The Cruising 101 Handbook
Your ultimate guide to cruising
Contents

Cheat Sheets

04 How to Compare the Best Cruise Lines
We created this handy evaluation of the different options — and their strengths and weaknesses — so you have everything you need to know in one place.

06 How to Pick the Best Cruise Itinerary
Not sure which route is right for you? Read our handy evaluation of the highs and lows of popular choices to help you decide where to sail next.

10 When is the best time to cruise?
There is no one-size-fits-all answer for when to sail. Whether you’re looking to avoid the rough seas or score a bargain, there’s a time of year that’s best for you.

16 What is the dress code for my cruise?
It may be the most confusing question in cruising: What clothing should I pack? The truth varies from cruise line to cruise line, so we called them to get the answers.

Q & A

08 9 commonly asked questions about cruising
Have you heard that the food onboard is terrible, or that sea days are dull? First-time cruisers have lots of questions when trying to determine if cruising is the right choice. Fortunately, we have answers.

12 Looking for the best cabin?
7 locations to avoid
Not all cabins – even ones in the same category – are created equal when it comes to noise. Check out our list of advice for how to pick a quiet stateroom.

14 The Ultimate Caribbean Cruise Packing List
Follow these five easy steps, and you’ll be able to pack for a one-week Caribbean cruise in as little as 10 minutes.

19 7 Ways to Save Money on Your Next Cruise
Cruising doesn’t have to be expensive. In addition to taking steps to cut costs during booking, you also can embrace strategies to save money once your journey begins. Here are some of our favorite tips.

21 How to avoid getting seasick
Seasickness can easily ruin your vacation. Whether you’re a first-time cruiser or a seasoned one, it’s important to know what you can do to ensure that rough seas don’t banish you to your cabin.

22 The 6 most annoying things about cruising
Here are some of our biggest pet peeves about cruises — and the lines that have brilliantly resolved these issues, making the sea a better place to vacation.
About Us

About Cruiseline.com

Cruiseline.com launched in December 2012 as an independent, objective guide to cruises and quickly became the second largest social review site on the Internet. Members use the site to simplify the task of choosing a cruise with unbiased opinions from fellow passengers, and to join the growing community.

Unlike other sites, Cruiseline.com guarantees the authenticity of thousands of verified reviews — which means you know you’re reading real reviews, by real people, who went on real cruises.

Best of all, Cruiseline.com uses member opinions to rank each cruise with a “Sail Score,” so you can see how ships and even itineraries stack up to determine the best cruise.

In addition, in November 2013, Cruiseline.com acquired Ship Mate cruise app, the largest mobile community for cruisers.

Cruiseline.com knows that researching and booking cruises isn’t always a straightforward process, so we dedicated an entire section of our site to providing our users with authoritative content on all things cruising. First-timers and veteran cruisers alike will find plenty of tips on how to book, what to pack, and what to do in port. For more helpful hints, plus fun quizzes and gorgeous photos that will inspire you to book your next cruise right away, head to Cruiseline.com/advice.

Our Editorial Policy

All of our articles are original and written by professional travel writers whom we consider the best in the business. We pay our impressive team for their work and, although we do allow them to accept discounts, this never influences our coverage. Our staff works hard to deliver up-to-date information, and we have a rigorous fact-checking process in place. That said, we suggest that you call ahead whenever possible to ensure that nothing has changed since publication.

Contact Us

Got a story idea? Want to comment about our fledgling magazine? Send us an email at hello@cruiseline.com. We’ll write back right away, assuming we’re on dry land.

CONTRIBUTORS

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Sherri Eisenberg

ART DIRECTOR
Juan A. Vazquez

PHOTO EDITOR
Kristi Drago-Price

COPY EDITOR
Lana Gates

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Thomas Faddegon

EDITORIAL INTERN
Laura Brothers

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Heidi Sarna
Polina Myagkov
Simon Duvall
Matt Villano
How to Compare the Best Cruise Lines

BY HEIDI SARNA

Not sure which cruise line is right for you? We created this handy evaluation of the different options — and their strengths and weaknesses — so you have everything you need to know in one place. Share it, save it, and print it out so you can keep it at hand when you’re planning your next vacation.

