

9/30/2021



index

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Cruising Review

Cruise Ship Reviews | Luxury Resort | Jet | Yacht | and Travel Tech

Structured Data

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Complete guide to cruises, cruise lines, charter jet, luxury resort, and travel. Cruising Review has been doing reviews and travel technology since 2000. The core technology is Filemaker database which is used as the backbone to organize and provide solutions to record and present review data. This website was made with our own Filemaker solution. We also develop new travel technology to streamline the travel experience for both tourists, bloggers, and the travel industry.



PDF Version of the webpage

This webpage QR code

<https://cruisingreview.com/index.html>

Top Pick for World's Best: The Burgenstock Resort

This is my all-time favorite resort, located above Lake Lucerne in Switzerland.

After undergoing a multi-hundred-million dollar facelift and renovation, the result is nothing short of spectacular. The staff is the best in the world.

The views, food, atmosphere and wonderful feeling will leave you spellbound.

Updated after September 2021 visit at the Palace Hotel Suite 2309 (see link below).

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Our Experience with the Swiss Covid Certificate

It was with great anxiety that we started our vacation in Switzerland arriving on Monday 13 September 2021, which is when the Swiss Covid Certificate was required in resorts, restaurants, and other venues.

While I emailed in advance the resorts for advice, replies were slow to come back, so we got a free rapid Covid test when we landed in Geneva at Terminal 2 (free).

Much to my dismay, since the USA does not have a QR code for our vaccines, our manually, paper authenticated vaccine cards were not accepted in Switzerland. Only QR code vaccine documentation was allowed.

To get into restaurants (and other indoor venues such as museums), your Swiss Covid Certificate QR code is scanned and authenticated (verified valid). In Zermatt, we were not allowed to sit inside on multiple occasions.

Before we departed Zermatt, we visited the local doctors office to pay 80 CHF each, to get a rapid test, which is valid for two days. A PCR test (around 140 CHF each and results not available for a day) was good for 3 days.

When at the Burgenstock, we got tested at the on-site WaldHotel for 100 CHF each (rapid test), which was also good for our travel (flight) home on Swiss. We had to show the email pdf document (they would not scan the QR code at the airport).

This information is valid for September 2021. Of course it may change.

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Riffelalp Resort July 2021

The most amazing view in Europe, of the iconic Matterhorn. Resort is above Zermatt. Located half way up the Gornergrat, it has the best view of the western sky and sunset than anywhere in the region.

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Air Zermatt Fall Tour 2021

After staying at the wonderful Riffelalp Resort at 2222 Gornergrat above Zermatt, Switzerland we decided to do a fall tour from the helicopter. Our original goal was a transfer directly to the Burgenstock Resort above Lucerne, but they were in a cloud that day, so we did a quick tour of the Matterhorn and surrounding alps, then over to Visp, where we landed and took the train for the rest of the journey.

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Zurich to Chicago aboard Swiss B777 Business Class 12D Flight LX008 September 2021

The Swiss flight from Zurich to Chicago went smoothly with incredible Business Class food service and really good menu choices and quality.

The check-in process was awkward. I tried to pay for an upgrade from Economy to Business, but was informed that a ticket purchased using miles was ineligible. I was directed to the Swiss customer service desk where I was able to purchase an upgrade for around \$1,200. During check-in, I was asked for a passport, and Covid test result (entire pdf or paper form) for either PCR or antigen. With two carry-ons, I was informed that if my small wheeled carry-on was more than 5 kg (about 10 lbs), it would have to be checked. I quickly scrambled to remove my MacBookPro and keys, then checked the bag to Chicago. That is a first.

Egress through the Zurich airport was smooth, and exit immigration was smooth.

Briefly visited the Swiss Business Class lounge (which is so much more amazing than the United lounge experience), and then proceeded to the gate.

At the gate, documents were again checked, and an entry form was also requested (see end of this post) for entry into the USA.

Boarding the flight was orderly and fast.

The seating area was comfortable, until about 2 hours into the flight when my foot recline and seat cushion inflation comfort level stopped working. Annoying, but not a disaster.

The food was the true gem of the flight, with excellent service.



The Best Kept Secret in Europe - Welcome to the Riffelalp Resort

With the Best View in the World The Riffelalp Resort at 2222 meters above Zermatt, Switzerland

The most amazing view in Europe, of the iconic Matterhorn. Resort is above Zermatt. Located half way up the Gornergrat, it has the best view of the western sky and sunset than anywhere in the region.

The Matterhorn is in the foreground. Please follow the link below to read about this epic resort.

