

Ovation of the Seas



17-Night Trans-Pacific Cruise

April 15 - May 02, 2023

Sydney, Australia to O’ahu, Hawai’i

Ports of Call –

- Bay of Islands (Paihia), NZ
- Auckland, New Zealand
- Pape’ete, French Polynesia
- Mo’orea, French Polynesia

Including –

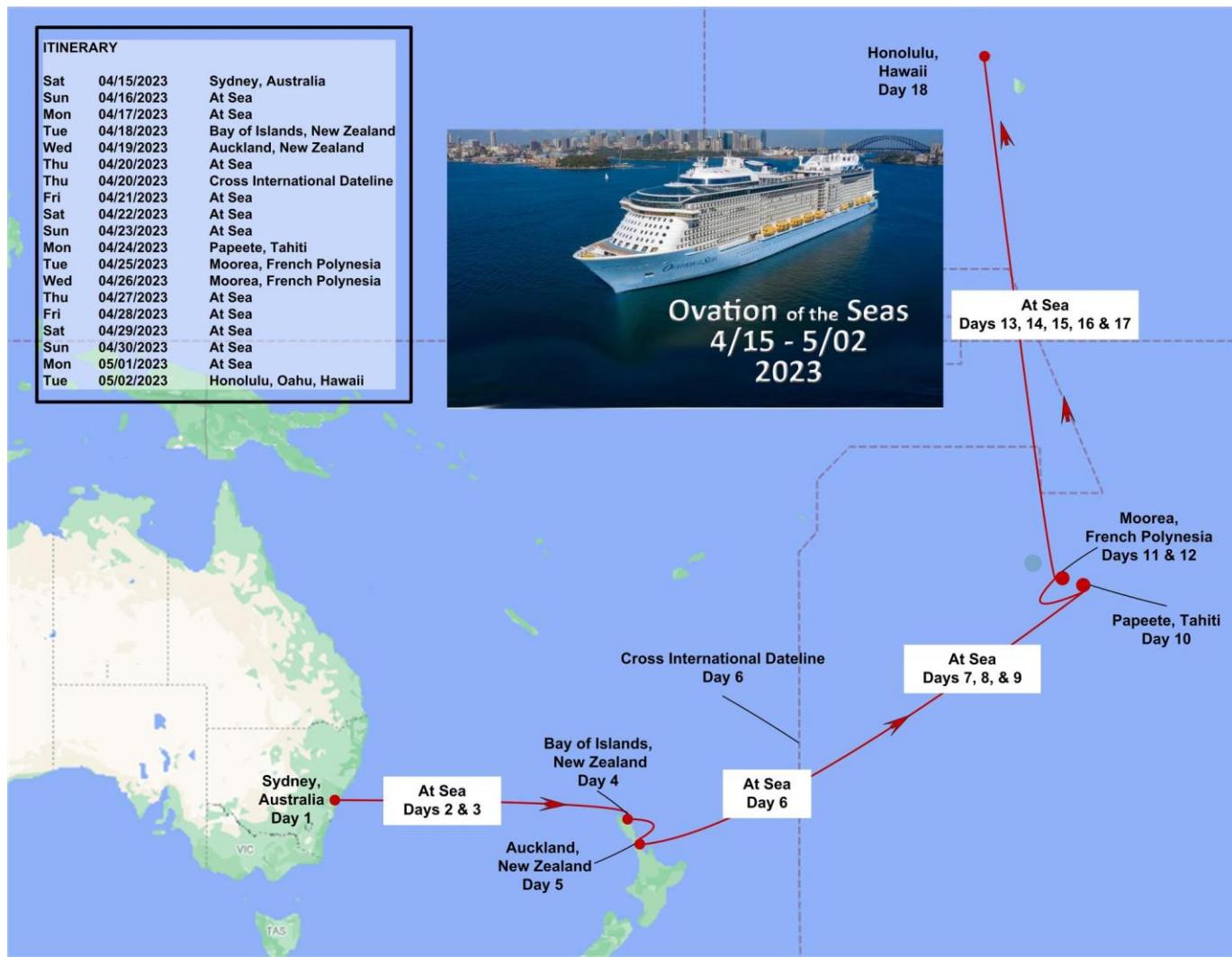
- International Date Line Crossing
- Equator Crossing
- ANZAC Day Memorial Service

Deck Layouts / Room and Floor Plans

Review of Facilities / Activities and Amenities

Compiled by John Hausmann

Information taken from Royal Caribbean, Cruise Mapper, Cruise Critic, and other websites



Day	Date (2023)	Arrive	Location	Activity	Depart
1	Sun, April 15		Sydney, Australia	Departure	6:45pm
2	Mon, April 16		At Sea		
3	Tue, April 17		At Sea		
4	Wed, April 18	9:30am	Bay of Islands (Paihia), New Zealand	Port of Call	9:00pm
5	Thu, April 19	8:00am	Auckland, New Zealand	Port of Call	5:00pm
6	Fri, April 20		At Sea	International Date Line	
7	Sat, April 21		At Sea		
8	Sat, April 22		At Sea		
9	Sun, April 23		At Sea		
10	Mon, April 24	8:00am	Pape'ete, Tahiti	Port of Call	Midnight
11	Tue, April 25	8:00am	Mo'orea, French Polynesia (Overnight)	Port of Call / ANZAC Day	
12	Tue, April 26		Mo'orea, French Polynesia	Port of Call (Departure Updated)	1:00pm
13	Wed, April 27		At Sea		
14	Thu, April 28		At Sea		
15	Fri, April 29		At Sea	Equator Crossing (approximate)	
16	Sun, April 30		At Sea		
17	Mon, May 01	4:00pm	Arrive EARLY in O'ahu (Honolulu)	Overnight in Port	Overnight
18	Tue, May 02	Overnight	O'ahu (Honolulu), Hawa'i	Disembark starting 6:00am	

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The “Amp’d” Ovation of the Seas

Ovation of the Seas Overview

Pioneer America's last frontier onboard one of the world's most groundbreaking ships, Ovation of the Seas®, the biggest boldest ship to ever sail Alaska. It's scenery scoping from the unrivaled perspective of North Star® — the highest vantage point on any cruise ship. Edge-of-your-seat entertainment, game-changing family fun you can enjoy in any climate, and breathtaking vistas from every stateroom — even interior staterooms offer real-time views from a Virtual Balcony™. All between unforgettable destinations from Juneau to Skagway. No other cruise ship lets you see Alaska like this.



RCI also has RCCL's largest fleet as both numbers of vessels and GT tonnage (ship sizes and capacities). All RCI liners have names ending with "*of the Seas*".

The 4200-passenger ship Ovation OTS is a Quantum-Class vessel which in size is significantly smaller in comparison to RCI's Oasis-Class.

Ovation of The Seas Wiki

Ovation is Royal Caribbean's third Quantum-class liner, with younger "WOW" sisterships Quantum (2014) and Anthem (2015). There was a possibility RCCL to order a fourth Quantum-class vessel as this option was included in the shipbuilding contract. In the beginning, the Quantum-class had a code name "Project Sunshine".

Ovation OTS entered technical drydock at Singapore's Tuas Shipyard for a routine (5-year) refurbishment in March 2021.

Passenger cabins on all vessels in the Quantum series are ~9% larger than those of the world's largest cruise ships – Harmony, Oasis and Allure, also part of Royal Caribbean's fleet. RCI Ovation features the new "virtual balcony" rooms – a live camera feed showing the passing scenery on an 80-inch / 203 cm floor-to-ceiling HD LED screen. The DreamWork experience and the 3D movie screen are among the other WOWs on board. The ship is designed to be family-friendly, with the latest high-tech equipment currently available on the market.

On February 11, 2011, under "Project Sunshine", the shipowner Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. (RCCL) announced the order of a new vessel. It represented a new passenger ship class of all three vessels, the first of which (Quantum) was delivered in 2014. On February 29, 2012, RCCL ordered the second "Sunshine" ship – Anthem (launched in 2015).

On January 31, 2013, the new ship class was officially named "Quantum Class". On this day were also officially announced (for the first time) the names of the first two vessels – Quantum and Anthem. The third vessel (Ovation) was launched in 2016 (float-out from dry dock on February 18). Ship's Inaugural Cruise (maiden voyage) was on April 14, and the christening ceremony – on June 24 (godmother Fan Bingbing).

On March 11, 2016, the vessel was officially delivered to RCI by Meyer Werft in Bremerhaven Germany. The delivery ceremony was attended by Richard Fain (RCCL's CEO and Chairman) and Bernard Meyer (Meyer Werft's owner). The vessel left the shipyard and was tugged down Ems River on a 26 mi / 42 km long conveyance itinerary from Meyer Werft-Papenburg to Eemshaven Holland (North Seas / Baltic Sea) arriving on March 12 at ~6 pm. Followed the sea trials.



On April 11, 2016, the cruise ship arrived in Southampton England and was docked at Berth 101 (Western Docks). The liner stayed in port for a few days. followed the Suez Canal relocation cruise from the UK to China (Southampton to Tianjin). This 53-day ("world cruise") itinerary was officially named "Global Odyssey". China departures (from homeport Tianjin) started in June 2016.

Among the fun facts is the Royal Caribbean's "Chinese affair" – Ovation is the world's first cruise liner built for China, starting operations in China, and christened by a Chinese godmother – Fan Bingbing. The name of the vessel's godmother was announced on April 12. Mrs. Fan Bingbing (born 1981) is a famous Chinese actress, TV producer, and pop singer. She is ranked in the top 10 of the "Forbes China Celebrity 100" list every year since 2006. She is number one in that list for the years 2013, 2014 and 2015. Mrs. Bingbing is also the first ever Chinese celebrity selected to be the person naming an international cruise line ship.

On June 24, 2016, was vessel's christening ceremony held in Tianjin (seaport for Beijing). Ship's godmother was the Chinese actress Fan Bingbing. Godmother's name was officially announced on April 13, 2016. The naming ceremony was attended by Zinan Liu – President of RCI's "China and North Asia Pacific" branch. In 2016, Ovation OTS joined in China the RCI ships Quantum, Legend, Mariner, and Voyager. This made Royal Caribbean the company with the ever-largest fleet operating on the Chinese market.

During Ovation's 2016 Asia season (homeported in Tianjin and Hong Kong), RCI (for the first time ever) partnered with local culinary experts to provide onboard over 20 signature Chinese dishes. Among those were fried scallops, pan-fried fresh shrimp, fish fillets with corn, steamed chicken. Ship's menus were also redesigned (picture-oriented) for more appealing reading.

List of Ship's Revolutionary New (WOW) Feature

- Two70° – this lounge has a 270° panoramic view, includes cafe and ice bar. At night it transforms into a venue for nouveau-cirque-style productions and disco club.
- Bionic Bar (capacity 2 drinks per minute) uses 2 robotic arms to prepare mixed beverages (muddled, stirred, shaken and strained). Those can be ordered via an app (tablets or smartphones). Orders are displayed on large LED screens around the bar. The robotic bartenders use 30 different spirits and 21 mixers (8 sodas, 6 juices, 3 syrups, sugar, mint, limes, lemons).
- SeaPlex complex has a roller-skating sports arena, full-size basketball court, bumper cars, "food truck" (casual dining).
- "RipCord by iFLY" is the RCI's skydiving simulator.
- "NorthStar" is the absolutely complimentary sensational observation tower on the top deck. Its glass-walled capsule is mounted on a long rotating arm to lift small groups of passengers over the Ovation ship's edge (up to 300ft/91m above sea level).
- "RFID wristbands" are created to replace (optional) the old SeaPass cards that allow stateroom access and onboard purchases.

On April 13, 2016, Royal Caribbean announced that Fan Bingbing, internationally acclaimed Chinese actress, would act as the Godmother for the world's newest and most technologically advanced cruise ship Ovation of the Seas. The announcement was made by President, Royal Caribbean International – China and North Asia Pacific, Dr Zinan Liu, at a press conference in Beijing at the Great Hall of People. Bingbing is the first Chinese personality chosen to be the Godmother of the international cruise line. She officially named Ovation of the Seas at an inaugural ceremony on June 24, 2016, in Tianjin, China.

Inaugural Cruise Itineraries 2016

The list of operational regions (destinations) and exact itineraries for the newest RCI cruise ship was officially announced at the end of March 2015. Confirming the Internet rumors, Royal Caribbean home-ported the new Ovation ship in China (Tianjin-Beijing).

After its launch in April 2016, Ovation of the Seas started operations with an almost "around the world" voyage – 52-night long itinerary (officially "Global Odyssey") from the UK to China (Southampton to Tianjin) with Suez Canal transition. This repositioning maiden voyage was divided into several smaller itinerary segments. Before the relocation to Asia (China) the ship offered 3 round-trip itineraries out of Southampton England:

- 2016 (April 14 "Inaugural Cruise") 3-night to Holland, visiting Rotterdam
- 2016 (April 17-22) 5-night to France and Belgium, visiting Cherbourg, Le Havre-Paris, Zeebrugge
- 2016 (April 22-29) 7-night to France and Spain, visiting Gijon, Bilbao, Le Havre-Paris, Cherbourg

- 2016 (June 28 “Inaugural China Cruise”) 5-night round-trip from Tianjin to South Korea and Japan, visiting Busan and Nagasaki
- 2016 (November 30) 15-night Asia-to-Australia repositioning from Singapore to Sydney visits Fremantle-Perth (first ever port of call in Australia), also Adelaide and Hobart (Tasmania).
- 2016 (December 16 “inaugural Australia cruise”) 15-night from Sydney round-trip to New Zealand, visiting Hobart Tasmania, Fjordland Park, Dunedin, Wellington, Picton, Tauranga, and Auckland.

Itineraries 2017 Changes

On April 4, 2016, Royal Caribbean announced that the Ovation ship would return to Australia for a second 2017-2018 season. Also, the ship's maiden (2016-2017) cruise season in Australia would be extended with 4 additional itineraries. In June 2016, during the ship's maiden call in Singapore, RCI representatives announced the ship would be home-ported for its 2017 season in Singapore. Adding the large-sized Ovation to Voyager (May 2017) and Mariner (October 2017) increases the line's passenger capacity in Southeast Asia by 30% over 2016. The other Royal Caribbean Australia ships for 2017-2018 were Explorer, Radiance, Voyager.

As season 2017 extension, 4 new Royal Caribbean Australia cruises from Sydney were added.

- 5-night Tasmania from Sydney (Jan 23, 2017) from \$960 pp
- 12-night New Zealand and South Pacific / New Caledonia, Mystery Island) – Jan 28, 2017, from \$2320 pp
- 8-night Tasmania and South Australia (Feb 9, 2017) from \$1600 pp
- 3-night Cruise to Nowhere from Sydney (Feb 17, 2017) from \$600 pp

Note: These itineraries are currently not included in the ship's official schedule.

At the End of May 2016, RCI Added Six More Round-Trip Australian Cruises for 2018, All Leaving out of Sydney

- 8-night Sydney to South Pacific Islands (Feb 18, 2018) from \$1450 pp
- 5-night Sydney to Tasmania (departing March 8, 2018) from \$1050 pp
- 3-night “Cruise to Nowhere” from Sydney (March 23) from \$670 pp
- 10-night round-trip Sydney to New Zealand (departures March 13 and 26) from \$1820 pp (two itineraries)

There is also a 14-night relocation cruise from Australia to Asia (one-way from Sydney to Singapore) – departure on March 26, 2018, priced from \$2070 pp.

Ship Facts

- Vessel width: 162 ft (49 m), Waterline width 136 ft (41 m)
- Virtual balcony's LED screen is 80-inch 4K (ultra high-definition)
- Jogging track length 436 ft (133 m)
- North Star's height is 300 ft (92 m) and turns every 15 min.
- SeaPlex's bumper cars are 15
- On each voyage, the ship is loaded with fresh fruit (25 tons), fresh vegetables (36 tons), fish (10 tons), eggs (79,000), still water (22,200 L), sparkling water (12,000 L).
- In the vessel's construction were used 37,000 tons of steel, 346 tons of glass. It took 41,600-man hours to build it.
- Engines/power: two Wartsila diesel (type 12V46F, power output 14400 kW each), two Wartsila diesel (type 16V46F, power output 19200 kW each), two Caterpillar engines (type 3516C HD (power output 2500 kW each)
- Diesel-electric propulsion: two ABB thrusters (type Azipod XO, power output 20,5 MW each), plus four Brunvoll bow thrusters (type FU115, power output 3500 kW each)
- A signature feature of the vessel is the top-deck located giant “Mama and Baby” panda bear statue. Together, both pandas weigh around 6,5 tons. As to their sizes (heights), the Mama panda is 10 m (33 ft) while the Baby panda is 3 m (10 ft).
- The ship's Captain is Henrick Loy.

All Quantum-class liners don't have Viking Crown (top-deck observation lounge) and an ice-skating rink. There are also differences in the Royal Promenade (shopping mall area). Entertainment options are brand new, with many “firsts at sea” present in the line's brochures.

Cruise Itinerary Program

Ovation of the Seas itinerary program is based on Asia cruises with departures from Tianjin (Beijing, China). In 2017-2018-2019, the ship was deployed in Australia for year-round operations with roundtrip departures from homeport Sydney NSW.

In early-March 2018, Royal Caribbean offered promo discount deals for families with kids. Ovation ship's kids' cruise fares started from just AUD 29 / NZD 39 pp per day, while the parents were given 30% discounted fares. The "Annual Family Sale" promotion was available for booking until April 9, 2018, applicable to all Australia / New Zealand itineraries pre-scheduled for the period September 2018 through April 2019. On an 8-night itinerary, quad-share stateroom promo deal prices for adults started from AUD 1690 / NZD 1860 pp, while the children's fares started from AUD 169 / NZD 189 pp.

In summer 2019, Ovation OTS is deployed in Alaska as the first Quantum-Class liner there. Ovation repositions from Sydney AU to Seattle WA (Alaskan homeport), then offers 7-day roundtrip itinerary to Juneau, Skagway, and Victoria (BC Canada). In Alaska, Ovation joins the fleet mate Radiance OTS.

Decks and Cabins

Ovation of The Seas staterooms (2098 total, in 33 grades) include 127 Suites, 1445 Balcony, 156 Oceanview, 370 Inside (including Virtual Balcony), and also 28 Studios (Balcony and Interior). Most cabins are sized 180-200 square feet / 17-19 square meters. Most cabin balconies are sized 55 square feet / 5 square meters. The largest is the Royal Loft Suite (1660 square feet / 152 square meters plus 620 square feet / 58 square meters wraparound terrace). Wheelchair-accessible cabins are 22.

The boat has [16 decks](#), of which 15 are passenger-accessible and 9 with cabins.

The new "Royal Suite Class" booking category (suite accommodations only) provides the ship's highest paying passengers with the ultimate all-inclusive cruise experience of Royal Caribbean, marked by Coastal Kitchen exclusive access, 24-hour personal butler service, included gratuities, all-inclusive drinks, free Internet, and thermal suite unlimited access.

Ovation OTS also has RCI's Virtual Balcony Interior cabins (with floor-ceiling 4K UHD screens that receive real-time video streaming from the ships outside cameras). Compared to the Oasis-class, Quantum-class liners have larger staterooms, more connected cabins (for families with kids) and Studios (designed for solo travelers).

Shipboard Dining Options – Food and Drinks

Passengers on Ovation of the Seas are offered plenty of dining options to choose from, with multiple choices for light bites as well. A total of 25 onboard dining options are available (14 are complimentary). Reservations for all restaurants can be made online ahead of the cruise. Though not required, reservations are definitely recommended to ensure guests get to eat where they want, when they want. Food and service at the main restaurants, Silk, Chic, American Icon, and The Grande, is varied and offers an array of experiences.



Follows the complete list of Ovation of the Seas restaurants and food bars.

- The Grande (offers DreamWorks themed breakfast, two fixed dinner seatings and "My Time Dining")
- Chic Restaurant (one of the four dining rooms)
- American Icon Grill (one of the four dining rooms)
- The Silk (Asian cuisine, one of the four dining rooms)
- La Patisserie (specialty coffee and teas bar; offers fresh-made pastries and sweets)
- Wonderland Imaginative Cuisine
- Johnny Rockets (fast food restaurant, complimentary)
- Kung Fu Panda Noodle Shop (a la carte priced Chinese food bar for noodles, dim sum, beverages, desserts). During ship's 2019 refurbishment, Kung Fu Noodle Shop was replaced with RCI's specialty restaurant "Fish and Ships". The restaurant debuted on Independence OTS as poolside a-la-carte priced eatery (located aft-portside on Lido Deck) serving British food – freshly battered cod, crispy hand-cut fries, calamari, cold brews.
- Windjammer Marketplace buffet restaurant (offers Early Breakfast at 6:30 am, Breakfast between 7-11:30 am, Lunch 11:30-3:30 pm, and Dinner 6:30-9 pm)

- Chops Grille (steakhouse/seafood)
- Prime (Chef's) Table (14-guest capacity, gourmet private dining package)
- Sorrento's (Italian restaurant)
- Jamie's Italian Restaurant (deck 5) is a 132-seat specialty trattoria restaurant (at surcharge USD 30 pp dinner, USD 20 pp lunch/sea days only) via a partnership with British celebrity chef Jamie Oliver,
- Izumi (73-seat Asian/Japanese restaurant)
- The Cafe at Two70 (casual dining marketplace)
- Coastal Kitchen (Suite passengers only restaurant)
- Solarium Bistro (healthy dining menu "Divinely Decadence")
- SeaPlex Dog-House (complimentary).

Shipboard Entertainment Options – Fun and Sport



If you love adventure, iFly by RipCord is a must-try. The first “flight” for every passenger is free. The Royal Theater hosts the major production show onboard the Ovation. The cruise ship features the DreamWorks Experience – a themed programming in partnership with the Walt Disney Company. This new entertainment program is aimed at families and offers movies-themed DreamWorks activities on select RCI ships within the fleet. The list of special activities includes characters meet and greets (of course, plus photo ops).

Additional amenities include: Complimentary 24-hour Room-Service, Internet/Wi-Fi Access, Supervised youth programs (Royal Babies, Adventure Ocean, Royal Tots, Dream Works experience), Laundry.

Ovation OTS (and all Quantum-Class liners) feature as unique facilities “iFly by RipCord” (skydiving simulator at a fee, reservations are required) and “North Star” (jewel-shaped glass capsule) rising 300 ft (92 m) above sea level for 360-degree views above the ship. North Star is at a fee, and also can be privately booked (for special events). At “iFly by RipCord”, each passenger is fitted with goggles, helmet, and jumpsuit before jumping into the chamber (1-min sessions). These vessels also have Bionic Bar where “bartending robots” mix up cocktails ordered via a tablet.



Follows the complete list of Ovation of the Seas lounges, clubs and other entertainment venues for kids, teens, and adults.

- Royal Theater (features 3D Movies, aerial acrobatics performances, and Broadway-style productions)
- Music Hall (2-deck high live entertainment venue)
- Two70 Lounge (3-deck high relaxation observation lounge with live entertainment)
- Photo Gallery and Shop; SeaTrek Shop (diving equipment)
- Diamond Club Lounge and Bar (past guests only); Concierge Club and Lounge (suite- and past guests only)
- Amber and Oak Pub (former Michael's Genuine Pub), Bionic Bar, NorthStar Bar, Boleros (Latin-themed cocktail bar lounge)
- The Via (an area between the boutique shops and restaurants on deck 5, part of the Royal Esplanade; with the Vintages wine bar and Jamie's)
- Casino Royale; Card Room
- Retail Shops (duty-free)
- Outdoor Movie Screen

- Vitality at Sea Spa and Fitness Center; 10 Jacuzzis (2 cantilevered); 4 pools
- Solarium lounge (includes Solarium Cafe, pool bar and adults-only pool area); Solarium Bar
- Video Games Arcade; The Living Room and Night Club teen areas; Royal Babies and Tots Nursery; Adventure Ocean kids lounge area; Workshop (family venue); H2O Zone family and kids' area
- SeaPlex (sports complex, with roller-skating, bumper cars, circus school, full-sized basketball court); North Star; FlowRider (surf simulator); RipCord by iFly; Jogging Track; Rock-climbing Wall.



