

# P&O Cruises' Ventura



Andrew Harrison, Broads Travel's General Manager, his wife and their two young sons (aged 8 and 3 years), plus grandparents discovered what P&O Cruises' Ventura has to offer when they cruised for 14 nights around the Mediterranean last summer.

We travelled down to Southampton the evening before the ship's departure and stayed overnight at a nearby hotel. Parking the car at the cruise terminal on departure day was a breeze and our luggage was swiftly taken to our cabins by the porters.



Ventura looks magnificent – a ship P&O Cruises can be justifiably proud of. Exploring a new ship is always exciting and P&O Cruises provide you with a pocket size deck plan which is really useful. Having quickly found our cabins, we all attended the lifeboat drill which takes place in one of the lounges and then began to explore our new home for the next 2 weeks!

Like many cruise ships, P&O Cruises operate a cashless charge card system so having registered our credit card, all our valuables and cash were placed in the safe within our cabin.

## Children's activities

With two young boys, we had selected the ship specifically to ensure there would be lots for them to do. If they wanted to spend time in one of the clubs then they could, otherwise they would join my wife and I with the general activities around the ship. The children's clubs are for children between 2-17 years old and are split into 4 categories. Each of the clubs are run by the qualified "Reef Rangers" who have plenty of patience and energy! To use the clubs you need to complete the registration details for the children, so that they could be signed in/out by one of the four adults in our party.

We were really impressed with the ship's Reef Crew - one of the team arranged a staged production of Cinderella starring all of the children in the club. Many children attended the rehearsals and learnt their lines and dance routines and the theatre was packed for the children's final performance in front of over 700 nervous parents and families. The children were not fazed at all, met lots of new friends and had a great time.

50 Mere Green Road, Sutton Coldfield  
T: 0121 250 2201  
E: [cruises@broadscozines.com](mailto:cruises@broadscozines.com)  
W: [www.broadscozines.com](http://www.broadscozines.com)

**broads**  
Travel Group

10a Bird Street, Lichfield  
T: 01543 412768  
E: [holidays@broadslichfield.co.uk](mailto:holidays@broadslichfield.co.uk)  
W: [www.broadstravel.com](http://www.broadstravel.com)

Having travelled on many ships in the past, I believe that the P&O Cruises' children's club staff are amongst the very best of any cruise line. They are attentive, hard working and the security and safety of the children is outstanding. They constantly do head counts, not moving until they know they have all of the children together, holding on to a long extender lead which is manned by Reef Rangers at the front, middle and end.

Cirque Ventura is the first contemporary circus school on any cruise ship and we were really looking forward to the activities. They include tight wire, acrobalance, clowning and juggling - I managed to receive some 4 ball juggling tuition which was great fun!

## Dining



You really are spoilt for choice with the 8 restaurants on Ventura. For special occasions I would suggest Marco Pierre White's The White Room restaurant, but we preferred the Baytree restaurant for evening dining and chose the first seating (6.30pm), which gave us plenty of time before the main show at 9pm each night. You can also opt for Freedom dining, which enables you to turn up when you choose. If you wish to have a break from formal dining, there are several alternative restaurants to choose from - we had a delicious 'Sizzle' meal in the New York restaurant for which there was no extra charge.

During our two week cruise, we had four 'formal dress' dinners although a normal, smart suit is sufficient and the rest of the time the dress code was 'smart casual'.

Children may either join their parents in their chosen restaurant or can have their own children's evening meal at 5pm, which is highly recommended. The meals looked very appetising and are extremely healthy. If children join dinner in the main restaurant, they can choose from the adult menu or the alternative is a children's menu which features a choice of fish fingers, chicken nuggets, pasta and chips.

## Accommodation



Both of our cabins had balconies which we were very pleased with as the lower balcony cabins can be overlooked - the lower balcony cabins can be overlooked from those above. The cabins were immaculate and the layout of them provided far more wardrobe space than any cruise ships we had experienced before. The two upper bunks for the children are folded into the ceiling out of sight during the day but after dinner the stewards service the cabins and fold down the bunk beds (adults should mind their heads!). Although we didn't spend much time in our cabin, there are tea and coffee making facilities and fridge all as standard. The bathroom is perfectly adequate, spotlessly clean with lots of towels including extra towels for the pool. It's just a shame that the lower beds cannot be configured as a double bed when the bunk beds are used.

