

Escape

■ Cruise packages B6
■ Win new Alaskan guide B6

Aboard a vessel with restaurant fittings from Titanic's sister ship Olympic, JANE JOHN dances her way to a smaller dress size during a sea cruise around New Zealand.

SHAPE-UP at SEA

Lose weight on a cruise? When piglets sprout wings, you say. I hate to boast, but – lose it I did. I blame excessive enjoyment.

When my husband first suggested a two-week cruise around New Zealand to Australia I couldn't resist stating the obvious.

"We have seen New Zealand before. Sydney, too.

"But we've never seen Fiordland. Might be some surprises."

Now, I don't usually say this – but he was right. Celebrity's cruise ship Millennium boasts six eateries, four bars and complimentary 24-hour room service. Cruising is not about denial. So I pace myself. And I'm fussy. At seven-course dinners in the two-storey Metropolitan Restaurant I eat the tastiest portion of each course – then move on. Less bread, more lobster. I test cheese, taste dessert, sample sorbet. I enjoy everything – always leaving room to taste more.

Even the chocolate lover's midnight feast is no bar to losing kilos – if you dance the night away! And dance we do. The morning's "Dancing with the Stars" class is a must-do. The "stars" of the ship's Broadway-style shows teach us new

steps, new dances. Over and over until we get it right. They are very patient and smile a lot.

Every evening we get to practise. Before dinner we dance to "the big band with the Glenn Miller sound". And after dinner. And after the show. And before the midnight swim. And, no, I don't think I'm a danceaholic – yet.

This is my disguise-exercise enjoy-everything approach to shape up on a ship. Lots of dancing, swimming and learning new stuff. Go to the ship's perfectly nice gym on holiday? Too boring.

That famous health and fitness fanatic, Captain James Cook, pops up regularly when you cruise along New Zealand's coastline. Well, he named most of it. And there was plenty of dancing, sightseeing and shopping (trading) on Cook's voyages, too.

He kept his crew fit dancing hornpipes and free of scurvy with fresh fruit when possible, or much-hated sauerkraut at other times. Refuse and you got 12 lashes – for your own good, of course.

The morning we wake up in Dusky Sound it's not dark, or dusky as named by Cook, but pristine, bright and sunny. Dress-circle views from every deck keep me moving around the ship aiming the camera

at seals and scenery most of the day.

An "enjoy-everything" cruise needs commitment. In port as well as at sea. Shopping (especially window shopping) and sightseeing has to be done. Even if it's raining. On a wet day in Dunedin we exchange a wildlife trip for an eye-popping walk around the public art gallery. Surprises here: Monet, Turner, Gainsborough, an extensive Frances Hodgkin's collection and a painting by Thomas Sickert, who is alleged by novelist Patricia Cornwell to have been Jack the Ripper.

In Sydney for two days, Millennium is moored within spitting distance of The Rocks, the place old Sydney began: a perfect shop-sightsee combo.

Among historic buildings and arty shops, we meet Pia Anderson in the Metcalfe Arcade. She sells vintage clothing and is a dead ringer for a 1950s movie star. Clothes, curves, make-up scream rock 'n' roll – her other passion.