Inclusions

- Meals in three main dining rooms, Windjammer Marketplace buffet; Cafe @Two70, Solarium Bistro, SeaPlex Dog-House, Sorrento's Pizzeria, Cafe Promenade, and Coastal Kitchen for Grand Suite Guests and above, plus Pinnacle members, only
- Shows in the main theater
- Most daily activities and entertainment events, except those noted below
- Use of the fitness center (excluding fitness classes)
- Use of the sports center, Flowriders, mini-golf, Ripcord by iFly and rock-climbing wall
- North Star rides (except in Alaska and on China sailings)
- Activities in the SeaPlex, including bumper cars
- The Adventure Ocean Kids Program (ages 6 months to 17 years) until 10 p.m.
- Gratuities, only if you booked your cruise in Australia and New Zealand in AU and NZ dollars

Not Included with Your Cruise Fare

- Gratuities (\$14.50 per person, per day for Junior Suites and below; \$17.50 per person, per day, for passengers in Grand Suites and above)
- Auto-gratuities of 18 percent on dining, beverage, salon, and spa purchases
- Drinks excluding water, tea (including iced tea), coffee and select juices from the Windjammer Marketplace buffet
- Room Service (except continental breakfast, which is free of charge)
- Specialty dining
- Spa and salon services and treatments
- Fitness classes, training sessions
- Activities including bingo, Arcade games, arts and crafts classes, alcohol tastings and shopping events
- Kids programs after 10 p.m. in Adventure Ocean
- Shore excursions
- Internet packages
- Photos and artwork

Royal Caribbean Dress Code

Daytime

During the day, virtually anything goes: Swimsuits and shorts poolside are perfect, though shirts for men and cover-ups for women are required for dining indoors.

Evening

At night, casual resort wear is required:

- For men, that means slacks or khakis and collared shirts.
- For women, sundresses, or capris, nice slacks, or skirts with blouses.

Ovation of the Seas has two formal nights during a one-week cruise. Acceptable formalwear includes evening or cocktail gowns or dressy slacks and blouses for women, and tuxes, suits or slacks with sports coats, dress shirts and ties (optional) for men.

Not Permitted

Shoes are required in all dining venues any time of day, tank tops are off limits for dinner except in the buffet, and shorts are discouraged at dinner time in the main dining room and most specialty restaurants.

For more information, visit Cruise Line Dress Codes: Royal Caribbean.

Ovation of The Seas Review and Specifications

Specifications of Ovation of the Seas

Year built	2016
Flag state	Bahamas
Builder	Meyer Werft (Papenburg, Germany)
Class	Quantum
Building cost	EUR 750 million (USD 940 million)
Owner	Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd
Operator	Royal Caribbean International
Speed	22 kn / 41 kph / 25 mph
Length (LOA)	348 m / 1142 ft
Beam (width)	49 m / 161 ft
Gross Tonnage	167800 gt
Passengers	4168 – 4825
Crew	1300
Passengers-to-space ratio	35
Decks	16
Cabins	2098
Decks with cabins	9
Last Refurbishment	2021
Sister-ships	Anthem OTS, Quantum OTS
Christened by	Fan Bingbing (a Chinese actress, model, television producer, and singer)

Ovation of The Seas Deck Plans

Rating: 4 of 5 stars

Ovation of The Seas deck plan review at CruiseMapper provides newest cruise deck plans (2021-2022-2023 valid floor layouts of the vessel) extracted from the officially issued by Royal Caribbean deck plan pdf (printable version).

Each of the **Ovation of The Seas** cruise ship deck plans are conveniently combined with a legend (showing cabin codes) and detailed review of all the deck's venues and passenger-accessible indoor and outdoor areas. A separate link provides an extensive information on Ovation of The Seas staterooms (cabins and suites), including photos, cabin plans and amenities by room type and category.

Ovation of the Seas (2016-built, last refurbished in 2021, Royal Amplified in 2019) is the third of the Quantum-class Royal Caribbean cruise ships – together with Quantum OTS (2014) and Anthem OTS (2015).





Note: CruiseMapper's Ovation OTS deck plans are valid for 2021-2022-2023 (through April 15).

The Ovation cruise ship shows a total of 2098 staterooms for 4168 passengers (max capacity is 4825) served by 1300 crew-staff. The boat has 16 decks (15 passenger-accessible, 9 with cabins), 18 dining options (restaurants and bars), 4 swimming pools (1 retractable roof-covered), 10 outdoor Jacuzzis (whirlpool hot tubs), 16 elevators. The ship also has a multi-million-dollar art collection of over 11000 pieces (estimated value USD 4,5 million). The contemporary artworks were curated by "Peter Millard & Partners" (London, England).

the following signature RCI facilities: Ice Rink, Bowling, Zip-Line, Water Slides, Rope Course, Golf Simulator, Boxing Ring, Smoking Lounge, Royal Viking Crown (Observation Lounge). The traditional Royal Promenade is replaced by a 2-decks high walkway (location decks 4-5, connected with staircases). The new walkway passes through the center (roughly half of the vessel's length). New dining venues replace RCI's traditional Main Dining Room concept and serve the new "Dynamic Dining" concept.

Several dining venues replace the traditional Main Dining Rooms with the Royal Caribbean's new "Rotational Dining" system. This was implemented to replace the previous "Dynamic Dining" concept. The new Rotational Dining system allows guests to dine at different restaurants (complimentary venues only) each night on the ship (based on a rotational dining schedule). Just like on Disney ships, Ovation cruise ship passengers are served by the same wait staff and enjoy the same table companions each evening.

In March 2018, due to contract conclusion (between RCI and celebrity chef Michael Schwartz), the Ovation ship's "Michael's Genuine Pub" (midship on Lobby Deck 4) was renamed to "Amber and Oak Pub".

All Quantum-class "WOW ships" feature numerous unique facilities and onboard activities (never available at sea before), including:

- "RipCord" (deck 16) – sky-diving simulator
- "North Star" (deck 15) – an above ship observation capsule
- "SeaPlex" (decks 15 and 16) – bumper cars area part of the largest at sea sports complex
- "Two70" (decks 5-6-7) – LED Roboscreens (dynamic) and floor-ceiling glass walls for live panoramic views
- "Bionic Bar" (served by robotic bartenders)
- The new Interior cabin type called "Virtual Balcony" (decks 7 through 11)
- New Studio cabins with balconies (with single occupancy rates for solo travelers)
- Multi-million-dollar onboard art collection
- RFID cabin door locks and RFID wristbands (an optional choice to replace the traditional SeaPass cards) allowing passengers to purchase items on the ship and access into their cabins. The new wristbands are placed in envelopes in the passenger rooms.

Ovation of the Seas itinerary program offers exclusively Asia cruises from China. In January 2016, RCI and the Chinese Imperial Palace Museum signed a Memorandum of Understanding agreement, according to which the ship will offer onboard expert lecturers by employees of the museum. Lectures are themed on China's history and culture. The Palace Museum also provides signature pieces from its priceless collections to be displayed on the ship. By the new agreement, artworks created by Palace Museum artists are available for purchasing at onboard art auctions.

Deck Layouts

Deck 02 – Tendering & Hospital



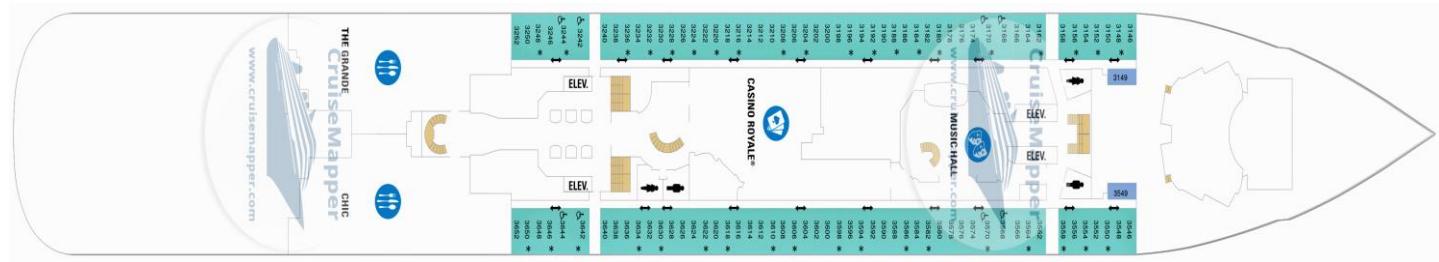
Medical Center is the ship's infirmary (onboard hospital) operated by resident doctors/physicians and nurses on 24-hour call duty. Opening hours are between 8 am and 8 pm. The infirmary is equipped with defibrillators, external pacemakers, pulse oximeters, an ECG (electrocardiograph machine), thrombolytic and lab equipment. Treatments at the ship hospital are equivalent to a private doctor's visit. All treatments and medications are at extra charge. The only exception is Bonine (seasickness medication) also available at no charge at the ship's Reception (24 hours). Payments are made by the Royal Caribbean boarding pass. General health insurance policies do not apply, so buying cruise health insurance is recommended.

Passenger Elevators (4x Forward, and 6x Mid-ship)

Storage areas, staff accommodations and crew cabins.

Passenger Tender Embarkation/Disembarkation areas are used when the ship visits a tendering cruise port along the itinerary, where passengers can be offloaded (and loaded back on) only via tender boats.

Deck 03 – Cabins



The **Royal Theater** (complimentary, capacity 1299 seats, level 1 of 3) is the ship's main show lounge for Broadway-style dance and music productions and aerial acrobatics performances in the evenings. The theater presents nightly 2 grand shows – early (at 8 pm) and late (at 10 pm) to match the assigned dining room sittings. Both are full-length production shows specially designed for the Ovation ship – with professional performances (singing, dancing, acting, live band music), excellent decors and lighting. Signature shows "The Dream" (original RCI production /musical with hi-tech special effects), a second grand-scale musical (yet to be announced) plus the rotating Headliners (tribute band show) and popular game shows (like "Love and Marriage"). The Royal Theatre has its own bar for refreshments. During the shows, waiters walk around and offer bar service. During the day, the theater functions as cinema (showing Dreamworks 3D Movies /seadays only) and also hosts enrichment lectures and bingo playing sessions. Royal Caribbean's Snowball Jackpot Bingo offers most generous payouts (final jackpots are in the several thousand dollars). Among the bingo prizes are also free cabin upgrades and even free cruises.

Casino Royale is a large-capacity, Vegas-style gambling casino with hundreds of slot machines, numerous gaming tables, its own full-service Casino Bar. The Casino staff also provides complimentary gambling lessons. Regularly, here are hosted gambling tournaments. The list of available games includes Video Poker (machines) and table games (Craps, Roulette, Black Jack 21, Caribbean Stud Poker). Guests can pay in cash, with their "Sea Pass" cards or with their WOWbands. The lounge area is furnished with tables, plush chairs, sofas. The Casino is a smoking-allowed area, but also has a small non-smoking section.

Music Hall is a 2-decks high show lounge for live music shows and dancing. It is served by its own bar. The lower level has pool tables, a large dance floor and a stage for live band performances and tribute acts (incl rock bands performances) in the evenings. The upper level is for the overlooking balconies. When bands are not performing, a DJ plays Top 40 music selections. This lounge offers a late-night show (named "Mamma Mia! After Dark") and Rockaoke (karaoke singing accompanied by the band). Another RCI signature night show presented here is called "Wink". The experience is defined as a combination of cabaret-style entertainment (by The Royal Theatre staff), premium brand spirits and adults-only night club party life. During the day, Music Hall is generally used for dance classes (incl ballroom dancing, rock 'n' roll) and for comedy acting workshops.

The **Grande Restaurant** (open between 5:30 – 9 pm) is a specialty restaurant and one of the RCI's "dynamic dining" (main dining) choices. The Grande is a complimentary, waiter-served (Gold Anchor service), dinner-only classy restaurant stylishly furnished and decorated (in black, gold and cream, crystal chandeliers). Formal dress code is required (excepting on embarkation day). Reservations are required. The Grande's menu features many items typically found only at upscale restaurants. Among the appetizers are prawn/shrimp cocktail, lobster bisque, salads, smoked fish, truffle wild mushroom risotto, tuna/beef carpaccio, escargot. Main offerings include premium steak (20-ounce dry-aged porterhouse), lamb, chicken, seafood (grilled salmon, lobster tail, sole almondine, shrimp, scallops, crab). The desserts menu includes chocolate cakes, Classic Napoleon, key lime tarte, cheesecake, also 3 specialty cocktails.

Chic Restaurant (open between 5:30 – 9 pm) is a specialty restaurant and among the RCI's "dynamic dining" (main dining) options. Chic is a complimentary, waiter-served (Gold Anchor service) dinner-only restaurant. Reservations are required. Decor is heavy on stark-white and gold, with diamond-inspired artwork. Dress code is smart-casual. Cuisine is contemporary, with many light-food and vegetarian choices. The Chic's menu features as appetizers beef carpaccio, salads, soup of the day, cured salmon, grilled shrimp,

prawn cocktail, crab cake. As entrees are offered premium steak (beef ribeye), lamb chops, chicken paillard, seafood (Icelandic cod, salmon strudel, diver scallops). The desserts menu has carrot cake, milk chocolate gelato, dark chocolate tarte, yogurt panna cotta, plus 3 specialty cocktails.

Cruise cabins from 3146 to 3652, of which Virtual Balcony Inside (category 2U) and the rest are Oceanview (categories 1N and 2N – Porthole Window types).

Note: The forward-location Oceanview rooms are near the ship’s Theater (show lounge), so noise during rehearsals or the evening stage shows could be an issue. Some mid-ship starboard cabins are located underneath the Sorrento’s Restaurant (on deck 4) and its Galley area (on deck 4).

Deck 04 – Lobby & Shops



The **Royal Theater** (upper orchestra level 2 of 3)

The **Royal Esplanade** (lower level) is a similar to the RCI’s “Royal Promenade” design concept of a shopping/entertainment district. This is a huge, 2-decks high interior area designed to resemble a street. It runs almost the full length of deck 4 (mezzanine level on deck 5) and has no natural light. There are lined-up multiple lounges, bars and restaurants (most with outdoor seating) and luxury boutiques and shops selling duty-free merchandise. The Royal Esplanade features impressive design and decoration (incl original artworks), innovative multimedia technologies, live music, fun demos, alcohol tastings, DreamWorks characters meets-greets, Port Shopping (daily talks on shopping options in all ports of call in the ship’s current itinerary).

Retail Shops (lower Esplanade level 1 of 2) is a duty-free shopping arcade lined with shops and name-brand boutiques. Their list includes **The Shop** (Royal Caribbean logo merchandise), **Korean Beauty** (make-up products), **Bling!** (jewelry), **Michael Kors** (designer handbags, watches, shoes, clothing, accessories), **Swarovski** (jewelry), **Kate Spade New York** (designer bags, clothing, shoes, accessories), **Trunk Show** (best buys, day specials merchandise), **Regalia** (watches and jewelry shops), **Sundials** (luxury sunglasses and watches), **Prince & Greene** (designer clothing/accessories), **Impulse** (perfumes, beauty products), **Sundials** (luxury sunglasses and watches), **La Mer** (Body & Beauty / skin and body products). **Port Merchants** is a general store selling conveniences, also liquor and tobaccos.

Diamond Club is an exclusive lounge & bar for Diamond, Diamond Plus and Pinnacle Club passengers (by the RCI’s loyalty program). The lounge (open 24-hour) has a full-service bar and offers complimentary amenities and concierge service.

Amber and Oak Pub – formerly “Michael’s Genuine Pub” (open between 11 am – 1 am) is a traditional English / Irish pub bar (gastropub). The pub’s menu is a la carte priced, with additional lunch and dinner menus. The main menu has a diverse selection of draught beers, IPAs, ales, craft beers, plus a variety of snacks (light bites). The food is standard pub fare and delicious. Among the snack items are marinated olives, fried hominy, deviled eggs, potato chips, tomato-bread soup, polenta fries, chicken wings, roasted pork sliders, cured meats, selection of cheeses. Also available are wines, bourbon flights, specialty cocktails, desserts. The decor features dark wood, brass finishes, deep booths. In March 2018, due to contract conclusion (between RCI and celebrity chef Michael Schwartz), the Ovation ship’s “Michael’s Genuine Pub” was renamed to “Amber & Oak Pub”.

Boleros is the RCI’s signature Latin-themed lounge-bar-nightclub. The lounge has comfortable plush seating, large dance floor, stage for Latin band music performances (salsa and merengue) in the evenings. The cocktails menu has an extensive list of mojitos, margaritas, premium tequilas and rums. After 10 pm, Boleros Lounge transforms into a disco nightclub with DJ programming. Daily here are hosted art auctions.

Card Room is for playing cards and popular board games, bridge tournaments.

Guest Services is the ship’s Reception Desk for 24-hour staff assistance, information, bookings/reservations (via iQ tablets), luggage and cashier services.

Casino VIP is an exclusive lounge also used for high-stakes poker gaming. It is invitation-only and served by its own bar.

Cafe Promenade is a complimentary, quick-food eatery (patisserie-brasserie-cafe bar) open 24-hours for snacks and drinks. Among the displayed foods are croissant sandwiches (mini), fresh-baked pizzas (in slices), biscotti, cookies, pastries, muffins, cheesecake (Lollipops), ice cream. Free of charge beverages are coffee, tea, water (dispenser).

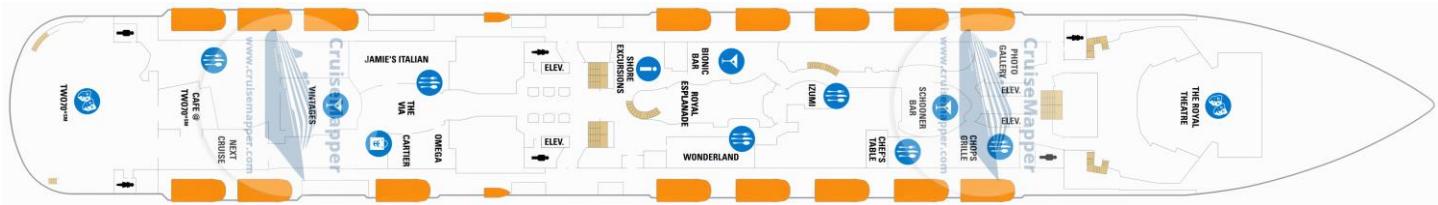
La Patisserie is a specialty coffee bar at extra charge. The menu is a la carte priced and includes chocolate-based sweets, bonbons, truffles, Danish pastries, cookies, cakes, Starbucks drinks (payments via Starbucks cards / phone app are also accepted). **Starbucks**

coffee prices are as follows: cold drinks (Coffee \$4,25, Mocha \$4,75), Iced Cafe (Americano \$2,75, Latte \$3,75, Mocha \$4,25), Tazo Tea (Shaken Iced \$2, Latte \$3, Hot Tea \$1,75), Vanilla Steamer (\$2,75), Soy Milk (\$3), Hot Chocolate (\$2,75), hot coffees (at \$3,50 – Americano, Cappuccino, Latte, Mocha), White Chocolate Mocha and Caramel Macchiato (each \$3,75).

American Icon Grill is a specialty restaurant and among the RCI's "dynamic dining" (main dining) options. American Icon Grill is complimentary, waiter-served (Gold Anchor service) and open for Breakfast (7:30 – 9:30 am /port days, and 8 – 10 am /seadays), Lunch (12 – 1:30 pm /seadays only) and Dinner (5:30 – 9:30 pm). Reservations for dinner are required. Dress code is smart casual. The cuisine offered here is traditionally American, with USA coast-to-coast favorites. The appetizers menu has Idaho potato pancakes, chicken wings, Yankee Franks (smoked sausages), fried calamari, New England clam chowder, Maryland crab cakes, prawn cocktail, traditional salads. The entrees menu has classic meat/fish dishes – short rib, salmon, fried chicken, southwestern fettuccine (chicken and smoked sausage), pork chop, Americana burger. There is a separate menu with signature desserts (based on peanut butter mousse, chocolate, fresh berries, ice cream and coffee) plus 3 specialty cocktails.

Silk Restaurant (open between 5:30 – 9:30 pm) is a specialty restaurant with pan-Asian cuisine, and among the RCI's "dynamic dining" (main dining) options. Silk is a complimentary, waiter-served (Gold Anchor service) and dinner-only restaurant. Reservations are required. Dress code is smart-casual. Decor is Asian (sophisticated, with dominating red and beige). The Chic's menu for appetizers has prawn cocktail, green papaya salad, onion bhaji, vegetable samosa, pork short ribs, shrimp shumai, Vietnamese tacos, garden salad, soups. The entrees menu has dishes with chicken, duck, beef, hibachi steaks, pasta, vegetable dishes, seafood (salmon, prawns, crab). There is a separate menu with desserts and specialty cocktails. At the Silk restaurant is also offered Dreamworks Character Dining (free for kids, surcharge per adult applies).

Deck 05 – Promenade



The **Royal Theater** (upper balcony level 3 of 3)

The **Royal Esplanade** (upper level /shopping and entertainment district) has two boutiques selling **Bulgari** (luxury perfumes, jewelry, watches) and **Hublot** (luxury Swiss watches). Here is located the "Sky Wave" sculpture. This is the first at sea kinetic moving sculpture created by Plebian Design (Boston MA). It consists of handcrafted fiberglass petals with various lengths. The whole structure pivots and curves at different points.

The Via is an oval shaped area (within the Esplanade) with a small seating surrounding a futuristic artwork named "The Red Thread". The sculpture (made by the Chinese artist Bieli Liu) represents an ancient legend about red threads connecting Chinese kids to their soulmates. The sculpture consists of hundreds of small red discs suspended on threads from the ceiling.

Schooner Bar is the RCI's signature piano bar for classy cocktails, live music, trivia games. Decor is nautically-themed, rich with dark wood, marble, decorative rope netting. The service bar is piano-shaped. The bar has a grand piano for live performances and sing-alongs in the evenings. Trivia quizzes and Sudoku contests are also part of the evening entertainment.

Vintages Bar is the RCI's signature wine bar. The menu has appetizers (at US\$5 each) and an extensive selection of fine wines and Champagnes (by the glass and bottle). Here are regularly hosted wine education classes and wine tasting events with sommelier service..

Focus (Photo Gallery & Shop) provides photo and video services by the ship's professional photographers. The Gallery has displayed both guest-made and professional photos (available for purchasing). The Shop sells at duty-free prices photo/video equipment and accessories. There are also computer stations (to view/order photos) and photo kiosks. As the Ovation ship uses face-recognition technologies, when the reader scan a SeaPass/RFID wristband all assigned photos will be displayed.

Shore Excursions Desk has computer stations and tables (no paper brochures). It provides information on Royal Caribbean cruise tours and excursions (sponsored ashore), also planning and tour booking services.

Next Cruise Desk is for Royal Caribbean cruise booking while on the ship. It serves the line's Crown & Anchor Society (past guest loyalty program). The RCI loyalty program offers to its members exclusive (discount) cruise rates (vary by itinerary and cabin category), balcony/suite discounts, onboard booking bonus (savings transferred to future OBC /shipboard credit), early sales access (a day before the general sale).

Bionic Bar (powered by Makr Shakr "robot bar") is the world's first ever bar run by robots working as both mixologists and bartenders. There are 2 robotic arms that prepare and serve cocktails (all bottles hanging from the ceiling) making 2 drinks per

minute. Cocktails are delivered in plastic cups via 4 conveyor belts. Orders are made via tablets. The menu offers classic and signature cocktails, plus the option for made-to-order concoctions. A TV display shows the ordered drinks, their ingredients and wait times. You can individually name your order. The name appears on the TV screen so you can track when the robot works on it. Just like at any of the ship bars, payments here are made via SeaPass (boarding cards) or RFID bracelets. Drinks can be ordered only by passengers 21+ years old. The “robot bar” is not a bar per se – it’s a walkway running along the Esplanade.

