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EasyCruiseOne on the Riviera

By **SETH SHERWOOD**

THE BASICS Launched by the company behind the no-frills airline easyJet, easyCruise has been offering cut-rate summer cruises along the French and Italian Riviervas on an ostentatious orange and white ship recalling a Creamsicle. From November to April the circuit will shift to the Caribbean. It's the antithesis of traditional cruising: amenities are scaled back; food and drinks aren't included in the price; and the boat (easyCruiseOne) spends nearly all day and night in port - with a curfew that's never earlier than 4 a.m. The philosophy is apparently that its youngish clientele - easyCruise concentrates on people between the ages of 20 and 40 - is more interested in dining and partying in exotic destinations than playing shuffleboard at sea.

THE LOCATION Scarcely a dazzling Riviera stone goes unturned. The ship follows the same seven-day itinerary every week, hitting Monaco (Monday), Genoa (Tuesday), Portofino (Wednesday), San Remo via Imperia (Thursday), Nice (Friday), Cannes (Saturday) and St.-Tropez (Sunday). Travelers can embark and disembark at any of the ports but must book a minimum of two nights.

THE ROOMS Loud, proud and not at all spacious. Painted in the ship's official bright-tangerine hue and gray, the tiny, windowless basic-level cabins contain two mattresses on low platforms. With little storage space (basically a long shelf and some hooks on the wall), traveling light is advised. Fortunately, the mattresses are comfortable, and the rooms are clean.

THE BATHROOMS Contained in a small frosted-glass enclosure, the bathrooms don't offer tremendous seclusion but do boast modern toilets and sinks, lending a vaguely boutique-chic feel. The shower, though, is simply a nozzle and drain in the floor. A public restroom-style dispenser provides all-purpose soap.

THE CROWD According to Neil Kelly, cruise director, up to 75 percent of easyCruisers are British, followed by Americans, Australians and Canadians. (English is the official language onboard, and food and drink prices are listed in pounds, though you can also pay in euros.) On a weekend in June, the manifest included a boisterous bachelor party of Londoners, a less-boisterous coed group of Americans getting MBA's in [Paris](#), a trio of Australian women in their 40's and numerous young Anglophone couples. The ship was at about two-thirds of its 170-person capacity, Mr. Kelly said.

AMENITIES Seasoned cruisers might miss swimming pools and jogging tracks, but for a no-frills outfit easyCruise offers some nice extras. The outdoor Jacuzzi and aft-deck bar get a lot of action. An attractive cafe serves decent coffee (\$2.60) and fruit plate (\$6, at \$1.85 to the pound), and the small fitness room is up-to-date. The Sports Bar, however, has lackluster menu options like buffalo wings and burgers. Around 11 p.m. on Thursday and Friday the bar attempts a nightclub atmosphere with low lighting, loud music and beers starting at \$3.90.

ROOM SERVICE On an easyCruise, the staff doesn't even clean your room unless you pay extra, much less bring nourishment to it. Guests can choose between a full cleaning (\$17.50), simple linen change (\$8.30) and towel change (\$6.45).

THE BOTTOM LINE For those who aren't picky about comfort - and don't mind arriving in sophisticated European resorts aboard the ocean's equivalent of an R.V. - this is a surprisingly efficient, cheap way to sample the Riviera. Cabin rates fluctuate according to a demand-based system. Doubles might range anywhere from \$60 up to \$114 a

night, depending on the month and ports desired.

Information: (44-1895) 651191, www.easycruise.com.