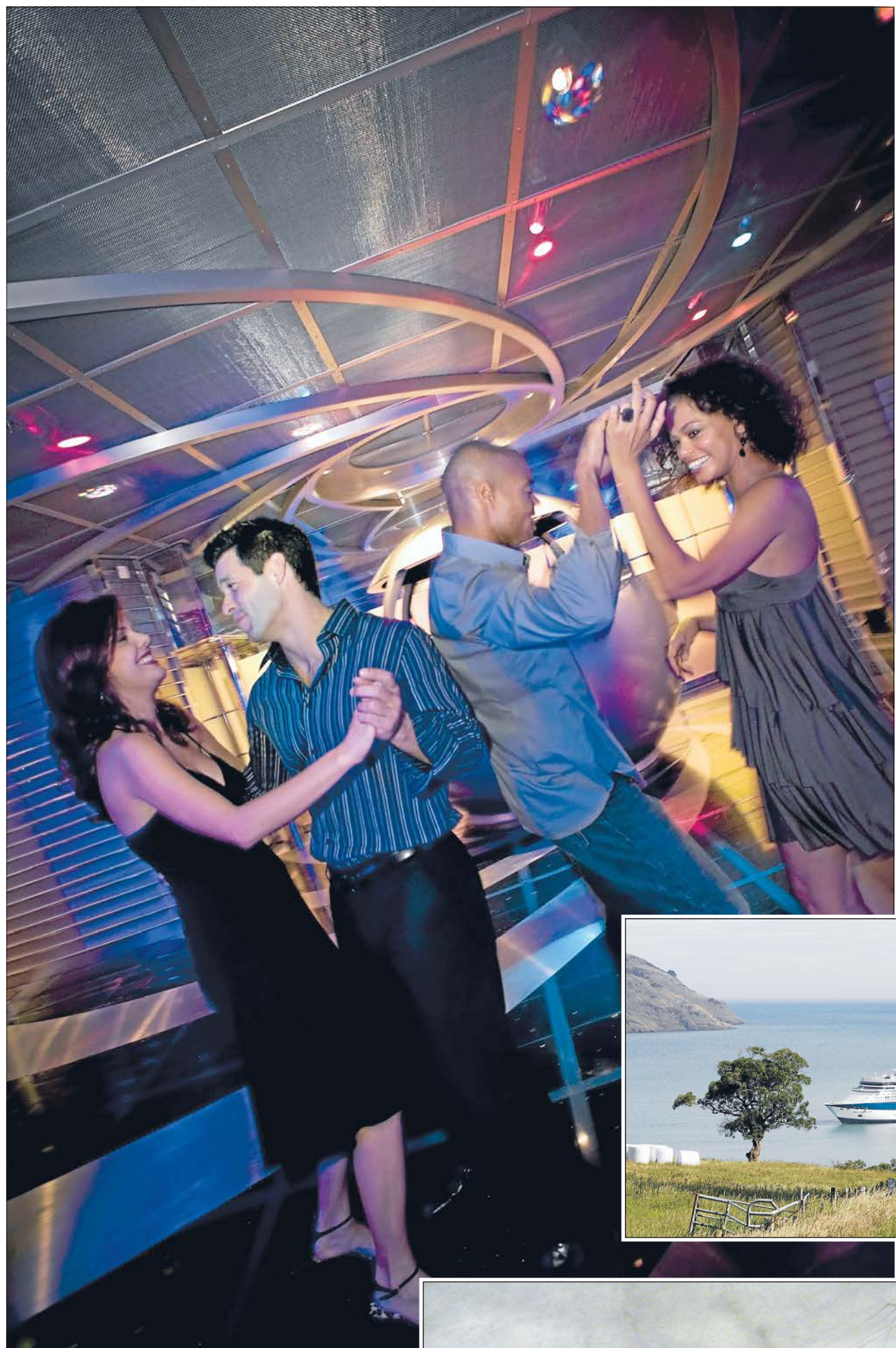
She tells us, "People say they like my costume. I say, 'What costume?' I wear this everyday." I buy one of the cheaper skirts. Funny how second-hand – sorry, "vintage" stuff is so expensive. Happiness is a smaller skirt size.

On Circular Quay we catch a ferry then a cable car to the top of Taronga Park Zoo.

We walk – and walk – though "Australia". Past snakes of all shapes and sizes and the angelic (he's asleep) Tasmanian devil. And then I see the dragon. Tuka the komodo dragon is 24 years old, over two metres long – and Indonesian. He's a close cousin of his zoo mate, the native lace monitor lizard often dubbed "the most aggressive Australian" – even without a green and gold jersey.

