

# WISHLIST GETAWAYS

## The Ultimate Cruise Guide

Tips, Tricks & Insider Secrets



*Your insider passport to smarter sailing, smoother  
planning and unforgettable journeys at sea.*

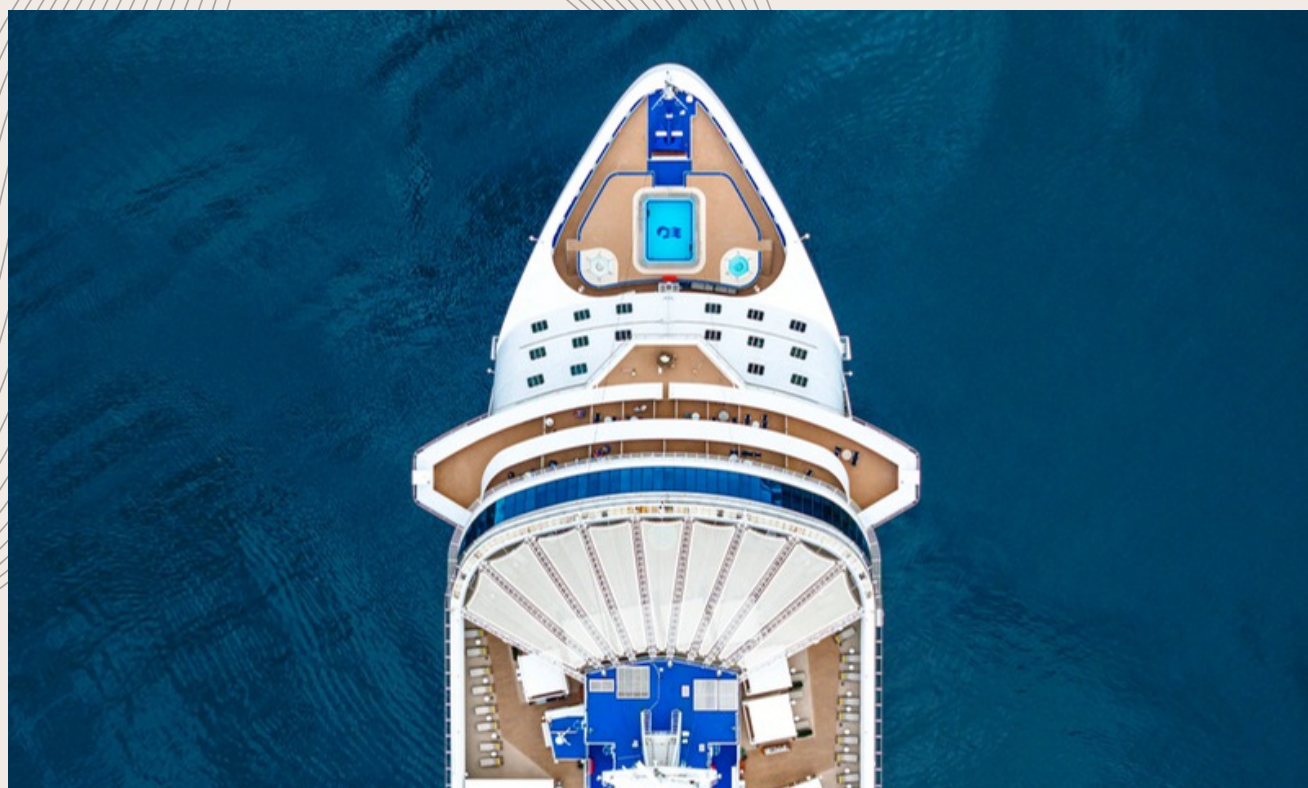
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# WISHLIST GETAWAYS

## *Intro*

This guide was created to help you travel smarter, sail smoother, and experience more on every voyage. Whether you're setting sail for the first time or you're a seasoned cruiser, the ocean always has new secrets to reveal.

At Wishlist Getaways, we believe a cruise isn't just a vacation - it's a floating world of discovery, luxury, and effortless travel where every detail matters. This guide is designed to help you unlock the very best of it.



# Plan *your cruise* with Ease

## Why use a Travel Advisor?

Booking a cruise may seem easy online, but working with a **professional and experienced travel advisor** can save you time, money, and unnecessary stress while ensuring you get the best overall vacation experience.

- ✓ Expert cruise recommendations tailored to your travel style
- ✓ Access to exclusive promotions, onboard credits, and group rates
- ✓ Help selecting the best ship, itinerary, and cabin
- ✓ Assistance with flights, hotels, transfers, excursions, and insurance
- ✓ Personal support before, during, and after your trip
- ✓ Saves you time and reduces travel stress.



## Prefer booking directly?

Booking on your own could lead to potential drawbacks:

- ✗ Time-consuming research and comparison shopping
- ✗ Risk of choosing the wrong ship, itinerary, or cabin
- ✗ Missing out on exclusive promotions and added perks
- ✗ Limited support if issues arise before or during travel
- ✗ Managing flights, hotels, transfers, and cruise details yourself.



