

RESEARCH DOCUMENT

Northern Lights, March 2027

Princess Cruises, *Majestic Princess* · 14 nights round-trip from Southampton · three travelers, two cabins

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This is a lightly edited copy of the research I prepared for a client, shared with their permission. Names, home city and booking details have been generalized. Fares are a snapshot from the time of research and will have moved since.

The client wanted a Norway fjords cruise in March with a real chance of seeing the northern lights. They enjoy doing research themselves and mainly wanted a travel advisor as a second pair of eyes: someone to brainstorm options, track down details, and open up the perks and inventory visibility that only advisors get. After looking at the wider market, we narrowed it to two sailings on one ship, then found a booking path that came in well under both the direct fare and the standard advisor fare.

The two sailings

Princess runs this itinerary twice in March 2027. Same ship, nearly the same route, but they are not interchangeable.

	3 MARCH 2027	17 MARCH 2027
Departs Southampton	3 March	17 March
Returns	17 March	31 March
Nights	14	14
Ports	5	5
Days at sea	7	7
Nights above the Arctic Circle	3	4
Ports requiring tender boats	none	none

Every port on both sailings has a dock, so you walk off the ship rather than transferring to a small boat.

Itineraries

Ports marked ★ are above the Arctic Circle (66.5°N), where the aurora is most reliably visible.

DAY	3 MARCH SAILING	17 MARCH SAILING
1	Southampton, depart	Southampton, depart
2	At sea	At sea
3	At sea	At sea
4	Ålesund, 62.5°N	Ålesund, 62.5°N
5	Trondheim, 63.4°N	Trondheim, 63.4°N
6	At sea	At sea
7	★ Tromsø, 69.6°N	★ Tromsø, 69.6°N
8	★ Tromsø, overnight	★ Tromsø, overnight
9	★ Alta, 70.0°N	★ Alta, 70.0°N
10	At sea	★ Alta, overnight
11	At sea	At sea
12	Molde, 62.7°N	Molde, 62.7°N
13	At sea	At sea
14	At sea	At sea
15	Southampton, arrive	Southampton, arrive

Tromsø sits at 69.6°N, about 200 miles inside the Arctic Circle, and calls itself the capital of the Arctic. Alta at 70.0°N markets itself as the city of the northern lights and is where most of the aurora excursions run from. The 17 March sailing adds a second night in Alta, giving four nights at Arctic latitudes instead of three.

Northern lights conditions

Both sailings fall after the polar night has ended, so you get daylight in port and darkness in the evening. Sunset in Tromsø moves from about 4:45pm on 1 March to about 7:45pm by 31 March (clocks go forward on 28 March). Darkness shrinks across the month, but both trips still get long dark evenings.

Mid-to-late March sits near the spring equinox, which is historically one of the stronger periods of the year for aurora activity.

Moon phase

This is where the two sailings separate. March 2027: new moon **8 March**, first quarter **15 March**, full moon **22 March**, last quarter **29 March**. Against the Arctic nights of each itinerary:

SAILING	NIGHT	DATE	MOON ILLUMINATED
3 March	Tromsø	9 Mar	~1%
	Tromsø, overnight	10 Mar	~4%
	Alta	11 Mar	~10%
17 March	Tromsø	23 Mar	~100%
	Tromsø, overnight	24 Mar	~98%
	Alta	25 Mar	~95%
	Alta, overnight	26 Mar	~89%

The 3 March sailing reaches Tromsø and Alta within three days of the new moon. That is about as dark a sky as the calendar allows. The 17 March sailing arrives the night after the full moon and stays above 89% illumination across all four of its Arctic nights.

A bright moon will not stop you seeing a strong display. What it does is wash out faint and moderate ones, flatten the color, and make photography much harder. Most aurora sightings are faint to moderate rather than spectacular. At these latitudes in March the moon is also up for most of the dark hours, so there is no waiting for it to set.

The tradeoff: 17 March is cheaper in some categories and adds an Alta night, but 3 March has considerably better viewing conditions.

The ship

Majestic Princess is one of Princess's Royal-class ships, built in 2017 and last refurbished in March 2025.

