Walking the corridors of Royal Princess I can’t help but think I’m retracing the steps of a duchess.

On a special day last year, the world’s attention was turned on this very ship in Southampton. And when the then heavily pregnant Duchess of Cambridge launched Princess Cruises’ latest vessel, the brand’s prominence in the UK market hit an all-time high.

Kate told staff she was eager to return to the ship for a further look around, so I was keen to see what the fuss was all about.

Royal Princess is one of the vessels that continues to push the boundaries of cruising; the subtle-yet-glam design, a vast array of dining options, and cutting-edge facilities such as the SeaWalk and Princess Live – the first TV studio at sea – distinguishing it from others.

Before joining the ship in Istanbul for my first cruise I was a bit unsure about whether I’d feel claustrophobic, considering the thousands of people on board (3,560 to be exact). But it was the sense of space that surprised me most – the ship never seems full and despite the many guests, staff still manage to remember you and your coffee order.

When designing Royal Princess, the cruise line was keen to create a sense of continuity through the brand’s fleet – to make repeat customers feel like they are ‘returning home’. It’s the modern style of the ship that impressed me, with the grand Piazza – which is larger than those that have come before – and the shops and bars that surround it creating a real wow factor, although they also provide lots of temptation to spend money!

This ship is perfect for multigenerational families and is full of new twists such as the SeaWalk, a glass walkway that hangs off one side of the ship 16 decks up. It took several glasses of limoncello before I plucked up the courage to cross – and even then I only made it halfway. It was night-time too, so I couldn’t even see the sea below.

Glass bridges aside, a cruise is brilliant for relaxation, especially if you spend a good few hours in The Lotus Spa and the Enclave – a thermal spa complete with its own pool and hot tub.

The adult-only pool area and sundeck are also perfect for parents or singletons wanting to escape the chaos and noise of family life. The Sanctuary, a private area at the front of the ship (it features on all the ships in the fleet except Ocean Princess and Pacific Princess), is the place for pure serenity and relaxation.

The only slight drawback is that from time to time you can hear the films being played on the Movies Under the Stars screen. It comes at a premium – $15 for half a day and $25 a day, and can only be booked on

NEW TO CRUISE: REVIEW

Matthew Brader, 27

Before going on a cruise I had what are probably the usual preconceptions that cruising was for older people or families. I hadn’t really thought of it as an option for me. But after being on Royal Princess for a week, I understand why it is so popular. It’s definitely something I would do again – there are not many holidays where you wake up in a different place every morning.

My favourite thing about the ship was The Sanctuary – only a limited number of people can get in and it’s a piece of luxury.
FAST FACT
Princess adds $11.50 per day to each adult’s onboard account as a prepaid gratuity, $12 to suites and 15% to bar and spa bills.

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