



# In The Spotlight

By Debbie L. Sklar

## Rob Henderson, Born to be a Cruise Expert

The first Expedia CruiseShipCenters in Tustin has just opened and is owned and operated by local entrepreneur Rob Henderson, 67, who is thrilled to begin sharing his lifelong passion for travel with his community.

His love of travel was sparked back in 1957 when he was just 9 years old. His grandmother passed away, leaving the family some travel money which they used to go to Europe. That passion continued to grow, and he went on to explore the world with his late wife, who also worked in the travel industry.

To date, he has visited more than 50 countries and continues to travel with his new wife.

After spending 20 years working in various manufacturing industries (which allowed him to actually build his Expedia CruiseShipCenters location by hand), he is excited to begin helping the residents of his community plan their own adventures and create lasting memories with their loved ones. Here is a close look.

**Q:** Sometimes cruises get a bad rap, what do you say to that?

**A:** To me, that's a drop of rain in a big sea. Statistically, cruises are the safest form of travel. That being said, there is a level of risk involved when

planning any vacation because, like with anything in life, you don't have total control. Currently, there is a huge investment going into cruise ships globally. In fact, every shipyard in the world is booked out through 2021. The ships are better than ever with fantastic new designs and amenities, and more people are cruising now than ever before because it is a great way to use your holiday time to not only explore the world, but to do so in comfort.

**Q:** Are you a cruise person yourself? How many have you sailed on?

**A:** Definitely, and I plan to do a whole lot more. I have been on a couple of great river cruises and last summer cruised the Baltic, which was fantastic!

**Q:** Do you have a favorite destination?

**A:** It's hard to pick a favorite place as I have been to 49 of the 50 U.S. states and over 50



countries. I am a bit partial to Asia as my late wife was an account executive for Singapore Airlines, so I got the opportunity to travel extensively through Asia.

**Q:** Who is your target audience?

**A:** Cruising is really a popular option for anyone looking for a spectacular vacation, and our travel consultants at Expedia CruiseShipCenters can help everyone navigate through all the options out there to put together a perfectly suited package, from finding the right ship to choosing the best destinations and planning the best excursions. This is especially helpful for families and mature

adults who want to explore the finer things in life.

**Q:** What makes cruises so popular?

**A:** On a cost-per-day basis, cruising is affordable and less expensive than land travel. People like not having to pack and unpack each day as they are essentially taking their hotel with them when they cruise. The ship becomes their oasis to retreat to as they travel from one fantastic place to the next. With everything included onboard, from dining to entertainment, relaxation and breathtaking views, everything is conveniently at their fingertips while they are transported from one amazing destination to another.

**Q:** Is a cruise costly?

**A:** You can enjoy a starter 3-day Mexico cruise for less than \$350, or take a seven day Alaska cruise for around \$700. On other end you can spend \$10,000 plus for a great European river cruise and even more for an Around the World Cruise!

**Q:** Former career?

**A:** I am not retired, but I have had a few careers prior to opening Expedia CruiseShipCenters. I am also currently partner in a boutique private equity group, Connexus Equity Management Partners, which is very active with startup investments. In my earlier years, I was an accomplished wallcovering contractor, and then worked for

20 years for Custom Building Products a core manufacturer for The Home Depot. Since obtaining my MBA in 2007, I have been the chief executive for four small businesses.

**Q:** Where were you born and raised?

**A:** I was born in San Francisco and grew up in the East Bay.

**Q:** Career thoughts as a young boy?

**A:** Growing up, I thought I might be in academia but was always in love with travel. My grandmother passed away when I was 9 and left money for the family to travel to Europe for 6 weeks so we could see where she grew up in Cornwall England.

**Q:** What is your education?

**A:** Graduated Oakland High School, Cal State Fullerton (Business), University of California, Paul Merage School (MBA).

**Q:** Why choose Tustin to start the business?

**A:** Tustin is a great community with lots of people who love to cruise. I have lived here for 20-plus years, so it was a natural fit.

**Q:** Spare time, hobbies?

**A:** Travel photography, yoga, cycling, and Words with Friends with my daughters. I have three sons, two daughters,