

Top to bottom from upper right: Early morning yoga on deck; Entrance to the Silver Spirit spa; Treatment room at the Silver Spirit spa; Resort-style heated swimming pool; Inset: The Silver Spirit cruise ship at sea; Opposite: An onboard massage



By Barbara Perkins

SILVER LINING

When you think of cruise ships what comes to mind are all-you-can-eat buffets, onboard entertainment and poolside lounge chairs. But it's a new era for cruise lines. We boarded a Silversea's ship for a luxurious journey into the realm of Health and Wellness.

As card-carrying sybarites we must confess, during a recent five-star cruise we were initially a tad stressed. Honest.

We joined the Silver Spirit, the newest in the Silversea fleet, a 642-foot ship that sports a resort-style pool (heated for cool weather), a poolside bar, legions of teak chaise lounges, and six dining room options. Nearly every suite has a private veranda.

Our stress? So many options! Should we check out the library or slink around the duty-free boutiques? Play table-tennis, Scrabble or learn Mahjong? Do we go for Italian fare (the pasta is made fresh daily) or the sushi and sashimi? Will it be live jazz, the casino, or a Vegas-style show? Even the pillows required a decision. Firm, down or memory foam? Must let the butler know!

Fortunately the ship's 8,300-square foot spa provides exquisite relief. No longer hidden below the scuppers, today's spa is the epicenter of the ship. Open daily from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., with nine treatment rooms and a staff of twelve, the spa packs in more services than landlocked outfits twice the size.

Passengers can indulge in therapies that include facials, body wraps and massages. We enjoyed the Thermal Suite, an exclusive area furnished with heated lounge chairs, steam and sauna, with a bubbler of ice chips nearby for cooling down. Just outside, the outdoor jacuzzi and relaxation area is perfect for the unwind. With bar service offered, we raised our flutes and toasted to good health.

While scores of treatments such as acupuncture, reflexology,

and body polishing are offered, the massages shouldn't be missed. We tried the Thai Herbal Poulitice, a 75-minute rhythmic massage utilizing scented herbs. The small pom-pom like hand tools are heated and applied to pressure points, ablating the tension burrowed into our muscles. Another favorite is the teeth whitening treatment, a nifty 30-minute session that cranks your smile up six degrees of white.

The spa's salon offers a multitude of hair, nail and waxing services, all wonderful indulgences when you're away from home. I mean, who wants to stroll around Sardinia with drab hair? (Smart cruisers know better and plan ahead—yes, appointments can be booked online, in advance—so snagging a last minute appointment for a cut and blow dry was a lifesaver.)

Worried we were getting too soft with the pampering, we headed to the state-of-the-art fitness complex. With two aerobics studios, complimentary yoga, Pilates, stretch and fitness classes are held daily. The gym opens at 6 a.m., with the usual ellipticals, running and weight machines significantly improved by the spectacular ocean view. The fitness lineup also includes seminars on nutrition and detox, with flexibility training programs.

The abundance of treatments makes it tempting to remain onboard every day, but don't. Push on or you'll miss fabulous excursions—in our case Granada's Alhambra, glorious Seville, and an unforgettable narrow-gauge train between Palma and Soller that wound its way through a canvas of lemon trees, olive orchards and quaint villages. But nothing was more enchanting—or salutary—than our days on the spa-equipped Silver Spirit. ☺

SilverSea | (877) 276-6816 | www.silversea.com