# Things to consider *before* you book

**1.**

## **Search for flights**

A cruise departure may seem like a fantastic deal, but airfare can significantly impact the total cost of your vacation. Sometimes a sailing that is \$200 less expensive can end up costing much more once flights are added.

**2.**

## **Ship's size**

Cruise ships come in all sizes, from intimate luxury vessels carrying a few hundred guests to mega-ships carrying over 6,000 passengers. Choose the ship that best matches your vacation style rather than simply selecting the newest vessel.

**3.**

## **Same sailing, different dates**

The same itinerary on the same ship can vary greatly in price depending on the departure date. School holidays, summer vacations, public holidays, special events, and seasonal demand can all affect pricing.

**4.**

## **Cabin type & location**

Your cabin will be your home away from home, so choosing the right one can make a huge difference in your cruise experience. Cabin location is just as important as cabin type.

**5.**

## **Itinerary & ports**

Not all cruises visit the same destinations, and even similar itineraries may spend different amounts of time in port. Make sure the destinations match your interests and travel style.

**6.**

## **Add-ons**

Cruise vacations involve additional onboard and pre-travel costs beyond the base fare, such as drinks, specialty dining, Wi-Fi, gratuities, insurance - so it's important to factor in these extras to understand the true total value of your trip.

# Insider tips

*to consider prior booking your cruise*

## Searching for flights

Compare flight prices before committing to a sailing date. Consider flying into nearby airports and arriving at least one day before embarkation to avoid travel disruptions. Using a Travel Advisor might give you access to better flight options, as they have access to flight consolidator platform which offer discounted, private, and commissionable airfares that are generally unavailable to the public.

## Compare different sailing dates

Shifting your departure by just one week or a few days can sometimes save hundreds of dollars per person while offering the exact same experience.

## Review the Itinerary and ports carefully

When choosing your voyage please consider the following:

- How many sea days versus port days
- Length of time in each port
- Whether ports require tendering
- Excursions and attractions available at each destination

**Remember:** The itinerary is often more important than the ship itself.

## Choose the right ship size

Smaller Ships offer: personalized service, unique and less crowded destinations, relaxed atmosphere.

Larger Ships offer: more dining options, extensive entertainment, water parks, shows, and family activities.

Choose the ship that best matches your vacation style rather than simply selecting the newest vessel.

## Best cabin type and location

**Inside cabins** - most budget-friendly option, ideal for travelers who spend little time in their room or like to sleep in a dark room.

**Ocean view cabins** - natural light and ocean views, great value for many travelers and safe for young children.

**Balcony cabins** - private outdoor space, perfect for scenic destinations and relaxing mornings.

**Suites** - additional space and premium amenities, enhanced service and exclusive benefits,

**Location matters too:**

Mid-ship cabins experience less motion.

Higher decks offer easier access to pools and activities.

Avoid cabins directly below pools, theaters, or nightclubs if you're a light sleeper

# Choosing the right *Cruise line*



## Mainstream

Best for: Families, couples, first-time cruisers, multigenerational groups.

- Large ships with extensive entertainment
- Multiple dining venues and activities
- Budget-friendly to moderate pricing

Examples: Royal Caribbean International, Carnival Cruise Line, Norwegian Cruise Line, Disney, MSC Cruises.

## Expedition Cruises

Best for: Adventure seekers and destination-focused travelers.

- Remote destinations
- Expert guides and enrichment programs
- Small expedition vessels

Examples: Scenic, Viking, Silversea, Seabourn, Hurtigruten, Ponant, Lindblad.

## Premium Cruises

Best for: Mature travelers seeking a balance of value and comfort.

- Higher service standards
- Better dining and enrichment programs
- Less crowded than mainstream ships

Examples: Princess Cruises, Holland America Line, Celebrity Cruises.

## Adults-Only Cruises

Best for: Couples, solo travelers, and adults seeking a child-free atmosphere.

- Sophisticated entertainment
- Modern dining concepts
- Relaxed onboard environment

Examples: Virgin Voyages, Viking Cruises, Oceania.

## Luxury Cruises

Best for: Travelers seeking exceptional service and inclusions.

- Smaller ships
- Spacious accommodations
- Fine dining and personalized service
- Many amenities included

Examples: Regent Seven Seas Cruises, Seabourn Cruise Line, Silversea Cruises, Scenic, Azamara, Cunard, Explora Journeys, Scenic etc.

## River Cruises

Best for: Cultural travelers and relaxed, immersive itineraries.

- Scenic sailing through historic cities and villages
- Frequent, easy shore access
- Focus on culture, history, and guided excursions
- Intimate service with fewer onboard amenities than ocean cruises

# Let's talk about *Staterooms*

## Inside / Interior

**Best for:** Budget-conscious travelers, first-time cruisers, active guests

- Most affordable option onboard
- No windows nor natural light
- Ideal for guests who spend little time in the cabin and like to sleep in a dark room.