Built	2017, Fincantieri, Italy
Last refurbished	March 2025
Gross tonnage	143,700
Length	330 m (1,083 ft)
Passengers	3,560 at double occupancy
Crew	1,346
Staterooms	approximately 1,780
Passenger decks	15
Passenger elevators	16
Medical center	Yes, Deck 4, with a doctor and nursing staff on board

This is a large ship, so distances between venues are real. A mid-ship cabin near the elevators makes a noticeable difference over two weeks.

Dining, included in the fare

- Main dining rooms
- World Fresh Marketplace, the buffet
- Salty Dog Grill, poolside
- International Café
- Pizza
- Continental breakfast by room service

Dining, additional charge

- Crown Grill, steakhouse
- Sabatini's Italian Trattoria
- Harmony, Cantonese, unique to this ship
- La Mer, French bistro from Michelin chef Emmanuel Renaut
- The Catch by Rudi, seafood
- Alfredo's and Gigi's Pizzeria, casual sit-down
- Ocean Terrace Sushi Bar
- Noodle bar, lobster bar, dim sum bar, gelato

Entertainment

- Princess Theater, the main production show venue
- Princess Live!, a television-style studio for talks and game shows
- Vista Lounge
- The Piazza, a three-deck atrium with live music day and evening
- Club 6 nightclub and casino
- Movies Under the Stars, a large outdoor screen
- Private karaoke rooms
- SeaWalk, a glass-bottomed walkway over the side of the ship
- Hollywood Pool Club, adults only, under a retractable roof
- 14 bars and lounges, 2 pools, 8 hot tubs

Fares

Per person, based on two people sharing, cruise fare only, as quoted at the time of the initial research. The per-night figure is the fare divided by 14 nights. It does not include the daily service charge, drinks, wi-fi, specialty dining or shore excursions; those are covered in the next section.

3 March 2027

CATEGORY	PER PERSON	PER PERSON, PER NIGHT
Interior	\$2,974	\$212
Oceanview	\$3,474	\$248
Balcony	\$3,127	\$223
Suite	\$4,349	\$311

The oceanview prices above the balcony on this sailing. That looks genuine rather than an error: balconies are the volume category on these ships and oceanview cabins are few.

17 March 2027

CATEGORY	PER PERSON	PER PERSON, PER NIGHT
Interior	\$2,379	\$170
Oceanview	Sold out	
Balcony	\$3,153	\$225
Suite	\$3,969	\$284

Interior and suite are cheaper on 17 March. Balcony is almost identical between the two sailings. Mini-suites were not quoted at this stage.

Balcony availability at a later check

When I re-checked a few weeks later, balcony fares had moved and the picture had changed, which is why the "when to book" section below matters.

BALCONY TYPE	3 MARCH	17 MARCH
Standard balcony, you pick the cabin	\$3,399	Sold out
Balcony guarantee ¹	\$3,229	\$3,210
Deluxe balcony, partially obstructed view	\$3,297	\$3,277

¹ A guarantee fare gets you a cabin in that category, but Princess assigns the location shortly before sailing and you do not get to pick it. It could include an obstructed view.

The third traveler's single

Majestic Princess does not have dedicated single cabins; Princess only builds those on *Sun Princess* and *Star Princess*. So the third traveler takes a standard double cabin at a single supplement.

Princess does not publish the supplement. The industry standard is 200% of the per-person double fare, and lines sometimes reduce it to 125% or 150% on sailings that are selling slowly. Port charges and taxes are only charged once, not doubled.

	3 MARCH	17 MARCH
Balcony at 200%	about \$6,254	about \$6,306
Balcony at 175%	about \$5,472	about \$5,518
Balcony at 150%	about \$4,691	about \$4,730

This is the single biggest unknown in the whole quote. The difference between 150% and 200% is roughly \$1,600. There did not appear to be any single-supplement promotions running, but that is only confirmed with an official quote from Princess.

What else costs money on board

	RATE	PER PERSON, 14 NIGHTS	THREE PEOPLE
Crew Appreciation, added daily	\$18/day standard cabins, \$19 mini-suite, \$20 suite	\$252	\$756
Princess Plus package	\$65/day	\$910	\$2,730
Princess Premier package	\$100/day	\$1,400	\$4,200
Wi-fi on its own, one device	about \$24.99/day	about \$350	about \$1,050
Room service beyond continental breakfast	\$5 per order		
OceanNow app delivery	\$14.99 per person, one time	\$14.99	\$45

Drinks bought individually: beer \$7 to \$8, wine by the glass \$10 to \$14, cocktails \$10 to \$26, soft drinks \$3 to \$4, specialty coffee \$3 to \$5, plus an 18 to 20% service charge. Specialty restaurants run roughly \$18 to \$39 per person depending on the venue.

