

Fred Olsen Cruise aboard MV Black Watch  
14 – 17 December 2011

My husband and I recently travelled with two friends on a three night mini cruise to Rouen, the historical capital city of Normandy. The ship disembarked on time from Southampton in what was regarded as choppy conditions but luckily this didn't spoil the first nights meal and activities. Our cabin was very comfortable, an outside on deck 4 with two portholes.

We enjoyed a lovely meal, meeting our waiters whose service was very friendly and efficient. Later on we enjoyed the ships bars with very affordable drink prices and a variety of entertainment including a magicians show.

Although the overnight passage was a little choppy, we managed to sleep well and awoke to the pleasant calm of chugging up the river Seine into the harbour at Rouen as dawn was breaking.



Each day `The Daily Times` is placed in your cabin, which gives you details of the next port that you are visiting along with all the ships daily activities.

A full breakfast was served from 7am and all options of taste were catered for, bacon, eggs and accompanying hot side dishes or a simpler continental style if preferred. The waiter service was not as personal but you were able to order omelettes that were cooked to order.

A variety of tours to nearby and further afield sights were available. For those who wished to stay local a shuttle bus was in operation for passengers wishing to take a trip into Rouen (£5 per person return) as the inclement weather made for an uncomfortable two kilometre walk.

The town centre comprised of modern shopping malls, bars and restaurants as well as the very impressive medieval old town, with its beautiful cathedral and squares. The Joan of Ark square was very interesting as was the intriguing astronomical clock. We also visited the Christmas market where we were able to warm up with a glass or two of mulled wine!

Upon returning onboard, we found that the daytime activities and events were all enthusiastically attended and we particularly enjoyed the general knowledge quiz and the observation lounge where distant views of the town and river Seine could be witnessed.

The formal night was very well received. The captain personally met and welcomed all guests at a pre-dinner cocktail party. The meal once again did not disappoint, the level and choice offered was complemented on by many guests we met.

The entertainment option we chose that night was an evening of comedy in the Neptune lounge. The comedian was excellent and then following his show we went to the well attended disco, which rounded off a perfect day.

The second day offered a slight improvement in the weather and many more passengers decided to take the walking option along the pier into the town. The malls and cafes were buzzing with visitors from our ship as we started to recognise many guests out and about.

Just over a year ago Fred Olsen changed their tipping policy. They will automatically add £4.00 per adult per night onto your onboard account, which you are able to increase or decrease at your discretion. However

if you prefer the traditional way then you are able to ask reception to remove the charges and they will provide you with envelopes to give to the staff instead.

The weather forecast for the return crossing was not good but fortunately by the time we had cruised 65 miles down the Seine to Le Havre we were fast asleep (1am) so were not adversely affected by the bumpy cross channel sail. We awoke to a bright and sunny Southampton morning and home to reflect on a very enjoyable mini cruise.

*Karen*