## Oceanview

**Best for:** Value-focused travelers who want natural light

- Window with ocean views (no balcony)
- More spacious feel than interior cabins
- Great for scenic cruising days
- Safe cabin option for families with young children



## Balcony / Veranda

**Best for:** Couples, honeymooners, and relaxation-focused travelers

- Private outdoor space with seating
- Fresh air and unobstructed views
- Strong balance of comfort and value
- Must-have when the ship does Scenic cruising days



## Suite & Penthouse suite

**Best for:** Luxury travelers, celebrations, families, and longer cruises

- Largest accommodations onboard
- Priority services (boarding, dining, disembarkation)
- Enhanced amenities, sometimes including butler service
- Premium locations and exclusive perks depending on cruise line.



# Staterooms

*that can cause inconveniences*



## Cabins above or below High-Traffic Areas

**Examples:** theatres, pools, open deck areas, bars & disco lounges, elevators, laundromats, dining venues.

- Noise from shows, footsteps, or early morning cleaning
- Vibration from public spaces above or below
- Increased foot traffic at peak hours

**Tip:** Check deck plans carefully before selecting your cabin.

## Obstructed view Oceanview & Balcony cabins

**Best to watch for:** lifeboats, structures, support beams or ship equipment blocking views.

- Partial or fully blocked ocean views
- Reduced natural light on balconies
- Less enjoyable scenic sailing experience

**Tip:** Always verify if a cabin is “fully unobstructed” before booking.

## Aft cabins (located at the rear of the ship)

**Pros & Cons:**

- Often larger balconies and great wake views
- Can experience noticeable vibration, especially on older ships
- Engine noise may be present in some categories

**Tip:** Great for views, but not ideal for light sleepers sensitive to vibration.

## Forward cabins

- More movement felt during rough seas
- Can experience wind noise on higher decks
- Require longer walking distances to elevators and venues

**Tip:** Best to be avoided by guests prone to seasickness.

## Connecting cabins

**Best for:** families (but not ideal for everyone)

- Interior door between two staterooms
- Less sound insulation between rooms
- Possible reduced privacy and noise transfer

**Tip:** If not traveling with family or friends, avoid unless necessary.

# Insider tips about Staterooms

## Guaranteed cabins (GTY)

You choose a cabin category (Interior, Oceanview, Balcony, etc.), but the cruise line assigns your exact room closer to sailing.

### Pros:

- Often lower price than selecting a specific cabin
- Chance of a complimentary upgrade within the same category or higher
- Good for flexible travelers

### Cons:

- No control over location
- You may be assigned near noisy areas or less desirable decks

**Best for:** Budget-focused, flexible travelers who care more about price than location.

## Premium Stateroom Categories

Most cruise lines offer enhanced cabin tiers with extra perks:

- Princess Cruises – Reserve & Sanctuary Collection
- Celebrity Cruises – Concierge Class & AquaClass
- Royal Caribbean – Sky Class / Star Class Suites (Suite Neighborhood)
- Norwegian Cruise Line – The Haven
- Carnival – Havana Cabins / Cloud 9 Spa Cabins

### Common perks include:

- Priority boarding and disembarkation
- Better locations on the ship
- Access to exclusive lounges or restaurants (varies by cruise line)
- Enhanced toiletries, bedding, and amenities.

**Best for:** Travelers who want added comfort and perks without necessarily booking full suites.

## Bidding for a cabin upgrade

Many cruise lines allow you to bid for a higher-category stateroom (e.g., Balcony to Suite).

### Pros:

- Potential to upgrade at a reduced cost
- You choose how much you're willing to pay
- Great value if your bid is accepted

### Cons:

- Not guaranteed
- No ability to choose exact cabin location

**Best for:** Travelers who want luxury perks without paying full suite pricing.

## Book early for best cabin selection

- The best locations (mid-ship, higher decks, unobstructed views) sell out first
- Early booking gives you more control over deck plans
- Often includes early booking promotions or onboard credit

**Tip:** Waiting for last-minute deals can limit your cabin choices significantly.

# Ship's size matters

The size of a cruise ship directly shapes the atmosphere onboard, the level of service, the variety of activities, and even the type of travelers you'll meet. From mega-resorts at sea to intimate boutique ships, each size offers a completely different vacation style.



## Large Cruise Ships (Mega Ships)

**Best for:** Families, multigenerational groups, and activity-seeking travelers.

Large cruise ships are floating resorts designed for entertainment, energy, and nonstop activity. These ships often carry thousands of guests and offer an impressive variety of features.

**What to expect:**

- Water parks, waterslides, and even roller coasters
- Broadway-style shows and large entertainment productions
- Multiple dining venues and casual options
- Dedicated kids' and teens' clubs
- Endless onboard activities and attractions

**Why travelers choose them:** They are ideal for families and social travelers who want excitement, variety, and constant entertainment without ever getting bored.



## Mid-Sized Cruise Ships

**Best for:** Couples, groups, and travelers seeking balance.

Mid-sized ships offer a perfect middle ground between large resort-style ships and smaller boutique vessels, without feeling overwhelming.

**What to expect:**

- Good selection of dining and entertainment options
- Easier navigation and less crowding
- A more relaxed atmosphere compared to mega ships
- Balanced mix of activities and quiet spaces

**Why travelers choose them:** They are ideal for those who want variety but still value comfort, space, and a relaxed onboard experience.



