



Look no further than Freo for great ocean getaways

CRUISING has again become a popular and affordable option with a price range to suit every pocket for those wanting a no-fuss holiday or 'break-ation'.

A revitalised Fremantle Port is now a popular stopover for many cruise liners and some, such as Classic International Cruises' *Athena*, call it home for the summer season.

The 16,200 tonne liner, which has seen a few reincarnations since her construction, is in her seventh season in WA and is due to come back for her longest ever season later this year.

Being an avid cruise enthusi-

ast, I jumped at the opportunity to join the *Athena* on her four-day Australia Day celebration cruise to Albany and Bunbury.

As a smaller sized ship – she carries a maximum of 580 passengers – there are little touches that really make the start of your holiday special.

On embarkation, passengers are greeted at the gangway with a warm smile, then escorted to their cabins and shown around by their personal stewards, something not done by the bigger cruise liners.

Each cabin has a marble bath-room with bath, another aspect

usually only seen in high-end cruise liners.

After a quick peruse of the ship's public areas, it was time to grab a cocktail and join other passengers at the sail-away party.

Tradition has not been lost on *Athena*, with streamers thrown as the ship pulls away from port.

I took along an old friend who had never cruised before and was eager to try all aspects of the cruising lifestyle. *Athena's* short cruises are the perfect way to determine if cruising is for you.

The sparkling pool (pictured) is the hub of the ship during the day, with ample comfy deckchairs

for those wanting to work on their tan and catch up on a good book from the ship's library.

If lazing around a pool is not your thing, strolling around the wraparound deck or playing shuffleboard is a great way to meet fellow passengers – although this writer chose the poolside option while at sea.

A big part of the cruising experience is the food, and *Athena* doesn't let anyone down here.

From scrumptious buffets to seven-course dinners in the dining room, there is something for every taste.

Then, there are the fabulous

midnight buffets, afternoon teas and snacks, all designed to put on the kilos; but fear not. *Athena* has a small but well equipped gym to keep you active.

After-dinner entertainment in the showroom is quirky and energetic with its Las Vegas-style productions, but you can also enjoy a new-release movie in the cinema.

Service aboard is friendly and just as my mother described her journeys aboard European liners.

It's easy to see the *Athena* crew are very proud of their ship.

Anthony von Leonhardi

■ The writer was a guest of Classic International Cruises.