➤➤ To B6

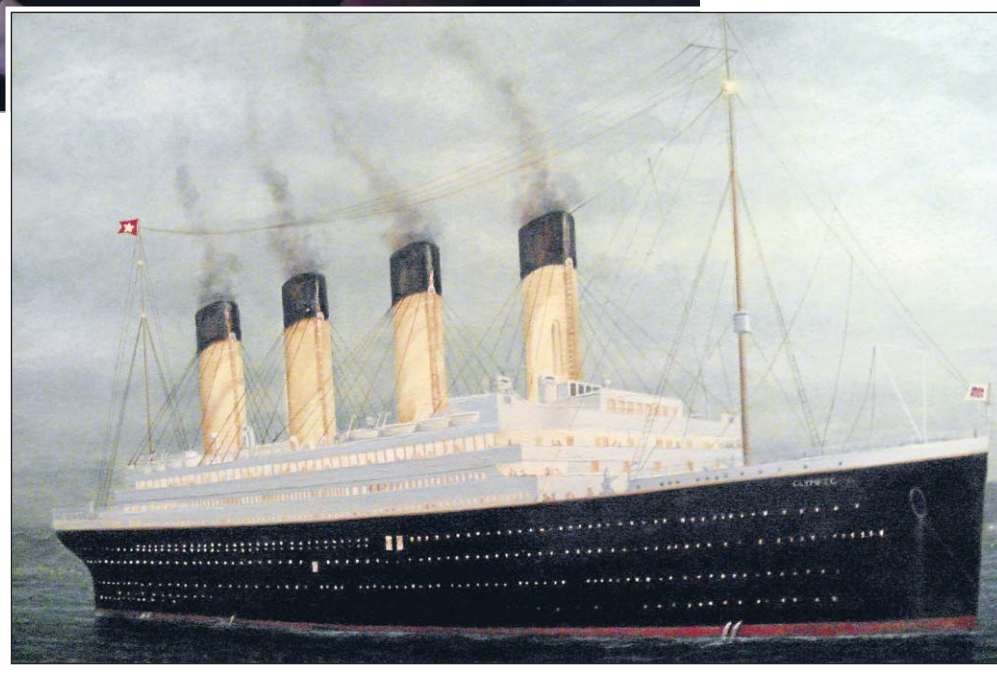
Olympic Restaurant: Original panelling from the Olympic, a sister ship of the Titanic, in a Millennium restaurant.



Alternative to gym: Dancing the night away aboard Millennium.

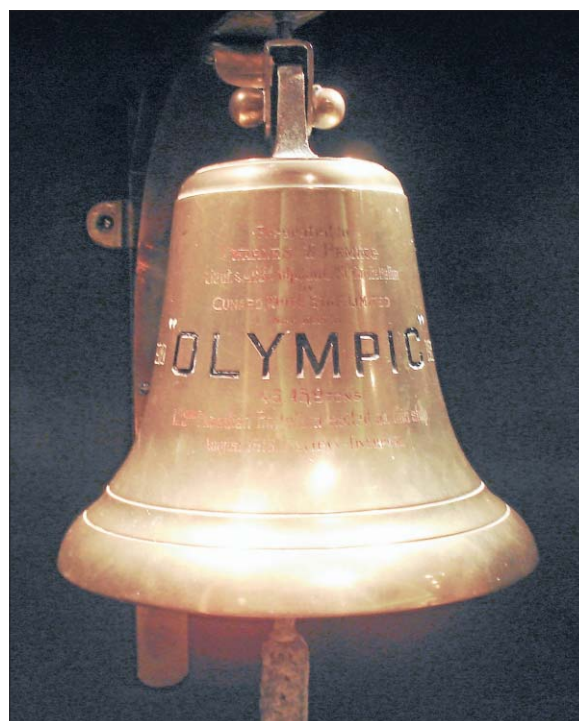
Akaroa stopover: Below, the Millennium moors in Akaroa Harbour near Wainui on Boxing Day, 2008.

Photo: KIRK HARGREAVES



Titanic's sister: A painting of RMS Olympic.

Valuable memento: Left, original bell of RMS Olympic.



LUXURY ESCAPES ON SALE

Sydney to Bangkok

21 nights from (WAS \$10,115) NOW **\$5750***

per person share twin

SAILING DATE: 08 February 2010 onboard Nautica
ITINERARY: Sydney, Brisbane, Whitsunday Islands, Townsville, Thursday Island, Darwin, Komodo, Bali (Benoa), Semarang (Java), Singapore, Ko Samui, Bangkok (overnight).

INCLUDES: 21 Night cruise from Sydney to Bangkok, onboard meals & some beverages, entertainment while onboard, gratuities and port taxes.



Panama Canal

16 nights from (WAS \$7320) NOW **\$5920***

per person share twin

SAILING DATE: 09 February 2010 onboard Regatta
ITINERARY: Los Angeles, Cabo San Lucas, Acapulco, Huatulco, Puerto Chiapas, Puntarenas, Panama Canal crossing, Cartagena, Key West, Miami.

INCLUDES: 16 Night cruise from Los Angeles to Miami, onboard meals & some beverages, entertainment while onboard, gratuities and port taxes.