About the author

Heidi Sarna has been traveling and writing about it for 20 years, the second decade often with her twin boys in tow. She has penned cruise guidebooks for Frommer’s for years and has also written for the International Herald Tribune, Condé Nast Traveler, Travel Weekly, and Parenting. Heidi is an ex-New Yorker now living in Singapore.
LARGE
Carnival Cruise Line
Celebrity Cruises
Costa Cruises
Cunard Line
Disney Cruise Line
MSC Cruises
Norwegian Cruise Line
Princess Cruises
Royal Caribbean International

MEDIUM
Costa Cruises
Crystal Cruises
Holland America Line
MSC Cruises
Oceania Cruises

SMALL
Azamara Club Cruises
Oceania Cruises
Regent Seven Seas Cruises
Seabourn Cruise Line
SeaDream Yacht Club
Silversea Cruises
Windstar Cruises

Crystal Cruises, Oceania Cruises, Regent Seven Seas Cruises, Seabourn Cruise Line, SeaDream Yacht Club, Silversea Cruises
EXPENSIVE

Azamara Club Cruises, Crystal Cruises, Cunard Line, Disney Cruise Line, Princess Cruises, Windstar Cruises
MODERATE

Carnival Cruise Line, Celebrity Cruises, Costa Cruises, Holland America Line, MSC Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line, Royal Caribbean International
BUDGET

Couples
Azamara Club Cruises
Carnival Cruise Line
Celebrity Cruises
Costa Cruises
Crystal Cruises
Cunard Line
Holland America Line
MSC Cruises
Norwegian Cruise Line
Oceania Cruises
Princess Cruises
Regent Seven Seas Cruises
Royal Caribbean International

Party
Carnival Cruise Line
Costa Cruises
MSC Cruises
Norwegian Cruise Line
Royal Caribbean International

Family
Carnival Cruise Line
Celebrity Cruises
Costa Cruises
Crystal Cruises
Cunard Line
Disney Cruise Line
Holland America Line
MSC Cruises
Norwegian Cruise Line
Princess Cruises
Royal Caribbean International

Luxury
Azamara Club Cruises
Crystal Cruises
Oceania Cruises
Regent Seven Seas Cruises
Seabourn Cruise Line
SeaDream Yacht Club
Silversea Cruises

Learning
Celebrity Cruises
Crystal Cruises
Cunard Line
Holland America Line
Regent Seven Seas Cruises
Seabourn Cruise Line
Silversea Cruises

Offbeat
Windstar Cruises
How to Pick the Best Itinerary

BY HEIDI SARNA

A visit to Mykonos, in the Eastern Med, offers beaches, sunshine, and great taverna cuisine. - Photo by Royal Caribbean International

Thinking about taking a cruise, but not sure which one is right for you? Check out our handy evaluation of the most common routes — and their strengths and weaknesses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITINERARIES</th>
<th>COMMON ROUTES</th>
<th>HIGHS</th>
<th>LOWS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean - Eastern</td>
<td>7-night routes round trip from Florida or Puerto Rico.</td>
<td>There are gorgeous beaches throughout the region, and plenty of snorkeling and diving.</td>
<td>You’ll find overcrowding and traffic in port towns, as well as shopping areas designed just for tourists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITINERARIES</td>
<td>COMMON ROUTES</td>
<td>HIGHS</td>
<td>LOWS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean - Western</td>
<td>7-night routes round trip from Florida, Louisiana, and Texas.</td>
<td>Mayan ruins and great silver jewelry shopping (in Mexico), and eco-excursions on most routes, from jungle hikes to kayaking, tubing, snorkeling, and diving.</td>
<td>Overcrowding and traffic jams in port towns, as well as shopping areas designed just for tourists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean - Southern</td>
<td>7- to 14-night routes from Puerto Rico, Barbados, or St. Martin.</td>
<td>Fewer crowds than eastern and western Caribbean, and excellent beaches.</td>
<td>Longer — and sometimes more expensive — flights home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>7-night routes from San Francisco, Seattle, or Vancouver.</td>
<td>You’ll see glaciers, fjords, and plenty of wildlife, especially otters and whales.</td>
<td>There’s crowding in many port towns, and the region gets a lot of rainfall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediterranean - Eastern</td>
<td>7- to 14-night routes from Venice, Istanbul, or Piraeus (Athens) to Turkey, Greece, Croatia, and Italy.</td>
<td>Important historic sights date back thousands of years.</td>
<td>Venice, Athens, Istanbul, and Rhodes are packed in the summer, and Italy is expensive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediterranean - Western</td>
<td>7- to 14-night routes from Barcelona or Civitavecchia (Rome) to Spain, France, Monte Carlo, and Italy.</td>
<td>Look for spectacular food throughout the region. Barcelona, Rome, and Florence are home to significant artwork.</td>
<td>It’s an hour’s drive to Florence and longer from port to Rome. August is peak tourist season, and what isn’t closed, is packed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltic</td>
<td>7- to 14-night routes from Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Harwich, Dover, or London (Southampton) to St. Petersburg, Russia, and Baltic ports or the Norwegian Fjords.</td>
<td>Gilded St. Petersburg charms us, as does the beauty of the Norwegian fjords.</td>
<td>Expect long lines at key sights in Russia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia - Andaman Sea</td>
<td>3- to 7-night routes from Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand.</td>
<td>Stunning temples and unforgettable flavor Asian cuisine.</td>
<td>Many beaches — except Langkawi’s — are narrow and overrun by reckless jet skiers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia - Gulf of Thailand and South China Sea</td>
<td>10- to 14-night routes from Singapore or Hong Kong to Vietnam and Thailand.</td>
<td>Expect gilded temples, diverse and delicious cuisines, and great shopping.</td>
<td>Some sights are a two- to three-hour drive — one way! — from the port.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Golden buddha statues in Bangkok, Thailand  
*Photo by Thinkstock*