Which package makes sense

Princess Plus at \$65 per person per day bundles drinks up to \$15 each, wi-fi for one device, the daily Crew Appreciation, and four casual meals. Paying separately, the service charge alone is \$18 a day and wi-fi is about \$25. That is \$43 before a single drink, so Plus breaks even at roughly two drinks a day.

If you tend to have wine with dinner, Plus is almost certainly cheaper. If you rarely drink, paying as you go and prepaying gratuities works out better.

Shore excursions

Princess had not yet loaded 2027 Norway excursions at the time of research. They typically open six to nine months before sailing. Based on comparable Arctic Norway sailings, expect roughly:

EXCURSION	PER PERSON
Panoramic coach or city tour	\$70 to \$130
Northern lights chase by coach	\$150 to \$250
Reindeer sledding and Sami camp visit	\$180 to \$280
Dog sledding	\$220 to \$350
Snowmobile safari	\$300 to \$450

These are estimates from similar itineraries, not Princess quotes. Once the list opens I send the actual excursions and pricing, with notes on which ones involve the most walking or climbing.

Getting there from the West Coast

Fly into	London Heathrow
Nonstop from the Bay Area	Yes, on British Airways, United and Virgin Atlantic, about 10 hours 15 minutes
Heathrow to Southampton	About 75 miles
By car or private transfer	1 hour 15 to 1 hour 45
By train	No direct service. Via Woking, about 1 hour 45
By coach	National Express, about 2 hours 20, but it terminates at the city coach station rather than the cruise terminal

A private car is the sensible option. It goes door to door, handles luggage, and tolerates a delayed flight.

I strongly recommend a night in London or near Southampton before the cruise rather than connecting straight from a transatlantic flight to embarkation. It removes the risk of a delayed flight costing you the sailing, and it lets everyone arrive rested. It is also an easy place to add a few extra days in England on either end of the cruise.

Booking terms

Deposit	\$500 per person, standard cabins. \$1,000 per person, suites
Final payment	120 days before departure
3 March sailing	Final payment due approximately 3 November 2026
17 March sailing	Final payment due approximately 17 November 2026

Cancellation charges

WHEN YOU CANCEL	CHARGE
Before final payment	Deposit forfeited
113 to 119 days before	25%
91 to 112 days before	50%
61 to 90 days before	75%
60 days or fewer	100%

Travel insurance is worth considering here. Medicare and many US health plans do not cover care outside the United States. Look for a policy with primary medical coverage and meaningful medical evacuation limits, and buy it within the deposit window to secure a pre-existing condition waiver. I send insurance options separately once the booking is in place.

When to book

Cruise lines open sailings 18 to 24 months ahead at introductory fares and generally raise them as the ship fills. Discounting on sailings that have not sold well usually starts around 90 days before departure.

That last part does not help here. Ninety days before these sailings is December 2026, which is after the November final payment date. Waiting for a late discount would mean booking after the point where an early booking's price is locked, with cabins already picked over. Wave season, the January to March promotional period, is also no help: for a 3 March departure, Wave 2027 happens while the ship is sailing.

What booking early buys you: choice of cabin, preferred dining time, and a much better chance of getting two cabins close to one another.

What booking late buys you: a possible discount, at the cost of choice and at the risk that your preferred category has sold out. The later fare check above shows this happening in real time: standard balconies on 17 March sold out between my first look and my second.

For three people in two cabins, the constraint is less about price and more about position. Getting two balconies near each other, mid-ship and near the elevators, gets harder as the ship fills. On a 1,083-foot ship that matters more than it sounds.

Princess has periodically run a price guarantee where, if the public fare drops before final payment, you receive onboard credit worth 120% of the difference, capped at \$2,000. Whether it applies to a given booking depends on the promotion running at the time, so it is something I confirm at booking rather than assume.

My recommendation: book early for cabin position, then watch the fare between booking and final payment.

Ways to reduce the cost

Carnival shareholder credit, \$250 per cabin

Carnival Corporation owns Princess. Shareholders holding at least 100 shares get onboard credit based on cruise length, and at 14 nights or more that is \$250 per cabin. These sailings qualify at the top tier. The credit goes to the cabin the shareholder is staying in, so to get it on both cabins, two travelers would each need to hold 100 shares. Requests go through the Stockperks app at least three weeks before departure.