South America

19 nights from (WAS \$7635) NOW **\$6150***

per person share twin

SAILING DATE: 22 January 2010 onboard Insignia
ITINERARY: Santiago (Valparaiso), Puerto Montt, Puerto Chacabuco, Laguna San Rafael, Punta Arenas, Ushuaia, Port Stanley, Montevideo, Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo (Santos), Rio de Janeiro (overnight).

INCLUDES: 19 Night cruise from Santiago to Rio de Janeiro, onboard meals & some beverages, entertainment while onboard, gratuities and port taxes.



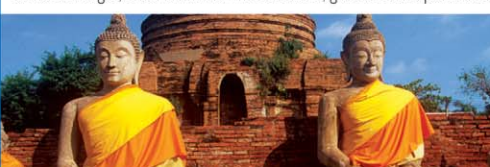
Bangkok to Beijing

24 nights from (WAS \$12,080) NOW **\$6575***

per person share twin

SAILING DATE: 01 March 2010 onboard Nautica
ITINERARY: Bangkok (overnight), Ko Samui, Ho Chi Minh City (overnight), Da Nang, Hanoi (Ha Long Bay) (overnight), Hong Kong (overnight), Taipei (Keelung), Kagoshima, Nagasaki, Shanghai (overnight), Seoul (Incheon), Beijing (Tianjin).

INCLUDES: 24 Night cruise from Bangkok to Beijing, onboard meals & some beverages, entertainment while onboard, gratuities and port taxes.



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HORIZONS

Irish Antipodes

Wellington is the venue next month for an Irish conference usually held in Australia or Ireland. The 16th Australasian Irish Studies Conference will be at the Massey University's Wellington campus in the heart of the city. An international panel of keynote speakers include Prof Tom Bartlett (University of Aberdeen), Prof Peter Gray (Queen's University, Belfast), Prof Dermot Keogh (University College, Cork), Prof Peter Kuch (University of Otago), Dr Perry McIntyre (St John's College, University of Sydney), Dr Richard Reid (National Museum of Australia) and Sir Tipene O'Regan (University of Canterbury). O'Regan will deliver the opening address at the four-day conference which is titled Ireland and the Irish Antipodes at 6pm on Thursday, July 9, with registration available from 5pm, then each morning thereafter. Inquiries: victoria.ac.nz/stout-centre/research-units/issp/conferences/conf-irish.aspx
The Accor Hotel Group is offering reduced tariffs for participants who can make bookings until June 20 at Mercure Wellington and Mercure Willis St (see mercure.co.nz) about 10 and 15 minutes walking distance from the conference venue.
For other accommodation options in the vicinity of the conference, see wellingtonnz.com/accommodation

Angels and Demons

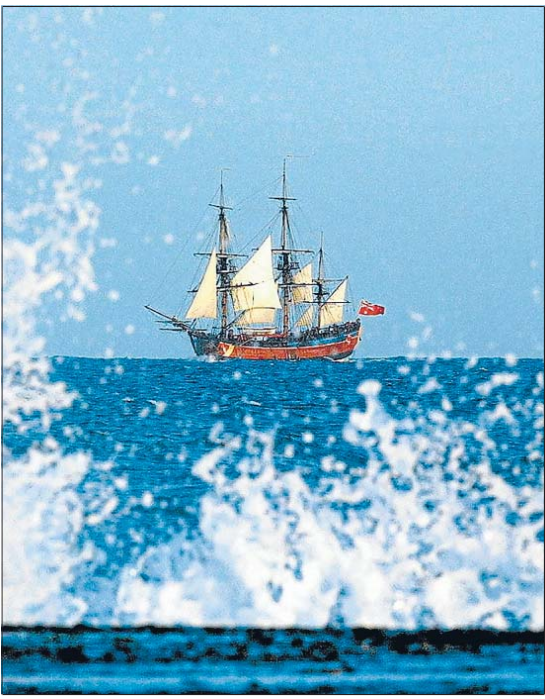
Trace the clues made famous in Dan Brown's novel and follow in the footsteps of the illuminati on an *Angels and Demons* experience in Italy. Flight Centre is offering a four-night experience in Rome, including accommodation and sightseeing tours to locations with hidden symbols featured in the book. Prices start from \$1099 a person, twin share, and include airport transfers, four nights at Kennedy Hotel in Rome, continental breakfast daily, a half-day Angels and Demons tour, dinner at That's Amore restaurant, an evening ghosts and mystery sightseeing tour, a panoramic open bus tour, rewind 3D Ancient Rome show, entrance tickets to Terrazza delle Quadrighe and wine tasting and appetisers at wine bar The Glass. Airfares to Rome are additional. Sales until June 22 for travel between July 1 and August 31 (also other periods available). Phone 0800 427 555 or visit flightcentre.co.nz