On level 2 of the shopping arcade there are two retail shops (name-brand boutiques) selling at duty-free prices **Bulgari** (luxury perfumes, jewelry, watches) and **Hublot** (luxury Swiss watches). **Port Merchants** is a general store selling conveniences and also duty-free liquor and tobaccos.

Wonderland Imaginative Cuisine ([menu](#), open between 6 and 9:30 pm, capacity 62 seats) is a specialty dining room (at surcharge per person). Reservations are required. All menus are blank, and guests have to paint them with water-dipped paintbrushes to be able to read them. The Wonderland restaurant’s decor is also unique – with giant keys hanging from the ceiling, mismatched chairs, blown-glass artistic lighting. The cuisine is truly inventive, with popular recipes being mixed and twisted. The food here (like it or not) is something you most probably have never tried before.

“**Jamie’s Italian Restaurant**” ([menu](#), capacity 132 seats) is a trattoria-type specialty restaurant at surcharge per person (USD 30 dinner, USD 20 lunch) via partnership with British celebrity chef Jamie Oliver. The restaurant has indoor and outdoor seating (on The Via, for alfresco dining). Jamie’s Italian is open for Lunch (12 noon – 1:30 pm) and Dinner (6 – 9:30 pm). The decor features as furniture leather sofas and chairs in combination with 4-seat (rectangular) and 6-seat (round) tables (wooden, metal, leather chairs), large TVs on the walls (also showing how Jamie Oliver cooks his food). Waiters are dressed in white shirts and jeans. Royal Caribbean’s Jamie’s Italian restaurant serves 3-course menu with starters, pasta-risotto and main dishes. It offers traditional Italian cuisine dishes – spaghetti, pizzas, antipasti, lasagna, bruschetta, eggplant parmigiana, garlic bread. The menu has 2 wooden “antipasti planks” – with either cured meats and cheeses, or seasonal chargrilled vegetables. There are also seafood dishes, burgers and terrific desserts. Signature menu items are Tuscan bean, Arancini (Parmesan-mozzarella risotto balls), fried squid, planks (cured meats, seasonal vegetables, Italian cheeses), Capezzana olive oil bruschetta, truffle tagliatelle, olives on ice, prawn linguine, crab-avocado bruschetta, carrot-beets salad, prosciutto-pear salad, Italian seasoned chicken wings, slow-cooked pork belly, Italian burger (steak, smoked mozzarella, balsamic onions, tomato, pickles, chilies). Hand-made pasta is prepared here each day. On request, guests can enjoy the old-fashion “View Finder” (usually given to kids dining here) to see their food in 3D pics.

Sorrento’s Pizzeria (open between 11:30 am – 3 am) is a complimentary restaurant with plenty of seating (both indoor and outdoor / on the Esplanade). It offers fresh, oven-baked pizzas (3 slices at a time) and pies for lunch, dinner and late-night. The decor features brick walls and a wood-fired oven. The pizzeria’s menu has traditional items (with meat, cheese, vegetables, gluten-free, incl Hawaiian, Florentine, pepperoni, barbecue chicken, four-cheese), custom-made pizza/pie, daily specialties, antipasti (olives, mozzarella, grilled vegetables), desserts (biscotti, gelato ice cream, raspberry mousse, amaretti, chocolate panna cotta). Drinks are at extra charge.

Chops Grille ([menu](#), 130 seats) is a premium steakhouse-seafood restaurant open for Dinner-only (between 5:30 – 9:30 pm). This is a specialty restaurant (at US\$39 surcharge per person) with an open kitchen allowing guests to watch the food preparation. Reservations are recommended. Included in the surcharge are bread with butter (first-served), 2 appetizers, 1 entree and desserts. At extra charge from the menu can be ordered soups, salads, prime meat (beef, veal, pork, lamb, poultry) and seafood specialties. Among those are New York strip steak (12 oz), filet mignon (6 oz, 9 oz), veal chop parmesan, short ribs, lamb chops, roasted chicken, crusted tuna, snapper Veracruz, grilled branzino, lobster, shrimp, scallops. Steaks are served with a choice of 3 sauces (barnaise, peppercorn, bordelaise). Among the upsell dishes are dry-aged steaks (16 oz), porterhouse (20 oz), Maine Lobster. Chops Grille menu also has sides/sharables (mashed potatoes, creamed spinach, truffled creamed corn, roasted mushrooms, grilled vegetables) and desserts (chocolate pie, chocolate lava cake, red velvet cake, cheesecake, warm cookie plate, ice cream, specialty coffees).

Chef’s Table ([menu](#)) is a private dining room (capacity 16 seats) surcharged at US\$85 per person. Reservations are required, and dress code is formal. The room is part of the Chops Grille restaurant and hosts every night an exclusive, 3-hours long gourmet dinner event with a 6-course menu. Each course is paired with premium wine. The event starts with a Champagne “meet & greet” with the fellow diners and the assigned sommelier (knowledgeable wine steward). Each wine is reviewed by the sommelier. All meals are prepared and reviewed by one of the ship’s top chefs. Menus are different each evening depending on the Chef’s personal choice. If reservations are under 12, Chef’s Table could be canceled.

Izumi Japanese Cuisine ([menu](#)) is the RCI’s signature pan-Asian cuisine specialty restaurant with mostly traditional Japanese dishes (sushi-teppanyaki-hibachi, tableside cooking). The restaurant is a la carte priced and open for Lunch (seadays only, between 12 – 1:30 pm) and Dinner (between 6 – 9:30 pm). Reservations are required. The restaurant is comprised of a sushi bar (sushi/sashimi) and another section with 2 hibachi stations. The menu includes sushi rolls, signature rolls, sashimi (2- or 5-piece, also combo platter), sukiyaki, yakimeshi, ishiyaki (grill / chicken, beef), wakame salad (seaweed), pan-fried gyoza dumplings, hot/cold appetizers, premium seafood (tuna, shrimp, lobster, eel, crab), desserts (ice cream, pancake, caramel flan, dessert sampler) and specialty drinks

(cocktails, beer, sake selection). Edamame soybeans and miso soup are complimentary. Izumi has Teppanyaki menu (for iron griddle-cooked food) and Omakase menu (Chef's choice).

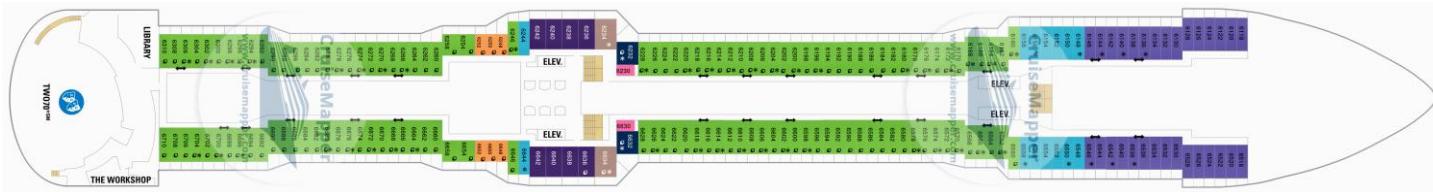
Izumi Express is the Royal Caribbean's new "sushi to go" option available fleetwide since July 2016. The "take-out sushi" is fresh-made and of premium quality. The new option is a great choice for families with kids (avoiding the formal sit-down meal) and for all passengers willing to enjoy this popular Japanese food somewhere else on the cruise ship (incl in their cabins). Izumi Express sushi ordering is via phone (any one on the ship, incl the cabin's) and also by going to the Izumi restaurant and placing your order there. Guests can order any item from the Izumi's sushi menu during the restaurant's operational hours. The staff takes the order and provides a time window to pick it up (usually within 10-15 min). Meals are in to-go containers (plastic, transparent) and conveniently bagged up. Quick and easy takeaway service is provided by the new Izumi Express carts (colored in black) offering up to 8 pre-packaged sushi rolls.

Two70° Lounge is a 3-decks high relaxation-observation-show lounge (also known as "living room"). During the day, this place offers 270-degree panoramic seaviews from its floor-ceiling windows (glass walls with an automatic shading system, overlooking the stern). The lounge's ground level has stage and an ice bar, and is served with drinks and snacks by its own full-service cafe bar. The upper levels are for the overlooking balconies. Nightly, Two70 transforms into a show lounge with live entertainment. The evening show program has an original RCI stage production named "Spectra's Cabaret". This is an exclusive multidimensional cabaret show produced by Moment Factory (multimedia studio). What makes this show unconventional is the use of Vistarama and Roboscreen (both trademarked multimedia technologies) implemented within the lounge. There are a total of 18 projectors for the Vistaramas (12K resolution / ultra-HD video backgrounds that cover the windows at night). RoboShows are performed by a total of 6 Roboscreens (computerized large LED screens controlled via a mapping system) descend from the room's ceiling. They display real-time views, graphics, animations (incl virtual dancers), and at times – dance to the music (twist, spin and move around by the use of powerful robotic arms) and even interact with guests. Live music and dance acts are performed on the stage. Starwater (a signature live show in the evenings) combines singing, dancing, and aerial acrobatics with the ultra-HD digital imagery. Other themed shows are the virtual concerts and symphonies – real performances pre-recorded in ultra-HD and broadcasted on the Roboscreens. Two70 Lounge also hosts the RCI's traditional Captain's Corner event. This is a Q&A session with the ship's Captain, Cruise Director, Chief Engineer, head of dining operations (food and drinks) and other staff representatives. During the day, at the lounge are held educational seminars, classes and workshops, including dance classes (also ballroom dancing), culinary classes, jewelry making. In the evenings, Two70 turns into adults-only nightclub with ample seating and a large dance floor.

Cafe Two70° (open between 7:30 am – 7:30 pm) is the lounge bar (food is complimentary). It offers light-food (hot-pressed sandwiches, wraps, custom-made salads, home-made soups), also gourmet desserts (bagels, pastries, muffins, cakes, fruits) and drinks (including specialty coffees). Here is also served Continental Breakfast (between 7:30 – 10:30 am).

The Ovation cruise ship has a total of 18 service boats, including 16 lifeboats (which double as ship-to-shore tenders) and 2 rescue boats (rowboats). The yellow-painted tender boats are with a futuristic design. Each of them has capacity 370 people, length 41 ft (12,5 m) and width 17,7 ft (5,4 m). For cases of emergency evacuation, the ship is also equipped with evacuation chutes (called "Viking Dual Evacuation Chute"). These chutes are connected to canisters, which after opening become life-rafts (inflate automatically when fall in the water).

Deck 06 – Two70° Cabins



Library is part of the Two70 Lounge (on level 2, entry from deck 4) and doubles as Card Room / Internet Cafe. It has 6 computer workstations (Internet packages are priced per week /according to bandwidth), comfortable armchairs, tables, books, cards and popular board games. Book selections include fiction/nonfiction plus a small section for children/teens. There are also popular titles in other languages. Among the available for playing games are decks of cards, checkers, cribbage.

Two70° Lounge (balcony level 2 of 3, entry from deck 4) also has **The Workshop**. This is a room dedicated to arts-crafts classes for adults (scrapbooking, jewelry making), expert lecturers, multimedia presentations and demonstrations.

Cruise cabins from 6118 to 6710, of which 2W-Inside with Virtual Balcony, Balcony staterooms (categories 3D, 4D, 7D, 8D, 1E, 2E and 2F) and the rest are Suite cabins (types GB, J1, J4-Junior).

Note: most-forward located balcony cabins (portside and starboard) are with larger verandas and unobstructed sea views when looking straight down from them. Balconies on rooms located where the deck narrows are with obstructed views due to lifeboats

(which tops come up to the railing's height). Forward staterooms are located above the ship's Theater (main show lounge), so noise during rehearsals or the evening stage shows could be an issue.

Two70° Lounge

Two70° Lounge is a 3-decks high relaxation-observation-show lounge (also known as "living room"). During the day, this place offers 270-degree panoramic seaviews from its floor-ceiling and wall-to-wall windows (glass walls with an automatic shading system, overlooking the stern). Lounge's ground level (Deck 5) has stage and ice bar and is served with drinks and snacks by its own full-service Two70° Cafe bar. The upper levels (decks 6-7) are for the overlooking balconies.

Nightly, Two70° transforms into a show lounge



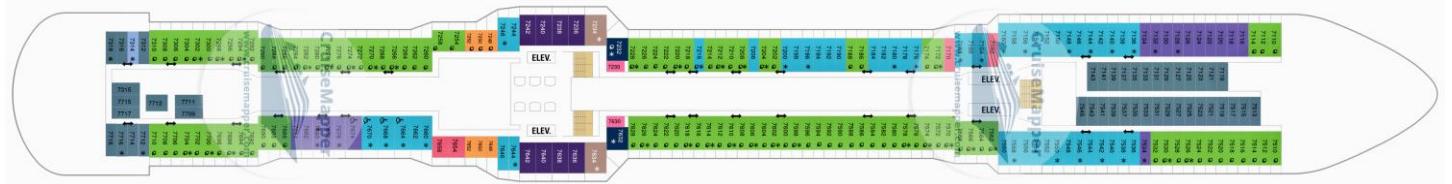
CruiseMapper

controlled via a mapping system) descend from the room's ceiling. They display real-time views, graphics, animations (incl virtual dancers), and at times – dance to the music (twist, spin and move around by the use of powerful robotic arms) and even interact with guests. Live music and dance acts are performed on the stage.

Starwater (a signature live show in the evenings) combines singing, dancing, and aerial acrobatics with the ultra-HD digital imagery. Other themed shows are the virtual concerts and symphonies – real performances pre-recorded in ultra-HD and broadcasted on the Roboscreens. Two70 Lounge also hosts RCI's traditional Captain's Corner event. This is a Q&A session with ship's Captain, Cruise Director, Chief Engineer, head of dining operations (food and drinks) and other staff representatives.

During the day, at the lounge are held educational seminars, classes, and workshops, including dance classes (also ballroom dancing), culinary classes, jewelry making. In the evenings, Two70 turns into an adults-only nightclub with ample seating and a large dance floor.

Deck 07 – Cabins

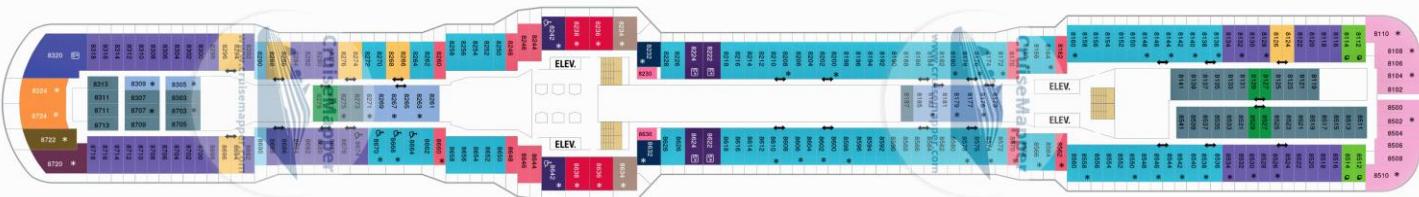


Two70 Lounge (upper balcony level 3, entry from deck 4)

Cruise cabins from 7110 to 7718, of which 3U, 4U and 2W-Inside with Virtual Balcony, Balcony staterooms (categories 1C, 2C, 4C, 3D, 4D, 7D, 8D, 2E and 2F) and the rest are Suite cabins (types GB and J1, J4-Junior).

Note: the 6 most-forward located cabins (portside and starboard) have large metal structure balconies (the opening looks like a porthole) which makes the view partially obstructed, but also offers greater privacy. All aft-located interior cabins are above the Two70 (show lounge, upper level) so noise during evening shows could be an issue.

Deck 08 – Cabins



Cruise cabins from 8102 to 8724, of which 1U, 2U, 3U, 4U and 2W-Inside, Oceanview (categories 1M and 2M), Balcony staterooms (categories 1C, 2C, 4C, 3D, 4D, 5D, 7D, 8D and 2E) and the rest are Suite cabins (types SL-Sky Loft, RL-Royal Loft, OL-Owners Loft, GL-Grand Loft, F1, J3-Junior, GB-Family Connecting, GS-Grand).

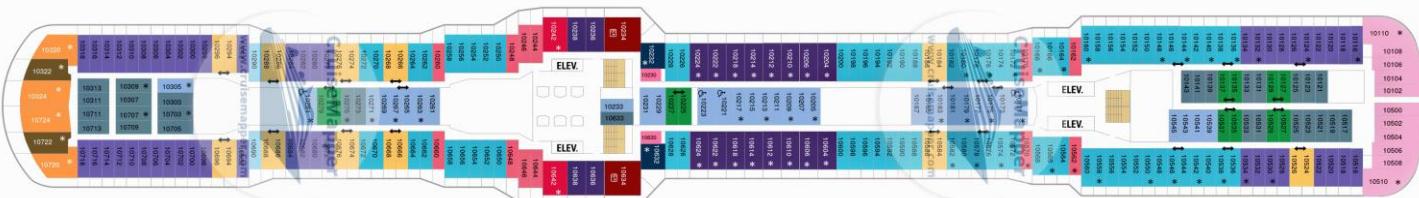
Note: the 4 most-forward located cabins (portside and starboard) have large metal structure balconies (the opening looks like a porthole) which makes the view partially obstructed, but also offers greater privacy. Each of the forward-facing (fore-location) oceanview cabins has a large porthole window overlooking the ship's bow.

Deck 09 – Cabins



Cruise cabins from 9102 to 9718, of which 1U, 2U, 3U, 4U and 2W-Inside, Oceanview (categories 1M and 2M), Balcony staterooms (categories 1C, 2C, 4C, 1D, 2D, 5D and 6D) and the rest are Suite cabins (types J1, J3, J4-Junior, GT and GS-Grand).

Deck 10 – Cabins



Cruise cabins from 10102 to 10724, of which 1U, 2U, 3U, 4U and 2W-Inside, Oceanview (categories 1M and 2M), Balcony staterooms (categories 1C, 2C, 4C, 1D, 2D, 5D and 6D) and the rest are Suite cabins (types J1, J3, J4-Junior, GT and GS-Grand, SL-Sky Loft, GL-Grand Loft).

Note: Balconies on rooms located where the deck narrows are with partially obstructed views due to lifeboats (only when looking straight down). Each of the forward-facing (fore-location) ocean view cabins has a large porthole window overlooking the ship's bow.

Deck 11 – Kids & Cabins



Adventure Ocean (neighborhood) is the ship's kids complex on 2 levels. It has all 6 (indoor) play areas for supervised, age-appropriate activities for 4 age groups – from 6-month babies to 11 year-olds. Each age group has its own room and dedicated staff. All youth programs are complimentary. Adventure Ocean's operational hours are – on seadays (9 – 12 am, 2 – 5 pm, 7 – 10 pm) and on port days (9 am – 5 pm, 7 – 10 pm, lunch included). Dinners (chaperoned) are between 5 – 7 pm at the Windjammer buffet. The "Late Night Party Zone" babysitting (between 10 pm – 2 am /for kids 3-11 y/o) cost US\$7 per kid per hour. Among the signature events here are Dreamworks characters appearances (4-5 times on 7-night cruise itineraries). Both levels of the complex are in the

ship's interior (without windows). This means better security/safety but also no natural light and outdoor playgrounds. Parents must sign their kids in and out each time they visit the Adventure Ocean. To each kid is issued a wristband (indicating muster station) that must be worn at all times.

Adventure Ocean (Royal Babies & Tots Nursery) is a babysitting facility Royal Babies (6-18 months) and Royal Tots (toddlers 18-36 months). Kids must be fully toilet trained. An hourly fee per kid applies (US\$6 daytime, US\$8 evening). The nursery (open between 9 am – 12 pm) has a Sleeping Area (5 cribs, 10 cots, 6 strollers) and an adjacent Open Playroom for interactive play sessions (45-min each). The RCI's "BABIES 2 GO" service allows pre-ordering Huggies products (diapers, wipes, cream) and Gerber (organic baby food) delivered to the cruise cabin/suite upon arrival and also throughout the Royal Caribbean cruise. Note: In-room babysitting for overage children is available (per hour fee applies) for up to 3 kids (within the same family). Advance reservations are required.

Adventure Ocean (Aquanauts Room) is for potty-trained kids (3-5 y/o). The room has a library, TVs (for educational shows), chairs and tables (for arts-crafts, board games). Daily activities (offered around the ship) include scavenger hunts, fun science experiments, dressing up.

Cruise cabins from 11102 to 11718, of which 1U, 2U, 4U and 2W-Inside, Oceanview (categories 1M and 2M), Balcony staterooms (categories 1C, 2C, 4C, 1D, 2D, 5D and 6D) and the rest are Suite cabins (types J1, J4-Junior, GS-Grand and OS-Owners).

Note: Balconies on rooms located where the deck narrows are with partially obstructed views due to lifeboats (only when looking straight down). Each of the forward-facing (fore-location) ocean view cabins has a large porthole window overlooking the ship's bow.

Deck 12 – Bridge & Cabins



The fore-located **Navigation Bridge** and the adjacent **Captain's Suite** and **officers' quarters** are inaccessible to passengers.

Adventure Ocean (upper level, Explorers Room) is for kids 6-8 y/o. Activities include educational games and arts-crafts workshops (nature, space, oceans, dinosaurs; painting/drawing, dressing up, scavenger hunts, sports competitions, kids discos, parties (pizza, ice cream).

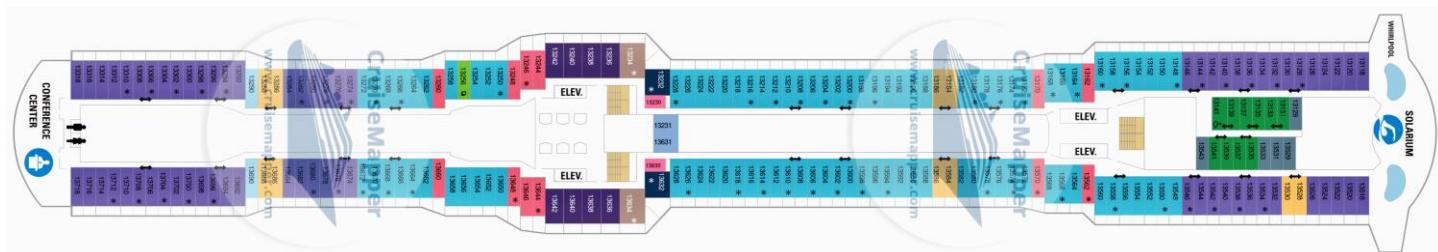
Adventure Ocean (upper level, Voyagers Room) is for kids 9-11 y/o. Activities include ship tours, sports, movie nights.

Adventure Ocean (upper level, Science Lab) is open to all ages and is for fun science experiments (supervised).

Concierge Club (aft location) is an exclusive lounge & bar for Grand Suite and above passengers and for Diamond Plus and Pinnacle Club guests (by the RCI's loyalty program). Concierge service is available daily (between 8:30-11:30 am, and between 5-8:30 pm). The list of amenities and services provided includes: personalized stationary, served Continental breakfast (8-10 am), Hors d'oeuvres and petit fours (served, respectively, before and after dinner), complimentary self-service bar (free drinks), reservations (specialty restaurants, shore excursions/tours, Beach Cabanas), Salon/Spa appointments, show ticketing assistance, media borrowing (music and movies on disks), business services (faxing, copying), private party arrangements. The lounge also has Internet-connected computers.

Cruise cabins from 12132 to 12718, of which 2U, 3U, 4U and 2W-Inside, Balcony staterooms (categories 1C, 2C, 4C, 1D, 2D, 5D and 6D) and the rest are Suite cabins (types J1-Junior, GS-Grand and OS-Owners).