The benefit is not just for this trip. It applies to future cruises on Princess, Holland America, Cunard, Seabourn, Carnival and P&O. The stock can easily move up or down by more than the credit is worth in a short time, so this only makes sense if you would be comfortable holding the stock anyway. *I am not a financial advisor and this is not financial advice.*

AARP discounted gift cards

AARP Rewards has historically sold cruise line gift cards at 10% off face value, which on this booking would have been worth roughly \$900 to \$1,100. I signed up for AARP Rewards to check, and Princess is no longer in their gift card lineup (only Royal Caribbean was showing), so this one is off the table for this trip.

Group space and consortia amenities

Agency networks like Virtuoso and Fora sometimes hold blocks of cabins at reduced group rates, and some Princess departures carry extra benefits through those networks such as onboard credit or a private shore event. I checked for existing group blocks on these two sailings and did not find any, and consortia amenities were still to be confirmed. One thing to note: group rates are usually excluded from the price guarantee, so the two can be mutually exclusive.

Choosing 17 March over 3 March

On the initial pricing, 17 March was about \$595 per person cheaper on an interior cabin and \$380 cheaper on a suite, with balcony roughly level. That is a real saving, but see the moon phase section: all four of the 17 March Arctic nights fall under a near-full moon, where 3 March falls on the new moon. And for balcony cabins, there is not much difference in cost anyway.

Rough total of the savings

LEVER	POTENTIAL VALUE
Shareholder credit	\$250, or \$500 if two travelers hold shares
AARP gift cards	Not available for Princess
Group space or consortia amenities	To be confirmed
Rough total	\$250 to \$500, plus any consortia amenity

The larger saving turned out to come from the booking channel rather than from any of these levers. See the alternative booking sections below.

Estimated total cost

Three people, two balcony cabins, with Princess Plus, using the initial fare snapshot. Figures marked **EST.** are my best estimates and firm up as quotes come in.

	3 MARCH	17 MARCH
Balcony, double cabin, two people	\$6,254	\$6,306
Balcony, single cabin, at 175% EST.	\$5,472	\$5,518
Cruise fare subtotal	\$11,726	\$11,824
Princess Plus, three people, 14 nights	\$2,730	\$2,730
Specialty dining, two dinners each EST.	\$210	\$210
Shore excursions, \$500 each EST.	\$1,500	\$1,500
On board subtotal	\$4,440	\$4,440
Flights, West Coast to Heathrow, \$1,100 each EST.	\$3,300	\$3,300
Private transfers, Heathrow to Southampton and back EST.	\$500	\$500
Hotel, one night before the cruise, two rooms EST.	\$400	\$400
Travel insurance EST.	\$1,800	\$1,800
Travel subtotal	\$6,000	\$6,000
Estimated total, before savings	about \$22,200	about \$22,300
Per person	about \$7,400	about \$7,400

Notes on the estimates: the **single supplement at 175%** is the midpoint of the 150 to 200% range Princess typically charges and is the number most likely to move, in either direction. **Flights at \$1,100** assume economy with a checked bag on a nonstop; premium economy would add roughly \$700 to \$1,000 per person and is worth considering for a ten-hour flight. **Insurance at \$1,800** is about 8% of trip cost; premiums are age-banded, so this varies by traveler. **Excursions at \$500 each** would cover roughly two or three tours across the trip.

If you went with interior cabins instead

	3 MARCH	17 MARCH
Cruise fare subtotal, single at 175% EST.	\$11,153	\$8,921
Difference from balcony	\$573 less	\$2,903 less

Interior barely saves anything on the 3 March sailing, because that sailing's interior fare is unusually high. On 17 March it saves close to \$2,900.

Other options we looked at

The client and I looked hard at the wider market before landing on Princess. For context, here is what else was considered and why it did not make the final list.