NRL Grand Final

Are you a rugby league addict? Harvey World Travel has packages available to the NRL Telstra Premiership Grand Final in Sydney. The deals start from \$1568 a person, twin share, including return Christchurch airfares to Sydney, transfers, three nights accommodation (October 2-5), and best available seating to the NRL Telstra Premiership Grand Final at ANZ Stadium on October 4. Phone 0800 80 84 80 or see harveyworld.co.nz. Valid for sales until July 31.

Bali getaway

Kuta is the ultimate Bali destination, home of most of the island's resorts, Hard Rock Cafe, surfing schools and shopping strip nearby. The best surf breaks are between April and September. Flight Centre has Bali holidays, including return Christchurch airfares and five nights accommodation in Bali with buffet breakfast daily and one night in Kuala Lumpur from \$1799 a person, twin share. Phone 0800 427 555 or visit flightcentre.co.nz. Sales until June 30 for travel June 7-30 and September 1-October 31.



Botany Bay: Among the first sightings of Australia for Irish immigrants, whether as voluntary settlers or as convict transportees to the penal colony. Photo: FAIRFAX

Parisian allure

Enjoy a Parisian experience staying in one of House of Travel's favourite Left Bank, three-star hotels on the edge of the vibrant Latin Quarter. The deal involves four nights accommodation for \$335, adult twin share, including breakfast. Sales until June 14 for travel between July 15 and August 24. Airfares are additional. Phone 0800 838 747 or visit houseoftravel.co.nz

Chicago in Melbourne

Experience the hypnotic glitter of the smash-hit *Chicago*, the musical coming to Melbourne from August 15. A House of Travel land-only package includes three nights staying at the Mantra on Russell and an A Reserve ticket to *Chicago* from \$599 a person, twin share. Sales until September 13 for travel August 15-September 24, September 27-29. Phone 0800 838 747 or visit houseoftravel.co.nz

Languages aid

A free language guide for travellers has been launched by Intrepid Travel in conjunction with World Nomads. Travellers can visit the Intrepid website to download the portable MP3 guides, which are available in 20 languages. The guides range from 10 to 16 minutes. The files can be stored on a portable MP3 device and take up less space than a full CD. See intrepidtravel.com/languageguides

Larnach Castle special

Turn back time at four-star Larnach Castle, Dunedin, by booking the Pinot Winter Reviver at \$250 a night for two people (usually \$310). The deal includes breakfast, a bottle of Central Otago Pinot Noir, late 1pm check-out, and a self-guided tour of the castle and gardens. Visit wotif.com or phone 0800-441-092

Guides winners

Winners of the Italy DK Eyewitness travel guidebooks are Lynne and Peter Williams, Annette Rosanowski, Mario Belanger, all of Christchurch; Marianne Palmer, of Nelson; Caroline Teichert, of Westport.



Majestic departure: The Barrett family farewells the Diamond Princess as she leaves Lyttelton Harbour.

Photo: PAT BARRETT

Date with a princess

Pat Barrett

Good things take time. That is an often repeated cliché that seems pretty meaningless until the day arrives when the thing you have often thought of takes place. For our family, it is a dinner date with a princess, although not your ordinary sort of princess.

Ours is 115,875 gross tons, has a length of 290 metres, carries 3900

passengers and crew, and is valued at US\$500 million. She is the Diamond Princess cruise ship. Fairly princess-ish figures you might agree, but not quite expected, and neither is our rendezvous point. It's in the tussock along one of the Lyttelton Harbour facing tracks at Godley Head, and it is a cold evening.

We are sure of one thing, however. The passengers and crew will not be enduring cold easterlies and lumpy

seats amid the fine dining and sumptuous luxury aboard.

Scampering along the dusty trail past the gun emplacements, the five of us head for a suitable location from where we can see the length of the harbour and escape the wind.

It is past dinner time for some of us, but never mind the chorus of wailing – there's a mission afoot and a date to make.