Hubbard Glacier in Glacier Bay National Park, Alaska  
*Photo by Thinkstock*
9 commonly asked questions

BY POLINA MYAGKOV

First-time cruisers often have many preconceptions about sailing. You may fear that the food on all ships is terrible, that days spent onboard are a claustrophobic’s worst nightmare, or that cruises are simply boring. Here are nine common questions from first-time cruisers:

1. Are cruises really all-inclusive?

   With onboard specialty restaurants, paid entertainment options, and extra charges for alcohol and soft drinks, mass-market lines are most definitely not all-inclusive. Many luxury lines, however, are much closer to the “one price covers all” ideal.

   The initial cost of a cruise on Silversea, for example, includes everything from drinks at dinner to your in-cabin minibar, to transportation into town in most ports of call. Love excursions? Though Silversea offers free guided excursions for passengers aboard two of its vessels (Silver Explorer and Silver Galapagos), Regent Seven Seas Cruises is an even more inclusive option — it features free, unlimited shore excursions in all ports.

2. Is the food good?

   In most cases, the answer is the same at sea as it is on land — you get what you pay for. Don’t expect to be blown away by the spaghetti carbonara in the main dining room on budget lines. Some luxury lines, however, offer fine dining experiences that rival the best-rated restaurants on land. Restaurant 2 aboard Seabourn Odyssey, for example, serves delicious seven-course meals in an intimate setting.
Will I feel claustrophobic?
We only get claustrophobic on the smallest of oceangoing vessels. Fortunately, ships come in many sizes. Some are as large as shopping malls and comfortably accommodate thousands of people — they’re so large, you might almost forget you’re out on open water. Inside cabins can feel confined, however, so if you anticipate being anxious, book a cabin that has a porthole or balcony.

Will it be crowded?
Probably not, but it depends on the ship and whether it is at capacity. If you’re worried you’ll be literally rubbing shoulders with other cruisers, do your research. To get an accurate idea of how crowded the ship will be, look up the ratio of passengers to square feet on the line’s website, and then compare the numbers to similarly priced competitors.

Are cruises cheesy?
The personalities of cruise lines are, well, not unlike people: No two are alike. Some mass-market lines offer hairy chest contests. Onboard luxury ships, though, you’re more likely to partake in a wine pairing class than sing along with an elderly woman belting out an oldie. Our experience? Even the cheesiest of shows can be fun if you have a sense of humor, and a couple of cocktails.

Will I be able to see everything?
Maybe you could in a small port with the right shore excursion. However, instead of trying to cram all the sights into your brief time in town, choose a few things you’re excited about seeing or doing at each destination. Think of the cruise as a tasting platter that can help you determine the places you’ll want to return to for a longer visit.

Will I get seasick?
When the weather is mild and the seas are steady, you won’t feel much rocking — especially on large, modern ships. If you’re prone to motion sickness, however, check out our suggestions on seasickness prevention.

Will I get my passport stamped?
If you’re flying into a foreign country for your cruise, your passport will get stamped when you go through customs in the airport, but otherwise, the answer is largely no. (And no, we don’t like this practice either.)

Will I be bored?
We highly doubt it — especially if you pick the right line for you. Cruise lines cater to different demographics. Families on a budget are not likely to enjoy luxury liners that have little to no children’s entertainment, just as an elderly couple looking for a quiet getaway may not enjoy the options on a ship that boasts rock-climbing walls and ice skating rinks. Since entertainment options vary vastly, it’s important to do your research before booking to ensure you find a ship that appeals to you.

About the author
Polina Myagkov joins Bon Voyage from the entertainment industry, where she managed social media for clients such as Disney, DreamWorks, and Universal Studios. Polina loves her hometown of Brooklyn, but she’s excited about hopping from ship to ship to give readers the scoop on cruises and ports.
When is the best time to cruise?