Deck 13 – Cabins



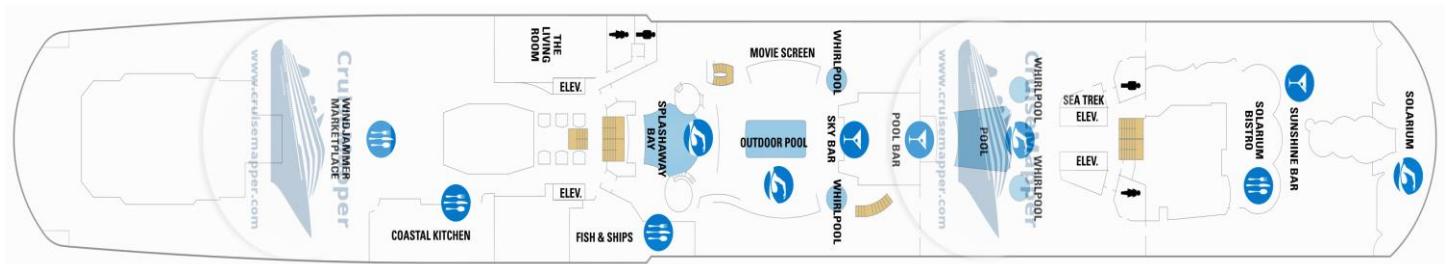
Solarium is the ship's adults-only relaxation complex spanning on 2 decks and covered by a glass rooftop. The complex features its own swimming pool (round-shaped, tiered), 2 large whirlpools, a sunbathing area with loungers, live plants for decoration, pool parties in the evenings. The adults retreat is served with drinks by the Solarium Bar (a light-fare cafe). There is a 24-hour beverage station for complimentary drinks (coffee, tea, iced tea, flavored waters).

Conference Center (aft location) has capacity up to 330 guests. It consists of several meeting rooms divided by collapsible walls. Each of the rooms can be configured to suit specific group needs. Here can be held lectures, seminars, presentations, group meetings, business and general sessions, conferences at sea. Modern presentation equipment is provided complimentary (including projectors, media players, large plasma TV, podium/lectern, wall-mount screens, video wall, microphones, stage lighting).

Cruise cabins from 13118 to 13718, of which 2U, 4U and 2W-Inside, Balcony staterooms (categories 1C, 2C, 4C, 1D, 2D, 5D and 6D) and the rest are Suite cabins (types J1, J4-Junior and GB).

Balconies on rooms located where the deck narrows are shaded by a large metal roof extending from deck 14 above. Forward-location balcony rooms (portside and starboard) are close to a Bridge Viewing platform (located on top the Navigation Bridge) so their veranda view is obstructed by the platform (only when looking forward). They also may experience privacy issues when this platform is in use.

Deck 14 – Lido & Pools



Solarium (adults only retreat, upper level 2 of 2) with a glass-roof cover. The Solarium complex is served with drinks by the Sunshine Bar.

Solarium Bistro is complimentary and offers "healthy dining" exclusively – fresh-squeezed juices, light fare for Breakfast (yogurt, fruits) and Lunch (incl meat/seafood and mixed salads). The Solarium Bistro's menu has appetizers (Yellowfin Tuna Sashimi, Mexican Shrimp Bowl, Mediterranean Ratatouille, Mushroom Risotto, Sea Scallops & Whitefish Ceviche), soups (with chicken, seafood, vegetarian), salads (vegetarian), entrees (pasta, salmon, tuna, fish filet, duck, lamb loin, bison tenderloin, pork filet, veal scaloppini), sides, desserts (all are low-fat, no-sugar-added). The menu also has a list of red and white wines (at extra charge /by the glass and bottle).

"Splashaway Bay" is an interactive aqua park (fresh-water outdoor play area) designed for toddlers and small children. It has 1 "vortex" wave pool (round-shaped), 1 splash pool for babies (swim diapers allowed), 1 lazy-river pool, 2 mini slides (1 open, 1 tubed), 1 whirlpool, 1 giant drench bucket. The splash zone is fitted with colorful sculptures, umbrella jets, fountains, waterfalls, water cannons, gazers, sprinklers, playground with a huge jungle-gym (multi-platform), sunbathing area with loungers and kid-size deckchairs. Near the water park are located self-service ice-cream vending machines (open 10 am – 6 pm). Nightly, the kids park transforms into a garden.

The Living Room is a club lounge for teenagers only (children 12-17 y/o). The room has plenty of chairs and beanbags, foosball tables, Xbox consoles, a large TV for movies. Among the scheduled activities are treasure hunts, talent shows, arts-crafts, trivia, sports competitions, video gaming tournaments, workshops/classes, airbrush tattoos, Scratch DJ Academy (DJ classes), themed parties, karaoke.

The ship's **Main Pool** area has 2 swimming pools (1 outdoor, 1 indoor /under retractable glass roof) each with 2 large whirlpools. Both pools are with expansive sundecks (sunbathing areas with loungers and sunbeds) and shaded areas (with wicker couches) for relaxation. Main Pool deck is served with drinks and refreshments (frozens, soft drinks, beer/buckets, wine, cocktails) by 2 poolside bars – Pool Bar and Sky Bar. The outdoor pool are has Jumbotron (giant LED screen) and a stage for live performances. Among the activities here are live band music, games, funny contests, deck parties, food carving demonstrations.

Sea Trek is a dive shop selling professional water sports gear (diving and snorkeling equipment), some souvenirs and sun-related products. Here passengers can sign up for basic scuba diving classes and get PADI qualifications.

Outdoor Movie Screen (called Jumbotron) is a poolside complimentary cinema (huge-sized LED screen) located near the main pool area. It is used daily for showing funny videos and live sporting events, and for watching new movies nightly.

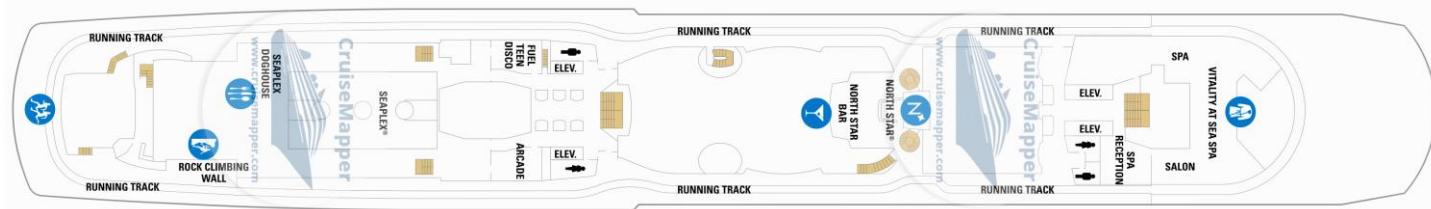
Coastal Kitchen is a suite guests only complimentary restaurant. The cuisine is a California-Mediterranean fusion – healthy food, well prepared traditional dishes (incl meat-seafood-vegetarian-light choices). Coastal Kitchen's menu offers appetizers (Serrano ham, grilled prawn, antipasti, charcuterie plate, zucchini), entrees (ceviche, scallops, salmon, chicken breast, lamb, beef tenderloin, strip steak, pasta, vegetable plate, classic homemade pies), salads, flatbreads and desserts (cheesecake, cafe con leche, dark chocolate tiramisu, caramel pudding). Coastal Kitchen (the “suite restaurant”) is open for Breakfast (7:30 – 9:30 am / Grand Suite cabins and higher only), Lunch (12 – 1:30 pm / Grand Suites and above) and Dinner (5:30 – 9:30 pm / Junior Suites and higher).

Windjammer Marketplace is the ship's complimentary Lido-buffet restaurant with international cuisine. The Windjammer restaurant is open for Breakfast (between 6:30 – 11 am), Lunch (between 11:30 am – 3:30 pm) and for Dinner (between 6 – 9 pm). The food is displayed in various pavilions (rather than a buffet line). The list of themed food stations includes New York Deli (panini sandwiches, rye bread, thin-sliced kosher dill pickles), Salad Bar, The Grill (24-hour, with daily changing menu), Potatoes, Panini (sandwiches), Pizza, Fruits, Seafood (including sushi), Bakery, ice cream, desserts (incl fresh, oven-baked cookies), fresh juices. Windjammer's complimentary “sushi stations” open for dinner-only (at 6:30 pm). Designated chefs continuously prepare fresh sushi (cooked rolls variations, mostly of eel and tuna). There are no nigirizushi or sashimi (with raw meat) or made-to-order items. Depending on the itinerary, themed food items are also offered. The restaurant has lots of 2-seat tables and features a small outdoor seating area (located aft) for alfresco dining.

Johnny Rockets (open between 11:30 am – 7 pm) is a 1950s themed specialty restaurant (at extra charge /a la carte priced). This is the RCI's signature fast-food diner conveniently located near the main pool area. This makes it the perfect choice for those who like the classic American fare (especially natural beef hamburgers/cheeseburgers) and don't want to change out of swimsuits for lunch. This poolside fast-food restaurant has mostly outdoor seating. The a la carte menu includes fresh-off-the-grill, made-to-order burgers and hotdogs (at US\$2,50), fries (incl onion rings, at US\$1,50), handmade milkshakes (3 flavors- vanilla, chocolate, strawberry /at US\$4,50), a selection of toppings (at US\$1,50), also grilled chicken breast, classic sandwiches, sides, shareables, desserts (incl apple pie). Orders are made at the counter. Passengers are notified by a pager when the food is ready for pickup.

During ship's 2019 refurbishment, Kung Fu Panda Noodle Shop was replaced with RCI's specialty restaurant **“Fish and Ships”**. The restaurant debuted in 2018 as poolside eatery on Independence OTS (located aft-portside on Lido Deck). “Fish and Ships” offers a-la-carte priced seafood – including freshly battered cod, calamari, crispy hand-cut fries, cold brews.

Deck 15 – Spa-Sports & Seaplex



Vitality at Sea Spa and Fitness Center is a 2-level wellness complex. On this level is the “ShipShape Spa” (open between 8 am – 10 pm). It consists of Spa Reception, Beauty Salon (manicure/pedicure, hairstyling, makeup, waxing, barbering, teeth whitening), 22 treatment rooms (incl for acupuncture, and 2 rooms for couples massages), Medispa (botox treatments), changing rooms, relaxation lounge (with plush armchairs, complimentary water/teas), Thermal Suite (6 heated loungers, 2 saunas /1 steam, 1 dry heat). Thermal Suite's pricing is US\$30 PP per day (US\$20 with purchasing a treatment). Day-passes are limited to only 30 per day. Free of charge steam rooms are available in the locker/changing areas (separate for men/women). YSPA (teen spa) menu offers treatments and services for teenagers (ages 13-17) including facials, massages, nail and hair treatments. Mainly on port days are offered spa promotions, incl treatment discounts, add-ons, 2-for-1, taster treatments. Up to 10-20-30% discounts are offered with booking multiple treatments. A spiral staircase leads to the upper level (ShipShape Center/Fitness).



Arcade Gaming Area (at surcharge US\$1,25 per game) has popular arcade machines, foosball (air hockey) tables, skee ball, ring toss. Daily are organized gaming competitions. Among the favorites are classics (like Pacman, Galaga), music (like DDR X, Guitar Hero), racers (like H2 Overdrive, Fast And Furious, Sega R-Tuned). There are also family games (like NickToons Nitro, Sega Rally 3) as parents are allowed to visit and play with their children.

Fuel Teen Disco (open between 8 pm – 2 am) is a nightclub for teenagers (15-17 y/o) with themed dance parties. Teen pool parties are held in the Solarium complex. Teens (lead by a staff member) can dine at the Windjammer buffet instead with their parents. Royal Caribbean doesn't offer teen-only shore excursions.

North Star Bar is a small beverage bar with all outdoor seating (bar stools, wicker chairs, tables, daybeds) located at the base of the pod's loading platform.

North Star is a Royal Caribbean signature facility consisting of an observation pod (jewel-shaped capsule) mounted on a rotating hydraulic arm (length 135 ft / 41 m). The capsule's capacity is 15 persons (incl 13 passengers, 1 operator, 1 wheelchair /no seats available). The pod is sized 12×15 ft (3,6 x 4,5 m) and operated in 15 min sessions. North Star was initially complimentary, with up to 2 hours long queues (especially on seadays). Since January 2016, a US\$20 (per person per ride) fee applies. Available packages (at surcharge) are named "Sunrise", "Sunset" and "Private Flight". Booking is not required (first come – first served basis), excepting for special events – weddings, group visits, etc. The rotational capsule offers stunning views above the ship – some 300 ft / 90 m above the ocean. The hydraulic arm moves slowly around, extending up to an 80-degree angle. Operations could be suspended due to bad weather (strong winds). While the ship is docked in port, sessions are 10 min and the arm moves only up and down (not over the ship's side). Bringing photo/video equipment is allowed. Curiously, in 2016, the RCI's "North Star" observational pod was entered into "Guinness Book of World Records" as "Highest Viewing Deck on a Cruise Ship".

North Star hours vary by cruise length and depend on weather conditions. Opening hours are as follows – up to 9-night itineraries (8 am – 10 pm on sea days, 9 am – 1 pm and 4 pm – 10 pm on port days, and between 1 pm – 2:45 pm. and 4 pm – 10 pm on embarkation day), 9-night and longer itineraries (9 am – 10 pm on sea days, 9 am – 12 noon and 5 pm – 9 pm on port days, and between 1 pm – 2:45 pm. and 4 pm – 9 pm on embarkation day).

Power Walking/Jogging Track (2-lane, 3 laps = 1 mi) is tightly surrounded by lounge chairs and has a small incline by the spa.

Rock Climbing Wall (height 30 ft / 9 m) is part of the SeaPlex complex. The facility is complimentary (first come first served basis) and used in 30 min sessions. Equipment is provided (shoes, helmets, harnesses). Daily are organized climbing competitions. The min age limit is 6 y/o (waivers must be signed by a parent/legal guardian). Children 6-12 y/o must be supervised by an adult at all times.

SeaPlex Sports Complex

SeaPlex is the ship's indoor sports complex featuring floor-ceiling windows, kids and family fun activities. The full-size Sports Court (length 161 ft / 49 m, width 89 ft / 27 m, height 33 ft / 10 m) can be used for playing basketball, volleyball, tennis, football/soccer, dodgeball, table tennis (ping pong). Daily here are organized group game competitions. There is a DJ booth and the sports court is convertible to dance floor. Nightly, it transforms into a roller-skating rink and disco.



Another SeaPlex signature facility is the **bumper cars arena** with a total of 18 cars (on rechargeable batteries /no overhead power; top speed 5 mph / 8 kph; colors – pink, green, red, orange, blue). Circus School has a flying trapeze for circus training (on select days, min age 6 y/o). Surrounding the main court, there are SeaPods (small rooms with Xbox consoles for multiplayer online gaming), foosball and air hockey tables. All SeaPlex facilities and activities (including the Dog House food) are complimentary (cruise fare inclusive).



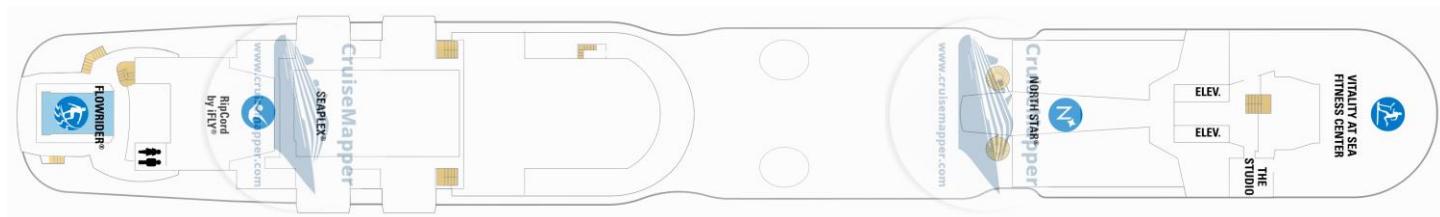
Outside the SeaPlex (on the exterior deck near the rock-climbing wall) is positioned a large-size (33 ft / 10 m tall) animal statue (two **Panda bears** – mother reaching down to a baby cub). The baby panda is 10 ft / 3 m tall. The statue was nicknamed "Mama and

Baby” (the official name is still not announced). The Ovation’s Panda statue represents a fun concept (and a distinctive ship feature) similar to the Quantum’s polar bear (nicknamed Felicia) and the Anthem’s giraffe (nicknamed Gigi).

SeaPlex Dog House (open between 11:30 am – 7 pm /seadays, and between 2 – 7 pm /portdays) is an all-you-can-eat, complimentary fast-food bar for gourmet hot dogs and sausages. The menu has 7 types of hotdogs – The Wunderdog (all-veal, plain baguette), The Coney Island (Kosher /all-beef, classic bun), The Warsaw (2/3 pork, 1/3 beef, caraway seed baguette), The Sicilian (pork, Parmesan, cheddar baguette), The Big Apple (chicken and apple), The Smoke House (Bratwurst /pork, Parmesan, cheddar baguette), The German (Thuringia Bratwurst /pork, caraway seed baguette).

SeaPlex Dog House menu also has potato salad, condiments and sides (fries, mayo, mustard, ketchup, sweet relish, sauerkraut, sauteed onions-mixed peppers). This eatery is similar to the “Boardwalk Dog House” on RCI’s Oasis-class liners.

Deck 16 – North Star, RipCord & FlowRider



Vitality at Sea Spa and Fitness Center (upper level 2) is the Fitness (ShipShape Center, open between 6 am – 10 pm). It consists of Gymnasium (complimentary, with Techogym equipment), Aerobics Studio (for classes- y/oga, Pilates, TRX, spinning, stretching), adjacent stretching area, Cycling Studio (FlyWheel classes, spin bikes racing), private training rooms, locker rooms (men/women, each with sauna and steam room). The Gym room (with floor-ceiling windows) has modern bodybuilding and training exercise equipment (free weights, weight machines, treadmills, steppers, ellipticals, stationary bikes, Kinesis wall). In the mornings/afternoons are scheduled health and wellness seminars (free of charge).

SeaPlex (sports complex upper level with Xbox / multiplayer gaming consoles)

North Star (here is the pod’s loading area, with a handicap elevator).

RipCord by iFly is the RCI’s indoor skydiving simulator. This is a freefall simulator implementing wind tunnel technology. The facility consists of a recreational wind tunnel (vertical) enabling the experience of a flight (freefall) without a parachute. The wind is generated vertically, moving upwards at ~120 mph / 195 kph. This allows the body to float in midair (belly-downwards). The RipCord simulator was initially complimentary, operated with 2 x 1 min sessions. Since January 2016, a US\$26 per minute fee applies. Equipment is provided (flight-suit, crash helmet, goggles, pre-watching a short video with instructions). Professional photo/video services are provided at extra charge. Reservations are required, and can be made also online (in advance). The simulator’s rules and restrictions mirror the land-based guidelines – min age 3+ years old (no upper age limit), good health/physical condition. Passengers with height less than 6 ft / 1,80 m must weigh under 230 lbs. (104 kg). Those with height over 6 ft must weigh under 250 lbs. (113 kg). Children under 18 y/o need a parent/guardian to sign the waivers. The flight simulator is not recommended for passengers with back/neck problems or a previous shoulder dislocation.

iFly hours vary by cruise length and depend on weather conditions. Opening hours are as follows – up to 9-night itineraries (8 am – 10 pm on sea days, 9 am – 1 pm and 4 pm – 10 pm on port days, and between 1 pm – 2:45 pm. and 4 pm – 10 pm on embarkation day), 9-night and longer itineraries (9 am – 10 pm on sea days, 9 am – 12 noon and 5 pm – 9 pm on port days, and between 1 pm – 2:45 pm. and 4 pm – 9 pm on embarkation day).

The aft-located **FlowRider** is the Royal Caribbean’s signature surf simulator. Pumps project high-speed water (20-30 mph / 30-50 kph) across a small area creating sheet waves (stationary waves) to simulate ocean surfing. FlowRiders were first created as land-based facilities and were implemented by Royal Caribbean for guests to enjoy traditional surfing and skimboarding on cruise ships. The Royal Caribbean FlowRider is a complimentary (cruise fare inclusive) facility and reservations are not required. Equipment (bodyboards, flowboards) is provided. Private surfing lessons are available for booking at additional cost per person. Groups are 6 to 8 guests. The FlowRider’s restrictions include min height (52"/132 cm to use bodyboard, 58"/147 cm to use flowboard). Not allowed are footwear, goggles, go-pro cams. Guests can surf at the simulator until they fall off the board. The facility is supervised by sports staff (safety, assistance, advice).

Ovation of The Seas Cabins Review

Ovation of The Seas staterooms (2098 total) include 127 Suites, 1445 Balcony, 156 Oceanview, 370 Inside (including Virtual Balcony) and also 28 Studios (Balcony and Interior). Most cabins are sized 180-200 square feet / 17-19 square meters. Most cabin balconies are sized 55 square feet / 5 square meters. The largest is the Royal Loft Suite (1660 square feet / 152 square meters plus 620 square

Ovation of the Seas – April 2023 Trans-Pacific (Sydney / Bay of Islands / Auckland / Pape'ete / Mo'orea / O'ahu)

feet / 58 square meters wraparound terrace). The total number of cabin categories is 37, including the “Guaranteed” categories (W-Suite, X-Balcony, Y-Oceanview, Z-Inside).

The cruise ship has a total of 22 handicap staterooms (ADA-certified, wheelchair-accessible cabins) in the types/categories Junior Suite (2), OceanView (8), Inside (12).

Disabled cabins offer the following special amenities: open bed frames, wider cabin and bathroom doors, wider turning spaces, lowered vanity (sitting area), closet rods, bathroom (roll-in shower, fold-down shower bench, grab bars, hand-held showerhead, lowered sink, raised toilet). Passengers booked in handicap-category staterooms are required to complete the “Guest Special Needs Form”.

All handicap cabins feature a convenient location near the ship's elevators.

All public restrooms on the ship have stalls and automatic door systems. All decks provide elevator access. All onboard dining venues, bars, and lounges offer wheelchair access and seating.

Smoking in the Suites/cabins or on their balconies is forbidden.

Royal Caribbean's Quantum-class liners are designed with cabins approx. 9% (on average) bigger in comparison to the Oasis-class accommodations. Of all Ovation OTS staterooms, 82% are outside, 72% are balconied, 18% are interior

Follows the review of RCI Ovation of the Seas staterooms as amenities, furniture, and services. you can see furniture details on the cabin plans shown above.

All Suites have King-size beds, large-size bathrooms (whirlpool bathtub, separate shower), vanity area, walk-in closets, large living rooms (Queen-size double sofa bed, dining area/pantry, wet bar, dry-bar, kitchen, dining table), step-out balcony (sliding floor-ceiling doors, whirlpool bathtub, sun loungers, deckchairs). Guests in all Suites (excluding only Junior Suites) enjoy the following bonus amenities: Concierge Service (24-hour Concierge Lounge access /continental breakfast, hors d'oeuvres, CD/DVD library, private parties' arrangements, priority services (Salon/Spa reservations, booking RCI cruise tours/excursions, dining reservations).

Loft Suites are duplex apartments (family-type maisonette staterooms) on 2 decks, with the balcony on the lower level and the bedroom on the upper level. Loft Suites have 1 bedroom, 2 bathrooms, living/dining room (double sofa bed, pantry, wet bar, dry bar, kitchen, 4-8 seat dining table, premium lounge chairs), media room (sofa), full bathroom (bathtub, shower, bidet, 2-sink vanity), balcony (dining area, padded sun loungers and deckchairs with low tables).

Owner Suites have a separate bedroom (2 twin beds /convertible to double), full bathroom (bathtub, 2-sink vanity, separate shower), second/half bathroom (toilet/single-sink washbasin), living area (4-seat dining table, double sofa bed), wraparound balcony (4-seat dining table, padded sun loungers).

Grand Suites are in two types (1-Bedroom, and 2-Bedroom/Family). The larger-sized Family Grand Suite has 2 separate bedrooms (both with convertible double beds), living room (double sofa bed, media center), 2 separate bathrooms (both with single-sink vanities, 1 with glass shower, 1 with bathtub), wraparound balcony (4-seat dining table, padded sun loungers). The smaller Grand Suite has a full bathroom (bathtub, 2 separate single-sink vanities, 2nd entrance to the living room), living area (double sofa bed, media center), balcony (2-seat dining tables, 2 padded deckchairs).

