

*Forget long-distance flights and take the boat if you want to arrive in Australia full of energy. You might even enjoy the holiday of a lifetime on the way, says Jan Etherington.*

§ 1. My son, Tom, made the announcement on New Year's Eve. 'Fran and I are getting married...' Hurrah! '...in Australia.' Now, I've always wanted to go to Australia but like most people, I'm put off by the flight and the thought of arriving pale, exhausted and needing a week to recover. Even with a stopover, you face two long-distance flights. But it doesn't have to be like that. I found a way to arrive suntanned, refreshed, and ready for action. I went by boat, on the Saga Rose world cruise.

§ 2. If I'd had the time and money, I could have gone all the way round the world, but the great thing about this cruise is that you can embark (садиться на корабль) and disembark wherever you wish. If you want to get to Australia or New Zealand, take a shorter flight somewhere, join the world cruise and arrive in civilised style. I picked it up in Valparaiso (the port for Santiago, Chile) and sailed on from there to Sydney.

§ 3. The Saga Rose is a good-looking ship. Launched in 1965, she is highly regarded by maritime (морской) experts for her elegant lines. Passenger capacity is 587 but we were fewer than 400, with 350, largely Filipino, crew who were smart, efficient and full of good humour. It was the cleanest ship I'd ever seen and the variety and freshness of the meals was impressive, with a welcome freedom to dine in the evening at any time between 7.15 and 9pm.

§ 4. I met lots of accomplished, funny, clever, attractive people on the ship. Good company and a well-run ship are important, because, on this stretch of the journey, we were together for a month — long enough to learn a skill. I took up salsa, inspired by dance teacher, Thabo, who made us believe we were good enough to perform in front of passengers and crew.

§ 5. Julia's jewellery-making classes were surprisingly popular. Even cynics (like me) were impressed as, using seeds and beads from local sources, students produced desirable costume jewellery. And the watercolour classes gave amateurs the tools to capture the passing scenes more imaginatively than with a digital camera.

§ 6. As we cruised into Sydney at sunrise, it was like sailing into a familiar postcard. We passed the Opera House, slid under the Harbour Bridge and, on the quayside (пристань), Tom and Fran waved banners of welcome. I leapt off, relaxed, fit and full of energy. 'Let's go shopping for a hat!'

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The writer says she had not expected

- 1) to have to spend so long on board the ship.
- 2) to get on so well with her fellow travellers.
- 3) to see such good results from one of the classes.