OPTION	WHY NOT
Havila and Hurtigruten, the Norwegian coastal ships	Working ferries rather than cruise ships. Excellent scenery and 34 ports, but no big-ship entertainment, and Havila's balcony cabins worked out near \$1,000 per person per day.
Holland America	No Norway sailings in March. Their season runs April to December.
Cunard, <i>Queen Mary 2</i> , 14 to 26 March	Excellent value and it calls at Tromsø with an overnight, but recent passenger reviews of the ship's condition and service were not strong enough for a two-week trip.
P&O Cruises, <i>Aurora</i> , 19 March	Very good itinerary, with 37 hours in Tromsø plus Narvik and Bodø. But it is a smaller, older ship with much less entertainment, and a UK-market brand that is difficult to book and support from the US.
Fred. Olsen, <i>Bolette</i> , 4 or 14 March	Ten nights from Newcastle with good single cabin availability, but a much smaller ship with limited entertainment, and it only reaches 68.8°N. No Tromsø or Alta.
Ambassador Cruise Line	Sixteen and seventeen night sailings, longer than wanted, on small older ships.
AIDA and TUI Mein Schiff	AIDA's 21 March sailing has the best aurora itinerary I found anywhere, reaching Alta, North Cape and Tromsø. Both lines operate in German throughout.
Royal Caribbean, MSC, Norwegian, Costa	None of them sail Norway in March 2027.
P&O <i>Iona</i> and <i>Arvia</i>	The big new ships with the strongest entertainment, but they are in the Caribbean and Canaries in March. Their Norway season starts 28 March and does not go north of Ålesund.
A cruise in May instead	Better weather, more daylight, easier travel, cheaper. No northern lights at all.
A land-based trip in Tromsø	More time under the aurora and more flexibility on excursions, but it means changing hotels and repacking several times.
March 2028	The same two sailings run again at lower fares. Worth keeping in mind if 2027 cabin availability turns out to be tight.

Alternative booking channels

Once the sailing and cabin category were settled, I priced the same cabins through every channel I could find. Two came in meaningfully below both the direct Princess fare and what I could offer as an advisor.

Cruise.com

Cruise.com showed lower prices than I could find anywhere else, likely through a combination of holding large blocks of cabins bought when prices were lower and rebating part of their commission. For the two cabins it came to roughly \$9,000 instead of \$11,000 to \$12,000.

Because that gap was large, I checked whether the offer was real. Cruise.com showed only one cabin at that fare for two people and a different one for a single traveler. I logged into the Princess booking system directly and confirmed those were the only two cabins left in that particular sub-category, with several more available one class up. So the inventory was real, if thin.

I also looked into the company. It is legitimate and well established: owned by Omega World Travel, a large US travel management company, with a BBB file dating to 1999 and its own host agency program. Its service reputation is poor, though. BBB reviews average 1.31 out of 5, on a small and complaint-skewed sample, and the recurring themes are advertised promotions not surviving to the confirmation email, cancellation and change fees on the cheaper fares, and cruise line communications not being forwarded. It is the standard high-volume online agency profile: fine when nothing goes wrong, hard work when something does. One caution for anyone researching further: cruise.com and cruises.com are different companies, both Florida-based, and reviews of the two get conflated constantly.

Booking through this channel has to be done by the client directly; I cannot place it as an advisor.

AAA Travel

AAA's online prices were very close to cruise.com's, and AAA offers more familiar talk-to-a-person support. When we called to ask about the advertised cabins, the AAA agent explained that the fares showing on the AAA website were not visible in her system or on Princess directly, and that to get those prices the client would need to book online through the AAA site. She confirmed the prices were valid and included the standard dining. One caveat she raised: the Carnival shareholder credit may not be honored on an AAA online booking, because previous AAA clients had been denied by Princess when trying to apply it.

Where we landed

The research settled the big questions: which sailing gives the best shot at the lights, what the two cabins would really cost once the single supplement and onboard spend are counted, why booking early matters on this ship, and which cost levers were real and which were not. Then it turned up something I could not match: online channels selling the same cabins for roughly \$2,000 to \$3,000 less than any advisor booking, including mine.

I told the client that plainly, verified the inventory was real, and walked them through the tradeoffs. They chose to book through the AAA Travel site themselves. That is exactly the outcome the process is meant to produce. My job is to get the client the best trip and the best booking, and sometimes the best booking is not through me.

The work does not end at the booking. I am still on the trip for the excursion list when it opens, the pre-cruise hotel and transfers, insurance options, and support while they are traveling.

Prepared by Kevin Rugg, **falco.travel**. Complex trips planned with you, not just for you. Fares, policies and availability are a snapshot from the time of research and change frequently; this document is an example of the research process, not a current quote.