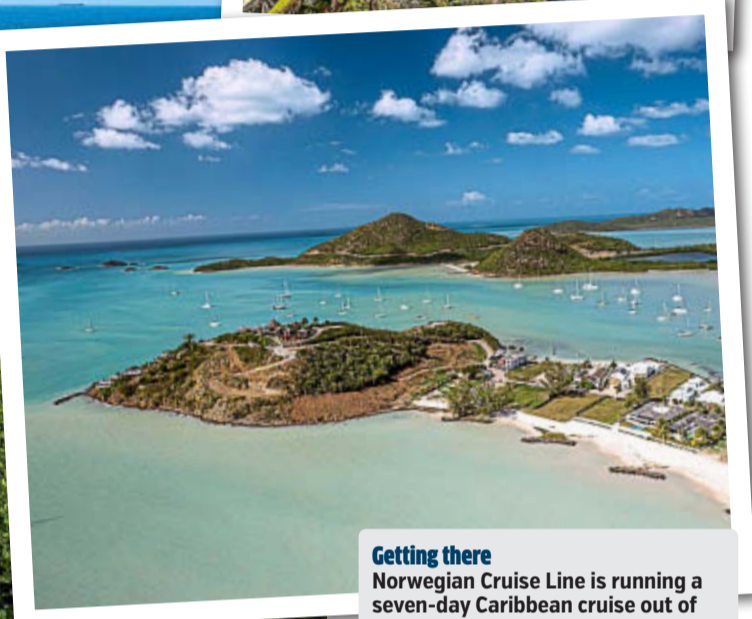


CHECK IN

METRO Special Advertising Supplement

Magnificent seven: Louise Atkinson and her daughter, Flo, took a Norwegian Cruise Line trip and visited seven islands including Barbados, inset right, and Antigua, inset below right



OUR MULTI-GEN CARIBBEAN CRUISE

Would island-hopping on a huge ship be fun for a first-time cruiser aged 26? We sent a mum and daughter to find out

Getting there
Norwegian Cruise Line is running a seven-day Caribbean cruise out of Puerto Rico on Norwegian Viva until the end of April. From £1,100 for an inside cabin, including all food and entertainment. Flights to Puerto Rico from the UK go via the US, from £700. See ncl.com for more.

EVERYONE has their own idea of what a cruise might be like. But which generation might enjoy the experience more? Louise Atkinson, 59, took daughter Flo, 26, on a week-long trip around the Caribbean. Here are their remarkably honest – and very different – reviews.

Louise says:
It is 1am when Flo tiptoes back into our cabin. 'Do you want to hear about what I've been up to?' she whispers into my sleepy ear. You bet I do!

As a travel writer, I've been on quite a few cruise ships and Norwegian Cruise Line is among my favourites. I love the many different dining options, the huge on-board Mandara Spa and the West End-standard evening entertainment.

But with cruise companies keen to pull in a younger audience, I'd like to find out whether my 26-year-old daughter, Flo, will find her tribe and her own vibe among the 3,500 passengers on this floating metropolis.

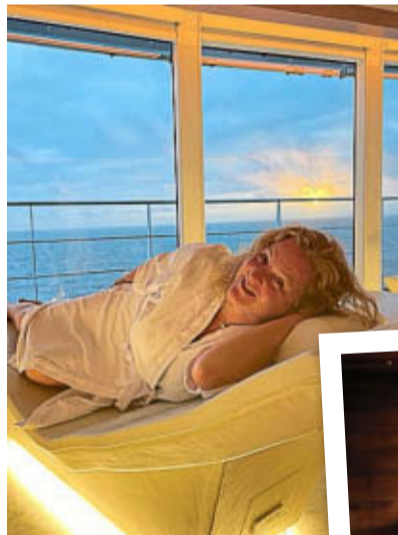
She's picked a good one for her cruise initiation. We're visiting seven Caribbean islands, with one day each on Puerto Rico, British Virgin Islands, Antigua, Barbados, St Lucia,

St Maarten and St Thomas before sailing back to Puerto Rico. It's like unwrapping a different Quality Street chocolate every day.

I'm a Gen X sucker for an offshore excursion, sticking close to the local guides as I learn about each island's unique features. BVI is surprisingly rustic and uncommercialised with roads scarred by potholes; Barbados feels properly British; St Lucia has some very spiky mountains and the beaches in Antigua are sublime.

And there's so much to do on board. One of Flo's new friends tried and failed to make a TikTok of herself trying every activity highlighted in the daily 'newspaper', from 7am abs class through morning trivia quizzes, arts and crafts, wine tasting, movie watching, dance demos, blackjack demo at the casino, game show and NFL games on the big screen.

I love the spa's thermal pools, saunas, steam room, salt cave and relaxation lounge, for an extra £300 for the week. And though tempted by the £200-a-week access to the squishy sunbeds and barely used infinity pools of the adults-only Vibe Beach Club, which is rather like a club-class luxury upgrade, I find plenty of quiet, sunny spots around the ship to stretch out



with a good book. Call me an old codger but I am rather partial to the crustless finger sandwiches served as 'high tea' in the thoroughly civilised Observation Lounge (free!) and it seems rude not to make the most of the 'all you can drink' premium plus beverage package (£750 for the week).

I'm in heaven – and I'm more than happy to leave the galling to Flo.

island and bump into the new friends I met in the karaoke bar last night. Work out in the ship's gym, with its brand-new hi-tech equipment, ice-cold face towels and excellent sea views.

All the oldies (sorry, Mum) seem to like the island group tours but I'm up for freestyle adventure. Taxis wait at every port so we find the chattiest driver and scoot around the Insta-worthy spots, for about £10 each.

Antigua tops my ranking. At Jolly Harbour beach we find idyllic white sand and turquoise sea but plenty of space so we don't need to pay £20 each for a bed and an umbrella.

Back on the ship for lunch or dinner, Mum and I fall into a routine, scooting past the loud self-service buffet and the old-school dining rooms to sit in a booth at Indulge, our favourite eatery, using a table computer tablet to click on any dish we fancy from a wide range of international street food 'vendors'. Guacamole, pad Thai, garlic naans and leafy cobb salad are on the table minutes later, freshly prepared and delicious. Sometimes the ship is so busy, it is a relief to order digitally and limit the human interaction.

Each night the VIVA auditorium, which hosts the big musical shows (they're doing Beetlejuice on our trip – it's incredible) turns into a nightclub. Most people on board are three times my age but it's great to see all ages salsa dancing or trying to keep up with the crew members who never leave the dancefloor. After shaking Mum off, me and the Gen Z gang check out poolside 70s, 80s or 90s-themed deck parties, ending up at the karaoke bar (the only party place open past midnight) before soaking up the cocktails with burgers and cheesecake at The Local Bar and Grill which serves food until 3.30am... sloping off to bed just as the sun starts to rise.

DIFFERENT TAKES ON SHIP-TO-SHORE FUN



Setting out: Mum and Flo, Puerto Rico



St Lucia: White sand, turquoise sea



Selfie time: Just one, for the album...



Infinity pool: Viewing St Thomas