# Ship's size matters

## Small Cruise Ships

**Best for:** Couples, solo travelers, and social explorers.

Small ships focus on connection - both with destinations and with fellow travelers. With fewer passengers onboard, the experience feels more intimate and personal.

**What to expect:**

- Personalized service and attentive crew
- Easier to meet and socialize with other guests
- Access to unique ports and hidden destinations
- Less crowds and more relaxed atmosphere

**Why travelers choose them:** They are perfect for travelers who enjoy a boutique feel, meaningful connections, and a more laid-back pace.



## Ultra-Small & Boutique Ships

**Best for:** Luxury travelers, destination-focused guests, and those seeking exclusivity.

These ships prioritize experience over entertainment, often carrying only a few hundred guests or fewer.

**What to expect:**

- Highly personalized, almost private-yacht experience
- Exceptional service ratios (staff-to-guest)
- Destination-rich itineraries with longer port stays
- Quiet, elegant, and refined onboard atmosphere

**Why travelers choose them:** They are ideal for travelers who value exclusivity, privacy, and immersive travel over onboard attractions.



# Choosing the right Itinerary & Ports

When planning a cruise vacation, many travelers focus primarily on the ship. While the ship is certainly important, the itinerary and ports of call often have a greater impact on your overall vacation experience. Two cruises on identical ships can feel completely different depending on where they sail, how much time is spent in port, and what opportunities are available ashore.

## 1. Look beyond the cruise price

A cruise may appear to be an excellent deal, but the itinerary should always be evaluated alongside the fare.

### Ask yourself:

- Are the ports & destinations really the ones you genuinely want to visit?
- How many sea days are included?
- How long is the ship in each port?
- Are there overnight stays?
- Will you need expensive shore excursions?

Sometimes a slightly more expensive sailing offers significantly better port experiences and longer stays, making it a much better value.



## 2. Consider the type of itinerary you enjoy

**Port-Intensive Itineraries** - perfect for travelers who love sightseeing and exploration.

Examples: Mediterranean cruises, Baltic cruises, Norwegian Fjords cruises, Japan cruises.

These itineraries often feature:

- Multiple ports in consecutive days
- Early mornings and active sightseeing
- Less time spent enjoying the ship

**Relaxation-Focused Itineraries** - ideal for guests who enjoy the ship as much as the destination.

Examples: Caribbean cruises, Trans- Atlantic crossings, Hawaii & repositioning cruises

These itineraries typically include:

- More sea days
- More time to enjoy onboard amenities
- A slower pace

# Choosing the right Itinerary & Ports

## 3. Pay attention to port times

Not all port visits are equal. Many travelers overlook port times and only focus on destination names.

- A port of call from 7:00 AM to 2:00 PM may only provide 5-6 practical hours ashore after disembarkation.
- A port of call from 10:00 AM to 10:00 PM allows: sightseeing, shopping, local dining and even evening entertainment.
- A stop in Santorini from 7:00AM to 2:00PM provides a completely different experience than a stop from noon until late evening.



## 4. Understand tender ports

### What Is a Tender Port?

Some destinations do not have a cruise pier large enough for the ship or simply the water is too shallow for a large cruise ship to dock. Instead the cruise ship will be anchored offshore and guests are transported to land via smaller tender boats.

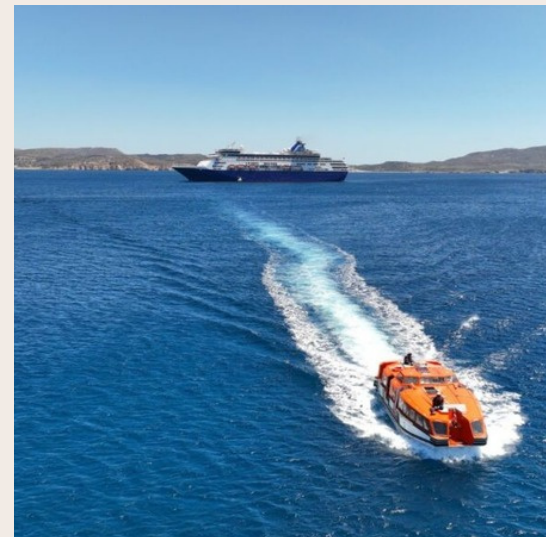
**Common tender ports include:** Grand Cayman, Belize City, Kona in Hawaii, Santorini, Cannes, some Alaskan ports, South Pacific islands and many ports in Australia & New Zealand.

What you should know:

- Tendering take between 30 to 90 minutes each way.
- Involve waiting lines.
- Be affected by weather conditions.
- Occasionally result in canceled port visits.

If mobility is a concern, tender ports may be more challenging than traditional docked ports.

**Insider Tip:** Guests booked on cruise line shore excursions often receive priority tender access, allowing them to reach shore earlier than independent travelers.



# Choosing the right Itinerary & Ports

## 5. Overnight and Late-Night port stays are hidden gems

Itineraries with overnight ports are popular amongst avid cruises because they get to experience the destination after day visitors leave.

An overnight stay often provides a richer destination experience than visiting two separate ports for a few hours each.

