

## Balmoral 22nd - 26th February 2013.

As a small to medium ship I found the Balmoral easy to get around, whether climbing stairs to go to the gym/observatory lounge or going from my cabin far forward to the aft for dinner in the Ballindalloch Restaurant. Though not at her max capacity of 1350 pax I found getting a table easy enough at lunch in the Palms Cafe which for me is always a tell tale sign of whether you may have to fight for space on a ship for other areas. In fact, about the only place it did become difficult to find a seat was once the sun came out and everybody hit the aft decks around the pool.

Fred Olson retains that classic style cruising with an English feel about it and think there is a market in Australia for this product as we do not have this here and am sure with the right targeting could fill the extra cabins on sectors around New Zealand and Australia.

Entertainment onboard was good with the crew show being a highlight and there were plenty of options through out the day to do different activities. Whether it was arts and crafts, cards, quizzes or the traditional bingo and for a small ship I was impressed with the size of the gym which I put to good use.

Staterooms were of good size from our inspection and you would have to be particularly happy if in a single cabin. That said, I did think the bathrooms did seem a fraction on the small side and without knowing about the other cabins I found my cabin to be warm (thermostat turned right down to low) and noisy but that may have just been due to my location on deck 4 far forward cabin # 4003. My poor cabin steward once she knew I was in that cabin was excellent and as one would expect (a slight mix up when we first got onboard).

<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
Food was exceptional	Bathroom feel cramped
Ease of moving around the ship	Far forward cabins noisy
Good size gym and spa	Ship tired and dated in areas and could do with a refurbishment
Cabin feels spacious	
Crew are polite and friendly	
Limited announcements over speaker	

Overall a good solid product that now having done this famil I know whom to target this product at not only for World Voyages but Fjordlands and Northern Europe. When guests you talk to onboard give the product a big thumbs up you know Fred Olson Cruise Lines and the crew onboard have to be doing something right.