

# Making Mom feel like a queen

## Transatlantic crossing just the ticket for mother-daughter bonding

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### **Doris Knowles and daughter Lori relax on an outside deck of the Queen Mary 2. (Lori Knowles Photo)**

I cannot think of a better way to celebrate Mother's Day. Seated in comfortable loungers on the aft deck of Cunard's Queen Mary 2 mid-way across the North Atlantic, wrapped in plaid blankets, advancing toward England, watching the sea churn below.

I was with my mother, taking a cruise on the largest, most gracious liner in the world, celebrating Mom's 80 years -- including nearly 60 years of marriage, four healthy children and a lifetime of fond mother-daughter memories.

"But it's not a cruise," a neatly dressed English woman with the Queen's accent remarked one morning, "it's a voyage!"

Indeed, we agreed. Cunard's transatlantic trips began with Samuel Cunard, a Halifax boy who built "an ocean railway" in 1840 between Nova Scotia and England. Cunard's ships were not meant for pleasure cruising, but for voyages to transport mail, soldiers in wartime, and of course, passengers.

Today, QM2 is at the height of the Cunard line -- one of the largest passenger ships in the world. It's as high as a 23-storey building, longer than the Eiffel Tower, and the most expensive boat ever built.

Our six-day transatlantic voyage from New York to Southampton, England, started aboard QM2 promptly at noon on a Sunday in late April. We met the ship in a Brooklyn harbour and sailed grandly out to sea, the Statue of Liberty off the starboard side bidding us farewell.

Our butler -- yes, butler, named Primo -- showed us to our stateroom, wending his way through the ship's passages, life-size photographs of silver screen celebrities lining the corridor walls. We stopped to stare at full-size black-and-whites of a young Liz Taylor and her rival Debbie Reynolds -- both my mother's contemporaries -- embarking on past voyages aboard the Queen Mary, QM2's namesake. Bing Crosby's image aboard the Queen Mary is there, too, along with Winston Churchill, Bob Hope, Ella Fitzgerald, even a young Queen Mother. In the decade post World War II, majestic transatlantic crossings were the way to travel between England and America.

Our stateroom -- part of the ship's Queen's Grill -- was the grandest room I've ever seen, with massive windows looking out to sea. Canapes and champagne were served to us on silver platters by our white-jacketed butler daily at 5 p.m, making us feel every bit as special as Liz and Debbie.

Days passed quickly on the ship. Our packed schedule included brisk walks around Deck 7's promenade (three times around equals 2.2 km); high tea with scones, strawberries and clotted cream in the Queen's Room; film lectures; spotting stars and planets in the ship's planetarium; browsing the library; bracing dips in one of QM2's seven pools; massages in the Canyon Ranch Spa; and golf in the ship's simulator.

At noon every day, a uniformed officer rang the ship's bell eight times in the Grand Lobby, followed by an update by the captain, who gave us our position and an outlook on the weather.

The best part of the day, though, was taking time to write notes on our personalized QM2 stationary outside on a Cunard-signature deck chair -- highly varnished and always topped with a snug blanket and a comfortable green cushion.

Evenings were an experience out of a Daphne du Maurier novel. Cunard's insistence passengers don evening wear on three formal nights gave us excuses to dress up: Gowns for women, tuxedos for men, seafood and beef on fine china in chandeliered dining rooms. Afterward there were balls, always with a different theme and with expert ballroom dancers.

Classically trained pianists and vocalists performed in the Royal Court Theatre. Actor John Cleese gave Oprah-style interviews to live audiences. And of course, the real stars were often visible in the night sky, with a front-row view from the top deck of the ship, alone in the North Atlantic.

Sadly, on the sixth day, the QM2 docked in Southampton. We were pried from our stateroom and transported two hours by van to the ship's land hotel, the equally elegant Stafford London. Sipping coffee in more fine china steps away from St. James and Buckingham Palace, I toasted my mother. How lucky I've been to have had these experiences -- all thanks to her and her 80 years of kindness, encouragement and perseverance.

Happy Mother's Day to my mother, and to all mothers. It's been quite a voyage.

For more information on Cunard voyages, visit [cunard.com](http://cunard.com).

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