



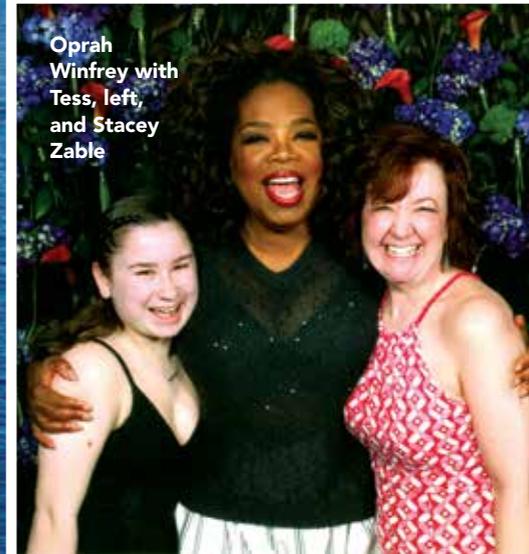
Onboard with Oprah

Cruise promotes self-improvement and female friendship

BY STACEY ZABLE



Oprah Winfrey with Tess, left, and Stacey Zable



With a theme of celebrating women, this trip promised to be one to remember, and I was thrilled that I could share it with my teenage daughter.

Just scoring a spot aboard the first ever Girls' Getaway cruise hosted by Holland America Line and *O, The Oprah Magazine* this winter was prize enough, but it had the added bonus of exposing my 16-year-old, Tess, to positive messages of female empowerment.

During the three-night voyage aboard Holland America's newest ship, the *Nieuw Statendam*, we listened to inspirational words from various women, including actress, media mogul, philanthropist and thought leader Oprah Winfrey. The ship was filled with more than 2,600 women (and 57 men) and opportunities to hear how self-empowerment and good friends can make a difference in

one's life.

Female friendships, including some that have endured more than 40 years, like that of Winfrey and Gayle King (co-host of *CBS This Morning*), were on full display during the round-trip cruise from Fort Lauderdale, Fla. King, who is editor-at-large of the *O, The Oprah Magazine*, sailed with her daughter; Winfrey brought along her sister, cousin and other female relatives. Mothers and daughters, sisters and groups of friends wore T-shirts declaring their

bonds as they boarded the ship. Many attendees spoke freely to each other about emotional subjects. Observing Tess and I, a woman shared with me that she

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and her daughter have a strained relationship: "I wish my daughter liked me." When I jokingly said that she would if she took her on a cruise like I did, she soberly replied,

"No ... not even then." It broke my heart to hear that what I viewed as the most treasured of all female relationships was seemingly irreparable for her.

Winfrey applauded the audience for taking advantage of the cruise as quality time to concentrate on themselves. She spoke candidly about personal experiences and her friendship with King, who joined her onstage. A few women shed tears while relaying stories of how the former talk-show host and motivational speaker has affected their lives.

During the cruise, other members of the magazine's editorial staff hosted presentations focusing on beauty and style. Participants took yoga and other fitness classes during a stop at Half Moon Cay, Holland America's private island in the Bahamas. Back on the ship, Tess and I participated in the "On Deck for a Cause" 5K fundraising walk offered on each Holland America sailing that benefits five international cancer organizations. And each night the ship's Music Walk offered live performances.

The Girls' Getaway was the latest Holland America cruise to involve Winfrey, who first sailed

on an *O* magazine-themed voyage organized by the line in 2017. Though no similar cruises are currently scheduled, guests on Holland America cruises in North America can take part in meditation, exercise and healthy eating activities developed with Winfrey and *O* editors.

The 2,666-passenger *Nieuw Statendam* sailed to the Caribbean out of Fort Lauderdale this winter and is spending the summer sailing round trip from Amsterdam to Norway, the Baltic and Iceland.

During the ship's dedication ceremony, in which Winfrey was named godmother of the vessel,

Oprah Winfrey and special guests, including best friend Gayle King, led the Girls' Getaway cruise. Writer Stacey Zable and daughter Tess met the entertainment icon.

she noted that the cruise was a "gathering space for everybody to come together of one mind and celebrate themselves, honor themselves and also honor each other." She added, "It has turned out to be one of the best things I've ever done."

My sentiments exactly, Oprah.

HOLLAND AMERICA LINE (3); GEORGE BURNS