

SAILAWAY

ISSUE 7

CRUISE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

JUL/AUG 2024



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Credit: Courtesy of Lily Tomlin



LILY TOMLIN
OLIVIA TRAVEL
WRITTEN BY JENNY BLOCK

Sometimes a collective dream really does become a reality. That is literally how Olivia Travel, the travel company for lesbians and LGBTQ+ travellers, came to be. It is the story of how the dreams of a collective of women came to set sail on the high seas.

It started with a record label founded in 1973 called Olivia Records. The company was created because it was clear that women artists, especially lesbian women, were not being recorded and produced at the same rate as men – not even close.

The label was a success, as were concerts with the label's recording artists. Soon, fans of the label began to muse about how incredible it would be to experience music and connect with musicians onboard a ship. One of the record label's founders, the remarkable and truly unstoppable Judy Dlugacz, was so inspired by the idea that she chartered a ship and manifested that musing into a reality. That charter became the humble beginnings of a grand idea: Olivia Travel.



Olivia Travel was born in 1990. It now takes lesbian and LGBTQ+ women all around the world on cruises, adventures and resort trips with one mission in mind: to create life as it should be, where lesbians and LGBTQ+ women can live out loud.

The trips boast impressive entertainment line-ups of musicians and comedians, as well as political and social activists. The Indigo Girls, Bonnie Raitt, Patti LaBelle, Sarah McLachlan, Billie Jean King, Dolores Huerta, Dr Maya Angelou, Ariana Huffington, Suze Orman, and many other celebs and prominent figures have joined Olivia Travel trips to inspire and delight guests.

One of their most recent sailings was the 'Women Who Rock Our World' cruise from 13th to 20th April 2024, aboard Holland America's vessel MS Zaandam. There were 1,400 guests, including 450 travellers new to Olivia Travel. The cruise began and ended in San Diego with stops in Puerto Vallarta, Los Cabos and Mazatlán.

Olivia is all about bringing the fun, and this trip was no different. There were theme nights such as Fiesta de Flores, Nauti Night and White Hot Heat, and late-night dancing in the Crow's Nest bar at Club O with DJ Christie James and DJ Olga T.

Musical guests included Cris Williamson, Antigone Rising and BETTY, as well as comedians Karen Williams and Suzanne Westenhoefer. Olivia Travel also hosted mind-expanding panels with Jaymes Black (President and CEO of Family Equality), Imani Rupert-Gordon (Executive Director of NCLR), Kelley Robinson (President of HRC), and Sarah Kate Ellis (President and CEO of GLAAD).

There was even a Laurel Burch shop onboard, including collaborative products with Olivia Travel. Laurel's daughter, Aarin Burch, is now CEO of Laurel Burch Studios, keeping her mother's art alive. She presented during the cruise, sharing the incredible journey of her mother's life and art.

The week was led by the incredible Tisha Floratos, Vice President of Travel and Business Operations. She served as cruise director extraordinaire, as she has for many years. This is a role Tisha was born for: always at the ready with a smile and a kind word, always keeping guests informed and excited.

It was a week of adventures, relaxation, and friends both old and new. Those who cruise with Olivia Travel know the joy that comes from true freedom of expression to live and love.

Ms Tomlin said: "I love performing with an Olivia crowd because their enjoyment is so palpable, and I feel truly supported by this community that Judy and her team have created for lesbians all over the world. And because the audience is already so charged for the grand cruise they are taking, I feel I receive a lot of that excitement from them during my show. It really energizes and allows me to enjoy the audience totally and completely. I feel we are together, playing off one another with no fear of judgement."

Besides her partner, Ms Tomlin says that when it comes to 'women who have rocked her world': "There are so many women who have rocked my world, it is difficult to identify all of them individually. I admire Judy Dlugacz for all that she has done in the lesbian community for decades! And of course, Jane Fonda is a great bestie to have in anyone's life, as she inspires all of us to reach a higher consciousness of our world, our climate, and our humanity."



When it comes to going one step further and thinking about the she-ros in her life, she says: "My mother, of course, also falls into that special category of she-ro. More than anyone, I value my partner, Jane Wagner. She is so far ahead of the curve that she has always brought new worlds into our lives. She is so curious and turned on to living and life and learning. She's an exceptional writer who has supported and created so much of what I have done in my career. The project of which I'm proudest was one she wrote specifically for me, The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe. I have never stopped marvelling at her brilliance and creativity in our world."

It was a week to remember, as it always is with Olivia Travel. And Lily Tomlin was the cherry on top, making it a trip none of the guests will ever forget.