



WINDSTAR'S WIND SURF

THE PREEMINENT WAY TO CRUISE THE RIVIERAS



BY TRACY BEARD

Photographs courtesy of Tracy Beard and Windstar

Shades of red, yellow, and orange fill the sky. You take a seat out on the deck with your glass of bubbly in hand. The music plays over the loudspeaker, and the wind catches the sails as you watch the sun dip below the horizon. The city lights glow and slowly dim as you sail out to sea. Come savor incredible experiences while cruising “[Charms of the French and Spanish Rivas](#)” on [Windstar’s](#) flagship yacht, Wind Surf.

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE WIND SURF

[Wind Surf](#), the largest of Windstar’s fleet, accommodates 310 guests and 200 crew members, and at 535 feet the ship is small enough to enter exotic ports that mega-ships cannot. According to Hotel General Manager Julian Petrasuc, “The Wind Surf is like a unique piece of jewelry at sea.”

Julian explained that there are very few commercial yachts with sails, and the Wind Surf boasts the most extensive amount of public deck space of any in the world. He says, “Guests never feel crowded on board because there is always space for them to walk outside on the main, star and bridge decks.”

HIGHLIGHTS ON THE WIND SURF

Windstar’s motto “180 Degrees from Ordinary” means all staff strive to be flexible for the guests. In case of a delayed tour, the lunch hour on board is extended to accommodate later arrivals. This service ensures that guests will enjoy their experience without feeling stressed if they are late.

Staff with Windstar have the freedom to create unique moments. They can add to the tour program as things arise and make changes as necessary, which differentiates Windstar cruises from most other cruise lines.

During my trip on the Wind Surf, I learned about some exciting highlights that repeat guests experienced on previous Wind Surf cruises. One couple shared how the chef took a small group of people into town and how they assisted in shopping for local specialty items that were served during happy hour on board that evening. The couple exclaimed how thrilled they were to taste their way through the marketplace with the executive chef.

Another gentleman shared how he was part of a group that attended a unique tour at a European chocolate maker’s private home. The participants learned about the ins and outs of making fine chocolates and then proceeded to make several varieties with the master chocolatier.

Several repeat guests told me about the incredible on-deck BBQs they experienced on previous cruises. The weather cooperated and one evening the crew prepared for the legendary BBQ. Tables, grills and chairs lined the decks, live music permeated the air, and everyone dined on grilled meats and seafood, fruits, vegetables, salads, bread and the local



specialty, paella. The evening ended with passengers and crew dancing the night away.

Those at the helm of the Wind Surf make safety their priority; but when weather permits, they maintain an open-bridge policy. Guests can visit the bridge, learn about sailing, and get a closer look at how this stunning yacht glides seemingly effortlessly through the water.

GOURMET CUISINE AND STELLAR SERVICE

Gourmet food is available on the ship 24 hours a day. AmphorA, the main dining room, features a variety of delicious choices each evening including a James Beard Foundation approved recipe. Two specialty restaurants are accessible by reservation only: Candles, the seafood and chop house that is set up each evening on the Veranda, and Stella, the Parisian bistro. All passengers can choose to lounge about in their stateroom and delight in the ship's 24/7 room service, or they can visit the Veranda that is open for breakfast and lunch every day.

Wind Surf's crew consists of people from all over the world. Julian says, "The crew is the soul of the ship, and they make the company successful. Crew members learn each guest's name within the first or second day, and they treat the Wind Surf as if it were their home, making visitors feel especially welcome."

AMAZING RIVIERA TOURS

Cruising the French and Spanish Rivas is a luxurious experience, and Wind Surf tours offered in ports of call are equally decadent. I sampled delicious wine and learned about wine production at [Domaine de Frégate](#) in Toulon, France. I took in the beauty of the Golden Corniche while riding comfortably in a luxury bus, dined on bouillabaisse in [Nice](#) after touring the old town, and savored local cheese and wine with a small group of eight in [Aix-en-Provence](#).

Due to severe weather conditions on my cruise, it was necessary for the captain to change the itinerary several times. We were unable to dock in St. Tropez leaving some guests disappointed. Staff worked diligently with local guides and put together a new and unexpected trip departing from Nice and going to [Monte Carlo](#) as a substitute tour.

I spoke with several guests that opted for the new tour. They were overjoyed with their experience, and the fun in Monte Carlo overshadowed their disappointment in missing St. Tropez. This kind of effort is the "jumping through hoops" that Wind Surf staff does consistently to retain their 50 to 66 percent of returning passengers.

Book a trip to the Riviera and anticipate rich and exciting highlights with Windstar's Wind Surf.