

FIGURE 10.2

Map of cruise ship itinerary for MS *Maasdam*.
 Source: Reprinted from Holland America Cruise Lines.



and activities. But, with 44 new ships scheduled to be put in service between 2016 and 2022, continuing passenger growth and employment opportunities look promising.²⁷

Cruise ships have an operational advantage over destinations that are anchored to a specific geographic location and must suffer through changing weather patterns. Sailing itineraries can be changed through repositioning cruises to take advantage of the best seasonal patterns and passenger demand anywhere in the world. In addition, “Cruise ships are an operator’s dream. They run at 95% of capacity or higher, when hotels are pressed to manage 70%. And cruise passengers, unlike hotel guests, cannot wander off to eat their dinner elsewhere” (p. 14).²⁸

With the flexibility to meet vacationer and meeting-goer needs, cruise lines are now targeting many of the same people and groups who previously stayed in traditional destination resorts. The primary geographic markets for U.S. cruise-line passengers are California, Florida, New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Texas; and the primary ports for cruise ships serving U.S. and Canadian markets are located in Miami, New York, Port Everglades, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, and Vancouver. Most cruise ships sailing from these ports go southward to Mexico, the Caribbean, and the Panama Canal, or northward to Alaska. Figure 10.2 shows a typical cruise ship itinerary.

“From a marketing perspective, getting consumers to take their first cruise is the key for the market to continue to grow and expand” (p. 343).²⁹ Today, cruise-line passengers come from a wide range of income levels and ages. However, the fastest growth in cruisers is in the 25- to 40-year-old and family segments, which has caused the median age of cruisers to drop from 58 to 43. “At long last, cruises are being perceived as a ‘hip’ vacation alternative, one that appeals to a group of vacationers whose diversity is matched only by the cruise industry’s diversity. We have 150 vessels visiting nearly 2,000 ports, and itineraries ranging in length from three days to three months—the possibilities are endless.”³⁰ These new and expanding groups of cruisers are not only selecting cruise ships based on sailing itineraries, activities, and length of time at sea, but they are also changing the way in which they incorporate cruise ships into their travel plans. Today, the usual pattern involves a fly-cruise package.

These efforts are proving successful, as cruise lines can offer many of the same features as, if not more than, a traditional resort (see Figure 10.3) at an **inclusive price**. Even the amount of tips for onboard service personnel is clearly communicated to all guests in information brochures. In fact, there are activities galore. Everything from rock climbing and golf lessons to ice skating and dancing:

When viewing Figure 10.3, think about the three main areas of a ship: the support or crew space, the cabins or **staterooms**, and the public space. The support and crew spaces will be found in very different locations on the ship. The crew spaces will be located on the lowest levels of the ship and will include crew cabins (much smaller than passenger staterooms), dining, and recreation facilities. Other support spaces