

Sweet sailing

Champagne on tap, sleeping under the stars and daily added extras make a fabulous floating honeymoon for **Jeannine Williamson**

As I wake beneath a canopy of stars, lulled by the gentle rhythm of the Aegean, I momentarily think I'm dreaming. Then I remember I'm out on deck, cosily wrapped in a duvet and on a comfortable Balinese daybed big enough for two. Despite the early hour, the air is warm and I soon drift off again.

Sleeping out beneath the stars is one of SeaDream Yacht Club's signature experiences. In the morning, when the sun appears over the horizon, we pad across the wooden deck to our cabin wearing the pyjamas, each monogrammed with our name, that appeared on our bed the night before. After a quick freshen-up, we head back to SeaDream's alfresco Topside Restaurant and enjoy a cheeky Buck's fizz with our breakfast.

Honeymoons are all about making joyful memories, and they're certainly coming thick and fast on our sailing around the Greek islands – both the headliners and the lesser-known isles. With a maximum ➤

Champagne for two
on board SeaDream I



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: A night-time movie; dining on deck; the in-cabin personal touch; writer Jeannine and husband Paul
RIGHT: Time for cocktails; *SeaDream I* and *II*

PICTURE: Bill Sumner; Jeannine Williamson



HOW TO SELL HONEYMOON CRUISES

- Stress the all-inclusive nature of luxury lines and the inclusions on all cruise ships, such as meals and entertainment, making it easy to budget after the cost of a wedding.
- Enjoy multiple destinations in a week, without the hassle of a tiring, land-based multi-centre trip after the busy schedule before the big day.
- From small-ship lines such as SeaDream, Seabourn and Star Clippers, to those with big nightlife and entertainment including Virgin Voyages, Norwegian Cruise Line, Celebrity Cruises and Princess Cruises, there's a ship to suit all.
- If clients have children, recommend family-friendly honeymoons with MSC Cruises, Disney Cruise Line and Royal Caribbean International, which all have great kids' clubs.

of 112 guests, looked after by 95 crew, *SeaDream I* offers a boutique cruise experience that's perfect for a floating honeymoon and would convert even the most devoted landlubbers into ocean lovers.

SPECIAL SERVICE

Yes, there's champagne, caviar, lobster and everything you'd expect from a premium all-inclusive cruise, but it's the attentive and intuitive service that makes SeaDream's brand of luxury feel effortless, and never stuffy or overbearing. For me, the real magic lies in the little touches: staff calling us by our names, the barman remembering my favourite cocktail, French rosé in my glass by the time I return from the lunch buffet or a crew member quietly cleaning my salt-speckled sunglasses while I'm taking a dip in the pool.

Meals are almost always outdoors, which creates a private yacht-style vibe and a complete contrast to a mainstream cruise experience on a bigger ship. For couples, there are always plenty of tables for two, although on several occasions we join larger tables. With the convivial atmosphere – perhaps partly due to the open bar – it's easy to strike up conversations with other guests.

The generous number of crew members means that they have enough time to chat and get to know you. Even the captain, normally just a voice at the end of a public address system, mingles with guests and hosts a table each night.

TREASURED ISLANDS

Days quickly fall into an easy rhythm as we island-hop to sun-drenched ports of call including Spetses, Milos, Patmos and Santorini – arriving at Santorini in the afternoon when the larger cruise vessels are getting ready to leave. On one day we join a shore tour, but most of the time we explore on our own with helpful crib sheets from the concierge desk, or stay on board to swim, paddleboard or jetski from the marina platform. My inner child delights in the inflatable waterslide that hurls me shrieking into the sea.

TABLE FOR TWO

One constant is the nightly institution of a pre-dinner cocktail at the Top of the Yacht Bar, sometimes with live music, to chat about the day. Food is equally impressive and mealtimes have the intimate atmosphere of a floating house party with friends. As a vegetarian, this cruise delivered some of the best veggie meals I've ever eaten at sea, with a wide-ranging choice on each menu rather than just a token dish.

But nothing could top the evening when my husband Paul and I were surprised with a private dinner to celebrate our honeymoon. We dined alone on deck, overlooking the ship's wake, while waiters appeared up and down the stairs with each course. Another day, we returned to find a cake on the table in our cabin.

These personal touches made it extra special, but there are plenty of daily treats for everyone else too. A



chocolate on the pillow – the most you can hope for with many cruise lines – is eclipsed by SeaDream’s daily presents: pyjamas, shoe bags, glasses cases, keyrings and more.

One night we joined fellow passengers for an open-air screening of *Mamma Mia!*, complete with freshly made popcorn

and chilled wine. Another evening there’s a dessert extravaganza, where the chefs show off their sweet-toothed prowess.

On the last afternoon, we laze in the hot tub with another glass of champagne. Whether or not you’re on honeymoon, each day on *SeaDream I* is a celebration. **TW**

BOOK IT

Inspiring Travel offers a seven-night Yachting the Greek Isles cruise with SeaDream Yacht Club from £7,799 per person, based on two sharing a Yacht Club Deck 2 stateroom. On board *SeaDream II*, clients will stop in Athens, Hydra, Sifnos, Santorini, Patmos, Naxos and Mykonos. Includes flights, private transfers, all meals, drinks, shoreside crew-led activities including walks and shopping with the chef, watersports and tips. Based on a cruise departing July 4, 2027. inspiringtravel.co.uk



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