



Holland America Line:

Reservation center for entire U.S. here in Williston

Williston Economic Development

If you've ever booked a cruise with Holland America Line, there's a good chance you spoke with an employee right here in Williston. This facility is one of only two reservation centers in the U.S. that takes calls for the entire country. The other is in Seattle where the corporate headquarters is located.

With over 720,000 passengers per year taking exotic destinations around the world, Holland America Line's reservation center in Williston is an extremely busy place.



"Because we're not a service industry and people don't come into our facility looking for a product, they tend not to know what we do," said Karlyne Mickolio, manager at Williston's Holland America Line Reservation Center. "People cannot

come in and book a vacation; but can call in if interested in one and we will help guide them. We are grateful for this opportunity to let the community know what our purpose is here."

Williston's Facility and their Employees:

Williston's facility is located directly across from the airport and offers services such as booking cruises, pre and post hotel stays and airfare to and from the departing city.

They also book package deals that include in-land tours and can connect you to a department that handles all the shore excursions. A reservationist will take care of all questions and concerns a person may have before booking a cruise. The entire vacation can be booked hassle free with only one call.

All employees go through paid three to four week training classes when hired to learn phone and customer service skills and the booking system. "We hold training classes throughout different times of the year depending on what we're looking for," said Mickolio.

Holland America Line has 14,000 employees world wide and has been a recognized leader in cruising for more than 135 years. They have taken over 10 million passengers on cruises since their first cruise set sail back in 1895. Today, they have 14 eloquent mid-sized ships (and one more in production) that offer nearly 500 sailings a year visiting all seven continents as well as unique voyages to the Amazon and Antarctica.



The Williston facility currently houses 73 employees, 60 of which handle all the reservation calls. "The Williston and Seattle office together, take over 10,000 calls per day," said Mickolio. "On average, each of our 60 reservationists will take up to 100 calls per day."



These employees work hard, and Holland America is dedicated to providing their Williston staff with a good benefit package. They receive good wages, medical insurance, 401K, sick and vacation time along with the opportunity to move up into other positions.

The Grand benefit, however, is one free cruise per year along with discounts on others. "A large number of our employees have been able to go on a cruise that may not otherwise have had the opportunity to do so," said Mickolio. "It's a benefit to the company because

they will come back with an expanded knowledge of our ships, and will have experienced the amenities and the service received. They will be able to give recommendations and answer questions much better."

Pamela Torgerson has been working for Holland America as a reservationist for over three years and has been on three of their cruises. In two weeks, she will be boarding her fourth on a seven day scenic cruise along the St. Lawrence River from Montreal, Quebec to Boston, Massachusetts. "I am so excited to go," she said. "I enjoy experiencing the different cultures and getting the chance to see places all over the world; we (employees) give to this company and they give back to us."

Lizzy Martinez has been with Holland America for two years and just returned from a 10 day action packed Mexican Riviera cruise that sailed from Puerto Vallarta, Mexico to Cabo San Lucas. This cruise was special to her, not only because it was her first, but because Mexico is part of her culture and she never had the opportunity to travel there before. "I wanted to experience my heritage," she said. "This was a big bonus for me. I also received a family and friends rate so I could go with my two brothers and one of their wives who had never cruised before either."

"Working at Holland America Line is a great opportunity for those who think college may be too expensive or not the route to go. Here, they receive benefits that are hard to find in a small community," said Mickolio. "It draws people to apply here."

How they got Started in Williston and Giving Back to the Community:

Holland America Line has been in Williston for five years, but the travel industry started back in 1999 with Rosenbluth, which was a corporate travel agency. Rosenbluth then turned into American Express travel for one year before Holland America took it over in December of 2004.

Rosenbluth received assistance from the STAR Fund to get up and running. "We invested \$2 million initially in the Rosenbluth building; we were land lords and they were paying us rent," said Tom Rolfstad, executive director of Williston's Economic Development. "When Holland America Line became interested, they wanted to own the building and so our total commitment in getting both Rosenbluth and Holland America Line located here were the donation of the land and some \$110,000 of STAR Fund dollars."



"The STAR Fund was instrumental in helping us attract Rosenbluth to Williston in the late 90's," said Williston's Mayor, Ward Koeser. "Without them investing in our community, we probably wouldn't have Holland America here today."

Holland America chose Williston for their reservation center because of Kurt Lanterman. He was CEO of the company at the time and was from the area (a native of Mandan and alumni of University of North Dakota). Lanterman met with alumni and they all thought Williston was the ideal location.



