

**CRUISE CHECK** PORT OF MIAMI-COCO CAY

Royal Caribbean **MAJESTY OF THE SEAS**

FIRST IMPRESSIONS The ship had just been modernized in feel and function after 28 days of round-the-clock work, with improvements to the guest suites and staterooms, dining areas, spa and gym, conference rooms, and more. Even the elevators

had been replaced with sleek new ones. Most of this was readily visible, and my cozy suite was mostly showroom-fresh.

BOARDING Our destination, a private Bahamian island owned by Royal Caribbean, necessitated a trip through customs and passport control. Screening was as thorough as any airport, minus the concern with toiletries. The line didn't move fast, and the terminal at Port of Miami wasn't air-conditioned—but no matter, as most had dressed the part. Guests were greeted with champagne when we boarded the renovated *Majesty of the Seas*.

UNDERWAY After a short break to rest and unpack, dinner was served on the main deck as we set off. It was an

affair of daunting proportions; even a bottomless appetite could not complete the gauntlet of steam tables that bracketed the pool. The food was fresher and better-prepared than that of my last cruise experience. Though the lines were long, attentive waiters plied us with drinks to blunt the hunger pangs.

After dinner I attended a show, *Signed, Sealed, Delivered*. This revue of classic Motown, blues and jazz favorites was in A Chorus Line, the 1,027-capacity theater towards the rear of the *Majesty*. The invigorating show gave me just enough pep for a drink with friends at Boleros,

the Latin-themed bar and club on the same deck. A live band performing Latin-American favorites of several regions kept the dancefloor animated until we left to check out the casino two decks down. After losing a responsible amount of money at the poker tables and slots, I went off to bed.

ARRIVAL We docked at CocoCay, 127 miles from Miami, the next morning. The fact that this is a private island virtually eliminates the waiting in line at disembarkation that seems attendant on most cruise travel. Ferries took us between the *Majesty* and the island, where activities including scuba diving, jetskiing and kayaking were on offer. Arrive early if you're hoping to jetski; it was booked through the day by the time I arrived. Souvenirs and snacks were also for sale in a faux-village area, and a bar overlooking the water had rows of lounge chairs for offshore relaxation.

OVERALL The improvements to the *Majesty* came off well, and make it particularly attractive for corporate retreats. There's plenty of fun to be had onboard and off, but there's also good cellular coverage, wireless Internet throughout the ship, and conference/meeting facilities, as well as a 24-hour business center with five terminals and laser printing. It was easy to imagine a team-building seminar out for the weekend on this three-day tour, returning rested, sunned and smarter.

—Alex Féthière



PROFILE **Emirates Academy**

The Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management, part of the Jumeirah Group's hospitality empire, hopes to raise the bar for hospitality management training worldwide. Its mission statement is "to be a world leader in facilitating university-level learning in the field of tourism and hospitality management." The boutique school, located in Dubai, instills its values in students through "a lot of one-on-one teaching, in groups no bigger than 15 students," says Anne Bleecker, Jumeirah Group's director of public relations and communications.

Besides training in business communications,

travelers and tourists.

The importance of information technology is foremost in every course. Ron Hilvert, managing director of the Emirates Academy, says, "From day one, the Academy's students are exposed to the latest IT systems that can be found in the world's finest tourism and hospitality organizations." The Academy is also a proving-ground for the latest and best technology applications and protocols: it was the first entity outside the U.S. to implement InfoGenesis' wireless POS system, and the first academic environment in the world to use Microsoft's SharePoint Portal Server, an intranet

portal and document-management application. IT, business, finance and marketing during their four-year degree program, students also have internships in demanding regional hotels and venues such as Burj Al Arab, Madinat Jumeirah, and Wild Wadi Water Park. Such an education and practice field better prepare graduates to meet the needs of both business

portal and document-management application.

An environment of intercultural ferment aims to better equip students to interact with guests and clients from all over the world. Almost 50 different nationalities are represented in the student body, and career placement outside of the UAE is not unusual. According to Mr. Hilvert, travelers will encounter Academy graduates in the U.S., U.K., Norway and elsewhere. Bleecker adds, "Last year we had visits from more than 20 of the most important organizations on the international hospitality and tourism scene including Hyatt International, Four Seasons, Marriott, Accor, Emirates Airlines, Jumeirah and many more."

Though primarily a management school, some instruction in business travel-related industries may be elected. A course focusing on the MICE industry is offered, which includes some discussion of current meeting and convention technology.

Hospitality training should naturally take food into account. The first semesters in the BSc (Hons) degree in International Hospitality Management focus intensely on food production, service, and food and beverage management. A variety of cuisines are introduced and studied.

It seems likely that before long, an Emirates Academy graduate will be somewhere in the service chain of most places you patronize—most probably near the top.

—Alex Féthière