

Mr & Mrs Gore
1 Claremont Buildings
Fairfield Park
Bath
BA1 6EZ
United Kingdom

01225 337801

Richard D. Fain
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Miami Head Office
Celebrity Cruises
1050 Caribbean Way
Miami, FL 33132
USA

Cruise date 19th March 2010.

I have recently returned from a Caribbean cruise aboard Celebrity Equinox. To say that it was a disappointment is an understatement and the reason I have decided to put pen to paper.

My wife and I were looking to cruise to go on a cruise to the Caribbean. We wanted to go to Barbados to renew our wedding vows as this was my wife's childhood dream. We wanted to get married in Barbados eighteen years ago but due to my wife's ill health I was unable to make this. My sister and now brother-in-law have been cruising for years and they had just returned from a Mediterranean cruise aboard Equinox. They told us that it was the best ship they had ever been on and were so impressed that they were actually married on the ship. They convinced us that this was the ship for us and we booked to go to the Caribbean in March 2009.

I am self-employed and had to work all hours to raise enough money to go. Due to my wife's illness she is unable to work. She was so excited and we were both looking forward to the trip. As you say in your advert "Your holiday starts when you book a cruise with celebrity". This was a big thing for us as we had never cruised before.

We had to travel from Bath, in the West Country, so I decided to book into a hotel at Gatwick the day before we were due to fly. Things began well enough; we travelled by train to the airport and stayed in the hotel overnight.

We went to check in our luggage only to be told that there was going to be a five and a half hour delay. I was concerned as I knew that we had a connecting flight to catch in Atlanta. We were told at the Delta Customer Service desk that there would be no problem and a connecting flight would be booked in advance and that there would be someone there to help us. We eventually took off six hours late spending some nine hours at the airport. We were given a five pound voucher by delta, which I felt wholly inadequate.

We landed in Atlanta 7pm their time. There was no one there to help us we collected our baggage and made our way to the Delta Service Desk only to be told that we had missed our connecting flight and that we had not been booked onto another. We tried to explain that we were leaving on a cruise the following day and needed to get to Miami. The staff were not interested and were very rude. We were told that we were going to have to be put on standby with no guarantee of getting to Miami. By now both my wife and I were very tired and distressed. We had no idea of how we were going to get to Miami or if we would even make the ship. Some start to what should have been a great holiday. We were eventually given tickets to Fort Lauderdale and Miami told we would have to make our own way to our designated pre-cruise hotel in Miami The Flight then left without us to Fort Lauderdale. Things just seemed to be going from bad to worse. There were a number of other British passengers on the same ship. Having spoken to some of them, it was evident that they were pre booked on a flight at Gatwick. We were then told that we could not have the seats on the plane to Miami and told to stay on standby. Whilst waiting at departures the flight we were on standby for announced that there had been a bomb scare on the plane and everything had to be taken off and searched. Some passengers then refused to re-board the flight. At least this meant that we could get on the plane. We were all subjected to a humiliating body search, which I can understand, but at the time was not at all funny.

We eventually took off some five hours after. We reached Miami at 4.30am. We had now been travelling some 26 hours since leaving London. We were exhausted. We went to collect our luggage but it had gone missing we went to the desk to be told that it would follow on. There was no Celebrity representative to be seen. We were initially told by Delta that we would need to find our own way to the hotel. We explained that we had already pre-paid for transfers through Celebrity. They were then kind enough to lay on taxis for us and a number of others. We eventually got to the Hotel at 5.30am in the morning. The hotel receptionists were less than helpful and it didn't help that we were all so exhausted from our traumatic journey. Our room was very poor with dirty sheets we seemed to have been penalised for arriving so late and were given the worst rooms in the hotel. We only had a couple of hours sleep before having to get up. We had no clean clothes as our luggage had still not arrived and were less than impressed to have to wear clothes that we had been in for two days. We went to reception to check out and spoke with the Celebrity Rep that had arrived. I tried to explain our problem but she was not interested and said that we would need to contact the airline. We were told by the airline that they were still trying to locate our luggage. I was shocked at the Reps lack of sensitivity and unhelpfulness I was beginning to wish that I could just go home. We had been so looking forward to this trip I just wanted this nightmare to end.