Junior Suites have a living/sleeping area (2 twin beds /convertible, double sofa bed), full bathroom (bathtub), large balcony (2 padded sun loungers). The vestibule can be connected with Studio Inside or Oceanview. Spa Junior Suites have split bathrooms (bathtub, separate shower with glass wall /allowing daylight in), second/half bathroom (toilet, sink).

All Balcony staterooms/suites have floor-ceiling sliding doors opening to a private step-out verandah.

Most Oceanview cabins have a Picture Window (round-shaped window, size is 24-inch / 61 cm). Deck 3's Oceaviews are each with two Porthole Windows (round, small, non-opening).

A unique Royal Caribbean cabin type is the “**Interior Virtual Balcony**”. The stateroom features a floor-ceiling LED screen (size 80-inch / 2 m). This is a 4K ultra-HD screen (no TV functions) that receives real-time/live video streaming from the cruise ship's outside cameras. This means you will enjoy “balcony views” without paying for the higher-priced cabins with step-out balconies.

Royal Caribbean's **Studios** (single cabins) are cruise staterooms with no single supplement required. These studios are designed for passengers travelling solo. The available for booking RCI cabin types/categories are SI-Studio Inside (with virtual balcony), SO-Studio Oceanview and SB-Studio Balcony. Studio cabin sizes range between 100-200 square feet (9-19 square meters).

All Ovation OTS cabins as standard/complimentary amenities offer 2 twin beds (convertible to Royal King), ample closet/drawer space, en-suite bathroom (WC-toilet, shower, single-sink vanity, hairdryer, bath products), sitting area (desk, drawers, vanity, couch/convertible sofa bed), smart HDTV (infotainment system, Internet, on-demand-movies), individual air-conditioning, direct-dial phone, electronic safe box and lifejackets (in the closet), radio, minibar, Internet access, 24-hour room service (5-12 am

/complimentary), European and US/UK electrical outlets, USB charging points, Internet access, individual air-conditioning. Twin beds size is 36 x 82 inch (90 x 210 cm).

Most staterooms have either double sofa bed or bunk beds (Pullman beds) for 3rd/4th person. Twin beds size is 36 x 82 inch (90 x 210 cm), all convertible to Royal King.

In-cabin babysitting is available at an hourly fee (US\$19 per kid) for 4 kids per stateroom max. For in-cabin use can be borrowed movies, toys and games suitable for kids with autism.

Among the new technologies implemented on all Royal Caribbean ships are the **RFID wristbands** (aka WOWbands). These are optional choices for replacing the RCI’s traditional SeaPass cards. They allow passengers to do onboard purchases (shopping, paying for drinks and food, casino playing) and also to access their cabins. WOWBands are silicone-made, offered in different colors (black, blue, white, yellow) and can be used on other Royal Caribbean ships (need re-programming). They were first introduced on Quantum OTS as a complimentary amenity for all guests. Subsequently, RCI started charging for the WOWBands US\$5 (available for purchase at the Guest Services desk). Junior Suite and above passengers receive their wristbands for free (placed in envelopes in the cabins).

Royal Suite Class Cabins

A new booking category “**Royal Suite Class**” (suite accommodations only) offers the boat’s highest paying guests the ultimate Royal Caribbean all-inclusive cruise experience. It is marked by a 24-hour personal butler service, all-inclusive drinks, included gratuities, free Internet, Coastal Kitchen exclusive access, thermal suite unlimited access. Also included is exclusive access to the Barefoot Beach – the suite-passengers-only private beach on Labadee (the lines private resort in Haiti).

Royal Suite Class bookings are available fleetwide (on all Royal Caribbean ships). Royal Suite Class staterooms are in all 3 service levels:

Sea Class cabins

In this cabin class are all Junior Suites categories, including Family, Spa and connecting. The package is inclusive of luxury brands bottled water, luxury brand amenities and products (Hermes, Ferragamo, L’Occitane), Memory Foam Pillow Top Mattress. “Sea Class” passengers also enjoy complimentary (suite-exclusive) dining at Coastal Kitchen (dinner only).

Sky Class cabins

In this cabin class are the suites in the following categories – AquaTheater, Crown Loft, Owners, Royal Family, Superior Grand, and Grand. Sky Class cabins enjoy unlimited Suite Lounge access, luxury bath products, Memory Foam Pillow Top Mattress, unlimited Thermal Suite access, free Internet, luxury brands bottled water, in-room dining, exclusive access to the suites-only private sundeck (Suite Sun Zone), reserved VIP seats at both theaters (Royal Theater and AquaTheater). “Sky Class” passengers also enjoy complimentary (suite-exclusive) dining at the Coastal Kitchen restaurant (breakfast, lunch, dinner).

Star Class cabins

In this cabin class are the suites in the following categories – Royal Loft, Owners Loft, 4-Bedroom Family, Grand Loft, Sky Loft and 2-Bedroom AquaTheater. The list of included amenities has all of the above, plus complimentary amenities (1 fitness class, in-cabin movies, mini-bar, speciality restaurants dining), plus exclusive access to the suites-only private sundeck (Suite Sun Zone), reserved VIP seats at both theatres (Royal Theater and AquaTheater). Also included in the deals is the Royal Caribbean unlimited drink package “Ultimate Beverage” and the 24-hour Royal Genie (butler) service. The Royal Genies butlers are certified by the British Butler Institute (private school in London, England). Royal Genies butler service offers reservations (for restaurants, shows, shore excursions, Spa, etc.), in-cabin dining, laundry and pressing, luggage, packing and unpacking. “Star Class” passengers also enjoy complimentary dining at the suite-exclusive restaurant Coastal Kitchen (breakfast, lunch, dinner).

Note: The suite-only complimentary dining at Coastal Kitchen (specialty restaurant) is available only for the passengers booked in the same Suite. The invited guests (not booked in the same accommodation) will have to pay the restaurant’s cover charge.

Floor Plans

Royal Suite Class Cabins

A new booking category “Royal Suite Class” (suite accommodations only) offers the Ovation ship’s highest paying guests the ultimate Royal Caribbean all-inclusive cruise experience. It is marked by a 24-hours personal butler service, all-inclusive drinks, included gratuities, free Internet, Coastal Kitchen exclusive access, thermal suite unlimited access. Also included is exclusive access to the Barefoot Beach – the suite-passengers only private beach on Labadee (the lines private resort in Haiti).

Royal Suite class bookings will be available on Royal Caribbean cruises starting in May 2016 onward, and on all Oasis- and Quantum-class cruise ships. Royal Suite Class staterooms are in all 3 service levels:

Sea Class Cabins

In this cabin class are all Junior Suites categories, including Family, Spa and connecting. The package is inclusive of luxury brands bottled water, luxury brand amenities and products (Hermes, Ferragamo, L'Occitane), Memory Foam Pillow Top Mattress. "Sea Class" passengers also enjoy complimentary (suite-exclusive) dining at Coastal Kitchen (dinner only).

Sky Class Cabins

In this cabin class are the suites in the following categories – AquaTheater, Crown Loft, Owner's, Royal Family, Superior Grand, and Grand. Sky Class cabins enjoy unlimited Suite Lounge access, luxury bath products, Memory Foam Pillow Top Mattress, unlimited Thermal Suite access, free Internet, luxury brands bottled water, in-room dining, exclusive access to the suites-only private sundeck (Suite Sun Zone), reserved VIP seats at both theaters (Royal Theater and AquaTheater). "Sky Class" passengers also enjoy complimentary (suite-exclusive) dining at the Coastal Kitchen restaurant (breakfast, lunch, dinner).

Star Class Cabins

In this cabin class are the suites in the following categories – Royal Loft, Owner's Loft, 4-Bedroom Family, Grand Loft, Sky Loft and 2-Bedroom AquaTheater. The list of included amenities has all of the above, plus complimentary amenities (1 fitness class, in-cabin movies, mini-bar, speciality restaurants dining), plus exclusive access to the suites-only private sundeck (Suite Sun Zone), reserved VIP seats at both theatres (Royal Theater and AquaTheater). Also included in the deals is the Royal Caribbean unlimited drink package "Ultimate Beverage" and the 24-hour Royal Genie (butler) service. The Royal Genies butlers are certified by the British Butler Institute (private school in London, England). Royal Genies butler service offers reservations (for restaurants, shows, shore excursions, Spa, etc), in-cabin dining, laundry and pressing, luggage, packing and unpacking. "Star Class" passengers also enjoy complimentary dining at the suite-exclusive restaurant Coastal Kitchen (breakfast, lunch, dinner).

Note: The suite-only complimentary dining at Coastal Kitchen (specialty restaurant) is available only for the passengers booked in the suite. The invited by the guests (not booked in the same suite accommodation) will have to pay the restaurant's cover charge.

Handicap / Wheelchair-Accessible Cruise Cabins

The Ovation ship's gangways are all wide enough for most types of wheelchairs and disability scooters.

For Royal Caribbean cruise passengers with disabilities, there are a total of 34 accessible cabins with wider doors, turning spaces, beds with open bed frames, lowered vanity in the sitting area, amplified phones, captioned TVs, wider bathrooms (roll-in shower, fold-down shower bench, grab bars, lower sinks and closet rods, raised toilets, hand-held shower head).

All handicap cabins feature a convenient location near the ship's elevators.

All public restrooms on the ship have stalls and automatic door systems. All decks provide elevator access. All onboard dining venues, bars and lounges offer wheelchair access and seating.

Anthem of the Seas cabin and suite plans are property of [Royal Caribbean](#). All floor plans are for informational purposes only and CruiseMapper is not responsible for their accuracy.

Cabin Examples

Ultimate Family Royal Loft Suite

Layout (floor plan)



Max passengers:

8

Staterooms number:

1

Cabin size:

1660 square feet / 152 square meters

Balcony size:

620 square feet / 57 square meters

Location (on decks):

(2-level accommodation) on decks 8, 9

Type (categories):

Duplex Apartment (RL) Royal Loft Suite with Wraparound Balcony / (US) Ultimate Family Suite

Owners Loft Suite

Layout (floor plan)



Max passengers:

4

Staterooms number:

1

Cabin size:

990 square feet / 92 square meters

Balcony size:

510 square feet / 47 square meters

Location (on decks):

(2-level accommodation) on decks 8, 9

Type (categories):

Duplex Apartment (OL) Owner's Loft Suite with Wraparound Balcony

Grand Loft Suite and Sky Loft Suite

Layout (floor plan)



Max passengers:

4

Staterooms number:

6 (GL), 3 (SL)

Cabin size:

GL (700-840 square feet / 65-78 square meters), SL (670-750 square feet / 62-70 square meters)

Balcony size:

GL (220-360 square feet / 20-33 square meters), SL (180 square feet / 17 square meters)

Location (on decks):

(2-level accommodation) on decks 8-9, 10-11

Type (categories):

Duplex Apartments (GL) Grand Loft Suite, (SL) Sky Loft Suite

Owners Suite

Layout (floor plan)



Max passengers:

4

Staterooms number:

6

Cabin size:

550 square feet / 51 square meters

Balcony size:

260 square feet / 24 square meters

Location (on decks):

midship on decks 11, 12

Type (categories):

(OS) Owners Suite with Balcony

2-Bedroom Royal Family Suite

Layout (floor plan)



Max passengers:

4

Staterooms number:

4

Cabin size:

550 square feet / 51 square meters

Balcony size:

260 square feet / 24 square meters

Location (on decks):

midship on decks 9, 10

Type (categories):

(GT) Two-Bedroom Grand Suite / Family Suite with Balcony

1-Bedroom Grand Suite

Layout (floor plan)



Max passengers: 4

Staterooms number: 22

Cabin size: 360 square feet / 33 square meters

Balcony size: GS (110 square feet / 10 square meters), SG-Superior (260 square feet / 24 square meters)

Location (on decks): GS (midship on decks 8, 9, 10, 11, 12), GB (midship on decks 6, 7, 8, 13)

Type (categories): (GS, GB) 1-Bedroom Grand Suite with Balcony

Large Balcony Family Junior Suite



Max passengers

4

Staterooms number:

16

Cabin size:

280 square feet / 26 square meters

Balcony size:

160 square feet / 15 square meters

Location (on decks):

midship on decks 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

Type (categories):

(J1-Quad) Family Junior Suite with Large Balcony

Junior Suite with Balcony

Layout (floor plan)



Max passengers:

5

Staterooms number:

68

Cabin size:

280 square feet / 26 square meters

Balcony size:

160 square feet / 15 square meters

Location (on decks):

6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

Type (categories):

(J3-Quad, J4-Double) Junior Suite with Balcony

Category "Junior Suite Accessible" cabins are larger-sized indoor (360 square feet / 33 square meters) but with smaller balconies (110 square feet / 10 square meters).

Junior Suite

Layout (floor plan)



Max passengers:

4

Staterooms number:

16

Cabin size:

275 square feet / 26 square meters

Balcony size:

160 square feet / 15 square meters

Location (on decks):

6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

Type (categories):

(JS) Junior Suite

Spa Junior Suite

Layout (floor plan)



Max passengers:

2

Staterooms number:

46

Cabin size:

270 square feet / 25 square meters

Balcony size:

80 square feet / 8 square meters

Location (on decks):

6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

Type (categories):

(SJ4J) Spa Junior Suite with Balcony

3-Bedroom Family Connected Junior Suite

Layout (floor plan)



Max passengers:

10

Staterooms number:

16

Cabin size:

580 square feet / 54 square meters (3 connecting staterooms)

Balcony size:

220 square feet / 20 square meters (2 connecting balconies)

Location (on decks):

midship on decks 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

Type (categories):

(FC) Family Connected Junior Suite / modular connected cabins

Balcony Cabin

Layout (floor plan)



Max passengers:

4

Staterooms number:

1445

Cabin size:

200 square feet / 18 square meters

Balcony size:

55-120 square feet / 5-11 square meters

Location (on decks):

6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 2F (6-7), 4C (9 thru 13)

Type (categories):

(CB-Connecting, 2F-Studio, 4C-Large balcony, 2C-2D-4D-2E-Double, 1C-1D-3D-1E-Quad) Balcony staterooms

Oceanview Cabin

Layout (floor plan)



Max passengers:

4

Staterooms number:

156

Cabin size:

180-220-300 square feet / 17-20-28 square meters, OC (360 square feet / 33 square meters)

Balcony size:

none

Location (on decks):

3 (Porthole), 8, 9, 10, 11

Type (categories):

(OC-Connected, 2N-4M-Double, 1N-3M-Quad) Oceanview / Outside cabins

Category OC (“Oceanview Connected”) are family staterooms located on Deck 3. They are booked together outside cabins, designed to ensure availability and convenience for large families, and also for group booking passengers.

Categories 1N-2N (on Deck 3) are outside staterooms each with two Porthole Windows (smaller-sized, round-shaped, non-opening).

Category “Oceanview Accessible” cabins are larger-sized (270 square feet / 25 square meters) and all are located on Deck 3.

Virtual Balcony Interior Cabin

Layout (floor plan)



Max passengers:

4

Staterooms number:

370

Cabin size:

2W (100 square feet / 9 square meters), 3U-4U (170 square feet / 16 square meters), 1U-2U (180-190 square feet / 17-18 square meters)

Balcony size:

none

Location (on decks):

3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

Type (categories): (CI-Connecting, 2W-Studio, 2U-4U-Double, 1U-3U-Quad) Virtual Balcony Interior / Inside staterooms

Category CI “Connecting Interior” (fka VC “Virtual Balcony Connected”) are interior family staterooms located on decks 8, 9, 10, 11, 13. They are booked together inside cabins designed to ensure availability and convenience for large families, and also for group booking passengers.

Category “Interior Accessible” cabins are larger-sized (260 square feet / 24 square meters) and with 1 double bed (not convertible to twins).

Studio Single Cabins

Layout (floor plan)



Max passengers:

2

Staterooms number:

28 (12x Balcony plus 16x Interior)

Cabin size:

Interior (100 square feet / 9 square meters), Balcony (120 square feet / 11 square meters)

Balcony size:

2F (55 square feet / 5 square meters)

Location (on decks):

2F-Balcony (6, 7), 2W-Interior (6 thru 13)

Type (categories):

(2F) Studio Balcony, (2W) Studio Interior / "Virtual Balcony" cabins

Single Cabin's amenities include 1 double bed, full bathroom (WC, shower, single-sink vanity, window), closet, radio, phone, hairdryer. These are double cabins that can be booked with single-occupancy rates (single supplement is not required).

Ship Comparisons:



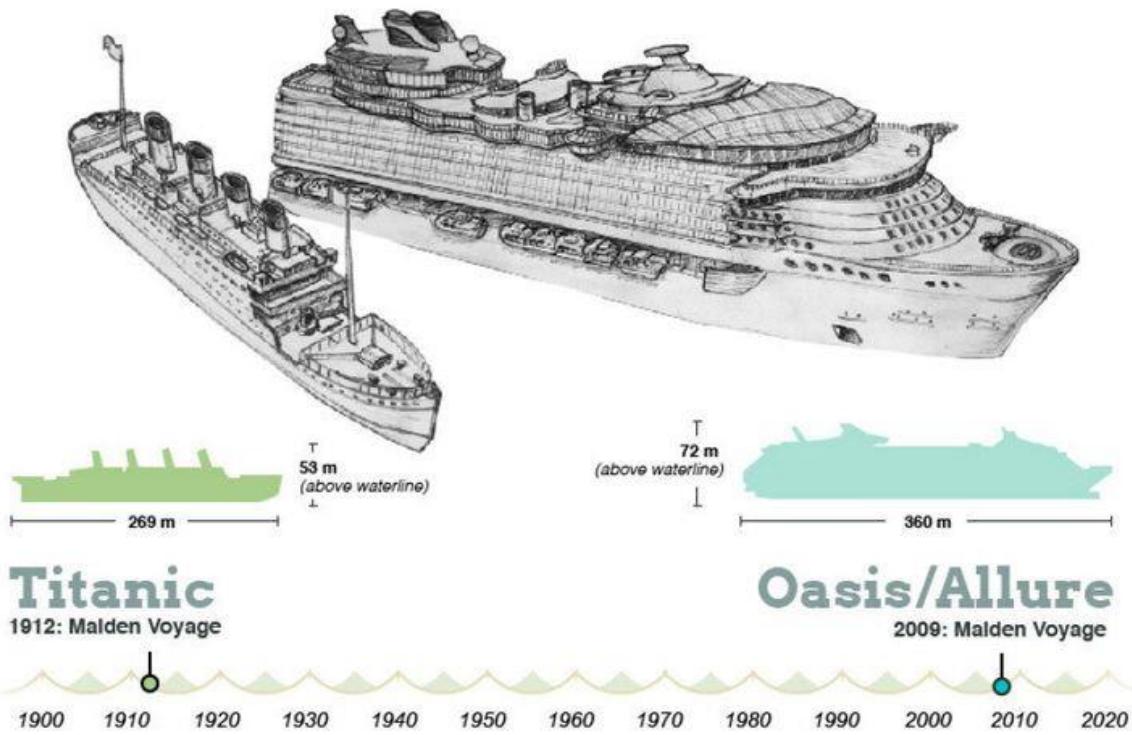
Titanic vs. Oasis of the Seas: Compare the World's Biggest Cruise Ships, Then and Now

The Titanic was the largest liner of its time when it struck an iceberg and slid to a watery grave on April 15, 1912. So how does it compare with the largest cruise ship sailing today, the Oasis of the Seas?

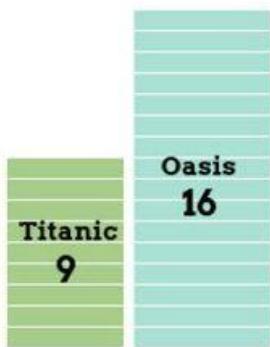
RMS TITANIC VS. MS OASIS OF THE SEAS

THE WORLD'S LARGEST CRUISE SHIPS THEN & NOW

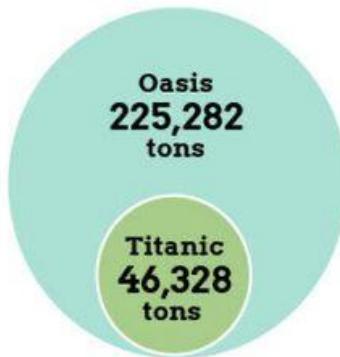
In 1912, the Titanic was the largest cruise ship to sail the seas. These days, the ships we travel in are much, much bigger. The current queen of the seas is the MS Oasis and her twin - the Allure. Here's a look at what's changed aboard these ships over the last century.



DECKS



WEIGHT



SPEED

22.6 knots
41.9 km/h

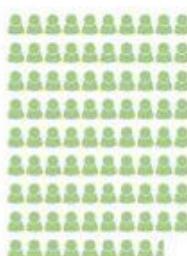
Oasis

Titanic

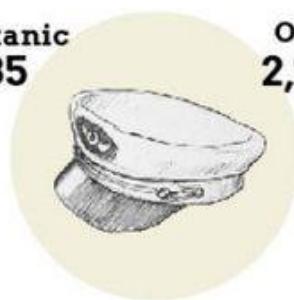
24 knots
44 km/h

THE CREW

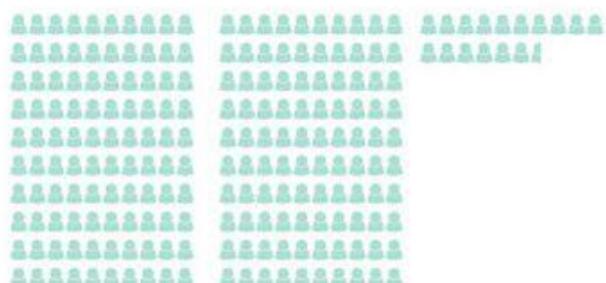
▲ = 10 people



Titanic
885



Oasis
2,165



PASSENGERS

Two parlour suites, each with a 15 m private promenade, were available on the Titanic for \$4,350 (about US \$83,000 today!)



1st Class 2nd Class 3rd Class

Titanic
1,343



There were only two bathtubs for the 700 3rd class passengers.

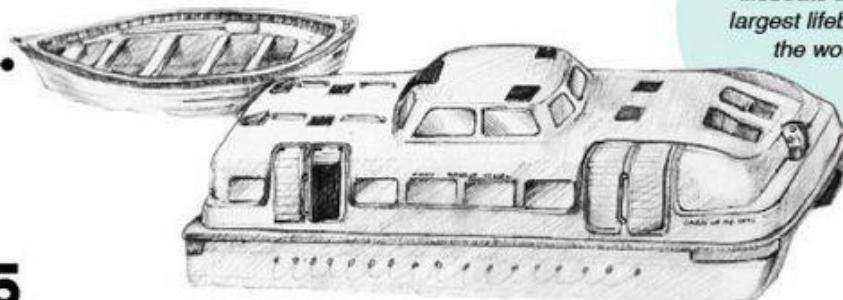
Oasis
6,296

LIFEBOATS

Titanic
20 boats
passenger capacity:

40-65

(Enough for roughly half the passengers)



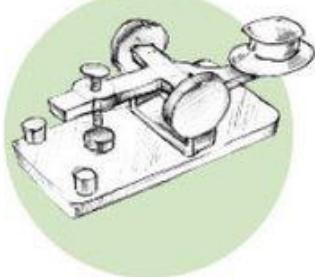
The Oasis lifeboats are the largest lifeboats in the world.

Oasis
18 boats
passenger capacity:

372

(A spot for every passenger)

COMMUNICATION



Telegrams

Guests could pay to have handwritten messages relayed to shore by Morse code.

iPhones

iPhones are available to rent for on-ship communications to make reservations or check up on the kids.



NOTABLE AMENITIES

Titanic

1

Pool

First class passengers could pay a dollar to use the first heated pool at sea.

SWIMMING AT SEA



Oasis

21

Pools & jacuzzis

The AquaTheater pool is 5.4 m deep and is the largest pool at sea.

4

Dining rooms

There was a separate dining room for each of the three classes on board as well as a restaurant where guests were serenaded by an orchestra while enjoying their dinner.

