

Understated elegance on board Viking Sun

After wrestling for nearly two hours with rush-hour traffic through a grey, misty morning with heavy rain, I needed to chill out.

I found the ideal place six minutes out from Newhaven Harbour on a tender to the understated elegance of the Viking Sun.

It is one of the expanding Viking ocean fleet and stepping on board is a memorable experience. You feel instantly at ease with the 400-plus staff there to satisfy all your needs.

Yes, it was quiet as the 900 passengers had the option to visit Edinburgh on day 11 of the world's longest continuous cruise.

Many took the option with more than 50 of them on board for the entire journey, an epic 245-day trip visiting 53 countries.

The immaculate ship left Greenwich in London and the Viking Sun will travel 55,700 nautical miles across six continents on this trip.

Of course, Viking already are a multi-award winner for their river cruises which include the Rhine, Danube, Paris to the Swiss Alps, Paris and the heart of Normandy and Chateaux, Rivers and Wine.

Now they are on the high seas and chairman Torstein Hagen said: "We have stretched ourselves creatively and technologically, evaluating every aspect of our guests'

cruising experience and asking ourselves how we can surpass it." That attention to details shows.

The company also cherish their connection with seafaring pioneers of the past and bosses promise that their state-of-the-art river and ocean ships offer fine cuisine to suit all tastes plus excellent service.

Viking ships offer an all-inclusive deal including all on-board meals featuring regional specialities in a multiple choice of dining venues and times.

Beer, wine and soft drinks with on-board lunch and dinner are included – you can upgrade to a spirits and premium wine package – along with free wi-fi. If you haven't brought a laptop there are screens available on-board.

An on-shore excursion is also included along with a programme of talks which aim to bring local history and culture to life.

Guests we spoke to from countries including Mexico and Australia were full of praise for the experience and the repeat booking rates are high.

No wonder, we strolled through spacious, well-appointed lounges with guests chilling, reading or planning trips.

Several were working on a giant jigsaw and others were in the library, feet-up on leather loungers, reading. The library is always open.

The spa is luxurious and nearby is an indoor pool with a built-in bubble stream. A steam room was invitingly close along with a sauna and the spa complex also boasts a snow room – yes snow.

Nordic tradition dictates that you alternate sauna bathing with cold dips or rolling in the snow. They say it detoxes the body, relaxes tired muscles and boosts circulation. I'll take their word for that.

Fitness classes are also available and include yoga, meditation, full-body workout and stretching, but some sidestep that and head for stylish coffee bars which are dotted around the ship, many with panoramic views.

The Bergen-registered ship maintains its Nordic seafaring traditions with links to the past with artefacts and pictures in key locations.

Images from the Bayeux Tapestry line the main staircase walls on the ocean ships and passengers can access information on weather, the next destination, restaurant menus and entertainment all on-line on large, conveniently sited screens around the high-tech ship.

Our next port of call was the theatre where rehearsals were under way for a forthcoming production.

It also doubles as a cinema and if the performance is full then it is beamed to a screen in one of the public areas.

Sections can be screened off for small lectures and talks and a number of speakers are on board to offer information of history, architecture and local culture.

Food is a major part of cruising. Here, all tastes are catered for. I indulged in an impressive signature starter, chicken salad with sun ripe tomatoes, peppers, black olives and a rich balsamic dressing. I also couldn't resist an avocado with dressed crab.

The salmon en croûte is also a special along with an extremely popular, succulent steak sandwich. The veal escalope with mushroom should also not be missed.

Red velvet cake is a must for those with a sweet tooth but the home-made ice cream was proving popular with fellow diners.

Of course, all this tempting food can stretch the waistline and the ship has a sizeable gym plus a personal trainer should

you wish to shed some of those unwanted pounds.

Sadly, my four-hour visit had to come to an end. I said cheerio and was the only person on board a tender returning to shore.

I glanced back at the floating palace having thoroughly enjoyed my brief association with the Viking way.

It is no surprise that the company added a Best Overall in the Cruise Critic Cruisers' Award for a ship category 600 to 2,199 guests in 2018 and a world's best in 2016, 2017 and 2018 with Travel + Leisure.

This is luxury with a capital L.