BY SIMON DUVALL

There is no one-size-fits-all answer for when to sail: It depends on your own personal priorities. Check out our breakdown of when to cruise based on destination, weather, and price to find your perfect fit:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESTINATION</th>
<th>BEST PRICE</th>
<th>BEST WEATHER</th>
<th>WE RECOMMEND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bermuda</td>
<td>March, April, and November</td>
<td>Bermuda is often in the path of storms during hurricane season (early June through late November), with the biggest risk from August through October. May through July is usually ideal.</td>
<td>Cruise during Bermuda’s festival season (winter through early summer) for cultural events like the Bermuda Festival of the Performing Arts, which draws artists from around the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DESTINATION</td>
<td>BEST PRICE</td>
<td>BEST WEATHER</td>
<td>WE RECOMMEND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>January, May, and September</td>
<td>Hurricane season lasts from June through November, so winter is prime time.</td>
<td>Winter is a no-brainer. (Plus, it’s colder up north and kids are in school, so ships are less crowded.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada &amp; New England</td>
<td>June through early September, as well as late October</td>
<td>Temperatures are warmer in the summer months, and June, July, and September are driest.</td>
<td>Fall “leaf-peeking” season runs from the second or third week of September to mid-October.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>Mid-May to early June and late August to mid-September. The trade-off: Cooler weather, less wildlife activity, and (in September) more rain.</td>
<td>For longer days, dry weather, and warm temperatures, cruise in late June through mid-July.</td>
<td>Salmon run season (mid- to late July) is when the bears are most active. If you’re interested in whales, however, August is when you’re mostly likely to spot them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>Between October and early December</td>
<td>The rainy season runs from November through March, so the weather is best between April and October.</td>
<td>Since the prices are stable year-round, choose a sailing between April and October.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican Riviera</td>
<td>September and January</td>
<td>Summer is often uncomfortably hot along the Pacific Coast, so sail during late fall or winter.</td>
<td>Score great deals by sailing here in winter, which is more likely to be cold back home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama Canal</td>
<td>April, September, and early January. Some lines offer longer repositioning cruises in May and September; if you can spare the time, these are the best per diem deals anywhere.</td>
<td>December through February offers warm temperatures and the least rain.</td>
<td>From December through February, the weather is best, shops stay open later, and street festivals abound.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>November and late April to early May</td>
<td>December and January are typically most pleasant, but the farther south you travel from the equator, the more varied the climate. Seas are rough near Cape Horn and Antarctica, regardless of the month.</td>
<td>December and January offer the best temperatures and the most wildlife. The Carnival of Brazil is the five days leading up to Ash Wednesday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediterranean</td>
<td>October through February, except for holidays</td>
<td>The peak season is May through August; however, if you’re looking at small-ship cruises, beware of the Meltemi winds in the Aegean Sea.</td>
<td>In summer, tourists overwhelm many ports. If you’re looking to avoid the flocks, consider early fall, when the weather is still warm but kids are back in school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Europe</td>
<td>The season is short (May through August), so there aren’t many bargains. Try to snag a deal on the first or last cruise of the season.</td>
<td>Conditions during summer are perfect.</td>
<td>If you want to avoid crowds, cruise in early May or late August.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia &amp; New Zealand</td>
<td>November to mid-March, except for holidays</td>
<td>December and January are warm and dry. Avoid cyclone season (early December and late May) in Australia; New Zealand is rarely impacted.</td>
<td>New Year’s Eve is the highlight of the year in Australia; cruise to New Zealand during reliably sunny December and January.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Looking for the best cabin?  
7 locations to avoid

BY SHERRI EISENBERG

I’m a light sleeper — a very light sleeper. If you’re like me, choosing a hotel room’s location is extremely important … and cruise ship cabin real estate is even more vital. After all, you don’t often spend a week at one hotel, but you do on a ship. Here are a few cabin location proximities to avoid:

1. By a door to the crew’s quarters

On one sailing, my cabin was right across from the entrance to the crew’s quarters. And although these may have been the most polite, professional crew members I have ever met (I heard shockingly little discussion between them from my cabin, and zero humming, singing, or whistling, as is sometimes the case), they work around the clock, so that door opened and closed well after I climbed into bed.
Above mechanical equipment

Once, I sailed in the most forward cabin on a ship — right over the bow — and I was awakened at the crack of dawn every day by the construction-like noise of the anchor as arrived in port. That cabin — and others near equipment the crew use — may be designated by an unmarked white area on the deck plan, so when you see a space like that, call the cruise line for more information.

Near elevators or stairs

Light sleepers everywhere request rooms away from elevators in hotels. The same should be true on cruise ships, only more so since passengers sometimes gather there — say, on the way to meals, shows, or for disembarkation.