I have lost track of the number of times we had said, "We must do that", so for us this is a first, and it gives us head for a suitable location from where we can see the length of the harbour and escape the wind.

Dinner although satisfying is a tad mundane. I do not think cold chicken qualifies as a regal treat and neither does half a can of beer. The rest is accidentally tipped into the tussock by small feet.

Never mind, the show must go on, or pass by as in this case.

Gliding out from her berth, our princess begins her slow passage along the harbour to the heads with a

scattering of tiny escort boats bouncing in her wake.

Our view is splendid indeed and we bask in her magnificent size, stunning lines and graceful passage out into the South Pacific Ocean.

As she passes, there is a fleeting moment of being a small part of her entourage, more imagined than real, and then she is gone, out over the briny to a distant date with another set of admirers.

Our brief audience with royalty is over. Now comes dessert, a banana, the packing up and getting home before dark; there are chores to do and children to bed.

I wonder if the princess's charges consider such things.

Access: Godley Head carpark from Evans Pass on the Sumner to Lyttelton road.

Time: 20-25 minutes to a suitable viewpoint from Godley Head carpark.

Grade: Easy.

Map: Banks Peninsula.

DIAMOND PRINCESS DEALS

Diamond Princess is a luxury destination in itself. Wake each morning in anticipation of a new horizon, with the view from one of nearly 740 balcony staterooms. Indulge in a hot stone massage at the renowned Lotus Spa, enjoy fine dining in a formal or relaxed atmosphere and make it a cruise to remember. United Travel has 18-night cruise packages from \$3799 a person, twin share,

including return airfares departing Christchurch to Bangkok and returning from Sydney, arrival transfer to hotel, one night pre-cruise accommodation, departing November 22 on the Diamond Princess, all main meals, accommodation, activities and on-board entertainment, government fees and port charges.

Phone 0800 46 86 48 or see unitedtravel.co.nz

Shape-up at sea

From B5

Whole continents later we're back on Millennium sipping rehydrating cocktails to the accompaniment of the string quartet in the Cova Cafe.

"Titanic is the most popular movie on the ship," says Lara, the young Spanish violinist, who knows how to get our attention.

"The second most popular is *Poseidon Adventure*." The cellist gets the laugh as Lara leads the Ellan string quartet into the theme song from *Titanic*.

"I'm a Titanic fanatic," says a man next to me by way of introduction.

"Really?" I smile politely. "Dinner at the ship's Olympic Restaurant is the closest you can get to dining on the Titanic."

"How's that?" "The Olympic was a sister ship to Titanic – nearly identical. Launched in 1910 as a luxury liner she took troops to Gallipoli in 1915, even sank a German U-boat in 1918". (Olympic's propellers sliced through the U-boat's pressure hull – the only known sinking of an enemy warship by a merchant vessel in World War 1.

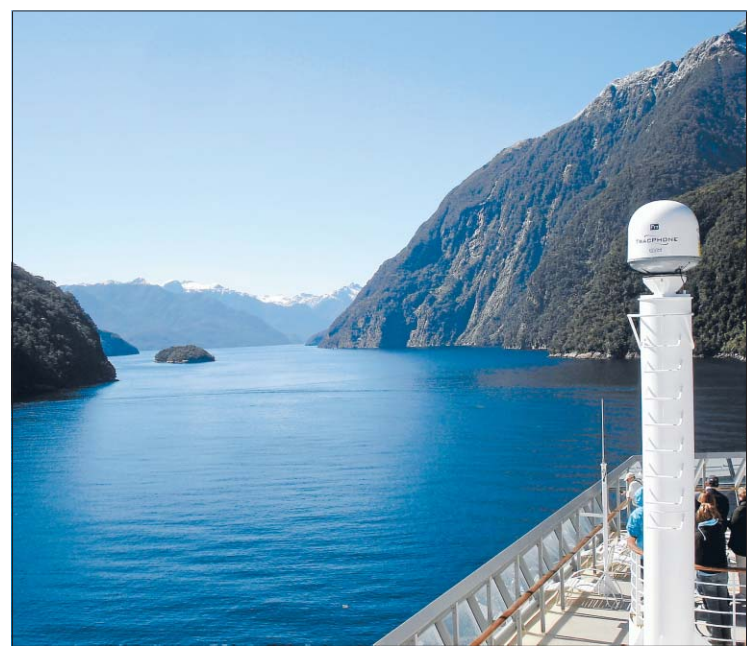
Titanic's other sister ship Britannic sank after striking a mine in the Aegean Sea in 1916). "Anyway, Olympic was scrapped in 1935 and the fittings from the first-class restaurant were sold to a private collection in England.

