

Cruises

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CRUISING

Costa is like floating on a slice of Italy

Even the line's Caribbean itineraries sailing out of Miami come with a European flavor.

TRIESTE, Italy -- When chunks of parmesan grace the buffet lines in bowls the size of washtubs, when each table burns a red candle at dinner, and when a multi-cultural group of cabin attendants greets you in the morning with a chorus of "Buon giorno," you know you are cruising on a Costa ship.

Costa now floats its slice of Italy around the world on a fleet of 15 big cruise ships, with another scheduled to debut in 2012. In North America, Costa sails out of Miami to the Caribbean and even on these itineraries passengers will share the ships with an international crowd, as Costa's mass-marketed, price-competitive voyages entice travelers from nearly every nation.

The all-Italian theme plays well in Europe, Asia, South America, and North America, where Italian restaurants are among the favorite places to eat and where visiting Italy is near the top of most U.S. travelers' wish lists.

I find that preparing for a vacation with Costa is more like a trip to Europe than a typical North American vacation. The food, and the attention to detail, point toward past centuries of Italian cuisine. The pool.

While English is the primary language to respond to requests, you can appreciate the experience.

If you are looking for a vacation in Dubai, you will find the ingredients with a "Made in Italy" stamp.

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Some 500 Italian companies were involved in designing, furnishing and building the Favolosa. In Italian, favolosa means fabulous and is related, says Costa, to favola which means fairy tale.

Favolosa furnishings came from Molteni, B&B, Rossi D'Albizzate, Moroso, and Tonon. Sicis decorated the Samsara Spa. Rubelli of Venice provided fabrics. Cotton came from Frette, and equipment for the fitness center from Technogym.

The art collection aboard ship includes 400 original works from 28 Italian artists.

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"The Costa Favolosa is like a pavilion about Italy," said Massimo Bottura, chef for the gala dinner at the Favolosa naming ceremony in Trieste in July. Bottura's restaurant, Osteria Francescana in Modena has two Michelin stars.



Chefs carving ham in the lido restaurant on Costa Favolosa. David G. Molyneux / TheTravelMavens.com

A CRUISE ON THE COSTA FAVOLOSA

Costa Favolosa is cruising out of Venice on a seven-night schedule to Greece, Turkey and Dubrovnik, Croatia. In late July, a travel agent quoted a price of about \$1,300 per person for two people in an outside cabin and \$2,200 each for a balcony cabin for seven nights in September.