Next to an ice machine

This is another one that is a common request in hotels for noise-a-phobes like myself, and should be on ships. Important to note: Some ships hide the ice machines in internal crew-only spaces; others keep them available for self-service.

Beside a laundry room

Not all ships have public laundry facilities, but on those that do, you want to avoid hearing the washers and dryers from inside your cabin.

Right below a public deck

Don’t want to hear the deck chairs as they’re moved around or dragged across the floor, or the sound of early-morning joggers? Then you’ll certainly want to avoid this location.

Above or below a dance floor or midnight buffet

Sailing on a ship that’s known for nightlife? When in doubt, don’t risk it.

About the author

Sherri Eisenberg has written about travel for Condé Nast Traveler, Los Angeles Times, The Baltimore Sun, and The Boston Globe — and has served as cruise editor for Travel + Leisure and, before that, for Travel Holiday. As senior travel editor of Condé Nast’s Brides, she won the Lowell Thomas Gold Award for best travel coverage in a non-travel magazine. Sherri keeps a bag packed at all times and has no plants or pets so she can hop on a plane — or a ship — at a moment’s notice.
The Ultimate Caribbean Cruise Packing List

BY SHERRI EISENBERG

Not sure what to bring — and, more importantly, what to leave home — on your cruise? I keep a warm-weather cruise bag mostly packed at all times, which speeds up the process. Here’s how I do it:

A Toiletry Bag:

I keep this stocked with refillable 3-ounce bottles filled with shampoo, conditioner, body wash, face wash, makeup remover, and astringent, as well as a tiny perfume atomizer. Japonesque makes a great bag in a clear TSA-friendly pouch, and it comes with cute stickers to label your bottles. I also stash in there a small tube of shaving cream and one of toothpaste, as well as floss and a toothbrush with a lid. (I love this Violife electric travel toothbrush.)

Trial Sizes of Things I Use Every Day:

In the pockets of my suitcase, I keep a small blow-dryer, comb, brush, and solid deodorant. These stay there at all times so I never have to pack them before my trip.
Travel-Specific Items:

I also keep a pocket stocked with comfy socks, a travel alarm clock, an eye mask, earplugs, a disposable camera, small binoculars, and a notebook and pens. (After all, why find room for this stuff in drawers?)

4 A “Summer Bag:”

In the wintertime, I keep a bag of warm-weather items I can grab quickly and stash in my suitcase, including two bathing suits, a cover-up, sunglasses, goggles, sunscreen, water shoes, and snorkel gear. (I hate to rent something that goes in my mouth — gross.)

5 Clothing:

I keep a list of the clothing I need for a one-week cruise or resort trip taped inside my bag and, the night before I head to the airport, I throw the following items in the suitcase:

- 7 pairs of underwear
- 5 bras; 2 sports bras
- 3 pairs of shorts
- 2 pairs of lightweight pants
- 7 tops
- 3 casual sundresses (I pick ones I can roll up)
- 1 dress for formal night (if necessary)
- 3 pairs of shoes: flip-flops, casual sandals, and heels

Of course, if you’re a guy, replace the bras, dresses, and heels with a tie, jacket, and dress shoes.

---

Keep 3 ounce toiletries packed in your suitcase.
*Photo by Thinkstock*

Pick a carry-on that doubles as a beach bag.
*Photo by Thinkstock*
What to wear on your cruise?

