

Cruise Corner

or listening to the waves while smelling the pleasant salt air. Shopping, casinos, a large theater, numerous food choices, spa, gym, and pools are the norm these days and are all present on the *Victory* as well as some really nice plusses. Lie back on a lounge chair or sit in a Jacuzzi and watch current-run movies or informative videos of upcoming ports on the giant outdoor movie screen. The experience combines the nostalgia of a drive-in theater with the added bonus of a well-stocked buffet, bar, and wait service with a Caribbean feel. Kids of all ages enjoy the waterslide and mini golf.

We also liked having two main formal dining rooms in addition to the buffets and other eateries. It provided a more intimate, peaceful restaurant feel than some of the larger shipboard restaurants. The “bang for the buck” that comes from creating a nice vacation at a reasonable price often comes at a cost. A pet peeve of ours on many ships is a central atrium that is only half size as a result of the accountants calculating how many more rooms (and therefore paying passengers) they can squeeze aboard the ship. The *Victory* has a full-size atrium on most floors, providing that dramatic and artistically luxurious look we love and appreciate.

The Islands

San Juan is the port of embarkation and we recommend flying in early or staying a day or two after



Old Town San Juan’s narrow streets have well-preserved buildings with a variety of European architectural influences.

your cruise. Old Town San Juan is where we like to stay to see the historical architecture, the wonderful old fortress “el Moro,” visit one of the many beaches or the el Yunche rain forest. The ship docks right at the base of Old Town and is only about a 15-minute

ride from the airport. The Sheraton is directly across the street from the terminal, but we opted to be right in the heart of town and stayed at Hotel Milano. Try dining at Sofia, a nice mix of Classic Italian and fusion cuisine, and afterwards visit Anam — a wonderful spa and cocktail lounge where for about \$20 you can enjoy a great pedicure, free cocktail, leg and foot massage — all while relaxing and taking in a scenic vista of the harbor.

St. Thomas, one of the U.S. Virgin Islands, is the second port of call. If you want a nice scenic and secluded beach, try Megan’s Bay. Getting there is an inexpensive bus ride, about \$8-\$10, and provides a nice mountaintop view on the way. Another favorite is to take the ferry over to St. John. The inexpensive ride glides past a host of beautiful islands over a span of about 20 minutes. About two-thirds of the island of St. John is a national park and the island is clean and well preserved. The famous Trunk Bay beach is a short bus ride and a great place to spend the afternoon.

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Trafalgar Falls in Dominica cascades from more than 60 feet up the mountain.

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