DINING OPTIONS



20+

Restaurants

From steak to sushi, there's a seemingly infinite number of dining choices available aboard the Oasis.

Need a snack? Visit the Seafood Shack or the Cupcake Cupboard.

THINGS TO DO



Titanic

- Gymnasium
- Squash court
- Turkish bath
- Barber shops
- Smoking rooms
- Libraries
- Cafés
- A piano
- Fully equipped darkroom

- Zip line
- Ice-skating rink (skates provided)
- Inline skating track
- Rock climbing walls - 13 m high
- 32 hole mini-golf course
- Yoga and tai chi classes
- Casino
- Duty-free shopping
- Broadway musicals



Oasis

Source: titanic.gov.ns.ca, rmstitanic.net, encyclopedia-titanica.org, oasisoftheseas.com, oasisoftheseasallureoftheseas.com, cruisebit.com, hf.ro, cruisecritic.com, nmni.com, titanicandco.com, titanic-facts.com, worldrecordsacademy.org, titanic100.com, malcolmoliver.wordpress.com

THE CANADIAN PRESS

CP



Top Things to do on a Sea Day on a Royal Caribbean Cruise

Part of every Royal Caribbean cruise are days spent at sea, which means you have the entire day to enjoy the vast array of things to do onboard. Sea days provide ample opportunity to see and do many things to do onboard, from dawn to dusk.

Sea days on a Royal Caribbean cruise are open-ended, with you setting your own pace for what to do. Some guests elect to do a ton of activities, while others take it slow and enjoy pure relaxation time. Regardless of what you pick to do on a sea day, there is lots to consider and here are the sort of activities it seems most people opt to try.

Sleep In

Sea days are the perfect day to sleep late, just because there is no port to arrive to and no excursions to be ready to experience. While sleeping is not the most exciting activity to tell your friends about, it is no less an awesome feeling.

Many guests like to take things easy while on a cruise, and nothing says a laid-back kind of day than sleeping into double digit hours!



Pool time

Perhaps no onboard activity is as synonymous with a sea day than spending time at the pools onboard. Whether you choose to sunbathe, swim, or just go back and forth, you will find ample opportunity to enjoy pool time on a sea day.

Royal Caribbean ships have more than one pool, with some ships having dedicated pool areas for kids. These kid-friendly pool areas often feature colorful splash zones, water slides, and of course pools and hot tubs. While there is plenty of swim opportunities for kids on all Royal Caribbean ships, the newest ships in the fleet offer the latest and greatest choices. Voyager, Freedom, Oasis, and Quantum class ships offer the largest and most extravagant pool facilities for kids.

Royal Caribbean also has a dedicated area on its ships for adults only, known as the Solarium. The Solarium is the adults-only pool that is open to guests that are at least 16 years old. It is usually located in the front of the ship's pool deck and is often indoors or with a retractable roof. Because of the indoor nature of the Solarium, it tends to be warmer and more humid in the Solarium than the main pool. Royal Caribbean also tends to have cushioned lounge chairs that differ than the loungers available in the main pool.

Lunch at Specialty Restaurants

While specialty restaurants are not that new an option on Royal Caribbean ships, offering lunch is becoming a new trend. Typically, specialty restaurants are open for dinner, with lunch overlooked. These days, more and more specialty restaurants are open for lunch and sometimes at a reduced price.



Advanced reservations for lunch are not normally available prior to your cruise, but one onboard, some restaurants take lunch reservations.

The Cruise Compass will list operating hours, but enjoying lunch at a specialty restaurant can provide an indulgent meal at a restaurant you might not otherwise have time to dine at.



Movies and Shows

Royal Caribbean ships are full of things to do on a sea day, including movies, live performances, and competitions. Throughout the day and night, there are regularly scheduled entertainment to enjoy all around the ship.

During the day, you will find lots happening by the pool. Pool games, line dancing, food demonstrations and more occur on each sea day. Plus, you will find live music performed right by the pool. There is something so relaxing and enjoyable about hearing a reggae or steel drum band play music on a sunny sea day afternoon.

At night, Royal Caribbean puts on its best performances in the Royal Theater. Broadway shows, original productions and comedy/magic acts are lined up for guests to enjoy each evening.

In addition, Royal Caribbean has added large screens near its pools in recent years, which means you can enjoy the latest films while taking in a swim (or from the comfort of a nearby chair).

Read a Book



A time-honored tradition on the beach has always been to read a good book, and being on a cruise ship is no different. Many guests take advantage of their time onboard to finally get to that book (or books) they have been meaning to read.

During a sea day, there are a lot of great places onboard to read a book. Depending on your style, one or more of these may be just the spot for you

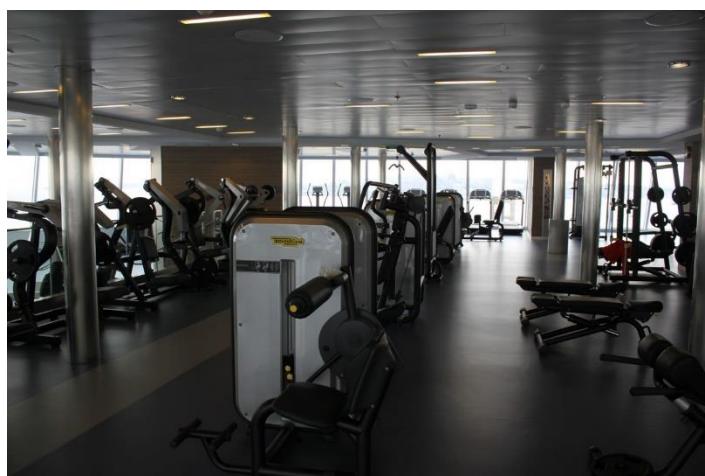
- On your stateroom balcony
- By the pool
- At a table at Cafe Promenade/Cafe Latte-Tudes
- In a chair on the promenade deck (usually deck 4 or 5 on most ships)

Signature Activities

Royal Caribbean markets its cruise ships as floating destinations, and you would be remiss if you did not check out some of the signature activities available on your ship.

Royal Caribbean first made a name for itself by adding rock climbing walls to its ships, and these days, they offer much more than just that. Depending on the class of ship you sail on, there are many really fun (and complimentary) activities to enjoy. Surfing on the FlowRider, ice skating, taking the view in aboard North Star, having a jump in the jump zone trampoline park, going down water slides and much more.

Whichever cruise ship you book, be sure to look into the activities available on the ship. Sea days are a popular time for many guests to enjoy these activities, but a little bit of research ahead of time can mean you can beat the crowds and get a few turns in.



Work Out at the Gym

Whether you go to the gym to maintain your regular exercise regimen, or just want to offset the delicious food you are enjoying onboard, Royal Caribbean's fitness center is a great way to keep fit on your sea day.

The equipment in the fitness center is complimentary for guests to use, and opens very early and stays open for much of the day and evening. There is ample opportunity to work out while on your Royal Caribbean cruise, and a sea day is a great time to stop by.

Royal Caribbean also offers fitness classes for an additional fee, where guests can partake in activities such as yoga, Pilates, spin and more. There are sign-up sheets in the gym, and it is open on a first-come, first-signed up basis. Your best bet is to sign up early in the cruise for the class(es) you want.

Spa Visit

A sea day can be super relaxing with just one visit to the Vitality Spa. Whether you choose a massage, facial, or another service, there is plenty of choices.

If you are new to the spa, you should consider taking a complimentary tour of the spa facility. We have found the spa tours to be low sales pressure, and a good way to learn about the services offered.

Sea days are quite popular for spa appointments, so be sure to book yours early in the cruise. Better yet, book it ahead of time prior to your cruise on Royal Caribbean's Cruise Planner site.



"Days at Sea"



It has a certain romantic ring to it—yet some travelers aren't sure what to do during those unscripted times when their cruise ship is on the way to its next destination. Without the go-go-go mentality of days spent in port, when you go on unique, guided shore excursions or explore on your own, many vacationers wonder what to do with their free time when sailing between one destination and the next.

When the weather is good, a popular pastime of choice is sunbathing on one of the ship's expansive decks or by a pool. But on a Royal Caribbean cruise vacation there's a bevy of other experiences and incredible dining options at your fingertips, designed to cater to everyone on board. You can check out world-class

shows, themed dance parties, fun games, classes, and movies galore, plus much more. And don't forget to take advantage of the rejuvenating spa, or go rock climbing, ice- or roller-skating, or surfing.

Here are some quick tips for how to spend your days at sea.

Relax and Recharge

You're on vacation—own it. If you want to really kick back, head to the Solarium, whirlpool, or the many other swimming pools and decks, and get ready to lounge and soak up the sun. Want to go deeper? Head to the Vitality Spa, where the offerings go way above your average hair, skin and nail treatments. Boost your complexion with a guest-favorite: a 24-karat gold facial, opt for an Elemis Spa detoxifying wrap, or de-stress with acupuncture or a massage, and don't miss the unique Rasul, an Arabian cleansing ritual that uses chakra muds and aromatherapy. You can enjoy your extra time by taking advantage of the medi-spa services available, too, including teeth whitening, Botox and more.



Push Your Limits



You can easily keep up your fitness routine, satisfy your need for adventure or push yourself with new experiences on board. The Vitality Fitness Center has you covered with advanced weight and cardio equipment, and a competitive set of group classes that includes Pilates, yoga and spinning.

If you like to take it outdoors, you can try things like hitting the links at the mini-golf courses, running on the top deck jogging tracks, or joining a game of basketball or volleyball. And what really makes the activities on board so special are the rock-climbing walls, zip lines, slides, surf simulators, and ice-skating rinks. Whether you're a newbie or experienced in any of the above, you won't want to miss enjoying them when you're at sea.

Play Hard



The largest indoor active space can be found at the Seaplex, a sprawling entertainment center for all ages that features bumper cars, roller skating and even a trapeze school. Vegas-style games more your style? Casino Royale is the place to be, with slot machines, poker, roulette, craps, blackjack, you name it—and player tracking technology that counts the points you earn and gives you the chance to redeem them for prizes.

If you're ready to take a seat and watch theater come to life, you've got the chance to catch dazzling, full-scale productions of everything from your favorite Broadway musicals, like "Grease" and "Mamma Mia!", to ice-skating and diving shows complete with a live orchestra and award-winning talent from across the globe.

You'll easily fill your day at sea with the combination of the variety of experiences that is perfect for you, and don't forget your dining options and in-stateroom amenities either. Now that you know what's waiting for you on board, find the Royal Caribbean cruise vacation that's right for you here.

What to Pack!?!?!

Camera. Suntan lotion. Swimsuit. Ok, now that we've got the basics out of the way, here are a few must-have cruise items that'll help make your holiday more comfortable, enjoyable and memorable.

On the First Day...

For the first day of your cruise, pack a small carry-on bag with your travel documents, a change of clothes, swimsuit, exercise clothes and any medications you may need. That way you don't have to wait for your checked bags to arrive in your stateroom.

Onboard Attire...

Shorts, t-shirts, slacks, trousers, casual skirts, blouses, and sundresses are all perfect during the day, whether indoors or out.

For lounging by the pool, pack two swimsuits (an extra one in case the other is wet) and a pair of casual shoes (e.g., thongs, sandals, running shoes). You'll also need some casual shorts and a couple of t-shirts or a cover-up for getting to and from the pool areas.

If you're planning to visit our onboard fitness centre, make sure you bring extra shorts, t-shirts, and socks that you won't mind working out in – plus a pair of tennis or running shoes/trainers.

Dinner Attire...

Meals in the main dining room follow this schedule:

Cruise Length	Casual	Smart Casual	Formal
3-night	2	0	1
4-night	3	0	1
5-night	3	1	1
6-night	3	1	2
7-night	4	1	2
8-night	4	2	2
9-night	5	2	2
10-night	6	2	2
11-night	7	2	2
12-night	6	3	3
13-night	9	2	2
14-night	8	3	3
15-night +	Remaining – Casual	3	3

Suggested guidelines for these nights are:

- Casual: Polo shirts and trousers for men, sundresses, or trousers for women
- Smart Casual: Jackets and ties for men, dresses, or trouser suits for women
- Formal: Suits and ties or tuxedos for men, cocktail dresses for women

For Fun...

There are four very important types of books you'll want to consider packing:

- Travel guides – to help you explore new destinations
- Poolside pleasures – nothing beats a great read in the sun
- Journal – keep an account of your adventure for sharing and reminiscing
- Address book – send your friends a postcard to make them jealous

Binoculars are another often forgotten, yet indispensable travel item. Be sure to pack a pair for magnified excitement on board and onshore.

Save Space...

Be sure to leave some room in your luggage for all those souvenirs and mementos. Some space-saving ideas include:

- Bring shirts and trousers/skirts that mix and match, turning three outfits into five or six.
- Wear your heaviest shoes during embarkation and disembarkation so you don't have to pack them.
- Pack small items inside larger ones for efficiency.
- Bring an additional empty bag for those acquired extras.

The number of smart casual and formal nights is at the ship's discretion.

Notes:

- Some 12 night or longer European cruises may have three formal nights
- For formal nights you'll need cocktail dresses for women, suits, and ties – or tuxedos – for men. And for the smart casual nights bring dresses or trouser suits for women, jackets for men.
- Remember, shorts, T-shirts, and swimsuits are not considered appropriate attire in the dining rooms at dinner. Casual dress dining is available nightly in the Windjammer Café. And be aware you'll also need smart casual attire for some of our specialty restaurants.
- We also offer tuxedo rentals for formal dinners and special occasions.

Onshore Attire...

You'll need comfortable walking shoes, as well as a hat and suntan lotion for protection from the sun.

If you are cruising to Northern Europe or Alaska, remember that nights on deck can be cool. Bring sweaters, jackets, and trousers. And if you'll be touring any museums, cathedrals, or churches, it's always wise to dress conservatively. You may also want to bring a raincoat, hiking shoes and a travel umbrella. And don't forget your swimsuit – it may be cool outside but it's always warm in our Solarium.

What Not to Pack

Weapons, illegal drugs, and other items that could interfere with the safe operation of the ship or the safe and secure environment of our guests and crew are prohibited. The following are examples of items that guests are not allowed to bring on board. These and other similar items will be confiscated upon being found. Alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, flammable liquids, explosives, and dangerous chemicals will not be returned.

Prohibited Items:

- Firearms & Ammunition, including realistic replicas.
- Tools including axes, hammers drills, drill bits, saws & tools greater than 7 inches in length.
- Sharp Objects, including all knives and scissors with a blade length of 10.2cm (4 inches) or more.
 - (Note: Personal grooming items such as safety razors are allowed.)
- Hookahs & Water Hookah pipes

- Illegal Drugs & Substances
- Candles & Incense
- Coffee Makers, Clothes Irons, Travelling Irons & Hot Plates
- Sporting goods including Baseball Bats, Hockey Sticks, Cricket Bats, Bows & Arrows
- Bicycles, Skateboards & Surfboards
- Martial Arts Gear
- Self-Defense Gear, including handcuffs, pepper spray, night sticks.
- Flammable Liquids and Explosives, including lighter fluid and fireworks.
- HAM Radios
- Powerboards / extension cords
- Dangerous Chemicals, including chlorine, spillable batteries, gas cylinders, bleach, and paint.
- Alcoholic Beverages (Note: Alcoholic beverages that are purchased in ports-of-call or from ships on board will be stored by the ship and delivered to you on the last day of the sailing. Alcoholic beverages seized on embarkation day will not be returned.)

Things to do in Sydney

Departs at 5:00 PM

You won't have any trouble filling up an itinerary in Sydney — there's a wealth of sights, sounds and activities here to delight adventurers of all stripes. Visit one or all of the city's three iconic landmarks: the Sydney Opera House, the massive arched Harbour Bridge and white-sanded, crescent-shaped Bondi Beach. Get your culture on at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, with works from ancient tribal Australia to medieval Europe to modern times. Cruise to Sydney and check out the North Head Cliffs at Manly Beach, which offer panoramic views of the bay and the skyline, or go snorkeling along the underwater nature trail at secluded Gordon's Bay to spot starfish and sea urchins.



Go in Circles

Circular Quay is the perfect place to start exploring Sydney. You can find the Opera House here, and Harbour Bridge is within walking distance. Stride into one of the many walking and pub tours that leave from here. Just 20 minutes away, you can stretch your legs on the iconic Harbour Bridge walk, the first of its kind in the world.

Insider Tip

Central Sydney is extremely walkable, so take the time to explore the little streets close to Circular Quay.

Walk Watsons

Hop on the ferry or one of the regular buses that go to Watsons Bay to enjoy the scenic hike around South Head. During your journey, you'll enjoy views of Sydney Harbour, North Head, the historic Hornby Lighthouse and, of course, the sapphire-blue Pacific Ocean. The Gap offers breathtaking views of the sea from the rocky cliffside.





Shopping

There are plenty of shopping malls in the heart of the city, including Westfield Mall, Pitt Street Mall and the wonderful Queen Victoria Building, which is now a shopping mall featuring top designers. Seek out cutting boards made from local camphor laurel — they're not only beautiful but also have natural antimicrobial properties. During your

Sydney cruise vacation, look for jewelry made from opal, the national gemstone of Australia.



Get Manly

Bondi Beach gets all the attention, but Manly Beach in the Northern Beaches is a bit more local. The Corso is lined with shops and restaurants, including local favorite, Hugo's. If surfing is your thing, this is the place to be. The walk from Spit Bridge to Manly is a fantastic way to soak in the city's coastline.

Insider Tip

Taronga Zoo is filled with indigenous animals (and yes, you can pet a koala). This zoo's biggest secret is that it has one of the best views of the city.



Local Cuisine

With all the water surrounding you, it's no surprise seafood takes center stage on many plates in the city. Head to Sydney Fish Market for giant Sydney Rock oysters or classic fish and chips. Stop into a local pie shop for a traditional Australian meat pie, or explore Sydney's international side with udon or ramen noodles at a Japanese noodle bar, or seek out shrimp dumplings in Chinatown.



Things to do in Bay of Islands

Look up — the Bay of Islands is said to have the world's second bluest sky after Rio de Janeiro. Located on the northwestern coast of New Zealand's North Island, the sea here is also a beautiful shade of turquoise, dotted with 144 subtropical islands of the area. Cruise to Bay of Islands and check out Urupukapuka Island, where you can hike through Maori village sites or relax on the white-sand beach. Visit the Waitangi Treaty Grounds — this is the site where the treaty that made New Zealand into its own nation was signed. Or head out on a dolphin spotting cruise to see the population of bottlenose dolphins that call these waters home.



The Hole in the Rock

Take a day trip to explore the bay and its pretty islands from close up, capped off with a trip through the Hole in the Rock. Carved by the sea and weather, the hole is 240 feet wide, though looks a lot smaller when you're heading toward it on your day-trip boat at speed. If conditions are right, don a wetsuit and jump in to swim with the bottlenose dolphins.

Wander Waitangi

New Zealand became a nation here, with the signing of the Waitangi Treaty between the Maori and the British in 1840. Visit the on-site Te Kongahu Museum and the intricately carved meeting house which often has Maori cultural performances. The largest Maori ceremonial war canoe in the world is here.



Fly Through the Sky



Judge if the sky is really the world's second-bluest via a parasailing trip to see the Bay of Islands from above with your cruise. Can you count all 144 islands? For a more adrenaline-soaked trip (though you're aiming to land away from the water) try tandem skydiving with an instructor.



Local Cuisine

Takeaway fish and chips is the perfect thing to eat near the water — the local style is whitefish fried crispy after a dip in batter, but you may see them frying up someone's catch of the day, too. In Russell, you'll find upscale spots serving bistro fare like local Hawkes Bay lamb, Northland pork and whole snapper.



Shopping

Look for New Zealand giftware like bone and jade carvings and handicrafts made from ancient kauri wood. The wood is from prehistoric trees found only on the top half of the North Island. The wood has been preserved for centuries in peat swamps and has an iridescent sheen.

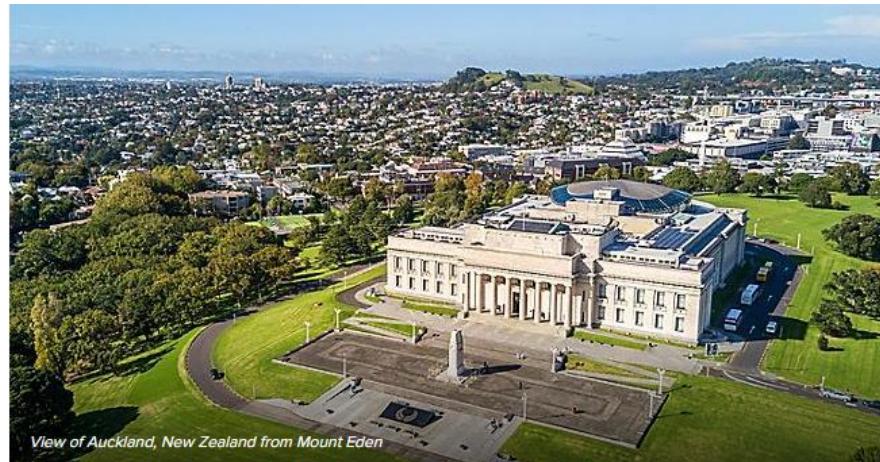
Things to do in Auckland

The New Zealand greeting "Kia Ora!" sets the tone for an Auckland adventure. This Maori phrase, used by Kiwis of all ethnic backgrounds to say "hello," roughly translates to "be well" — and after you've enjoyed the outdoor excitement Auckland has to offer, that's exactly how you'll feel. With three harbors and 18,000 miles of coastline, New Zealand's largest city offers all the exploration by land or by sea you could ask for.

Climb the Sky Tower for panoramic views of the city and the Twin Harbors. Jump on a New Zealand cruise and head to the Viaduct Basin in Wynyard Quarter to sail the harbor or relax with at a seaside brewery.

Taonga of the Maori

Visit the Auckland Museum to learn about the history, culture and treasures (taonga) of the Maori. A Maori cultural performance takes place several times daily concluding with a very loud haka, the traditional version of the dance the local All Blacks rugby team uses to intimidate opponents.





Adrenaline Junkies

New Zealand is famous for adrenaline-boosting activities like bungee jumping and Zorbing. During your New Zealand cruise, get a rush by climbing the Auckland Harbour Bridge, then bungee-jump off it. Walk the outside of the 630-foot-tall Sky Tower. You can even base jump all the way down, flying for 11 seconds at more than 50 miles per hour.



Local Cuisine

With the world's highest coffee roasters per capita, New Zealand is all about cafe culture. Though it's debated whether it was invented by Australians or Kiwis, drink a flat white while the kids have a fluffy, foamed milk with chocolate and marshmallow treats. Cruise to Auckland and seek out a hip farm-to-table spot for pastured-raised lamb roast, or feast on whitebait fritters or green-lipped mussels at a waterfront seafood spot.



Shopping

Souvenirs with New Zealand's unofficial emblem, the silver fern, are popular; rugby fans will want one in the form of All Blacks' paraphernalia. Pick up some raw Manuka honey; many believe it has medicinal benefits. Kids young and young at heart will love anything with a kiwi bird on it.

Things to do in Pape'ete

Papeete is the lively capital of Tahiti — a figure-eight-shaped island formed by the eruption of two volcanoes, it's become a go-to spot for tropical adventure. A bustling urban center, Papeete feels more French than anywhere else in Tahiti. Head to the center of the city to see the vibrant Municipal Market, where you can pick up coffee and chocolate croissants, sample fresh produce or shop for hand-carved Tiki statues. See the waves crash against the volcanic black-sand beach at Plage du Taharuu. Cruise to Tahiti and hike through the verdant jungle at Fautaua Valley — don't miss the dramatic waterfall that cascades almost 1,000 feet down into a natural pool.



Gardens Galore

Escape the city heat at the botanical gardens of the French Polynesia Assembly Complex. Stroll past an herb garden, tiki statues and a tranquil moss-covered pond, where Queen Pomare of Tahiti used to bathe every morning. Or head to the beautiful Paofai Gardens, where the trails take you past the bay and through ornamental fish ponds.

