



PICTURE: Giuliana Koren

## Norwegian Aqua

Norwegian Cruise Line

**OVERVIEW:** Norwegian Aqua, the newest ship in the Norwegian Cruise Line fleet and the first Prima Plus Class vessel, set sail in March this year. NCL describes it as its “most innovative ship” and says it is 10% bigger than predecessors Viva and Prima. A standout feature is the Aqua Slidecoaster, a hybrid rollercoaster and waterslide, perfect for thrill-seeking passengers.

**CABINS:** Aqua has the line’s biggest ship-within-a-ship concept, with 123 suites in The Haven, which include butler service and balconies, plus an exclusive restaurant, lounge, infinity pool and sun deck with whirlpool baths looking out over the aft of the ship. New for the line are four duplex suites with three bedrooms and three bathrooms, which are well suited to multigenerational groups. The decor is modern and sleek, with the feel of a stylish boutique hotel. Aqua also has studio, interior, ocean view, balcony and suite staterooms located between decks five and 16.

**FOOD AND DRINK:** Aqua has the line’s first Thai restaurant, Sukhothai (pictured), which was a standout for me, along with Nama, where you could enjoy sushi dishes that were as beautiful to look at as they were to eat. Cover charges for the seven speciality restaurants range from \$40 to \$60. Meanwhile, the Indulge Food Hall takes buffet to a new level, with tablets to order dishes from a range of cuisines to your table, including vegan food from the new Planterie. Walking past as chefs prepare handmade noodles, cook Indian dishes in huge tandoor ovens and plate up tiny tapas dishes is such a treat for the senses.

Aqua has 17 bars and lounges, including the brand-new Swirl wine bar, where I’d recommend the delicious wine and chocolate tasting, for an extra charge of \$22.

**FACILITIES:** Families and groups of friends can check out the virtual reality-equipped Game Zone for competitive fun, while evening entertainment includes stand-up comedy at The Improv at Sea and karaoke and themed soul nights at Syd Norman’s Pour House. If the Aqua Slidecoaster doesn’t satisfy the adrenaline hunters, they can try The Drop, a 10-storey slide down the side of the ship that you can see (and hear) from Ocean Boulevard.

**USP:** During the first trade sailing, a key discussion point was that even though Aqua is a big ship, it still feels intimate. It has capacity for 3,571 passengers, but with the design and variety of venues on board, passengers won’t feel crowded – unless they want the buzzy atmosphere of the Prince or Fleetwood Mac tribute shows in the Aqua Theatre, which spans the aft of decks six, seven and eight.

**BOOK IT:** Aqua will be sailing Caribbean itineraries from Miami and Port Canaveral. Prices for a seven-day Caribbean: Great Stirrup Cay & Dominican Republic cruise start from £719 cruise-only. NCL’s More at Sea package, which includes premium drinks, Wi-Fi and a shore excursion credit, is available as an upgrade. [ncl.com](http://ncl.com)

Reviewed by Ella Sagar