**Examples include:** Venice, Reykjavik, Istanbul, Quebec City, Sydney, Singapore, Dubai & more.

**Benefits include:**

- Sunset photography
- Local nightlife
- Evening dining experiences
- Less crowded attractions



## 6. Research distance from port to attractions/city centre

Not every port places you directly in the city center. Many first-time cruisers are surprised to learn that some famous attractions may be 1–3 hours away from the ship.

**Excellent walk-off ports:** Copenhagen, Valletta, Kotor, Dubrovnik, Juneau, Ketchikan, Sydney.

**Ports requiring significant travel time:**

- Rome (from Civitavecchia)
- Paris (from Le Havre)
- Berlin (from Warnemünde)
- Florence/Pisa (from Livorno)



## 7. Don't assume every port is guaranteed

Weather, tides, and operational issues can cause itinerary changes.

**This is particularly common for cruise itineraries in:** Alaska, Northern Europe, Iceland, Greenland, Antarctica, Caribbean during hurricane season & South Pacific islands.

Cruise lines reserve the right to modify itineraries for safety reasons.

**Insider Tip:** Book a cruise for the overall itinerary and experience - not for one specific port.

If missing a particular destination would ruin your vacation, consider a land-based trip instead.

# Choosing the right Itinerary & Ports

## 8. Always be back onboard early

One of the most important cruise rules. The recommended practice is to return to the ship at least 60–90 minutes before all-aboard time, even earlier if you're visiting a destination far from the ship.

**The ship will wait for:**

- Cruise line sponsored excursions delayed due to transportation issues
- Medical emergencies processed by the ship's medical team

**The ship will NOT wait for:**

- Independent tours
- Taxis stuck in traffic
- Late-returning guests

**Insider Tip:** "All Aboard" time is usually earlier than the ship's departure time.

**Example:** Ship departs: 5:00 PM - All aboard: 4:30 PM

Missing the ship can result in:

- Emergency travel arrangements
- Hotel expenses
- Flight changes
- Significant unexpected costs



## 9. Consider seasonal differences

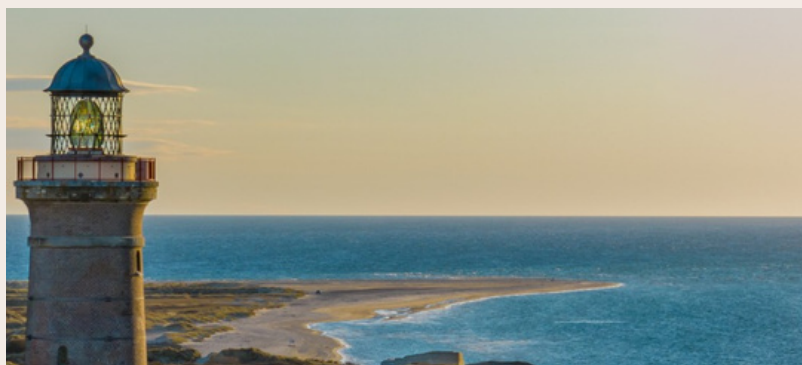
The season you choose can greatly influence your cruise experience, affecting weather, pricing, crowds, and what you'll see ashore. For example, the **Caribbean** offers warm weather year-round, with winter providing ideal conditions and summer often featuring lower fares but a higher chance of tropical storms. In **Alaska**, early-season cruises showcase snow-capped mountains, peak summer brings the best wildlife viewing and longest daylight hours, while late-season sailings offer beautiful fall colors and fewer crowds.

## 10. Balance ports and sea days

Many first-time cruisers choose itineraries with the maximum number of ports. Sometimes four excellent ports with two sea days create a better vacation than six rushed port calls. Experienced cruisers often prefer balance.

**Things to consider:**

- How active you want to be
- Whether you enjoy relaxing onboard
- The age and mobility of your travel party



# Cruise bundles & all-inclusive packages

Many cruise lines now offer bundled packages that combine popular amenities into one discounted price. Instead of purchasing each item separately, these packages often include beverages, Wi-Fi, specialty dining, gratuities, and onboard credit.

## Examples include:

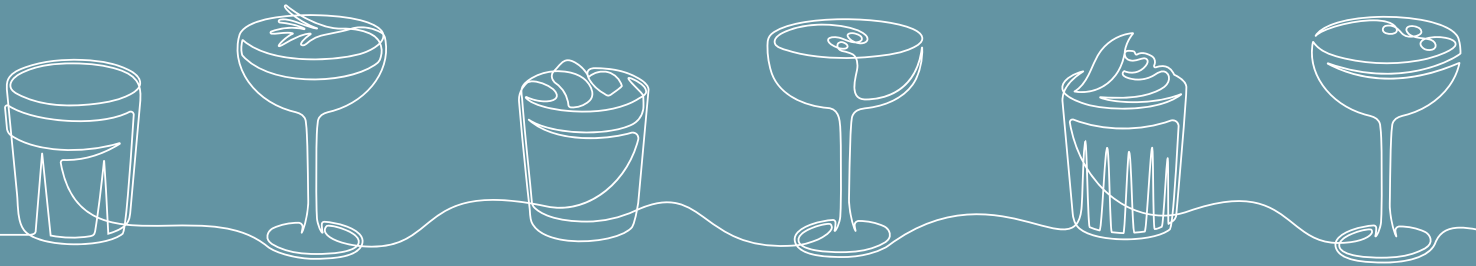
- Princess Cruises – **Princess Plus & Princess Premier** which includes the following: Wi-Fi, Beverage Package, Casual or Specialty Dining (Premier), Crew Appreciation (Gratuities), Premium Desserts, Fitness Classes, Unlimited Juice Bar, Photo Package (Premier), Reserved Theater Seating (Premier)
- Celebrity Cruises – **All Included** which includes the following: Classic Drink Package, Basic Wi-Fi. Guests can upgrade to Premium Wi-Fi or Premium Beverage Packages.
- Holland America Line – **Have It All** which includes the following: Shore Excursion Credit, Signature Beverage Package, Specialty Dining and Wi-Fi Package.
- Norwegian Cruise Line – **Free At Sea** which includes the following: Beverage Package, Specialty Dining, Wi-Fi Minutes, Shore Excursion Credit and Third & Fourth Guest Offers (select sailings).