Insider Tip

Rush-hour sees traffic jams on the road, so leave plenty of time to get back to the port.



The "Real" Black Pearl

Head to the Robert Wan Pearl Museum to learn all about striking black pearls. The museum takes you through how black pearls were first created and what makes them so special. After learning about the process, you'll have the opportunity to take one of these Tahitian beauties home.



Shopping

There is only one place you should be going to shop in Papeete: The Marche de Papeete is the hub of the city and the best place to buy delicacies and souvenirs during your Tahiti cruise. In over two stories, you'll find vendors selling exotic fruits and vegetables, intricate wood carvings, shark tooth pendants or pareos, the colorful sarongs unique to Tahiti.



Everyone Gets a Beach

Papeete is lined with picture-perfect beaches for every hobby. Go surfing at black-sand Papenoo Beach. Play a game of beach volleyball at Plage du Mahana Park. Or go snorkeling alongside tropical reef fish at Plage de Toaroto.

Insider Tip

The Municipal Market is a morning affair, so be sure to visit there first.

Local Cuisine



Lining the waterfront, you'll find an array of restaurants serving a mixture of Tahitian and French cuisine. Cruise to French Polynesia and taste the national dish of poisson cru — chunks of raw fish marinated in coconut milk. Make sure you also try coconut crab, a rich dish of salty seafood and sweet coconut.



Things to do in Moorea

Moorea is the picture-perfect vision of an ideal island paradise. Formed by volcanic activity, this heart-shaped island hidden a few short miles off the Tahiti mainland holds beaches that look out to the brightest blue waters you can imagine, and the soaring green peaks of the mountains here are the stuff of legend. Head to Tiki Village to experience a traditional Polynesian dance. Hike up to Belvedere Lookout for views of famous Cook's Bay and volcanic Mount Tohivea. Go snorkeling in the lagoon at Opunohu Bay, or check out the Moorea Dolphin Center to get up-close-and-personal with nature's cutest, most intelligent sea creatures.





A sting ray in the ocean

Lagoon Around the Island

Check out Lagoonarium de Moorea, an enclosed lagoon overlooked by Motu Ahi mountain. It's the lagoon of your dreams: warm waters glimmer with coral gardens and friendly floating turtles. Take a dip in its aqua waters and find out why the Polynesian Corals are worth the fuss.

Insider Tip

The coconut milk you buy in a store is nothing like real island coconut milk — be sure to try some!



Bird's Eye View

Soar through the deep green forests at the adventurous Tiki Parc. With varying levels appropriate for all ages, you can live out tales of island exploration along a series of rope courses, bridges and zip-lines. Remember to wear sensible clothes and close-toed shoes.

Insider Tip

Taxis are moderately expensive here — book a tour to save on transport costs.



Shopping

There is one must-have Moorea keepsake on the top of every visitor's list — a famous black pearl. You can find these pearls and other authentic crafts at the Moorea Marketplace or the charming Le Petit Village. Seek out tifaifai, traditional Polynesian quilts embroidered with geometric flower patterns.

Say Hi to Sea Life

Intercontinental Moorea Resort and Spa has designated a portion of their private lagoon as a rare natural refuge for sea creatures in need. Take a tour of the dolphin center, and swim with them in their natural environment. Before you leave, peek at the nearby turtle sanctuary — home to adorable growing baby turtles.



Insider Tip

Head to the Belvedere lookout point before 10 a.m. to snap the best photo overlooking the island.



Local Cuisine

In Moorea, you'll find plenty of the Tahitian signature dish, poisson cru — raw fish marinated in lime juice and coconut milk. You'll also encounter chicken fafa, baked in an underground oven with coconut milk and spinach. The island also offers higher-end spots serving innovative, regionally inspired fare like prawn curry or mahi-mahi with ginger and lemon sauce.



Things to do in O'ahu

Honolulu packs a diverse culture and a laid-back attitude into a setting rich with beauty. Visit Pearl Harbor and tour Iolani Palace — the only former residence of a royal family in the U.S. — to delve deeper into the Hawaiian capital's unique history. Snorkel Hanauma Bay or hike the iconic Diamond Head volcano to get up close and personal with the natural wonders that keep people coming back year after year. If time allows during your Honolulu cruise, head to nearby Waikiki for a surf; the calm waters are perfect for any experience level.



Ride a Wave

Vibrant Waikiki is known for its world-class beaches, designer shopping and restaurants focusing on Hawaii Regional Cuisine. Grab a surfboard and hit the gentle waves. Then, find an oceanside spot to indulge in pau hana, the local answer to happy hour and small plates.

Swim with Sea Life

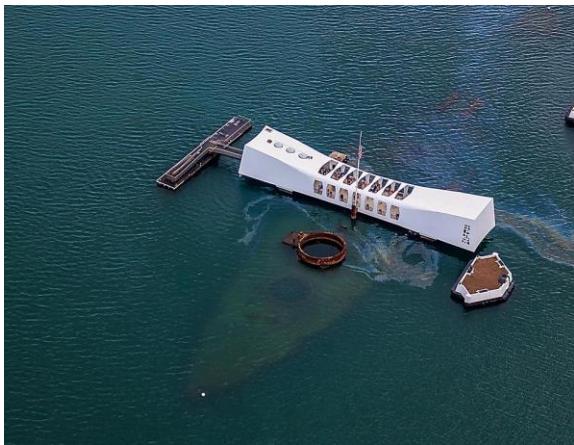


Below Honolulu's crystal-clear waters lies a coral reef that's home to thousands of species of colorful and tropical marine life. Book a snorkeling tour and explore what's beneath the sea with your cruise to Honolulu. You can often see fish right from the snorkeling boat.

Shopping

Waikiki is a shopper's paradise, with high-end stores as well as boutiques selling local signatures. At Ala Moana, the world's largest open-air shopping center, you'll find everything from designer fashions to purveyors of specialties, like fine coffees and traditional handmade quilts.





Don Your Learning Cap

Head to Pearl Harbor to learn more about what it was like on that fateful day of December 7, 1941. Visit the USS Arizona Memorial, which starts with a quick but informative documentary viewing followed by a memorable boat ride out to the historic ship.

Local Cuisine

Cool off at midday with some shave ice, a cold treat covered in flavored syrups. Try a traditional Hawaiian meal, such as laulau, a dish of pork and fish steamed in a taro leaf. Seek out Hawaii Regional Cuisine, a distinctive modern style that combines ingredients and



techniques from the Pacific Islands, Asia, and California.

Ways to Make Your Cruise Ship Cabin Feel Bigger

Who says interior designers are the only ones capable of making a small room feel bigger? With cruise ship cabins being significantly smaller than hotel rooms, avid cruisers have got making the most of the space they're given down to a science. With a little ingenuity, anyone going on a cruise can work wonders in their own cabin.

To put cabin size into perspective, RCL's standard inside cabins start at 100 square feet for single studios and up to 1660 square feet for two-story suites. Meanwhile, the average U.S. hotel room is roughly 330 square feet. So, cruisers who want to maximize space need to get creative.

From adding your own storage space to bringing in ocean views, we've compiled a list of ways to make your cruise ship cabin feel bigger that even the least crafty cruisers can accomplish. Eat your heart out, HGTV.

Don't Overpack.

How many times have you packed outfits, shoes, or accessories only to realize at the end of your cruise that they were a waste of space, because you never used any of them? Nothing makes your cruise ship cabin feel smaller than unnecessary clutter that inevitably ends up scattered all over the place. Simplify your packing routine by avoiding an excessively large suitcase (less than 28 inches – like a 26-inch bag -- is ideal) and packing smarter -- such as rolling your clothes and bringing one layer you can wear repeatedly.

Look for "Hidden" Storage Space ...

When it comes to cruise ship cabins, storage can be found where you least expect it. On Disney Cruise Line ships, for example, cabins feature ottomans that open to provide additional storage space. Some Royal Caribbean ship cabins have secret compartments behind the vanity mirrors. And don't forget there's always room underneath the bed. The more loose items you can get out of the way, the bigger your cabin will feel.

They're Magnetic: Most cabins are made of metal... and therefore they're magnetic. Bring along some magnets (or buy some as souvenirs) and you can keep all your cocktail party invites, alternative dining reservation notices and daily planners hung up on the walls and doors.

Nightlight Substitute: Inside cabins have no natural light. At all. Turn your TV to the bridge cam station, turn off the sound and -- voila! -- you've got an instant nightlight and a way to see if the sun is up.

Spa Passes: Spa cabins can often be a smart financial decision for avid spa-goers. Carnival's Cloud 9 Spa balcony cabins include access to the thalassotherapy pool, steam room and sauna. The extra you'd pay for the cabin (above a regular balcony room) is often less than what you'd pay for a cruise-length spa pass.

Limited Outlets: With all of the electronics we tote around with us these days, most people find cruise ship outlets to be insufficient, and only the newest ships have USB ports. You can bring your own charging station or power strip (check to see if these

are legal on your cruise line), but you might also want to ask your cabin steward. Sometimes there's an extra outlet hidden behind the TV or under the bed.

Bedding by Request: Picky about your bedding? Some lines will provide egg crate mattress toppers, top sheets and alternative pillow types by special request. Feel free to ask, before or during your cruise.

Hidden Storage: Cabin designers are pretty smart about creating as much storage space as possible. Do a little exploring or ask your cabin steward for a tour. You might be surprised to find extra storage under the bed or couch, inside an ottoman or behind a mirror.

Assistance for Seasickness: If you're feeling queasy, don't run out to a pharmacy before making some calls. Room service can bring you green apples and bland crackers (crew members swear by the apple remedy), and often you can get seasickness meds from the purser's desk for free.

... Or make your own.

Now that your overpacking days are over, you'll have more room in your suitcase for items that help you eliminate clutter -- ultimately making your cabin feel bigger. Seasoned cruisers swear by travel organizers like **Over-the-Door Shoe Bags and**

Hanging Shower Caddies. They're foldable and lightweight (thus easy to pack) and keep all your shoes, accessories, and toiletries in one place.

Remove Small Furniture.

While most cruise cabin furniture is either too large or too heavy to move or is bolted to the ground and thus can't be removed, some smaller pieces can be taken out of your cabin to create more space. On embarkation day, ask your steward if it's possible to take out a stool or even the throw pillows. Don't try to move anything yourself.

Keep your Cabin Tidy.

By no means are you expected to clean on your vacation, but you also shouldn't leave your cabin looking like a laundry bomb exploded. Hang clothes in the closet, and use your suitcase as a drawer for additional items -- then slide it under your bed. This makes it easier for your cabin steward to clean and make everything look pristine.

Take Advantage of the Walls.

Don't forget to pack those magnets! The majority of cruise ship cabins are metal, even though they might not look it. Instead of leaving your daily planners and cocktail party invites all over the desk and nightstands, consider hanging them up on the walls -- perhaps near the door, so you can take a peek at the day's activities on your way out.

Move the Beds.

Cruise ship cabin layouts are already designed to maximize space and efficiency. But depending on your ship, you might be able to have the bed moved to create more room in a desired area -- as long as it's not blocking a door or walkway. Additionally, beds can be configured to two twins or one queen or king (depending on room category), to tailor the layout to your liking.

Utilize Natural Light.

Natural light is an interior designer's best friend. It can make any small space feel bigger by brightening up dark corners and crevices. If you're staying in an ocean-view or balcony cabin, keep the curtains open while you're inside so the room doesn't feel so dark and cocoonlike. Just remember to close them if you plan to hop in the shower -- especially on port days. The last thing you want to do is moon someone on the ship docked next to you.

Turn on your TV.

Ocean views, whether from a balcony or through a window, can make any cruise ship cabin feel bigger. But not every cabin comes with a view. On the bright side (no pun intended), most cruise ship TV programming includes a bridge and/or bow cam station. If you're staying in an inside cabin, set your TV to the captain's view to give your cabin a roomier feel.

Choose the Right Cabin.

If not having enough space is a deal breaker for you, make sure to pick a cabin that suits your needs before booking. Cruise ship rooms vary in size, even within the same category. Check to see if there are special inside cabins with higher square footage or look for a "hump" cabin, which offers significantly more balcony space thanks to its unique location. Check out our roundup of unusual cruise ship balcony cabins to see if there's a layout that piques your interest.

Book a Guarantee Cabin.

Another planning strategy to (potentially) land more space is to book a guarantee cabin. Contrary to traditional booking, in which you instantly receive a cabin number, a guarantee cabin is unassigned -- it can be anywhere on the ship, in the category you choose, but you won't know the exact room until closer to your sailing. The plus is that lines offer these cabins at a lower fare and there's also the tempting possibility of an upgrade at no extra charge. On the flip side, if the ship fills up, you could get stuck in a cabin that's on the lower end of the category spectrum and thus smaller than you anticipated (since cabins within the same category tend to range in size).

How Not to Overpack for Your Cruise

Often it doesn't hit you until you're struggling with a stuffed suitcase at the airport: You overpacked for your cruise. Again. And while other travelers breezily zip through the airport, you're the one lassoing your bulging bags at baggage claim and handing out hefty porter tips.

Wish your packing life could be easier? Cruise Critic is here to tell you our tried-and-true secrets to avoiding overpacking. Read on for a few quick tips that can make your cruise packing process simpler, saner and less stressful.

Pick a Palette

It makes sense; if you have limited suitcase space, you can stretch your outfit choices by mixing and matching clothes that are similar shades. Restricting yourself to a handful of similar colors also means you can cut down on shoes.

Go Two if by Sea

The rule of "twos" can help you plan the perfect wardrobe. Pick two outfits -- one for day, one for night -- for each day you travel, as well as workout clothes, bathing suits, and PJs for every two days. Then cut the total amount in half -- remember, no one is going to notice when you wear the same shirt twice. Also, restrict shoes to two pairs (more about shoes below).

Layer Up

If you're heading to a chilly climate, you can wear the same upper layer repeatedly, while only changing the lighter layer close to the skin. Bring more lighter layers or do laundry onboard. Wear the heaviest outer layer -- a hoodie or a sport coat -- on the plane to save packing space.

Get a Shoe Clue

Shoes take up the most space in your suitcase, so be smart with how many pairs you bring. Limit yourself to two, in neutral colors, and chose ones that can do double duty. Boots, for example, can pair with a nice dress AND jeans. Ditto ballet flats or Mary Janes. Above all, choose comfort over fashion; nothing is worse than limping around a port in poor footwear.

Stay Fresh

Bring travel-sized Febreze spray to freshen up items to re-wear. A small sachet can make clothes in a drawer smell better. Clothes and underwear can be washed in the sink and hung on the clothesline to drip dry. (Or just spring for laundry.)

Accessorize

The same nice dress can look different with a new scarf or eye-catching jewelry, so this is one area to bring multiples.

Pashmina scarves can be particularly versatile, brightening up neutrals or serving as a shawl on chilly planes and in dining rooms.

Be Clever With Carry-Ons

Rather than pack a separate beach bag, look for a waterproof tote that's big enough to serve as your airplane carry-on.

Tablets are your best entertainment investment, as they can be used for e-books, downloaded movies and news sources.

Roll Up

Roll clothes when packing them. You can fit more in your luggage that way, and it also helps to minimize wrinkles. Rolling socks and stuffing them into shoes is another space saver.

Divide and Conquer

If you and your companion have both vowed to stick to carry-ons, don't be afraid to co-mingle bags. The taller person might have larger things, so splitting the stuff is more efficient.

Tame Toiletries

If you can live without your brands, go with the toiletries provided onboard. If you need a larger size, stop at a drugstore near the port, and buy it there. If you don't need the full 3 ounces, rebottle potions and lotions in a contact lens case. If you travel frequently, save time by keeping a bag of already measured liquids ready to go.

Single Out

It's not cheap but buying single use products can save space. Many products such as antibacterial lotion, nail polish remover, insect repellant and sunscreen come as wipes and cloths, not bottles. Simply toss when done.

Take Inventory

When you get home, look hard at your suitcase, and take note of what you did and didn't use. These can provide clues for the next cruise's packing adventures. And then write yourself a reminder not to overpack next time!

5 Great Travel Adapters and Chargers for Cruisers

There's lots to think about when you travel or cruise abroad, from simply remembering your passport to navigating unfamiliar cities, ordering a meal when you don't speak the language and connecting with the locals who might not speak English. Of course, cellphones can help with that, but your trusty electronic companion will quickly become a useless brick if you forget the proper tools for charging it.

Oh great -- something else to remember. But don't worry: We've got you covered with this list of adapters and chargers that are ideal for plugging in your phone, laptop and tablet, as well as hair-styling tools and other electronics you'll need on the go.

While most international cruise lines feature both North American and European outlets and voltages in their cabins, it never hurts to add to your travel technology toolkit, particularly if you're planning a pre- or post-cruise stay.

myCharge Portable Micro-USB Charger

If you're like us, you use your phone -- both onboard and ashore -- for things like navigation and taking photos, so your battery will likely drain before day's end. The last thing you want is to run out of juice mid-shore excursion or be tethered to the outlet in your cabin waiting for your phone to fire up. The myCharge portable charger offers micro-USB hookups that charge Apple and Android devices rapidly, either on the go or while the charger is plugged into a wall outlet (during which time it will also recharge itself and stay charged for several uses). That means you can leave your standard charger at home. Although myCharge is a tad expensive and bulky, it's worth every penny and still fits into most purses and pockets.



 <p>FACEVER 2-in-1 Qi Wireless Charging Pad</p> <p>If you like to stay on the cutting edge of technology, this two-in-one wireless charger is essential. Wirelessly charge your late model iPhone or Qi-enabled Android phone and a second Qi-enabled device (Apple Watch, AirPods) at the same time. The charging pad is flat, making for easy packing, and it supports a fast charge (special cable required, not included) so you can power up more quickly.</p>	
<p>JOOMFEEN Universal Travel Adapter</p> <p>This universal travel adapter fits standard outlets in more than 150 countries. It has a central adaptable area to plug in your devices, as well as two universal USB charging ports. To sweeten the deal, it comes in four colors and carries a one-year warranty. Note: This is an adapter only and will not convert voltage from country to country. It is not safe to use with electronics that have a heating element.</p>	
<p>Foval Voltage Converter With Adapters</p> <p>This nifty gadget is ideal for travelers with lots of electronics or for family travel, where several people need to charge their devices at one time. It offers two North American-style outlets and four USB ports. Its power cord is outfitted with a plug that fits European outlets and comes with adapters for other areas of the world, including the U.S., U.K., Australia, Asia and more. Equally important, it converts voltage from country to country so devices can be used more safely. Note: The Foval voltage converter is not recommended for use with hair-styling tools. Also be sure to check with your cruise line to see if power strips are allowed, as this could be considered one and might be confiscated upon boarding.</p>	 <p>Worldwide Charging 100V~240V input 100V-120V output +3 Plugs for use in over 150 countries</p>
 <p>Travel Smart by Conair Hair Appliance Converter</p> <p>Most voltage converters can't handle anything with a heating element, which translates to lots of fried (read: damaged, ruined, inoperable) hair-styling tools. Innumerable curling irons and straighteners have been sacrificed, but there's hope. The Travel Smart by Conair converter allows the frizzy-haired masses to choose a setting that's right for their appliance -- shaver, straightener/curling iron or hair dryer -- up to 1875 watts. The converter features a North American outlet and European-style plug, but it comes with adapters for use in up to 150 countries in the U.K., Asia, Australia and more.</p>	

Anatomy of a Cruise Carry-On



What you pack in your carry-on counts. We're talking about the bag -- be it backpack, shoulder bag or rollaboard -- that you carry onto your cruise ship after you've left the rest of the luggage with pierside porters.

As you may not have access to your cabin for a few hours after boarding and your luggage can show up anytime throughout the afternoon and evening (you try loading and delivering thousands of bags onto a ship by sailaway), the items in your carry-on might be the only possessions you have on your first day onboard. And in case of a lost luggage disaster, they may be the only things from home you'll have all week.

If you can't live without something, for a few hours or a few days, pack it in your carry-on and keep it with you. Smart packing will lead to a more pleasant and less stressful cruise experience.

To get your cruise started off on the right foot, we present to you a photographic dissection of the perfect cruise carry-on. Use this anatomy lesson to help you pack for an upcoming trip, and you'll be prepared to sail through many common start-of-cruise snafus.

Passport, ID and Cruise Documents. You will need to present all your official documents before you're allowed to board the ship. Fail to provide the correct ID and forms, and you will not be allowed onboard. If you're not sure what documentation you need, check with your cruise line, then doublecheck their answers on a government Web site (like travel.state.gov). Keep them handy and protected in a RFID-blocking document organizer.

Credit Card and Cash. It's unlikely that you'd pack your wallet in your checked luggage, but stranger things have happened. You'll need to present your credit card to set up your onboard spending account, and you'll want a few small bills ready to tip the porters who will be schlepping the rest of your bags.

Medications. If you have prescriptions you need to take daily, do not let them out of your sight. Bags can arrive late to your cabin or get lost, and ship medical centers are not full-fledged pharmacies that can easily restock your pill supply. Don't risk a medical emergency. We pack ours in a travel toiletry bag that rolls up and also has a hook for easy hanging in the bathroom.

Swimwear and Workout Gear. Once onboard, you might not have access to your cabin for an hour or two, and your luggage might not arrive until dinnertime. If you think you're going to want to go for a dip or a run on day one, pack a swimsuit (and a dry bag for when you're done), flip flops, workout-wear and sneakers in your carry-on. Why waste a day of your vacation?

Camera, Cell Phone, Laptop and Other Valuables. First off, don't pack anything in your checked luggage that you're worried someone will steal. (Then again, do you really need your expensive jewelry on a cruise?) Second, you may want your camera and cell phone ready for sail-away photo ops and final chats and texts while you can still access land-based (read: free) networks.

Change of Clothes. Remember, your luggage can take hours to arrive in your cabin -- sometimes arriving after you're scheduled to be at dinner. It's better to carry on an extra outfit for the first day -- either so you can change from your winter-in-New-England clothes to cruising-from-Florida attire or so you'll have a fresh look to wear to dinner onboard. (Thankfully, the first evening's dress code is typically casual for just this reason.) Also, should your luggage get lost (either by your airline or the cruise line), having a change of clothes, socks and underwear will help you get through the next few days. (We like throwing ours into the smallest of our packing cubes to keep them clean and separate from everything else in our carry-on bag).

Kid Stuff. Definitely carry on anything your kids can't live without should bags go missing. Perhaps that's baby's bottle, Junior's favorite teddy bear or a portable video game system. Plus, you'll want to bring extra diapers, pull-ups, wipes and kiddy snacks with you...just in case.

Toiletries. Will you cry if you can't have your favorite shampoo, or will your eyes burn without a specific contact lens solution? Then take them with you. You can buy basic toiletries at inflated prices in onboard stores, but if you're picky about brands, don't leave things to chance. Transport them in TSA-approved liquid containers.

15 Things You'll Regret Not Doing on a Cruise

You don't get a do-over if you make bad choices on your cruise vacation. Yet it's so easy to let fear, inertia and budgets stop you from doing that thing you really wanted to, and then you come home from your sailing with regrets.

At Cruise Critic, we want everyone to experience the perfect cruise. So, before you get caught up in the whirlwind of ship activities, see our list of the top things you'll regret not doing on a cruise -- and make sure you plan time to fit them in during your next vacation.

Watching the Sunset

The number-one must-do activity on a cruise ship is to stand by the railing, friend or loved one by your side, and watch the sun set over the seemingly endless ocean. (Sunrise works, too, but you need to be willing to get up in the dark.) You can selfie it or just take in the moment. Be sure to make time for this quintessential cruise experience. Tip: It's even better with a cocktail in hand.



Dining Outside



Whether it's on your private balcony or in the alfresco section of an onboard restaurant, dining outside is a great way to enjoy two of cruising's hallmarks: an abundance of delicious food and warm sea breezes. If you've booked a balcony cabin or suite, up the romance factor with a private dinner on your veranda. Breakfast is also more fun outdoors, especially in ports where the ship is at anchor and you have a nice view.