"They had an advantage with 32 employees already here that knew the call center atmosphere and customer service portion; they just needed specific training on Holland America," said Mickolio. "The facility was already here, the American Express Corporate travel office was moving out and it was a good opportunity for them." Kathryn Daves, human resource manager at the Seattle corporate office added, "He was also looking at Minot as a possibility, but meetings with Williston's city leaders prompted the final decision to be here."

Holland America has been a tremendous support to the community during the past five years. "We donated funds to the Miss North Dakota pageant for their scholarship program and to the Chamber of Commerce's pancake breakfast for their 'Shop Williston' campaign," said Daves. "The employees participate annually in the Walk for Life event, we have sponsored a Williston traveling baseball and softball team and we donated a cruise to help support the Mercy Hospital auction in 2005."

This company has been good for Williston's economy and community. "Holland America is helping us diversify our economy by providing good jobs not related to oil or agriculture," said Koeser. "We appreciate their investment in our community."

About Holland America's Ships and Cruises:

If you've been thinking about taking a vacation, but need to control the cost due to the economy, cruising is a great way to go. They are all inclusive (except for shore excursions and drinks) and you get to see a lot more than if you were just going to one destination.

Holland America Line is under the umbrella of Carnival Cruise Lines and tends to be a little more high-end based on several factors. Their service, ship size and staff to cruiser ratio puts them a step ahead of their competitors. "We do not have huge, mega ships; Holland America keeps them more exclusive so we are better able to service the people cruising with us," said Mickolio. "It makes the cruise more enjoyable and personable."



Their ships are very eloquent and have been going through renovations over the past few years. They are in the process of adding spa-type rooms with natural décor and

lanais (not balconies) for a larger area and more open space. These rooms will have direct access to the spa, so passengers will not have to trek all over the ship in a robe after a service.

On board, several one-of-a-kind programs are offered such as the Culinary Arts Center cooking demonstrations from chef's at major restaurants all around the country. Also offered are wine tastings and education, evening shows, big productions and movies.

There are also special areas for kids, teens and adults. Club Hal® Kids offers programs for children age three to seven and Club Hal® Tweens is for age eight to twelve. There is even a special place called the Loft and Oasis for teens ages 13 to 17. This is an area with disco, karaoke, sporting events, a game room and their own pool. For adults, Holland America is putting in a new pool area. "There will be loungers built directly into the pool, so this will be a nice relaxation area for them," said Mickolio.

"If you are looking for some of the most spacious and comfortable ships at sea, award-winning service, five star dining, extensive activities and enrichment programs and compelling worldwide itineraries, you've come to the right place," said president and CEO of Holland America Line, Stein Kruse in his letter from the Executive Office on the website. "We are committed to our mission: through excellence, we create once-in-a-lifetime experiences, every time."

Alaska is one of their **most popular destinations**. Mickolio said people like the adventure of going there and seeing all the animals. Also popular are the 'cruise tours', where people can take a seven day cruise, but get off the ship and go inland for three to five days so they can see more.



The **most expensive** is the 'Grand Royal' cruise. It can run into several months lasting 120 to 130 days. Cruisers can go all over the world and hit several continents during this voyage.

The **most economic** is the U.S. to Canada coastal destinations where cruisers can choose one to four days. "These tend to run from San Diego to Vancouver, Canada or Seattle to Vancouver," said Mickolio. "The Caribbean cruises are also economical and everyone likes to go somewhere warm."

Next year they will be adding a cruise to Bermuda departing out of New York. "We have had a lot of interest in people wanting to visit Bermuda," said Mickolio. "It's very expensive to travel there, but to be able to cruise and have your hotel and food on one ship makes it more economical for people who really want to experience it."

The closest U.S. ports to Williston are in Seattle or San Diego. Alaska cruises depart from Seattle and Vancouver and the Mexican Riviera and Hawaii cruises depart from San Diego. There are also ports in the Caribbean, Alaska, Europe, Mexico, South America, Panama Canal, Australia, New Zealand and Asia.

The busiest booking season runs from January to March. "People book their summer trips early," said Mickolio. "This is a good idea especially if you're reserving a specific type of room; you will have a lot more options the earlier you book."

To inquire about a cruise vacation or to book a cruise call toll free at 1-877-932-4259. For more information on Holland America Line, visit <http://www.hollandamerica.com> for a list of itineraries, ports, shore excursions, pre/post hotel stays and brochures.