**Insider Tip: Cruise lines frequently discount bundle packages before embarkation. Purchasing them in advance is often significantly cheaper than buying once onboard.**

# Drinks packages



A beverage package can be one of the most valuable cruise add-ons, particularly for guests who enjoy specialty coffees in the morning, bottled water throughout the day, soft drinks, fresh juices, cocktails by the pool, or wine with dinner. Rather than paying for each drink individually, beverage packages allow you to enjoy a wide selection of drinks for a fixed daily price, making it easier to budget your vacation expenses.



**Princess Cruises** has two options:

- Princess Plus includes the Plus Beverage Package, featuring cocktails, beer, wine by the glass, specialty coffees and teas, fountain sodas, juices, bottled water, smoothies, and more within the package limits.
- Princess Premier upgrades the beverage selection by increasing the drink price limit, offering access to a wider variety of premium wines, champagnes, and top-shelf spirits.

**Royal Caribbean** offers several beverage options, including:

- Deluxe Beverage Package (alcoholic drinks, specialty coffees, bottled water, fresh juices, premium teas, and soft drinks)
- Refreshment Package (non-alcoholic beverages)
- Classic Soda Package

**Celebrity Cruises** guests can choose between the :

- Classic Drink Package
- Premium Drink Package includes higher-priced wines, premium spirits, craft cocktails, and an expanded selection of beverages.



**Norwegian Cruise Line** has the Unlimited Open Bar Package (often included with the Free At Sea promotion) offers a wide selection of spirits, cocktails, beers, wines by the glass, soft drinks, and juices, with the option to purchase premium beverages above the package limit.

**Holland America Line** offers beverage packages range from soft drinks to the Elite Beverage Package, which includes premium cocktails, wines, beers, specialty coffees, bottled water, and sodas.

**MSC Cruises** offers several drink packages, from non-alcoholic options to the Easy, Easy Plus, and Premium Extra packages, each providing access to progressively larger selections of beverages and higher-priced premium brands.

**Virgin Voyages** takes a different approach by including essential beverages such as filtered water, soft drinks, juices, teas, and drip coffee in the cruise fare. Guests who plan to enjoy alcoholic beverages can pre-purchase a **Bar Tab**, which functions as onboard credit exclusively for drinks and often includes bonus credit during promotional periods.

# Insider Tips about drinks packages



- Purchase beverage packages before your cruise whenever possible, as cruise lines frequently offer pre-cruise discounts.
- Review what is already included in your cruise fare or bundle package to avoid paying twice for the same benefits.
- Check whether everyone in the same stateroom must purchase the same alcoholic beverage package, as this policy varies by cruise line.
- Remember that beverage packages usually apply only to drinks up to a certain price limit. If you order a premium drink above that limit, you'll typically pay only the difference rather than the full price.

## Specialty dining packages

While complimentary dining is available on every cruise, specialty restaurants provide a more intimate experience with elevated cuisine and personalized service. Many cruise lines offer multi-night dining packages that reduce the cost compared to booking each restaurant separately.

Popular options include:

- Steakhouses
- Italian Restaurants
- French Cuisine
- Seafood Restaurants
- Teppanyaki
- Brazilian Steakhouses
- Sushi Bars



**Insider Tip:** If your itinerary includes many port days, consider fewer specialty dining reservations since you'll likely enjoy local cuisine ashore.

# Crew gratuities / service charges



Many cruise lines charge daily gratuities that are distributed among crew members working behind the scenes and throughout the ship. For most mainstream cruise lines, automatic crew gratuities typically range between \$17 and \$20 per person, per day for standard staterooms. Guests staying in suites or premium accommodations generally pay \$20 to \$25 per person, per day, depending on the cruise line.

**Depending on the cruise line, gratuities may:**

- Be automatically added to your onboard account
- Be prepaid before sailing
- Be included within premium bundle packages
- Luxury cruise lines often include gratuities in the cruise fare.

**Insider Tip:** Pre-paying gratuities before your cruise helps lock in today's rates and reduces your final onboard bill.

## Internet packages



Internet access has become increasingly important for many travelers. If you plan to work remotely, video call family, or stream content, upgrading to premium internet is usually worthwhile.