Updated after September 2021 stay in Room 102.

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Conrad Bora Bora Resort February 2021

February 2021: Just returned from a wonderful trip to French Polynesia and the Conrad Bora Bora Nui. The Conrad has now reopened as of May 2021 (mostly to Americans who are more free to travel due to the huge drop in Covid cases due to the vaccines).

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Airports are a mess as travel increases to and from Europe July 2021

Poor airport planning and huge travel demand results in long lines, lots of waits, and inefficiency by overworked staff. This was my first trip back to Europe since 2019, and overall was fantastic. I am vaccinated and had no problem entering France (Paris) showing my passport and Covid vaccination card (no Covid test required).

The exit from Europe however, was an experience. On a Swiss flight (booked through United and also code-shared with United) departing from Zurich (ZRH), Switzerland, I experienced first-hand the frustrations of duplicate document checks, two agents working security for two full flights exiting the country, and flawed computer systems. On arrival to ORD, the 2 hour lines were exasperated by staff shortages. This is where Global Entry really shined. I was able to transit customs and immigration in about three minutes. Travel is back, so prepare for long lines, full aircraft, and lots of waiting.

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Cruise News

This section will be for current travels, upcoming flights and cruises.

The big news of the day is moving the website from WordPress to our own proprietary web site generation program we developed using FileMaker database, which allows us to use all of our past cruise ship reviews from 2001 onwards.

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What Happened United Airlines ? Demonetizing flight credits and impossible to get refunds. July 2021.

I recently booked a trip to Paris in July 2021 with unused flight credits from last year during the pandemic. Remember when United canceled their change fees ? Well they have something better up their sleeve.

If I did a search for a standard economy fare (basic or standard) my fare was \$1,300. But when I tried to use my \$2,800 (Business Class fare) unused ticket to Europe from last year when the flight was canceled, the fare that pops up is \$2,600. So basically United has decided to use a pricing model that demonetizes your paid fare by half. That's 100 percent profit. Upgrades have similar issues.

Even worse, last year the original fare was for Business Class. Now I can barely get Economy. So they did not honor the class booked. Now Business Class is \$5,000-\$10,000.

Clever.

To make matters worse, United offers a cabin upgrade offer, for 20,000 miles and \$421 from Chicago to Paris. When I took the offer, United deducted 40,000 miles and \$421, and did not even declare the miles deducted on the receipt. Go to the website (after waiting 1.5 hours on hold with United customer service) and the agent suggested to go to United/Refunds on the website. Unfortunately, you can't even file a complaint or refund request until the flight has already passed. I tried calling again today and after another hour on hold, I gave up.

Feeling screwed yet ? Yup.

I love United (pre-pandemic). The new United puts profits ahead of customer experience and has now gone down the rabbit hole of deceit.

The pandemic has spawned a littany of trumped up fees, and other expenses which they pass on to the customer, but which is pure profit to the company.

Remember that fuel surcharge ? How about employee wellness programs ? How about add on fees after you have shipped something ? Or better yet, how about that nice tip you charged on your bill for the fantastic spa massage or other experience (like drink tips). Yep, you guessed it, it goes directly to the owner or company. It's all profit mongering and greed. Next time ask where the tip goes, and you'll be surprised.

United, time to step up to the plate and treat your customers better. We love travel, let us spend money and travel, without the hassle of trying to figure out how you're demonetizing our hard earned money. We want you to thrive, but now at the expense of greed and deceit.

@unitedairlines

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Sky Princess Cruise with Growing Up Without Borders November 2019

Series of videos of our cruise with the YouTuber family Growing Up Without Borders crew.

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AirBNB Yacht:

Over the past year I've been developing a AirBNB renewable powered (solar PV) multihull. The basic concept is to provide a lake (or river) based yacht which has income potential from AirBNB, or similar business model. In Europe, real estate is so expensive, you could literally build a yacht for much less money, and cruise the many large waterways. Lake Geneva (Lac Léman) in Switzerland is one example.

The 60 ft. yacht will be a unique trimaran, with three carbon fiber hulls and all-systems and living quarters above the waterline.

The unique design will be a paddle-wheeler, to reflect traditional European lake and river cruisers. More important, the paddle-wheel was chosen over all other designs for ease of build, cost, durable, and dependable service. Built in modules, the vessel will be shippable via ocean freight container.

Lac Léman is a crescent-shaped lake shared with France and Switzerland, with views of the alps. The swiss city of Geneva, is on the southern tip. Évian-les-Bains is on the southern side. On the northern side is the Swiss Riviera which stretches from Lausanne to Montreux. Much of the northern side is covered with wine vineyards.



