



# Red letter days

From a Bahamian beach club to a Britney dance class, a Caribbean fam trip offers the ultimate in high-energy cruising, writes **Kelly Ranson**

There's a moment on a cruise when it all clicks, and for me it was day five: Virgin Voyages' famous Scarlet Night. Dancing on the pool deck somewhere in the waters of the western Caribbean while KPop *Demon Hunters'* *Golden* blasted out across a sea of red-clad 'Sailors', I looked around and couldn't help but smile. The energy was infectious and everyone was having fun.

I was on the adult-only *Resilient Lady* with a group of nine UK agents who had lucked out in the Bring on Bimini incentive, getting the chance to sail a seven-night Western Caribbean and Bimini Beach Club itinerary out of Miami.

The line has its own cheeky take on cruising – guests are greeted with the phrase 'Ahoy, Sailor' and the Happenings Cast (aka entertainment crew) add a 🍻

The Diva, resident drag queen on all Virgin Voyages ships

PICTURE: Alberto Oviedo



# GRAND VOYAGE

FROM LEFT: Bimini, Virgin Voyages' private beach club in the Bahamas; agent winners of the line's Bring on Bimini incentive

personal touch to every interaction. The sailaway set the tone for the voyage as Milly the Hostess and Wesley the Diva got the party started before we had even left port.

## TOP OF THE POPS

When it comes to onboard fun, there's plenty. On my first sea day, I spotted Pop Princess Showdown on the daily agenda and signed up immediately. What followed was 45 minutes of learning Britney Spears' hit *Oops!... I Did It Again* alongside 11 equally clueless strangers, before performing in groups like we were a warm-up act for an American sporting event. Instructor Kelsey described it as "the chance to be yourself and just let go" – and that's exactly what I did.

Now back to Scarlet Night. It's a full ship takeover with flash-mob dances, best-dressed contests, photo booths and pop-up performances throughout the evening.

There are 80s nights and parties galore in The Manor nightclub plus shows in The Red Room theatre: *The Mind Mangler* is a spoof of classic mind-reading acts, while

*Miss Behave* is a competitive game show that had us laughing and screaming with scandalised joy.

## SHORE UP

Excursions are known as Shore Things, and after a couple of days at sea I was raring to go for our first stop: Ocho Rios in Jamaica. Here, we jumped into waterfalls at the Blue Hole and went tubing on the White River – brilliant fun and genuinely exhilarating. In Grand Cayman, a catamaran took us to idyllic Starfish Point for a morning swim and a chance to hunt for starfish along the shore, which was just the tonic we needed.

Then there's Bimini Beach Club, Virgin Voyages' private Bahamian island retreat, and a standout stop for many passengers. Waking up to clear waters and gleaming white sand felt like a dream, and at the beach club there was time to take a dip in the sea or cool off in one of the pools. Lunch is included and any on-ship bar tab can be used there too. The pool gets lively when the inflatables come out, but there are plenty of quieter areas if that's not your clients' thing. ➔

## WHERE TO EAT

### RESILIENT LADY

🌊 **The Wake** lies at the aft and is the line's take on an upmarket steakhouse – think bread fresh from the oven with garlic butter, followed by filet mignon or roasted salmon.

🌊 **Gunbae** is a Korean-inspired venue that kicks off dinner with a drinking game. Starters of fried chicken and kimchi pancakes are served, and seafood and meat are cooked on a hot plate at your table.

🌊 **The Test Kitchen** serves a five-course tasting menu where the menu lists only the key ingredient such as 'mushroom' or 'beef', so every dish is a surprise!



# GRAND VOYAGE



FROM LEFT: *Resilient Lady*; the agent group gets set for tubing fun on Jamaica's White River

## Ask the agents



**Kevin Akers**

travel consultant, Travel Counsellors

"The atmosphere on the ship is incredible – it's been genuine and nothing felt fake. The cabins are comfortable and generous in size. My favourite space is the Roundabout (atrium) and the bar, On the Rocks. It's a great central point with something always going on."



**Michael Carroll**

personal travel consultant, Hays Travel

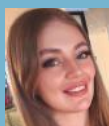
"Virgin Voyages offers a great selection for foodies. My favourite restaurant on *Resilient Lady* is The Wake – it has an upmarket dining feel and the view out to the aft is just fantastic. I love the menu and had the best steak in there."



**Dee Bolton**

personal travel expert, Designer Travel

"This is the first cruise where I've not had to have a drinks package. As a non-drinker, it's a great plus point – I can tell clients they can just do a bar tab for the cabin if one of them drinks. It's brilliant not having to pay extra for restaurants and the quality of food is great."



**Rhiannon Finlay**, travel agent,

Barrhead Travel, Gyle branch, Edinburgh

"I loved Bimini. The beach itself is stunning and the vibe of the club has the perfect balance of relaxation and fun. Our Shore Thing to the Blue Hole and tubing on the White River was also so much fun."

Back on board, it's the same story: those who want 24/7 action will find plenty to entertain, but *Resilient Lady* has been designed with peaceful hideaways too. The Dock features loungers and mellow music, and the Social Club is a relaxed spot for board games and quizzes.

Also, the Redemption Spa's thermal area can be booked in three-hour slots, starting from \$59 per person on port days or \$79 on sea days.

As for dining, there's no buffet in sight. The Galley operates more like a food hall with stations serving Mexican tacos, Thai noodles and quite possibly the best make-your-own salad bar at sea. A key selling point is that all dining is included, with no paid-for speciality venues. For drinks, clients don't need to buy a set package; instead, a bar tab can be purchased in advance or on board, which counts per cabin.

The ship's 1,330 cabins are modern and spacious, and those with a terrace (balcony) feature the oh-so-comfortable red hammocks. There are also 78 suites, known as Rockstar Quarters. Clients who book a suite will receive perks such as VIP boarding, access to Richard's Rooftop and their own private area at Bimini.

I left *Resilient Lady* with a spring in my step, knowing there had been high energy when I wanted it, chilled vibes when I didn't – and a smile on my face the entire time. ●

**BOOK IT:** *Virgin Voyages* offers a six-night *Western Caribbean & Bimini Beach Club* sailing on *Resilient Lady* from £781 per person, departing April 4, 2027, not including flights. [virginvoyages.com](https://virginvoyages.com)