Cruise lines typically offer:

- One-device plans
- Multi-device plans
- Basic browsing packages
- Premium streaming packages

**Insider Tip:** Internet packages are almost always less expensive when purchased before sailing.



# Travel protection & insurance

One of the most valuable add-ons is travel protection. Unexpected events can happen before or during your vacation, making travel insurance a worthwhile consideration for most travelers.

**Depending on the policy, coverage may include: trip cancellation, trip interruption, medical emergencies, emergency evacuation, lost luggage, travel delays and missed connections.**

There are several ways to purchase travel insurance:

- **Cruise Line Protection Plans** - most cruise lines offer their own travel protection plans during the booking process. These plans are convenient and specifically designed for cruise vacations, often including cruise cancellation benefits and assistance with itinerary changes. However, coverage limits and medical benefits may be lower than those offered by independent insurers, so it's important to review the policy carefully.
- **Independent Travel Insurance Providers** - many travelers choose to purchase coverage through a third-party travel insurance company. These policies often provide more comprehensive protection, higher medical coverage limits, and greater flexibility. If you travel several times a year, an annual (multi-trip) travel insurance policy can be an excellent value, providing coverage for multiple vacations under one plan while eliminating the need to purchase insurance for each individual trip.

- **Credit Card Travel Protection** - some premium travel credit cards include complimentary travel insurance benefits when you use the card to pay for all or part of your trip. Depending on the card, these benefits may include trip cancellation or interruption coverage, travel delay reimbursement, lost luggage protection, rental car insurance, and emergency assistance. Since coverage varies significantly between credit cards, always review your card's Guide to Benefits to understand what is and isn't covered before relying solely on this protection.

**Insider Tip:** Don't assume all travel insurance policies are the same. Compare coverage limits, deductibles, exclusions, and medical evacuation benefits before purchasing. If you're traveling internationally, visiting remote destinations, or taking an expensive cruise, comprehensive travel insurance is often one of the smartest investments you can make.

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# *Let's talk about* **Shore Excursions**

One of the greatest advantages of cruising is waking up in a new destination almost every day. From ancient European cities and tropical Caribbean islands to remote Alaskan wilderness and charming Mediterranean villages, every port offers an opportunity to discover something unforgettable. But with hundreds of shore excursions available, choosing the right experience can feel overwhelming. A little planning goes a long way in turning a good cruise into an extraordinary one.

## **What are Shore Excursions?**

Shore excursions are organized tours and activities available while your cruise ship is in port. They can be booked directly through your cruise line or through carefully selected independent tour operators. They range from relaxing beach days and sightseeing tours to thrilling adventures and exclusive cultural experiences.



## **Choose Experiences, not just Tours**

**Rather than trying to visit every attraction, focus on the memories you want to create.** Whether it's strolling through historic old towns with a local guide, sampling regional cuisine and wines, exploring castles, ancient ruins, and UNESCO World Heritage Sites, encountering wildlife, snorkeling in crystal-clear waters, taking a scenic train ride or helicopter flight, or immersing yourself in cooking classes, artisan workshops, and cultural performances, the most rewarding shore excursions are those that offer authentic local experiences rather than simply checking famous landmarks off a list.

# Should you book Shore Excursions only through the cruise line?

Booking through the cruise line offers several advantages:

- The ship will wait if a cruise-sponsored excursion is delayed.
- Transportation and logistics are handled for you.
- Easy meeting points and multilingual guides.
- Added peace of mind, especially for first-time cruisers.

Booking through the independent tour operators may offer:

- Smaller group sizes.
- Lower prices.
- More personalized itineraries.
- Unique local experiences not offered by the cruise line.

**An experienced Travel Advisor can help determine which option offers the best value for each destination.**

## Don't overbook excursions for every port

Many first-time cruisers try to schedule an excursion in every port. While exciting, it can become exhausting.

Instead, balance your itinerary by mixing:

- Active adventure days.
- Cultural sightseeing.
- Relaxing beach days.
- Independent exploration.
- Time onboard to enjoy the ship while many passengers are ashore.

## Research the port before you arrive

Not every port requires a guided excursion. Before exploring on your own, research whether the destination is walkable, how far the attractions are from the cruise terminal, the reliability of local transportation, and allow plenty of time to return before all aboard.



# *Insider tips about* **Shore Excursions**

- **Book popular excursions early** - Helicopter tours, glacier landings, exclusive wine tastings, and small-group experiences often sell out months before sailing.
- **Consider the season** - Whale watching in Alaska, tulip gardens in the Netherlands, Northern Lights excursions, and Christmas Markets are all highly seasonal experiences.
- **Read the duration carefully** - Some tours last only two hours, while others occupy almost the entire day.
- **Mix organized and independent exploration** - A guided morning excursion followed by free time in town often creates the perfect balance.
- **Avoid unnecessary shopping pressure** - Some tours include scheduled shopping stops. If shopping isn't your priority, choose excursions that maximize sightseeing instead.
- **Check what's included** - Meals, entrance fees, equipment rental, transportation, and gratuities vary by excursion.
- **Pack a small day bag** - Make sure to take essentials such as your cruise card, ID, credit card, sunscreen, hat, water bottle, phone charger, and any beach gear if needed. Most importantly, wear comfortable walking shoes.
- **Tender ports** - booking a shore excursion directly through the cruise line is often the safest option. If a cruise-sponsored tour is delayed, the ship will wait for its returning guests, giving you added peace of mind and allowing you to enjoy your day without worrying about missing the all-aboard time.