We were taken to the ship and got on board without any problem. The first impressions of the ship were that she was magnificent and we thought at last our holiday nightmare would end. We explained to the lady at the book-on desk about our experience and the loss of our luggage. The lady at the desk was very sympathetic and said they would do everything to help us. Before getting onto the ship a photographer wanted to take our picture. I told him that we were both too tired and looked a mess and did not want a picture taken. We were told it was for security and we would not be able to get onboard without one being taken. I was later to find out that this was a lie as we had our picture taken by the machine on boarding the

ship. Once on board we were told that our cabins were not quite ready so we decided to go the buffet for something to eat. To say it was chaos was an understatement. It was like feeding time at the zoo. There were people pushing and shoving you, grabbing at the food, reaching over, I had never seen anything like it. People were behaving like it was there last meal. There was no-where to sit, I got so stressed that I had to leave and find a seat somewhere to calm down. When we went to our cabin it was lovely. We then went to see the concierge and spoke to a lady called Christina. She restored some faith in human nature and did everything she could to help us. She was very sympathetic and helpful. She phoned the airline to try and track it down and told us that she would contact us as soon as it was found. Thankfully our luggage arrived half an hour before the ship was due to sail the cases were very badly damaged and I was amazed that nothing had fallen out. They were so damaged that I had to buy a new suitcase for our journey home. At last I could begin to relax and think about enjoying my holiday.

On first impressions the cabin looked good but I found the towels small and the sheets on the bed appeared to be dirty stains on them. I went to put on the dressing gown only to find makeup all down one side. At least the bathroom was clean. We unpacked and then took a breather and thought here we go finally can put everything behind us. We went to the buffet restaurant as we were so tired and could not face a sit-down meal and went to bed at 7pm. In the morning we ordered room service, what a treat, they were so kind and helpful always with a smile. We thought that we were in heaven. So we looked at each other and said 'A brand new day' and looked forward to what that day may bring.

We decided to look around the ship which is amazing, no where to sit mind as all the loungers were taken or being kept by people so we took this time to have a good look around the ship and find all the bars and activities available. We found a place at the top of the ship by the grass which I thought was the nicest part of the ship only to be disappointed to find dirty ashtrays and people smoking everywhere. What a shame as we are non-smokers we did not go there again. We went back to our cabin; the people above us must have had children or something as they were very noisy and continuously banging. The lady next to us was obviously a heavy smoker and coughed constantly throughout the cruise day and night. I then found cigarettes butts on our balcony I was not at all happy as I thought you were not allowed to smoke in your cabin. I rang reception to report this and they came down and sorted immediately.

I began to feel very let down and depressed we it was not what I expected. We went down for Dinner on the second night it took a while to find the table with not much help. The table was between the kitchen and a pillar. We were right in a corner and we felt so trapped with waiters flying by all the time there was very little room and it was very noisy. I did ask the waiter if we could move but we never were.

Now down to the menu I found the menu very difficult to read as not all of was in English. I do suffer from dyslexia which makes things a little more difficult. The waiter was very impatient as it was taking me a while to work out what was on the menu. He was very busy and was not very helpful. I kept telling him to come back as I needed a little bit more time. Because he was so busy he did not seem to have the time to explain what was on the menu. I felt very uncomfortable and rushed.

Throughout the cruise I found the food very tasteless and bland. There was a real problem with the food being cold due to cold plates and I had to complain about this a number of times. One occasion I ordered a Cesar salad with a bit of chicken well you could have fed a family of 10 on it nearly half a chicken and very poorly presented. I could not eat it all surely this should not have been served as an appetizer. I then ordered Salmon for the main course which was a bit of a mess. There were seeds all over it that had been baked dry. To make things worse it was cold and tasteless. They took it away and after some time replaced it with another; this was very under cooked and cold again. I was beginning to wonder if I was being targeted as nothing seemed to be right.

