



# Paradise Found



## Aboard the Caribbean Princess in its Inaugural Season

By DAVID GAWKOWSKI

As the van rambled through the verdant Jamaican countryside our affable tour guide, Kingsley, proclaimed "Here in Jamaica, we have a saying: 'There are no problems, only situations, mon!'" What a great way to look at things, I thought.

I joked that it would even be a perfect campaign slogan for a certain troubled president this fall. But after just a few days at sea on the new and luxurious 3,120-passenger *Caribbean Princess* I had an understanding of what he really meant. When you're traveling through these paradises of the Western Caribbean with a warm tropical breeze in your face and reggae music floating through the air, you learn not to sweat the small stuff. A couple of minutes later, we passed a fender bender on the side of the road and the two drivers seemed to be having a laugh over it. "See there," Kingsley said, "No problem, just a situation, mon. Everything's irie!"

### The Newest Princess

Our seven-night voyage aboard the *Caribbean Princess* took us from Ft. Lauderdale to Montego Bay, Cozumel, Grand Cayman and the Princess Cruises' private island. With nearly 900 balcony staterooms, the ship is specifically designed to accentuate the flavors of the islands with special menus, entertainment, ship design features and activities.

For example, with their new program called "Movies Under the Stars," passengers can watch movies on a 300-square-foot poolside movie screen from the comfort of a lounge chair. Major sporting events and other can't-miss programming are also shown on the Times Square-styled LED screen. Special movie-themed cocktails and complimentary popcorn are offered to round out the ultimate "drive-in" poolside experience.

Other onboard amenities include three show lounges, four pools and the new Asian-themed Lotus Spa. The nightclub Skywalkers, located 16 decks above sea, was hopping every night we stopped in. Special dining options include the Italian restaurant Sabatini's, which is notorious for its large portions (expect to be rolled out), and the Sterling Steakhouse (expect to be craned out).

### Princess Cays

The Cays are Princess's own private and pristine stretch of sugar white beaches on the Bahamian island of Eleuthera. Here you can enjoy an array of water sports or simply soak up the sun. My girlfriend Carolyn and I decided to try a banana boat ride.

Whenever I see a banana boat I remember that scene from "Jaws 3," so I kept my eyes peeled for any fins and held on tight. While I loved it, let's just say Carolyn thought it was a little *too* thrilling and she's retiring from the racing circuit for a while.

### Montego Bay

The aforementioned ride through Jamaica took us to Chukka Cove for a jungle canopy tour. On this unique tour, knowledgeable and friendly guides assist



Above: The new Caribbean Princess at sea.



Left: Ruins of Tulum.

you as you literally glide across the treetops of the jungle like a bird; moving from platform to platform via a system of cables, harnesses, and sheer gravity at speeds of up to 35 mph. There are nine traverses in all, the longest being the "Inter-parish Express," which is over 1,000 feet long and 300 feet high. There are other outstanding activities in Jamaica, including climbing Dunn's River Falls and rafting on the Martha Brae River, but the canopy tour is a truly exhilarating experience that should not be missed.

### Grand Cayman

Due to high seas, our ship was unable to dock in Grand Cayman. It was good to know passenger safety came first with our captain. After all, we all remember what happened when the *Titanic* captain decided to go full throttle.

Still, it was slightly disappointing, because Princess offers excellent shore excursions here, including world-class snorkeling and diving opportunities. You can also take a ride in an Atlantis Submarine or visit Stingray Island, where you can feed hundreds of stingrays as they swim around you.

### Cozumel

Cozumel offers a wealth of activities to choose from. Shore excursions properly showcase the many spectacular Mayan ruins on the Yucatan Peninsula,

such as Chichen Itza, Tulum and Xcaret. Tulum, set on a cliff overlooking the Caribbean, holds unparalleled Mayan treasures. Nearby, Xel-Ha Lagoon is another great snorkeling hole and fun place to relax.

We chose to visit Xcaret, an incredible eco-archaeological park near Cancun. Xcaret has a little bit of everything: wildlife, snorkeling in an underground river and ruins. If you only have a day it's the perfect place to go to sample a taste of what the Yucatan has to offer.

## Caribbean Princess at a Glance



PRINCESS CRUISES  
escape completely™

- 3,120 passengers
- 881 staterooms with balconies
- Four pools, sports court, jogging track, putting course and golf simulator
- 300-square-foot Movies Under the Stars movie screen
- Asian-themed Lotus Spa
- Three dining rooms, two specialty restaurants and 24-hour room service
- Wedding chapel, officiated by ship's captain
- Three unique show lounges
- One of the largest casinos afloat
- Expansive child and teen centers
- Skywalkers nightclub, suspended 150 ft. above water

The *Caribbean Princess* will alternate on seven-day Eastern and Western Caribbean itineraries roundtrip from Ft. Lauderdale this winter, spring and summer of 2005.