BY POLINA MYAGKOV

Gone are the days when formal nights were a staple of cruising, punctuated by tuxedos and ballroom gowns. Cruise lines have loosened their grip on restrictions for formal wear to accommodate younger travelers’ more casual style. Suits have replaced tuxedos, and cocktail dresses, gowns. On some ships, you can even get away with wearing jeans. Here’s the line-by-line breakdown for appropriate dinner attire:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LINES</th>
<th>POLICY</th>
<th>MEN</th>
<th>WOMEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Azamara Club Cruises</td>
<td>Azamara is generally casual. It has no formal nights.</td>
<td>Slacks, khakis, sportswear, and button-downs.</td>
<td>Casual dresses, skirts, or slacks with blouses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnival Cruise Line</td>
<td>Carnival has one or two formal and four casual nights for seven-day voyages.</td>
<td>Casual: slacks, khakis, jeans, and button-downs.</td>
<td>Casual: casual dresses, slacks, skirts, and blouses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formal: dinner jacket, tuxedo, or dark suit with tie.</td>
<td>Formal: cocktail or evening dresses or dress pants with blouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrity Cruises</td>
<td>Celebrity has two formal and five casual nights for seven-night voyages.</td>
<td>Casual: slacks, khakis, jeans, and button-downs.</td>
<td>Casual: casual dresses, slacks, skirts, and blouses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formal: dinner jacket, tuxedo, or dark suit with tie.</td>
<td>Formal: cocktail or evening dresses, or dress pants with blouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINES</td>
<td>POLICY</td>
<td>MEN</td>
<td>WOMEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Cruises</td>
<td>Costa has two formal and four casual nights for seven-day voyages.</td>
<td>Casual: slacks, khakis, jeans, and button-downs.</td>
<td>Casual: casual dresses, slacks, skirts, and blouses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formal: dinner jacket, tuxedo, or dark suit with tie.</td>
<td>Formal: cocktail or evening dresses, or dress pants with blouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal Cruises</td>
<td>Crystal has one formal and five casual nights for seven-day voyages.</td>
<td>Casual: slacks, khakis, jeans, and button-downs.</td>
<td>Casual: casual dresses, slacks, skirts, and blouses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formal: dinner jacket, tuxedo, or dark suit with tie.</td>
<td>Formal: cocktail or evening dresses, or dress pants with blouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cunard</td>
<td>Cunard has three formal nights on trans-Atlantic crossings and two formal nights on its other sailings. The rest of the evenings are casual.</td>
<td>Casual: slacks, khakis, and button-downs, with jacket required, tie optional.</td>
<td>Casual: casual dresses, slacks, skirts, and blouses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formal: dinner jacket, tuxedo, or dark suit with tie.</td>
<td>Formal: cocktail or evening dresses, or dress pants with blouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disney Cruise Line</td>
<td>On three- and four-night cruises, Disney has one optional semi-formal night. Seven-night cruises have one formal and one semi-formal night. The rest of the nights are casual — including the “pirate” party.</td>
<td>Casual: slacks, khakis, jeans, and button-downs. Semi-formal: jacket required, tie optional.</td>
<td>Casual: casual dresses, slacks, skirts, and blouses. Semi-formal: cocktail dresses, dress skirts, or pants and blouses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formal: dinner jacket, tuxedo, or suit with tie.</td>
<td>Formal: cocktail dresses or evening gowns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holland America Line</td>
<td>Holland has two formal and four casual nights on a seven-day cruise.</td>
<td>Casual: slacks and button-downs.</td>
<td>Casual: casual dresses, slacks, skirts, and blouses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formal: dinner jacket, tuxedo, or dark suit with tie.</td>
<td>Formal: cocktail or evening dresses, or dress pants with blouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSC Cruises</td>
<td>MSC has two formal and four to eight casual nights on 7-11 day cruises.</td>
<td>Casual: slacks, khakis, jeans, and button-downs.</td>
<td>Casual: casual dresses or skirts, and blouses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formal: dinner jacket, tuxedo, or dark suit with tie.</td>
<td>Formal: cocktail or evening dresses, or dress pants with blouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwegian Cruise Line</td>
<td>Norwegian is generally casual. It has no formal nights.</td>
<td>Slacks, khakis, sportswear, and button-downs.</td>
<td>Casual dresses, skirts, or slacks with blouses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania Cruises</td>
<td>Oceania is generally casual. It has no formal nights, but jeans and T-shirts are not allowed at dinner.</td>
<td>Slacks, khakis, sportswear, and button-downs.</td>
<td>Casual dresses, skirts, or slacks with blouses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princess Cruises</td>
<td>Princess has two formal and four casual nights on a seven-day cruise.</td>
<td>Casual: slacks, khakis, and button-downs.</td>
<td>Casual: casual dresses, slacks, skirts, and blouses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formal: dinner jacket, tuxedo, or dark suit with tie.</td>
<td>Formal: cocktail or evening dresses, or dress pants with blouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINES</td>
<td>POLICY</td>
<td>MEN</td>
<td>WOMEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regent Seven Seas Cruises</td>
<td>Regent Seven Seas is generally casual and does not schedule formal nights on cruises under seven days. Cruises of 16 nights or more have two optional formal nights.</td>
<td>Casual: slacks, khakis, and button-downs.</td>
<td>Casual: casual dresses, slacks, skirts, and blouses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formal: dinner jacket, tuxedo, or dark suit with tie. (Rentals are available.)</td>
<td>Formal: cocktail or evening dresses, or dress pants with blouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Caribbean International</td>
<td>Royal Caribbean has two formal, one “smart” casual and four casual nights on a seven-night cruise.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formal: dinner jacket, tuxedo, or dark suit with tie.</td>
<td>Formal: cocktail or evening dresses, or dress pants with blouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seabourn</td>
<td>Seabourn has one optional formal night for cruises up to 13 days, two optional formal nights for cruises 14 to 20 days, and three optional formal nights for cruises of 21 or more days. The rest of the nights are casual.</td>
<td>Casual: slacks and a sweater or shirt, jacket optional. Jeans are not considered appropriate attire.</td>
<td>Casual: sundress, skirt, or slacks with a sweater or blouse. Jeans are not considered appropriate attire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formal: dinner jacket, tuxedo, or dark suit with tie.</td>
<td>Formal: cocktail or evening dresses, or dress pants with blouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silversea</td>
<td>Silversea has one formal, three informal and three casual nights on a seven-day cruise.</td>
<td>Casual: open-neck shirt, slacks, or sports outfit. Informal: slacks, khakis, and button-downs, with jacket required, tie optional.</td>
<td>Casual: open-neck shirt, slacks, and sports outfits. Informal: sundress, skirt, or slacks with a sweater or blouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formal: dinner jacket, tuxedo, or dark suit with tie.</td>
<td>Formal: cocktail or evening dress, or dress pants with blouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windstar Cruises</td>
<td>Windstar is generally casual. It has no formal nights.</td>
<td>Slacks, khakis, sportswear, and button-downs. (No jeans at dinnertime.)</td>
<td>Casual dresses or informal cocktail dresses; skirts or slacks with blouses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7 Ways to Save Money Onboard