"When Millennium was built, the original walnut panelling and other bits and pieces were bought and installed in the Olympic Restaurant." He pauses for breath. "And it's a \$300 meal for \$30."

Dine with the ghosts of early transatlantic cruisers – for only \$30. Who wouldn't?

On the last night of the cruise, the maitre'd – all white gloves and diamond studs – shows us to our table in the walnut-panelled room.

With the Sydney Opera House a glowing backdrop, we sit down to gleaming silver, crystal and candlelight.



Fiordland welcome: A sunny Doubtful Sound greets Celebrity's Millennium cruise ship. Photo: JANE JOHN

On the last night of the cruise, the maitre'd – all white gloves and diamond studs – shows us to our table in the walnut-panelled room. With the Sydney Opera House a glowing backdrop, we sit down to gleaming silver, crystal and candlelight.

No waiters here – rather "chefs du range" because many dishes are prepared tableside where each "chef du range" has two assistants. The fun comes when each man lifts the silver covers off the dishes in perfect unison – quite a sight. Each course is more delicious than the last – souffles, flambees, and a trip around France with the cheeses. Tonight I eat everything on my plate.

Wine is extra so we pass on the 1907 Heidsieck Monopole at \$7000 – ordering a very enjoyable red for \$28. A memorable meal at a ghost of a price.

More surprises than I thought possible on this cruise. Plus the "drop-a dress-size" bonus. Can you have too much fun on holiday? Having completed an inaugural season in New Zealand and the South Pacific, Celebrity's Millennium is sailing out of Vancouver to Alaska (seven and 10-night cruises) until September. It will be then based in the Caribbean until next year. Celebrity plans to return to New Zealand and the South Pacific for the 2010-11 season.

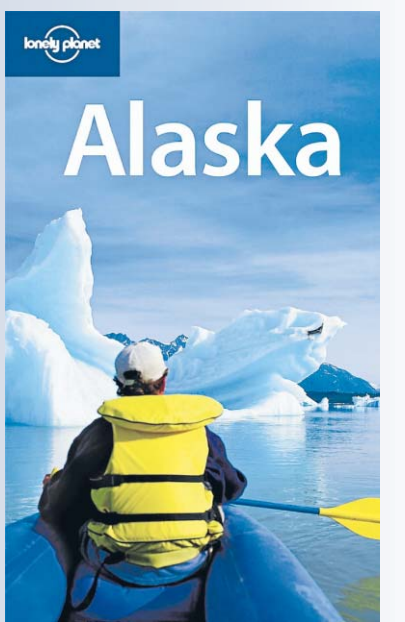
ALASKAN CRUISE

Experience five-star cruising at its best and discover Alaska's breathtaking sights and sounds on a cruise holiday aboard Celebrity's newly refurbished Millennium.

House of Travel has a 10-night package priced from \$4379 a person, twin share. The price includes return airfares from Christchurch to Vancouver with Air Canada, a 10-night round-trip Alaskan cruise aboard Millennium in an inside stateroom, all main meals and entertainment on board the cruise, all port taxes, and government fees. Sales until June 30 for departure on September 18. Gratuities are additional.

Why not extend your stay in Vancouver? Talk to your House of Travel consultant about the great range of hotels on offer. Phone 0800 838 747 or visit houseoftravel.co.nz

WIN NEW GUIDE



An Alaska cruising chapter helps you choose the right ship for your requirements in Lonely Planet's new Alaska travel guidebook.

Alaska serves it up big – volcanoes, glaciers, caribou, bald eagles and the tallest mountain in the United States. Get a taste of its grand scale as you kayak through a sea of icebergs and seals or hold your breath as a 40-tonne humpback whale erupts from the sea.

Press Escape has five copies to give away. To be in the draw, write your name, address and phone number on the back of an envelope and send to: Alaska Contest, PO Box 1005, The Press, Christchurch 8140, to arrive no later than noon, Thursday, June 11. Winners' names will be published on Monday, June 15. The edition has a retail price of \$55.

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