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**Mariner of the Seas**  
**7 Night Mexican Riviera Cruise**

**May 2010**

**By**

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Our third cruise on Royal Caribbean's Mariner of the Seas was our best yet! We sailed a 7 night Mexican Riviera cruise on the Mariner in May 2010 with our 16 year old sons

Andrew and Josh and Tim's sister Phyllis. Pictured above is us zip lining in Puerto Vallarta; we tell about this exciting shore excursion and more in our report below.

## **Shore Excursions**

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### **Cabo San Lucas**

At Cabo San Lucas we took a wonderful shore excursion to the ME resort. Booked through shoretrips.com, we were the only ones on our cruise who chose this excursion (it was not offered through Royal Caribbean). This was another example of how booking independent excursions are often better than those offered by the cruise line.

Our afternoon at the ME resort was pure luxury! We were led to our own large "canopy bed" in the pool area. The cover on the bed kept us shielded from the hot sun (temperatures were in the 90's this day). An attentive wait staff brought us food and drink. We had a beautiful view of the beach.

#### *Anne says*

This port does require guests to be tendered to shore – taken by boat versus walking off the ship directly to the pier. This wasn't a problem, though, because Royal Caribbean was very organized. Once on land, we had no problem finding a taxi stand. The locals were very helpful and the taxi was van size and there was more than enough room for the 5 of us.

There are only a few beach areas in Cabo where the beaches are swimmable, in many areas the undertow makes going in the water unsafe. The ME is located on this swimmable beach. We could not have asked for a better resort, great food and drink, incredible pool – a great day in Cabo.

#### *Andrew says*

Our day at the ME resort was great! I really liked the waiters/staff, the food (especially the strawberry smoothie and quesadillas), and the comfortable canopy bed. The beach was good and there were no little kids around.

#### *Josh says*

I liked the resort at Cabo because it was very relaxing. The chairs and "beds" that were there were comfortable and it had a nice beach. The food was excellent also (like Andrew I had a chicken quesadilla and strawberry smoothie).

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See our video slideshow of our day in Cabo and the ME resort here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PfcSZRAEB94>

## **Mazatlan**

We had visited Mazatlan two times previously on cruises and we hadn't experienced a good shore excursion there. That was to change with this cruise! We had our best ever Mazatlan experience at Stone Island Beach.

We took a scenic boat ride from our ship to Stone Island. It was interesting to see the large rocks close up in the Mazatlan waters, including caves and harbor seals. Once we arrived at Stone Island we took a tractor ride to see the interior of the island before reaching the beach. The beach had very few rocks, different from other Mexican Riviera beaches we had seen. This feature made it a great swimming beach.

*Anne says*

One thing to keep in mind is that this is a public beach, so there were many local vendors vying for our attention and money. There were interesting goods for sale, from blankets, wood carvings and jewelry to toys and cookies! If you want the shopping to come to you, sit back and you have many opportunities. Although there were a large number of vendors, I didn't find them to be rude or intrusive – a simple 'no thanks' and they were on their way.

*Andrew says*

Other than me getting a bad sun burn, this tour was great! I liked seeing caves closeup on the boat, the tractor ride through town, and especially boogie boarding in the surf. Lunch was good (quesadilla and fish)

*Josh says*

This excursion was great because it had one of the best beaches I've ever been to. It started with a boat tour and the guide was funny and friendly. Then we stopped at the beach on Stone Island and had a bunch of activities to choose from. I went boogieboarding in the ocean which was very fun. Towards the end we were served a nice lunch with a variety of items like a cheese quesadilla, mahi mahi, mexican rice, and beans.

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See our video slideshow of our day at Stone Island beach here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YMH1pOQiuqM>

## **Puerto Vallarta**

As we sailed towards Puerto Vallarta I wondered which shore excursion I would rate the best on this cruise. Both our Cabo and Mazatlan experiences were excellent and it was tough to pick which one was best. Little did I know that we would have the best shore excursion on this cruise and one of our best excursions on any cruise at Puerto Vallarta.

I had booked several clients on the ziplining excursion through Shore Trips at Puerto Vallarta and everyone returned with rave reviews. I had always been a little hesitant to go ziplining, but I decided to try it on this cruise. I was glad I did! The ziplining was thrilling, invigorating, a little but not too scary, and just plain fun!

I discovered that the Puerto Vallarta ziplining is very safe. Once I went down my first line I knew I would be ok. The guides were great in showing the right techniques.

*Anne says*

I, like everyone in the family, really enjoyed this experience. There is some climbing up the mountain involved. You don't have to be in top shape, but those who don't enjoy exercise at all may not like this excursion. We started the climb going up a steep narrow winding staircase. One person in our group of about 25 saw the stairs and immediately knew that he wasn't up for the challenge. There were a few water stations along the way and you could take your time, so there wasn't any pressure to make it to the next zip line in a hurry.