50 Mere Green Road, Sutton Coldfield  
T: 0121 250 2201  
E: [cruises@broadscozines.com](mailto:cruises@broadscozines.com)  
W: [www.broadscozines.com](http://www.broadscozines.com)

**broads**  
Travel Group

10a Bird Street, Lichfield  
T: 01543 412768  
E: [holidays@broadslichfield.co.uk](mailto:holidays@broadslichfield.co.uk)  
W: [www.broadstravel.com](http://www.broadstravel.com)

## Excursions

To make the best use of our holiday we decided to take advantage of some of the pre-bookable excursions. You can't leave children in the Reef Crew Club without a parent or adult in the party remaining on the ship, but the children chose to stay onboard most days with their grandparents which left us time to enjoy one or two of the trips on offer.



The excursions can be expensive so it is wise to carefully plan in advance which ones you wish go on. We took a full day tour of Rome, a family day trip (including grandparents) to the Marine Park in Cannes, a half day trip to Barcelona and also took our eldest son on a half day trip to Pompeii. The trips were really well planned and we all saw some great places.

One advantage of staying onboard the ship when it is in port is that the ship is much quieter. On two occasions we had the swimming pool to ourselves and no difficulty in getting a table for lunch.

## Evening entertainment



The shows are excellent and were thoroughly enjoyed by grandchildren, parents and grandparents alike! Each show is performed twice each evening - we found that our evening meal would finish around 8.30pm and we could be comfortably seated in the first show by 8.40pm. Our favourite was Saturday Night Fever but the magician shows and workshops were also great fun. As always, if you sit at the front you are likely to get picked on - how Grandma's ring was crushed in a grinder at the start of the show only to reappear in a gum ball machine half an hour later is still a mystery!

## Birthday Celebrations at Sea!



Our youngest son celebrated his 4<sup>th</sup> Birthday onboard Ventura and was joined at breakfast by a very excitable Noddy! There was lots of music and it was really great fun. A Noddy Olympics then took place on the Sports Deck where our 'Tessie Bear' team came second. The same afternoon, the birthday boy was presented with a birthday cake along with a very nice Ventura teddy bear. Noddy and Ventura's other celebrity, Mr Bump are certainly a big hit with the children and there are plenty of opportunities to have photos taken with them.

We had arranged for a birthday cake to be given to Sebastian that evening (which must be ordered in advance). The waiters and other passengers all sang Happy Birthday and made a real fuss of him. The Captain even sent him his own birthday card!

As with all cruises, there are plenty of opportunities to spend money on excursions, drinks, photographs, shopping and the Casino, but equally, if you choose to just enjoy shipboard life, you don't really need to spend any money once onboard.

50 Mere Green Road, Sutton Coldfield  
T: 0121 250 2201  
E: [cruises@broads-cruises.com](mailto:cruises@broads-cruises.com)  
W: [www.broads-cruises.com](http://www.broads-cruises.com)

**broads**  
Travel Group

10a Bird Street, Lichfield  
T: 01543 412768  
E: [holidays@broadslichfield.co.uk](mailto:holidays@broadslichfield.co.uk)  
W: [www.broadstravel.com](http://www.broadstravel.com)

## Disembarking

On some cruise ships breakfast on the morning of disembarkation can be quite chaotic and there is usually much less choice than the rest of the holiday. However, our last breakfast on Ventura was really well organised and there was plenty of choice available.

## Summary

Ventura is designed for family holidays and is ideal for all ages due to its varied entertainment options. One of the great things about cruising is that it gives you an opportunity to see a snap shot of each of the countries. We had a great holiday, a lot of fun and three generation of the Harrison family all have some great memories and stories to tell.

50 Mere Green Road, Sutton Coldfield  
T: 0121 250 2201  
E: [cruises@broadscriuses.com](mailto:cruises@broadscriuses.com)  
W: [www.broadscriuses.com](http://www.broadscriuses.com)



10a Bird Street, Lichfield  
T: 01543 412768  
E: [holidays@broadslichfield.co.uk](mailto:holidays@broadslichfield.co.uk)  
W: [www.broadstravel.com](http://www.broadstravel.com)