BY MATT VILLANO

Cruising doesn’t have to be expensive. In addition to taking steps to cut costs during booking, you can embrace strategies to save money once your journey begins. Here are some of our favorite money-saving tips:

1. Explore ports on your own.

Depending on the port and which activities you choose (helicopter tour, anyone?), shore excursions can be exorbitantly expensive. Instead, use our handy destination articles — or guidebooks or other sites — to devise a game plan on your own. (Just make sure you’re back on the ship with time to spare.)

2. Sign up for beverage packages.

Some lines — including Celebrity, Royal Caribbean, and Disney — offer flat fees for unlimited amounts of beverages. These packages range in price from $5 per day for a bottled water plan to $55 per day for an alcohol plan. Read the fine print; some policies have surprising restrictions (such as per-meal or per-day caps), many include a 15 percent service charge, and most are not transferable.
Seek spa deals by choosing your time wisely.

Most of the time, prices for onboard treatments such as massages and facials rival what you’d pay at luxury resorts on land. The exception: embarkation and port days, when rates can drop by as much as 30 percent. We don’t love to give up time in port, but we do like to prebook a massage for embarkation day, which feels like a well-earned treat after a long day of travel.

Steer clear of photo galleries.

Many ships employ their own onboard photographers and, for $20 to $30 per 8-by-10-inch image, you can purchase “official” pictures of your family embarking, eating, playing, dancing, and all dressed up for formal night. Instead of splurging for the official cruise line photos, nominate one member of your party to play photojournalist each day so you can save on this expense without missing a moment.

Avoid onboard Internet.

Internet access and Wi-Fi are among the more expensive amenities at sea; many ships charge anywhere from 55 to 75 cents per minute. To avoid racking up big bills, save your surfing for port days — where, depending on your itinerary, you might even get cellphone coverage.

Run your own fitness class.

Most ships offer yoga, Pilates, and other group classes, but they can cost up to $15 apiece. Instead of forking over the cash, bring yoga or Zumba® videos and your laptop, and work out in your cabin.

Hand-wash your clothes.

Most cruise lines will gladly do laundry for you — with prices starting at around $2.50 per item. Instead of sending your washing out, use the self-service launderettes (up to $5 per load), or pack enough clothing for your trip and a small bottle of Woolite® detergent. Plan to hand-wash items in your cabin’s bathroom sink that you unexpectedly need to reuse. Then hang them in the shower to dry. You can do the rest of the laundry when you get home.

About the author


Zumba is a registered trademark of Zumba Fitness LLC. Woolite is a registered trademark of Reckitt Benckiser LLC.
How to avoid getting seasick

BY POLINA MYAGKOV

Getting seasick on a cruise can easily ruin your vacation. Whether you’re a first-time cruiser or a seasoned one, it’s important to know what you can do to ensure that rough seas don’t banish you to your cabin. Here’s what to pack (and do) before you set sail:

1. Choose a ship with fin stabilizers.
   These large, underwater “wings” on the left and right of the ship help keep it straight and upright. The newer the ship, the more advanced the stabilizers, which will keep the vessel steady in rougher conditions.

2. Select your itinerary carefully.
   Though storms and high winds can occur anywhere and at any time, certain regions are known for particularly rough waters. Avoid ocean crossings, Mediterranean sailings during fall and winter, the Caribbean during hurricane season (June through November), and Alaska cruises that pass through the Pacific.