There were several adventurous souls who rode the zip line backwards. The guides would even turn your harness around and you could ride the zip face first, no hands! I stuck with the standard position of feet first facing forward, which was plenty exciting enough!

*Andrew says*

Though the climb was difficult for some and the bus ride to the mountains was very long, I really enjoyed the ziplining. The instructors were humorous and I was glad we got a chance to zip on 14 different lines (the highest was the best).

*Josh says*

Zip lining was my favorite excursion. The staff were all very nice and funny, and the zip lining was awesome because it was fast and gave a great view of the jungle.



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See our video slideshow of our ziplining experience here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YK34aP0JK-g>

## **The Ship**

### **Dining**

The food on the Mariner of the Seas was good. We had the first dinner seating and I liked having the same wait staff every night. The service was excellent. Our waiter from India memorized our names and had a special greeting for us each night.

*Anne says*

There was always a good variety of food choices on the menu for dinner. Royal Caribbean also has a standard menu they offer with choices that are more basic – pasta, steak, chicken. We also took advantage of visiting both the dining room and the buffet for breakfast and lunch. Somedays we just felt like being served in the main dining room and other days we enjoyed getting the food ourselves from the large buffet selection. We did not take advantage of the specialty restaurants this trip, but know from past visits that the quality is excellent.

*Andrew says*

I really liked johnny rockets, the snack options at the café promenade, and the sundaes I had for dessert after dinner each night. Having a soda card for the whole cruise was great as I could have a soda whenever I wanted to. I was disappointed there were not more pasta options on the dinner menu.

*Josh says*

The food on this cruise was excellent. The buffet had a good selection for both breakfast and lunch and the dining room always had great food for dinner. I was able to try a few new foods that I had never eaten before. Johnny Rockets was really good and worth the \$5.

## **Entertainment**

*Anne says*

I am generally a big fan of shows and entertainment on the cruise ships. I love musicals and comedians. We saw 2 comedy acts plus a comedian juggler – all were very good.

Of the two musical productions, I enjoyed the second one more than the first. The first one featured old time Broadway, Las Vegas and Billy Joel. The first two parts seemed a little old fashion the for age of the crowd. The second show on a separate night was music of the '80s and the songs and dancing really seemed to be crowd pleasers.

*Andrew says*

I liked the shows (especially the comedians). The ice skating show was great. We played trivia a few times – it was very crowded and challenging. There was so much to do, also mini golf, rock climbing, basketball, ice skating, a movie theatre, and an arcade.

*Josh says*

I went to a few of the shows and they were all good. The comedians were funny and the musical productions were well-made. Trivia was really fun but some of the questions were extremely hard in general trivia.

## **Teen program**

*Andrew says*

The counselors were good and weren't crazy. I opted out of most of the activities; I preferred to do things on my own.

*Josh says*

The teen program was pretty good on this cruise. [The activities that I went to](#) were all all fun; they consisted of some events like scavenger hunts and other times were they just let us hang out and play cards. The only complaint I had was that sometimes the events didn't stay on schedule like they were supposed to.

## **Memories**

This was an especially memorable cruise for me as I had sailed on the Mariner back in 2004 with Andrew and Josh. I created a video slideshow comparing our experiences on the two cruises at this link:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R60rPIEbwl>

## **Summary**

I enjoyed this cruise very much. I said to Anne as we were sailing back to Los Angeles, "The Mexican Riviera ports are really underrated." Having worked in the travel business since 2002 I notice many cruisers don't consider the Mexican Riviera, instead preferring

a Caribbean cruise out of a Florida port. If you haven't sailed the Mexican Riviera yet, give it a try! On this cruise we discovered terrific shore excursions at each port, along with an excellent onboard experience similar to our past Royal Caribbean cruises.

The Mariner of the Seas will be sailing this itinerary only for a little while longer before heading to Europe in the Spring of 2011. Other cruise lines will still be sailing the Mexican Riviera, however. Carnival has a new ship sailing this itinerary year round, and other cruise lines offer Mexican Riviera cruises in the Fall and Spring.

*Anne says*

This was my third time on the Mariner of the Seas. I really like this ship – it is typical of what Royal Caribbean offers. There is something for everyone. It feels like we were busy most of the time but there were many activities we didn't even try, such as BINGO, the casino, dancing, and more. The 7 nights we were on the cruise went by very fast and I am ready to go again!

*Andrew says*

This was one of the best cruises I have been on because of shore excursions.

*Josh says*

Overall this was one of my favorite cruises because all of the shore excursions were great, the food was excellent, and there were plenty of fun activities to do around the ship.

*Are you interested in a Mexican Riviera cruise for your family? We can help! Contact us at [info@familytravelgurus.com](mailto:info@familytravelgurus.com).*

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