

Touring the Viking Polaris in Port Toronto, a review

Invitations to board ships are very rare. Cruise lines take their security very seriously and rarely have the time in port or staff to conduct tours. What a great privilege to be invited to tour the Viking Polaris while she was docked in the Port Toronto.

We arrived by taxi and were invited through security on the dock as the passengers from the Polaris were disembarking. I was very curious to observe the guests. I wanted to see the demographics of the customer. This is vitally important to me, as a Travel Agent. I need to know who amongst my customers would be interested in Viking Cruises. The disembarking guests were on average seventy to eighty years of age, well dressed in smart casual travel wear, with hints of affluence. Some guests required the assistance of canes or walkers but most were robust and healthy, if only showing the slight air of tiredness that accompanies the end of a voyage.

Once our group was assembled we walked the steps up the gangway and onto the ship. My first impression of the entrance atrium of the Polaris was surprising. It was quiet and understated in subtle colours. It was open from side to side with grand windows and one story up to the ceiling above and a glass floor to see one floor below. There was an area for a bar and seating with an intimate Customer Service desks tucked off to the side. I expected, what most luxury cruise ship have a great atrium with a flowing staircase and glittering chandelier. That is not what you will find on the Polaris.

I found this to be the case throughout the ship. The design has been carefully crafted to blend in with the nature outside the ship not to compete with it. The ship gives off a very soothing atmosphere that envelopes you and draws you to the flora and fauna you are about to explore. The Polaris is an exploration, expedition ship built to take you to the far reaches of the world. She sails from the Antarctic to the Arctic and for a brief period of time in between, calls the Great Lakes home.

The luxury exists in the staterooms. A full three hundred square feet, the balcony has been replaced with a complete wall of windows with a private sitting area, a convertible king or twin beds, and a marble walk-in ensuite bathroom. The suites are fully appointed with robes and your very own Viking Expedition Kit and expedition jacket.

You won't find loud entertainment, or Broadway shows on an expedition ship. What you will find is a library with cozy reading nooks, cards tables through the lounge for afternoon bridge, and fireplaces for evening brandies.

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The Polaris was launched in 2022. She has seven decks, five restaurants, 189 cabins, holds 378 passengers and 260 crew. The Polaris is a science vessel and a floating art gallery. You will find a science laboratory, and an area called expedition central where specialists provide details of your destinations through maps, and books. The art gallery is everywhere in the ship, hung in corridors and stairwells with Bluetooth promoted explanations of each piece.

These aren't even the most spectacular features of the ship. There is the panoramic auditorium with floor to ceiling windows and 270 degree views, the indoor/outdoor plunge pool with retractable roof, the spa, fitness room and salon, combine this with the spectacular cuisine, and you have all the luxury you could even want. And let's not forget the water crafts. It is, after all an exploration ship and therefore has all the water crafts needed for guests to explore. The Polaris is equipped with six-passenger submarines, kayaks, and Zodiacs, all meant to take you up close and personal to a world few get to see.

The Polaris is a ship meant for the curious, the mindful, and the scientist in all of us. If you want to learn more visit www.viking.com.

I wish to thank the staff at Viking for the opportunity to view the Polaris. It was an education and gave me a new perspective on expedition ships versus ocean liners.

Written by:

Joan Kingston

Joan@JKJourneys.ca

905-493-0134