3. Book the right cabin.
   Passengers in bow cabins — at or near the front of the ship — and staterooms in the highest decks will feel the most motion. Midship cabins, which are always first to be sold out, are least motion-sensitive.

4. Pack prescription medication.
   Acupressure wristbands and antihistamines, such as Dramamine®, are available without prescriptions and may work for some. But Transderm Scōp®, the small, prescription patch applied behind the ear, is considered the most effective and long-lasting of anti-seasickness drugs. Best of all, it’s less likely to make you drowsy than over-the-counter medications, and more likely to work than homeopathic options.

5. Act quickly.
   Pay attention: The first symptom can be as harmless as yawning. If winds are picking up and you start to notice heavier rocking, take your meds and move to a less motion-sensitive area of the ship before seasickness hits.

Dramamine is a registered trademark of Prestige Brands Inc. Transderm Scop is a registered trademark of Novartis AG.
The 6 most annoying things about cruising

BY SHERRI EISENBERG

There’s a lot that I love about a cruise. Pick an itinerary, like the Mediterranean, and it feels like there’s no better way to see the region than on a ship, on which you can sail from Spain to France and Italy without studying a map, unpacking, or dragging your suitcase from hotel to train or rental car. But I’m not going to lie: There are things that drive me nuts about cruising. Here, my pet peeves — and the lines that have resolved these issues:

1. Sailing out of port ... just when things are heating up.

Is there anything worse than a ship that sails before the sun sets from a port known for nightlife? I have literally stood on a deck fighting back tears as we pulled out of Barcelona at 5 pm, mourning the lost evening.

Solution: Azamara Cruises and SeaDream Yacht Club have made it part of their mission to overnight in just such places, and when Viking Ocean Cruises launches in 2015, it plans to do the same. Bravo!
Paying a single supplement, just because you want to travel alone.

Solo travel comes with its frustrations. Eating dinner by yourself can be lonely, as can a moment when you see something amazing and realize you don’t have anyone to share it with. A cruise seems like the perfect solution … except most cruise lines charge for the privilege of traveling alone.

Solution: Norwegian Cruise Line has designed studio cabins so that single travelers don’t get dinged with a supplement fee — complete with a shared lounge that makes it easy to connect with other singles.

Giving up the luxury of being able to stay connected.

Sure, some people pick cruises for the luxury of unplugging completely. But many of us (myself included) feel more relaxed when we have the option of checking email and browsing the Internet easily and inexpensively. Unfortunately, on some lines, that privilege costs a small fortune and feels only a smidge faster than dial-up.

Solution: Not all lines are created equal on this one. Costa Cruises charges a mere $13 an hour and has Wi-Fi just about everywhere. Check out our handy chart on what Internet access costs at sea, cruise line by cruise line.

Being forced to pack bulky dress shoes and (gasp!) a tux or gown.

It wasn’t that long ago that most cruises had at least one formal night, and that formal night was mandatory. Some ships still enforce these dress codes and, while they seem appropriate on some occasions (transatlantic crossings) and easy on some cruises (say, from ports you can drive to), most of the time, this requirement forces you to check luggage.

Solution: Ten years ago, Norwegian Cruise Line launched its innovative Freestyle Cruising® concept, which made cruising more like a resort vacation than a historic ocean liner voyage. (In addition to old-fashioned dress codes, the line did away with assigned tables at fixed dinner sittings, a change we thank them for every time my husband and I sail.) Fortunately, many lines followed suit — check out who did away with formal nights in our dress code chart.

Having to pay for shore excursions if you want help with sightseeing.

Historically, cruise lines gave you a port map and sent you on your way if you didn’t book a tour. We understand being protective of that revenue stream, but come on! Is there any aspect of a cruise that’s more important than making sure you have a good time at the destinations the ship visits?

Solution: Celebrity, Holland America, Norwegian, and Royal Caribbean offer excellent concierge programs for customers who book top-level suites. I dream that someday, these services will be available to everyone.

Cruising through the Caribbean … and not getting enough time on the beach.

You could easily book a seven-day Caribbean cruise and — between late arrivals, early departures, and can’t-miss shore excursions (such as tours of ancient Mayan ruins) and experiences (including shopping in St. Barths) — end up with just a few hours of beach time.

Solution: Well, this one is all on you, the traveler. Determine in advance which ports have the best beaches. Then set aside days to hop in a cab and sit by the surf all day. Or book a day pass to a resort on a pretty beach. If what you really crave is beach time, you won’t be sorry — those ruins aren’t going anywhere.