# Understanding and Preventing Seasickness on your cruise

Seasickness, also known as **motion sickness**, occurs when your inner ear senses movement that your eyes don't see, creating conflicting signals that confuse the brain. This sensory mismatch can lead to symptoms such as dizziness, nausea, sweating, headaches, fatigue, and, in some cases, vomiting. While anyone can experience seasickness, some people are naturally more sensitive to motion than others.



## Tips to prevent Seasickness while cruising

- **Choose the right cabin** – Book a cabin mid-ship on a lower deck, where ship movement is minimal. Avoid the very front or back if you're prone to motion sickness.
- **Get some fresh air** – If you start feeling unwell, head to an open deck and focus on the horizon. Fresh air and a steady view can quickly ease symptoms.
- **Eat light & stay hydrated** – Stick to light meals, drink plenty of water, and avoid excessive alcohol, caffeine, sugary or greasy foods, especially in rough seas.
- **Pack motion sickness remedies** – Bring remedies such as Dramamine, Bonine, ginger products, or acupressure wristbands if you're sensitive to motion.
- **Take medication early** – Motion sickness medication works best when taken before symptoms begin or before sailing through rough waters.
- **Stay midship** – Spend time in lounges or public areas near the center of the ship, where movement is less noticeable.
- **Get plenty of rest** – Being well-rested and hydrated helps your body adjust more easily to the ship's motion.
- **Visit the medical center if needed** – If symptoms become severe or persistent, the ship's medical team can provide effective treatment and medication.
- **Don't let seasickness stop you** – Modern cruise ships are highly stable, and with a little preparation, most travelers enjoy a comfortable, seasickness-free vacation.

# Cruise Loyalty Programs

If you love cruising, joining a cruise line's loyalty program is one of the easiest ways to enhance your vacation experience. Most major cruise lines offer complimentary loyalty programs that reward repeat guests with exclusive benefits, priority services, and special onboard privileges. Best of all, enrollment is free - simply sign up and start earning rewards with every sailing.

## How do Loyalty Programs work?

Each cruise line has its own loyalty program, where members earn points or cruise credits based on the number of nights sailed or completed voyages. As you accumulate points, you'll move through higher membership tiers, unlocking additional benefits along the way.

## Typical Loyalty Perks

Depending on your membership level, you may enjoy benefits such as:

- Priority check-in and embarkation
- Exclusive member events and cocktail receptions
- Complimentary laundry service
- Discounts on specialty dining, spa treatments, internet packages, and shore excursions
- Priority tender tickets at select ports
- Welcome gifts and complimentary beverages
- Dedicated loyalty customer service
- Invitations to exclusive onboard events and experiences.



## Stay loyal or explore?

Some travelers choose to remain loyal to one cruise line to maximize their benefits, while others enjoy trying different cruise lines to experience a variety of ships and destinations. There is no right or wrong approach, it simply depends on your travel style. If you have a favorite cruise line that you sail frequently, remaining loyal can provide excellent long-term value.



# *Insider tips about* **Cruise Loyalty Programs**

## **Can you get free cruises or upgrades?**

While loyalty status doesn't guarantee complimentary cruises or cabin upgrades, it can improve your chances. Many cruise lines offer exclusive promotions, member-only discounts, priority upgrade opportunities, and early access to special offers. Higher-tier members may also receive complimentary cabin upgrades, free internet, onboard credits, or invitations to exclusive events when available.

### **Insider Tip**

Always include your loyalty membership number when making a reservation to ensure you receive all eligible benefits. If you've cruised with a line before but never enrolled, you may still be able to receive credit for previous sailings - it's worth checking before your next cruise.

## **Major cruise line loyalty programs**

- Princess Cruises – Captain's Circle
- Royal Caribbean International – Crown & Anchor Society
- Celebrity Cruises – Captain's Club
- Carnival Cruise Line – VIFP Club
- Norwegian Cruise Line – Latitudes Rewards
- Holland America Line – Mariner Society
- MSC Cruises – MSC Voyagers Club
- Disney Cruise Line – Castaway Club
- Virgin Voyages – Virgin Voyages Sailing Club
- Cunard Line – Cunard World Club
- Oceania Cruises – Oceania Club
- Regent Seven Seas Cruises – Seven Seas Society
- Seabourn Cruise Line – Seabourn Club
- Silversea Cruises – Venetian Society
- Azamara Cruises – Azamara Circle
- Viking Cruises – Viking Explorer Society
- Explora Journeys – Explora Club
- Windstar Cruises – Windstar Yacht Club
- Paul Gauguin Cruises – Paul Gauguin Society
- Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours – Scenic Club
- Emerald Cruises – EmeraldEXPLORER Loyalty Club



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