



Sail Away from Tradition

Cruising at Christmastime doesn't mean missing out on the holiday spirit

BY LESLEY TKACZYK

I love tradition. Having the house decorated just right and enjoying family breakfast on Christmas morning mean the world to me. But after taking two Christmas-time cruises, I see that breaking tradition can also be a good thing.

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My family first took a holiday cruise when I was in my teens. Our extended family thought we were crazy (and a little rude) for having the audacity to leave home. Despite their protests, we took off for warm waters with Royal Caribbean International.

Mom brought a few must-have items. Come Christmas Eve she pulled out the traditional early present of new pajamas, and in the morning our stockings at the end of our beds were stuffed to the brim.

As we walked around the ship,

our shipmates had friendly smiles on their faces. That Christmas spirit I was so worried about missing was definitely here, in the middle of the ocean.

We didn't have to trek through the snow to see Santa, but it was cooler in the ice-skating rink where he gave out beach towels to the kids onboard. Snow shoveling and cleaning in preparation for company were replaced by shopping and snorkeling. Plus, with the Ben & Jerry's® on ship, I didn't miss the cookies we make at home.

The company at our dinner table weren't family members on Christmas night, but they were cheerful and fun. As we told our new friends all about our holiday spent relaxing in the sun on the beach, I think the planning for our next trip had already begun. •

Lesley Tkaczyk is AAA *Traveler's* assistant editor, and she cruises as often as possible.