The next night was not any better even though it was a formal night. I did complain to the manager as I thought it was wholly unacceptable. We met up with the manager the next day after telling customer relations I would not be eating in the restaurant again and explained the problems again. I was getting more and more wound up all I seemed to be doing was complaining surely it was not too much to ask that the food was serve hot and actually looked edible. The manager of the restaurants admitted that there was a problem with the food and cold plates. He said it was down to supervision and would make sure it was sorted out.

We were three days into the cruise and I was now very fed up and disillusioned with the whole thing. I just wanted to get off the ship and go home. I would have got a better meal from Tesco frozen microwave selection then I got in the restaurant. I know that sounds harsh but I was a chef for 16 years and when you pay as much as we did for this cruise you should expect to receive a good standard of food and presentation. All I asked for was hot, tasty well presented food. All I got was cold uninviting and badly presented food. Apart from the taste aspect I was worried about food poisoning. I would have been embarrassed to send out this standard of food out to paying guests. With the worry of catching the stomach bug and being confined to my cabin at lot of the time I did not eat what was put before me. Most people I speak to come back from a cruise at least a stone heavier I actually lost weight.

I thought that we would have good entertainment with west end shows. I was disappointed with the shows. I was lead to believe that the shows were fabulous but it would seem that all the best shows and acts were especially designed for the first cruise. The comedian was mediocre, the female pianist was good but not to my taste. I felt let down when reading the daily newspaper there seemed to be lots to do on paper but I did not want to do ping pong, conundrum or bingo. If I wanted to do that then I would have go to Butlins Holiday Park. The bands were always in the stairwells I could not always see them or sit anywhere. The live bands during the day always played the same act there was no party atmosphere I was expecting Caribbean music but got none and there was no sail away party or theme nights. The bars were so small you could not get a seat or drink in the evening. On sea days it was very difficult to get a seat people would save seats for hours with no-one on them. I thought there was a policy of removing items after half an hour but this was not enforced. This I find strange as there were plenty of security staff and pool attendants. Some of the bar staff were rude and unhelpful and seemed very over-worked.

On a good note we went to the silk harvest restaurant on the last night. If only all the food and service on the ship was this good. I was amazed with the food and it was

spot on, thoughtful staff good food hot plates. I could see no reason why our dining restaurant could not offer the same standard after all we had paid good money and were told that it was fine dining at its best.

This holiday has really shattered my dream of what a cruise is all about and really put me off going again I had this image in my mind that I would be looked after, rested, pampered with good company, food, entertainment, and of course good ports of call. I am very saddened that I have to say none of these came close to my expectations. I must say for a ship that looks so luxurious it was badly let down by its service. The decor was out of this world.

You often get ask did any ships crew member make that extra mile for you I must say a resounding no on this holiday. I left feeling let down, tired, angry that I had wasted all our savings on this once in a lifetime dream. Of being part of something wonderful the ship its self had style and glamour but it was a big let down that the food; entertainment did not match the interior decor.

It is very doubtful if I will ever cruise again. I only hope that you reconsider some of your policies and if nothing else please look closely at the airlines that you use. I know that we are all in a recession at the moment and need to cut costs wherever possible but it shouldn't be at the expense of paying passengers. Booking passengers on an airline where there would have to be a change is a big risk, it may save a few pounds and is fine if things go according to plan. But if things go wrong, as they did in our case, then surely that risk is too great. This surely puts the reputation of your company at stake. Albeit it was not your fault with regards to the flight delays with Delta Airlines it would have been far more appropriate to book passengers on direct flights from London to Miami.

I look forward to a timely response regarding the above issues

Yours Mr E L Gore