Imanta: Paradise Lost. The Good. The Bad. And the Ugly

Imanta Resort is the most architecturally stunning and wondrous natural setting in Mexico. It's like a Mayan temple has risen from the forest to meet the ocean. The rolling pipeline surf provides a relaxing white noise as the sea comes ashore. I've been there three times, and the third will be my last. Follow the link below to find out why.

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Swiss Riviera Luxury Condo AirBNB

Looking for a wonderful AirBNB to stay while in Switzerland ?

Try this beautiful Villeneuve (Switzerland) luxury apartment, close to Montreux and on the sunny side of Lake Geneva (Lac Léman).

Only one block away from the lake, and a few blocks from the train, which connects east/southeast to Gstaad, Verbier, Zermatt, and southeast to Montreux, Lausanne, Vevy, and Geneva. Take the train northeast to Bern and from there to Lucerne and Zurich.

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MSC Bellissima: Beautiful ship but a cruise to avoid (December 2019)

Ever wonder what is too big for a cruise ship ? Look no further, it's the MSC Bellissima. While a beautiful new ship, it's overcrowded without the staff to support the 4,500 passenger load.

Antiquated card based POS systems only make things worse, especially when trying to incorporate the medallion RFID system.

Unsure if it's the Italian way of doing business, or the staff is overwhelmed, but the organization is fraught with problems, inefficiencies, and has the potential for very unsanitary operating conditions, especially in the buffet area (no soap or sanitary lotion many times).

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Why Charter A Jet?

On a recent cruise, our group chartered a small business jet from Barcelona to Zurich.

Not only was it super convenience, but an amazing experience.

Most locations in Europe are an easy 1.5 hour flight or less point to point. Chartering a jet provides a very economical way for 6 people to travel First Class, avoiding airport hassle of long lines and waits. It also provides a customized service to your destination direct. In this case, we were leaving the cruise ship on a Sunday, and wanted to spend a few days at the Burgenstock Resort near Lucerne, Switzerland. There is actually an airport next to the resort, but unfortunately closed on the weekends, so we had to fly into Zurich, then take a van (weather was not good enough for a helicopter transfer) to the resort.

For all your jet needs (this is a non-compensated link), please contact:

Gilbert Mindren / Jet Charter Specialist

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Tel. +41 22 788 6880

Mobile +41 79 611 7741

www.d-jet.aero

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Red Light Improves Eyesight

Recent studies (June 2020) confirm that for adults over 40, a red spectrum (LLLT or Low level light therapy) light can help the functioning of mitochondria.

There was a 14 percent improvement in the ability to see colors, or cone color contrast sensitivity, for the entire two dozen participants.

The spectrum for this therapeutic red light is around 660 nm. I have been using the Amzcool device (shown to the left and link below) for almost a year now, and love it. I use it for both my eyes, and for knee pain. It works for both eyes and skin healing (verified by NASA).

For more details, please follow the link for our detailed review.

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Postcards from the Past. 1922. Interlocken in June.

The Lauterbrunnen valley is the door into the Jungfrau region of Switzerland. This is when Will was visiting the high alpine region around Interlocken, and visited the glaciers in the alps.

This is just one of many postcards from the wonderful travels of Will McCracken (from Waterloo, Wisconsin) in his epic European tour in 1922.

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New Web Site Format

This website will be the first test of our new Millenium Web Engine, which is based on using a Filemaker (Claris) database backbone. The primary goal is to build a website using semantics specifically referenced by Google (metatags and proper page building), so that their search spiders and page ranking derive better results. Part of this initiative is building a business around .pdf documents and QR codes, so that customers can easily reference website pages for additional information, including order products and services. The strategy is function over form. Using First Principles, we are building a Web Engine that provides useful information quickly, and without a lot of clutter which is found in most pretty websites (i.e. WordPress). Building a website rich in .pdf and QR codes provides the view with a better and faster experience. Making the entire process into a database and AI, makes it even better. You control the website and the data (not WordPress). It's more durable, and always backed up on your local computer. WordPress does not do daily backups, as claimed. When your business depends on your website, you need to take control of its foundation.

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Travel Blogger Software

Need to get organized ? We are now making available our software apps to travel bloggers. Based on Filemaker platform (Mac, Windows, and Mac IOS Filemaker Go), we have developed some industry specific apps that will increase your efficiency, reduce time, and give you valuable heads-up time while doing reviews, blogs, and video blogs.

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