



# Passengers mingle like old friends

by SUE PRESTON

**A**TTENTIVE 'old-fashioned' service is what the good ship *Athena* offers its passengers.

Going on board the sturdy mid-size liner is like stepping back into the familiar, where comfort reigns and airs and graces are left ashore.

People are already mingling – on the deck, in the lounges and in the restaurants – like friends of many years standing.

In fact joining *Athena* just one day into its cruise felt a little like arriving late at a party when everyone else was already on first name terms.

Originally a trans-Atlantic liner, the classic-styled *Athena* features a remarkable number of facilities given her small size – a wrap-around promenade deck with an ample supply of traditional wooden deck chairs and other outdoor tables and chairs, marbled reception foyer, pool, fitness centre and sauna, five bars and lounges, nightclub, show-lounge, casino, library, boutiques, cinema and two restaurants.

In all, she has 276 spacious cabins, each with a bath – a luxury generally only found in suites on the latest superliners.

Forty-three of these are suites, including eight balcony cabins with jacuzzi baths.

There is a wealth of *Athena* cruises to choose from this coming summer, including spending Christmas at sea.

A maiden visit by *Athena* to Christmas Island during the Christmas cruise and the first-ever return cruise from Western Australia to South Australia will feature in Classic International Cruises' biggest program in Australia.

The 550-passenger liner will be the only cruise ship based in Perth this summer and

will offer 13 cruises to and from Fremantle for four months from November 14 to April 14.

You can choose between cruises from two to 39 nights including the Christmas cruise from Perth to Christmas Island and Bali, an 11-night cruise from Perth to the seafood capital of Australia, Port Lincoln, as well as Kangaroo Island, Adelaide and an extended Asian cruise.

There will also be popular short and weekend cruises around the West Australian coastline and two traditional line voyages between Europe and Australia.

Fares start from \$445 per person, twin share, for a two-night cruise, with children under 18 cruising for free on six selected cruises with only nominal taxes to pay. Supplements for solo travellers in selected cabins are as low as 25 per cent, instead of double.

The line's Australian managing director Grant Hunter attributes *Athena*'s popularity to a "highly successful formula of traditional cruising on a real ocean liner, affordable fares, attractive itineraries, fine cuisine, friendly and personal service, and the warm and relaxed atmosphere that you only get on a smaller vessel".

Mr Hunter said Classic International Cruises had a firm commitment to offering cruising from Western Australia.

"People in Western Australia love the fact that they can sail with us from their doorstep," he said.

■ Bookings or a copy of the 2010/11 *Athena* brochure, are available from travel agents or [www.classicintcruises.com](http://www.classicintcruises.com)

\* Sue Preston was a guest aboard *Athena*.

