



Into International Waters

The Emerald Princess II Casino cruise ship in Brunswick, Georgia, is a 200 foot gambling boat that provides the best gaming experience in the Southeast, as well as a picturesque cruise along the Georgia coast. Once in international waters, two casino levels open with slots, blackjack, poker, roulette and craps. Texas Hold 'Em tournaments are held each Tuesday and Thursday night and Sunday afternoon. A light meal is served in the ship's Bistro. For information call 800-842-0115 or visit www.emeraldprincess.com.

By Mitch Willard

If you are headed to the coast of South Carolina, Georgia, or Florida, or if you live along the coast of one of these states you can join the latest phenomenon that has captured the American public in the past few years.

Gambling. More specifically Texas Hold'em, the game that has really captured the American public. From Little River, South Carolina (just north of the Myrtle Beach area) to the coast of the Gulf of Mexico (Maderia Beach) people are gaming where gambling is supposedly illegal.

Here a point should be made: No actual gambling is done in these coastal states, and you will not be breaking the law of the state. Those who care to take a shot at winning big are boarding cruise boats. The owners of the "cruise to nowhere" are stretching the limits of the U.S. laws on gambling by using an old law that defines three miles off the coast anywhere in the United States as international waters and thus immune from the normal gambling laws. The idea of international waters came about in the eighteenth century when three nautical miles was the approximate length of a cannon shot, thus a country could defend its shores from attack within that three-nautical-mile distance. So here in these international waters, gambling is legal. People are boarding these cruise boats and heading out to this three-mile mark. Then as they say "Let the games begin." Once out in the middle of nowhere you will find the full Las Vegas style casinos.

When you are on the boat you will find food and drink available. However, remember that the purpose of the "cruise to nowhere" is to gamble and not specifically to eat. Thus don't expect the gourmet meals that can be found in Las Vegas or Atlantic City where the food is part of the ambience. Sandwiches, cheeseburgers, salads and wraps are the usual menu on the gambling boats. Some may stretch the menu to include ribs and barbeque, but remember you are there to gamble. Drinks are usually on the house if you are at the gaming tables, and beer is moderately priced.

“Let the games begin.”

Anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour after you have left port you will be out far enough for the staff to shuffle and deal. If cards are not your thing choose from a variety of other games. Of course the most popular are the blackjack tables and the slot machines. Depending on the size of the boat, some of the cruises will have up to 200 slot machines. Other games that you can choose to play are Craps, Roulette, and Let it Ride, Mini Baccarat, and Three card poker.

Gambling on the casino boat is very similar to the traditional casinos with the rules basically the

same. If some of the rules are different, signs will likely be posted stating those rules. Remember, if you have any doubt in your mind about rules, make sure to ask the designated representative on board about any specific concerns before starting play.

One of the advantages of being a passenger on one of these excursions is that the dealers and other employees on board seem to be patient with their clientele, possibly more so than those in the big casinos of Vegas and or Atlantic City. While any gambler is definitely welcome on board a casino boat, most passengers are not the big time rollers typically found in many resort casinos.

Some of the boats are small and intimate and can carry only 150 passengers. Others are larger and have a capacity of 500. Most of the boats take two trips a day, one during the day that usually leaves around noon or earlier and another in the evening that leaves around seven. It is recommended that you get reservations for your trip. To board the boat you must be at least 18 years old, and to drink alcohol you must be 21. Also to board you must have valid government identification. You can start to board up to an hour before departure.

These gambling boats seem to appeal to retirees who are vacationing or who live in these areas as well as to golfers who take their yearly golfing group to the nearby courses.

Find your hidden treasure in international waters and enjoy the cruise to get there. ■