

Cruise Travel FAQs

If you have never taken a cruise, you're in for a wonderful experience. Cruises are the most luxurious form of travel. Imagine a floating resort, created just for your vacation pleasure. Imagine days of sparkling ocean vistas, nights of first-rate entertainment, exotic tropical ports of call, non-stop pampering, and fabulous cuisine.

Taking a cruise vacation can be relaxing, exhilarating, and, at first, a bit confusing. Put your mind at ease by taking a look at the following frequently asked questions (FAQs) and answers that are sure to make your cruise smooth sailing.

What kinds of people take a cruise?

There is no typical cruise person. On nearly every ship at any given time, you'll find families with kids, honeymooners, retirees, and singles and couples of various ages. Newer ships and ships with shorter itineraries tend to draw the youngest crowd. Older ships and longer itineraries (more than a week) tend to draw an older crowd. Cruises are not just for the rich. You can cruise for under \$100 per night (including accommodations, meals, activities, and entertainment)—a bargain compared to land vacation prices.

Is a cruise good for families with kids?

Without a doubt! Most cruise lines offer supervised programs to keep children and teens busy and entertained in a safe environment. Kids can enjoy sports activities, video games, movies, and scavenger hunts, while parents relax and enjoy quiet time. Many cruise liners specialize in family cruises, offering poolside visits by Mickey and Minnie Mouse (Disney Cruise Line), rock climbing, and ice skating. Children have a special menu in the dining room or they can make their own choices at the buffet table. In many cases, cruise lines offer reduced fares for children when sharing a cabin with adults.

In addition to family-friendly cruises on the large cruise ships, there are ecological and educational cruises, windjammers and river cruises, and many more possibilities for families looking for an enlightening, new experience.

Is a cruise good for honeymooners?

Absolutely! You want your honeymoon to be a dream vacation, and that's why a cruise is a great choice. Cruising sets the mood for romance, with cozy dinners for two, strolls on deck at sunset, dancing under the stars, and so much more you'll remember forever. Most cruise lines offer honeymoon packages, often as an add-on to the regular fare (a great wedding gift). The package might include a bottle of champagne, flowers, chocolate-dipped strawberries, his-and-hers massages, souvenir bathrobes, a framed souvenir photo, a travel diary, and a Happy Honeymoon cake. You can even get married onboard! Ask your cruise specialist for details.

Is a cruise good for single people?

A cruise is ideal for people traveling alone, because cruising is a social experience—you can't help but meet people. In fact, most ships have parties just for singles at the beginning of the cruise so you can start meeting people right away. You never have to sit alone in the dining room—you're assigned to a table with others, sometimes even other singles. You can also meet other singles at poolside, in the spa or health club, on shore excursions, in the card room or library, and at sports contests and other participatory activities. Cruise lines offer single-occupancy rates, and some ships have single cabins. Many cruise lines offer a single-share program, where you are paired with another single traveler in your cabin.

How long are cruises?

Cruise length varies, depending on how many ports the itinerary includes and how much time (and money) you have to spare. For example, you could take a 3-day cruise to the Bahamas, a 7-day cruise to Mexico, a 10-day cruise to Alaska, or an 11-day cruise to Hawaii. There's a 19-day cruise of the Spice Islands, including Singapore, Jakarta, and Bali. A 24-day cruise goes from the U.S. to India, Burma, and Thailand; another to India and Africa. In 21 days, you can sail from New York to San Juan to Aruba, Acapulco, and San Diego. In 50 days, you can sail from Florida around South America, and back again. And, of course, you can cruise around the world in 99 days—the cruise of a lifetime.

What about seasickness?

All modern ships are equipped with stabilizing “fins” to minimize side-to-side rolling. In most cases you will feel no motion at all, even through rough sailing. Many people find sleeping on a cruise ship a uniquely relaxing experience, buoyed by the ocean and its rhythmic movement. If you are prone to motion sickness, bring medication with you (or ask the onboard physician for a remedy). When the cruise is over, you might experience “sea legs,” the strange sensation of feeling you're still on water when you're walking on land. This goes away within a few hours.

What documentation is needed?

This depends on the type of cruise and the destination. Generally, one of the following is acceptable for U.S. and Canadian citizens:

- Valid passport.
- Birth certificate or certified copy of a birth certificate. This document must be accompanied by official photo identification, such as a valid driver's license.
- U.S. naturalization certificate accompanied by official photo identification, such as a driver's license.

Non-U.S. citizens who are permanent residents of the United States must carry their passport and Alien Registration Receipt Card. All other non-U.S./non-

Canadian citizens must have valid passports and any necessary visas. Verify the existing identification requirements for your cruise, because these requirements are subject to change.

Do I need insurance?

Most Americans don't realize that their regular health insurance might not cover them outside the U.S. That's one reason for buying travel insurance—the other reason is for cancellations. If you have to cancel the cruise due to circumstances out of your control, the cruise lines charge a penalty unless you have insurance. If your flight is cancelled or late and you miss the boat, there's no reimbursement for missed days aboard ship unless you have insurance. Travel insurance provides peace of mind—any illness or accident will be covered, and you'll receive partial or full compensation if you can't travel. A comprehensive trip cancellation-interruption policy offers reimbursement for cancellation penalties plus out-of-pocket compensation.

The cost of travel insurance is based on the cost of your cruise. For example, insurance coverage for a \$2,000 cruise is approximately \$175. You generally have two options when choosing travel insurance: the cruise line's own insurance or third-party programs. The downside to buying travel insurance from the cruise line is that the policy won't pay for medical costs related to pre-existing conditions.

Do cruises have different classes of service?

The only differences are in the category of cabin you choose, based on size and location. No matter what you pay, you will enjoy the same service, menus, activities, and entertainment as everyone else onboard.

How do I choose a cabin?

Price is a major factor in choosing your cruise ship accommodations. If you need to keep your cost down and will use your cabin just to change clothes and sleep, choose an inside cabin (the lowest-price cabin category), which is a small space with no window. If you need a window, choose an outside cabin. Outside cabins could have just a small porthole or a large window and balcony. A cabin with a balcony is great if you like a quiet place to read or reflect on the sea. A mini-suite means there's a sitting area. A suite usually means there's a separate sleeping and sitting area (and sometimes a separate dining area as well). The most expensive cabins are typically on upper decks.