Posing for Photos

Yes, the backgrounds are cheesy and the prints overpriced, but if you've never cruised, you cannot bypass the crazy photo ops at embarkation, as you disembark in port, or during formal photo sessions offered by the ship's photographers. It's more fun than you think to ham it up in front of a fake ship's railing. And while you might grumble about the price, you'll find that even the cheesy photos become treasured keepsakes a few years down the line.

Ordering a Fruity Umbrella Drink

Do you like pina coladas? How about daiquiris, mai tais and other mixtures of fruit juice and rum, served in crazy drinkware with paper umbrellas and plastic monkeys? Once you've ordered a fruity umbrella drink, you will know you're officially on vacation. Trust us -- these drinks are also much more photogenic than beer bottles, should you be chronicling your travels on social media.



Sleeping In

It's easy to go-go-go on a cruise and let FOMO keep you on a packed schedule day and night. But a vacation should allow you some time to relax, so pick a day to cancel the wakeup call, embrace the late riser's breakfast, and sleep in. You will NOT regret it.

Talking to Strangers

Also known as making friends, talking to strangers is easier on a cruise than it is on other types of vacations. Cruise ships are social places, and people expect you to strike up conversations when you're seated next to each at the bar, zip-lining together for the first time or competing fiercely for cheap prizes in a trivia game. Some folks make friends for life on cruises; others find that dinner or a tour are enhanced by a fun chat with a shipmate.

Stargazing.

If you can find a dark spot on your cruise ship's top deck, you'll be rewarded with a vivid nighttime sky. Many people don't realize they can see so many more stars when they're away from light pollution. There's nothing like a vast ocean and an infinite sky to make your worries seem small. And if you geek out on astronomy, prep in advance so you can search out constellations and planets and impress your travel companions.

Living It Up

Sign up for the hairy chest contest, do a shot and sing karaoke, conga like a boss at an evening deck party, or scream your way down a waterslide -- you have to let loose a bit to fully get into the cruise spirit. Look, no one at home needs to know you've acted a bit silly, but you will feel invigorated if you put your stodgy inhibitions aside for a day and have some fun.



Trying a New Food

Does escargot intrigue yet frighten you? Has raw fish never crossed your lips? Always wondered what the fuss is about with beef bourguignon, foie gras or caviar? A cruise is a great time to sample foods you've never tasted. If it's on the main dining room menu, it's almost always included in your cruise fare, and if you spit it out, gagging, your waiter will bring you a replacement dish, no questions asked. Who knows? You might fall in love with a new food.

Dressing Up

We know that packing the suit or cocktail dress and heels is a pain, and it's so easy to eat at the buffet in shorts and a T-shirt. But if you pick one night to dress up and have a sit-down dinner, it will make your cruise feel more like a special occasion. And you don't want your vacation to feel like every night at home, do you? Plus, if you're cruising with your sweetie, seeing him or her dolled up can get those romantic vacation juices going, if you catch our drift.

Souvenir Shopping

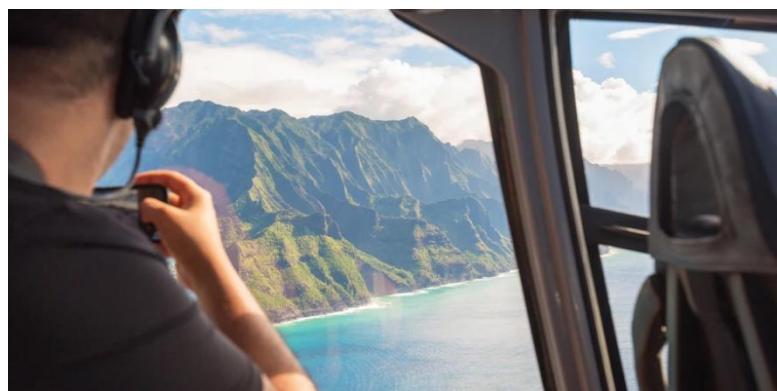
We're not talking about that Senor Frog's T-shirt, but buying something local in port -- whether it's a handmade craft item, a local food or beverage, or jewelry -- is a great way to remember your cruise trip long after you've returned to the doldrums of regular life. Remember, a souvenir does not have to be expensive to be memorable.

Watching Sail-Away

There's something cool and a little magical about watching a cruise ship pull away from its pier and set sail for the horizon. We like to watch the crew and dockworkers hauling up ropes and see the water churn as the ship starts to maneuver away from land, and it's just as enjoyable viewing the coastline pass by as you leave port behind.

Splurging a Little

On vacation, sometimes you have to splurge a little. Perhaps you're in need of a massage in the ship's fancy spa, or you've fallen in love with a handcrafted bracelet in port. Maybe you've always wanted to ride in a helicopter or try scuba diving. Budget a few splurges into your vacation plan because you'll regret giving up on those possibly once-in-a-lifetime experiences.



Washing Your Hands

On a different note, you will absolutely regret ruining your cruise by getting sick when you could have taken a simple preventative action. Wash your hands multiple times a day -- especially after using the bathroom and before dining -- in order to prevent norovirus and save you from being quarantined in your cabin, bonding with your toilet.



Putting on Sunscreen

In a similar vein, put on sunscreen every time you're out in the sun, and don't forget to reapply it. There's nothing worse than cowering inside, in pain, wearing long sleeves while your friends are frolicking at the beach or on the pool deck because you're so sunburned you can't move.

11 Best (and Worst) Cruise Souvenirs

You're expecting your next cruise will be the vacation of a lifetime, and you want to commemorate it appropriately. But what's the best way? With crew members hawking inch-of-gold jewelry discounts and locals zealously selling trinkets in port, it can be difficult to decide. Below, we offer some solid cruise souvenir ideas, as well as some not-so-great ones you might want to avoid.



Daily Programs

If you simply loved the onboard experience on your cruise, save a daily program or two (or all of them). They're ideal mementos for scrapbookers, and they'll give you an hourly play-by-play of each day's ship activities; when someone asks what you did on your sailing, you'll remember every detail. The best part? They're free, you'll receive at least one each day in your cabin, and they'll take up almost no space in your luggage on the way home.

Cruise Cards

Like the daily schedules, your onboard keycard is a great scrapbook addition, and it's small enough to take home without costing you extra in overweight baggage fees. Plus, it contains additional details -- like your name and dining time -- that the daily programs don't have. If you're extra crafty, you can turn your collection of cards into refrigerator magnets using a bit of magnetic tape or Christmas ornaments using a hole punch and some ribbon.

Photos

Everyone's got a cellphone these days, so there's no excuse for not taking photos. Even if you keep it on airplane mode for the duration of your trip, you can still use the camera function to document as much or as little of your voyage as you'd like. Whether you print them out later to use in a photo album or create a free online one, you'll have some great memories captured.

Photos (Did we say “Photos” again?)

If your photography skills aren't the best, you don't feel like lugging your camera or cellphone around with you or it's time for a new family portrait, not to worry. Nearly all oceangoing ships have onboard photography services. You can either set up a time to have professional photos taken, or you can purchase ones taken of you during dinner or at embarkation. Alternatively, if you've taken your own photos of the trip and want to display them, there are plenty of inexpensive ways to make hard copies. We've tried photo books from Shutterfly.com and Chatbooks.com. The latter, which automatically aggregates pictures from social media outlets like Facebook and Instagram, is ideal if you've been posting photos throughout your travels.



Duty-Free Items

You'll often find duty-free shopping options onboard and in port, featuring items like jewelry, cigarettes, alcohol, perfume and electronics. Although they won't necessarily provide you with a locally made memento of your trip, these can provide decent savings over what you'd pay elsewhere. But if you're in the market to make a purchase, it's a good idea to do some pricing research before you embark so you know whether or not you're actually getting a deal. Also keep in mind that, even though the items might be duty-free, you could still have to pay hefty taxes, depending on where the purchase is made. We

bought perfume at an onboard shop on a recent sailing, and although we didn't pay a duty, we did have to pay a 20 percent tax, which was levied based on our ship's European itinerary.

Ship-Specific Items

Whether you cruise a lot or a little, if you're a ship nerd or know someone who's interested in impressive feats of engineering, a ship-specific souvenir is a great idea. Many mainstream lines' onboard shops sell T-shirts, mugs, ship replicas and the like. They range in price, but they're a great way to remember the specific vessels on which you've sailed. Some are even printed with facts and stats, such as when the ship was launched, how many tons it is and how many passengers it carries.

Authentic Handicrafts From a Port You Loved

Was there a stop on your itinerary that you absolutely adored? Snag a local souvenir. From Jamaican rum and Alaskan ulus to French lavender soap and perfume, there's nothing that will remind you of your journey quite like something native to that area. Just be sure that what you're buying is authentic. Check the items to see where they're made. Bonus points if you purchase something that you witness being crafted right in front of you.

Sunburn

Of course you want the folks back at home to know that you've just spent a week in the Caribbean. One of the easiest ways to do that is by catching a lovely case of sunburn after too many hours on the beach without sunscreen. Although it's free, we don't recommend it. If you're prone to becoming a lobster, use a high SPF, and toss a hat, some sunglasses and lightweight protective clothing into your bag.

Weight Gain

Combine the vacation mentality with seconds on dessert and access to nearly 24/7 nibbles, and you're likely to come home with an extra 10 pounds in tow. You can still indulge, but there are a few simple ways to ensure your biggest cruise souvenir isn't an extended waistline. Take the stairs instead of the elevator whenever possible. Not only will it help you work off the extra calories from that bucket of beer, but it will also help you to better learn your way around the ship. Order desserts to share. Instead of ordering two or three desserts at dinner (because you just can't decide which one you want), have each member of your party order something different, and share the plates. Finally, even the smallest ships generally have onboard fitness facilities that are free to use. Some also have walking/jogging tracks and fitness classes that provide great at-sea workouts. You don't have to go crazy, but 20 minutes of walking on a treadmill or around the outer decks can keep weight gain at bay.

Pillow Chocolates

With pillow chocolates at turndown slowly becoming a thing of the past, these little morsels might seem like a hot commodity. They aren't. We tried stockpiling them throughout a sailing and taking them home, but they sat in a cupboard for months, nobody daring to take a bite. This is especially true if the chocolate has been melted by contact with someone's head after a night of sleeping without checking the pillow first. Instead, stick with chocolate that's made locally in a port of call you've visited or sweets from one of the onboard shops.

Pressured Purchases

Beware of unsavory sales tactics used by locals in some ports of call. It goes something like this: A person approaches you, welcomes you to the port and asks your name. You smile and reply. Before you know it, your name has been carved into some sort of souvenir for which the artist then demands payment. If you didn't specifically request the item with your name on it, don't feel obligated to

buy it; a simple, firm "no, thank you" is sufficient. If the seller is insistent, becomes angry or continues to follow you, alert port security.

20 Quintessential Cruise Experiences You Must Try at Least Once

Despite modern cruising's best efforts to add flashy, adventurous and jaw-dropping attractions to ships, some of the best cruise experiences are the tried and true activities that have been popular for decades. Sure, they might be more stereotypical and less high-tech, but there's a reason they have such staying power. From bridge tours to belly flop contests, check out these 20 classic cruise pastimes you've just got to try.

Meeting the Captain

There's something about a captain that commands respect and leaves you in awe. Maybe it's the uniform. Maybe it's the accent (likely Italian). Maybe it's the fact that he (or she) is in charge of keeping you and 4,000 others safe while flawlessly maneuvering 100,000 tons of steel through the ocean. If you have a chance to meet him (or her), take it. You can ask questions and, if you're lucky, maybe hear a few fun stories about life on the bridge.

Playing Bingo or Trivia

Two don't-miss activities on any sailing are bingo and trivia. For the first, you'll have to pay a per-card fee, while the second is free, but the stakes are also much higher for the former when it comes to prizes. If cash or free cruises sound enticing, bingo is the way to go. Trivia swag is generally less coveted, often consisting of cruise line branded items like key chains, but that doesn't make showing off your knowledge of useless topics any less fun.

Checking Out an Art Auction

Art isn't everyone's cup of tea, but whether you're a serious collector, curious about how the art auction process works or just plan to grab a glass of free Champagne and leave, it's a fun way to spend some time. Plus you never know: You might just snag a deal on the perfect masterpiece.

Dressing Up on Formal Night

If you're like most people, it's not often you get to don sequins or a bow tie for a night "out." Sure, dressing to the nines isn't for everyone, but it's a great opportunity to strut your stuff a la senior prom and feel like royalty while tucking into that fancy shrimp cocktail. Above all, don't stress about what to wear. Dig out the dusty old gowns and leisure suits, and make formal night fun.



Attending a Deck Party

There's nothing that will get you into the vacation mindset quite like a deck party. Usually held on a couple of evenings throughout each voyage -- the first being the sail-away party on embarkation day as your ship pulls away from the dock -- this type of shindig is likely to have you dancing on the pool deck or doing the limbo with a cocktail in hand.

Booking a Balcony Cabin

Choosing a cruise ship cabin can be hard. It might be tempting to reserve yourself an inside stateroom, particularly if you're on a budget or if you don't spend much time in your cabin, but we promise a balcony is worth the splurge. It's a great place to sit as you pull away from port, enjoy a morning cup of coffee or hear the sounds of the ocean as you get ready for dinner or drift off to sleep. (Just don't forget to close the door before leaving the room.)

Doing a Behind-the-Scenes Tour

If you've ever wondered what goes into running a ship and all of its moving parts, you'll want to sign up for a behind-the-scenes tour of the bridge, galley, storage facilities and/or backstage area. Some lines offer these types of tours for free, but many charge for the experience, and it's not always cheap. Still, seeing just how many chefs work to prepare your dinner or witnessing the sheer amount of machinery used by the ship's officers is something you won't forget.

Going to the Piano Bar

Live music can generally be found in several areas on each ship, particularly at night. But if you're looking for a more intimate venue, check out your vessel's piano bar. In many cases, the person tickling the ivories will take your requests as you sip a drink or two.

Asking for Seconds

Can't decide between two entrees or desserts you've spotted on the main dining room menu? Not a problem. Order them both; waiters are generally happy to oblige. Having a meal at the buffet? Who says you can't go back for seconds? Or thirds? That's right -- nobody. (But do make an effort to observe proper buffet etiquette.)



Buying a Fruity Drink

Most mainstream cruise lines offer a "drink of the day" on their ships, and many even allow you to keep the glass as a souvenir. The majority of these libations are fruity in nature and will make you feel like you're on a tropical island, even if you haven't yet set foot in a single port. If you're not a big fan of alcohol, don't worry: The bartender can make you a delicious virgin concoction.

Posing for Photos

Prepare to have your photos snapped in several key locations on your sailing. The first is at embarkation, just before you leave the terminal to board the ship; a tacky backdrop will probably be involved. The second is at dinner. Several dinners, actually -- whether you've finished chewing your food or not. The third is in port. Just as you're leaving the ship and trying to figure out where to put your darn keycard, a photographer will materialize out of nowhere with a fellow crew member dressed as some sort of character. Even if you want the photographer to leave you alone, be a good sport, and say "cheese!" Even if you don't buy the photos, you'll have fun trying to find them in the gallery later and laughing at how ridiculous you look. (On a more serious note, onboard photographers also schedule sessions for family portraits, which make nice mementos that involve better lighting ... and slightly less kitschy backdrops.)

Witnessing (or Participating in) a Top-Deck Contest

Your daily schedule of activities is likely to include variations of stalwart outdoor cruise favorites like belly flop contests and hairy chest competitions. Go! Even if all you do is watch from the sidelines, we dare you not to at least crack a smile. Bonus points if you sign up to get in on the action. Remember: What happens on the top deck stays on the top deck. (OK, not really.)

Singing Karaoke

The beautiful thing about this Japanese-inspired spectacle is that horrible singers and stellar ones are equally appreciated. If you're truly awful or truly great, people will remember you, so karaoke is a perfect way to make friends and feel like a total rock star.

Looking for Pier Runners

If your vessel's port departure time has come and gone, and repeated announcements ask Mr. and Mrs. Jones to "please contact guest services," chances are some of your fellow passengers are late returning to the ship after a particularly intense visit to Senor Frogs. Do what all good cruisers do, and find a decent vantage point from which to watch the latecomers sprint back onboard (if the

ship waits that long). Place bets on whether the pier runners will be juggling beach gear, an excessive haul of souvenirs or both. For added fun, be sure to cheer, clap and get it all on video.



Watching a Production Show

Nighttime entertainment in the theater varies widely from ship to ship, some employing the most cutting-edge technology and special effects, and others boring passengers to tears with acts that were hot in Vegas 30 years ago. You simply haven't had the full cruise experience until you've seen at least one of each type, so pick a show and go. (If you're skeptical, pick a seat near the back so you can make like a ninja and vanish if you find yourself nodding off after the first number.)

Staying Onboard During a Port Call

While we certainly don't advise skipping a port if it's your first time there, the onboard experience on a port day is downright relaxing for those who've visited the same region more than once. While everyone else is ashore, you'll have no trouble finding a deck chair, booking discounted spa treatments or enjoying lunch for free (although with limited choices).

Adopting a Towel Animal

Towel animals come standard with turn-down service on many ships. One day it's a monkey or a dog; the next it turns into an elephant or a swan. It's all up to the whims of your room steward, who may or may not decide to dress up your new friend with hats, sunglasses or even scraps of old daily schedules -- whatever is conveniently lying around. If you're really lucky, he or she might add to the collection each day (instead of reusing the same towels) so that, by the end of your cruise, you've got a towel animal menagerie. Don't forget to snap some photos since you can't take them home with you!

Ordering Room Service

One totally underrated cruise experience that's universal across nearly all ships is room service. Although more and more lines are charging extra for this perk, most still offer a free Continental breakfast option. It's absolutely perfect for both leisurely mornings when you want to have a bite on your balcony or hectic ones when you know you won't have time to run up to the buffet before your shore excursion. (Just note that a tip of a dollar or two is customary for the person who delivers your order, even if the food itself is complimentary.)

Soaking in the Hot Tub

If you've spent all day in the pool, why not spend all night (or at least part of it) in the hot tub? Relax after a grueling day ashore as you sail under the stars or enjoy a movie on the giant pool deck LED screen.

Joining a Cruise Critic Roll Call

Cruising is more fun with friends. Shameless plug: Join one of Cruise Critic's Roll Calls, which allow you to connect with others on your sailing before you even leave home. Be sure to sign up for a Meet & Mingle, too, so you can meet each other in person once you're onboard. These events are often attended by some of the ship's officers, as well.

Top 10 Ways to Take Your Cruise to the Next Level

Need to take the vacation fun up a notch for your fifth, 10th or 25th cruise? Want to make sure your first sailing is your best holiday ever? Hope to celebrate a birthday, anniversary or graduation in style? Don't leave the vacation fun to chance. Cruise ships are rife with opportunities for romantic moments, touching surprises and group bonding. Seek them out, and you'll take your next holiday at sea to the next level.

While it's true that some of the best ways to upgrade a cruise vacation involve spending a bit of extra money, many options are free or relatively inexpensive. So, whether you're booked into the cheapest inside cabin on a discounted shoulder-season sailing or the top suite on a luxury line for a summer cruise, you can afford to transform a typical vacation into the event of the year. Here are our favorite tips for making your cruise extra-special.

Enjoy a Pre-Cruise Splurge

Why wait until you get onboard to start the celebrations? There are plenty of things you can do pre-cruise to make this vacation stand out from all others. Splurge on a new bathing suit, casual cruisewear or formal outfit to show off on the cruise so you've got something extra to look forward to. Or, upgrade your travel arrangements by flying first-class to your homeport, staying in a luxury hotel or spacious suite for a day or two before you board or hiring a limo to drive you to the port. These decadent moments will set the right mood for the rest of the holiday.



Upgrade Your Cabin



If you want to treat friends or loved ones right, don't confine them to a cramped, windowless inside cabin. Instead, go for broke with a balcony cabin or suite, though you will pay hundreds -- or even thousands -- of dollars more, depending on the ship, sailing and stateroom.

Sticking to a budget? Try booking the lowest category of balcony cabin during a shoulder-season sailing, taking advantage of upgrade sales during Wave Season or snagging a guarantee cabin. It's definitely worth the money when you can spend sea days relaxing in peace on your private verandah, rather than fighting the hordes on the pool deck for a lounge chair. To make use of the space, indulge in a room service dinner, served in your suite's dining area, or throw a cocktail party in your spacious digs for your travel companions or newly made friends.

Plus, the suite life may entitle you to V.I.P. treatment, such as priority tendering, access to concierge lounges or first pick of reservations for specialty dining and shows. Now that's how you travel in style.

Arrange an In-Cabin Surprise

You could spend sail-away out on deck with the crowds, or you could surprise your cabinmate(s) with a special delivery of Champagne or chocolate-covered strawberries to enjoy as the ship speeds out to sea. Also consider having flowers or a fruit basket waiting when you get back from a day onshore. Most cruise lines offer menus of sailaway gifts or items that can be delivered to your stateroom throughout the cruise.

Beyond the typical snacks and flowers, we've seen some unusual Bon Voyage gifts -- including Disney's Star Wars-themed package (including a Star Wars pillow, fleece throw blanket and glow-in-the-dark decorations) that your cabin steward can set up in your room, and Carnival's delivery of a Candy Fun Box for those with a sweet tooth. And definitely let the ship know that you'll be celebrating a birthday or anniversary onboard. You might find your door or cabin decorated with balloons.



Find Memorable In-Port Activities

Has your mom always wanted to eat at a Michelin-starred restaurant in Europe? Have your kids dreamed of swimming with sting rays, sharks or turtles? Is your husband itching to go fishing in Alaska? Make their dreams come true by doing some research on the ports of call and finding the perfect activities for your travel group. It could be as simple as locating a beautiful, secluded beach or dining on pizza in Italy, or as elaborate as flying to the Taj Mahal or going on safari in Africa.

Just remember that while the cruise line offers some fabulous excursions, your dream day in port might be better arranged with a private tour guide or by making your own plans in advance.



Turn Dinner Into an Event to Remember

A cruise ship offers many ways to elevate a simple meal into a memorable evening. Splurge on a night out in your cruise ship's upscale specialty restaurant -- such as Disney's adults-only Remy (at \$95 a head) or Royal Caribbean's 150 Central Park (\$75 to \$89 for a meal paired with wines). Or order course-by-course dining in your cabin or -- better yet -- out on your balcony.

Order a cake to celebrate a special event, or request ahead of time that the chef prepares your favorite dish or a special menu for your table. Most cruise lines are willing to accommodate special requests with advance notice, and we say it can't hurt to ask.

Dress Up on Formal Night

We know that many cruisers balk at the thought of donning a gown or tuxedo just to have dinner on a cruise -- not to mention schlepping all the extra luggage to the pier. But there's something about getting all dolled up that can turn an ordinary evening into a night on the town. Maybe your sweetie will surprise you by asking you to dance in one of the lounges -- like the exquisite ballrooms on Cunard's three ships -- or treating you to a cocktail at a top-of-ship bar where you'll be seeing stars.

Or, perhaps the sight of your significant other in his or her snazzy duds will elicit new sparks of romance (and maybe lead to an early evening -- nudge-nudge, wink-wink)? It's worth a try....

Treat Yourself (or Someone Else) to a Splurge

At least once, when you start thinking, "I'd really like to do that, but it's a little expensive," hush your inner accountant, and take the plunge. Perhaps you've always wanted to try a hot stone massage or order a fancy bottle of wine. Note the bejeweled bracelet your wife is eyeing or the piece of local artwork your dad has gravitated toward, and purchase it when her/his back is turned. Or, pick up a surprise gift at a brand-name store onboard, such as Coach, Kate Spade or Michael Kors.

You don't have to get carried away and completely override your vacation budget, but a splurge or two on a special item or event is bound to make a lasting impression.

Hit the Deck for a Special Moment

You're on a cruise ship in the middle of the ocean, so don't waste all your time indoors. This is your chance to watch the sun rise or set, splashing dramatic colors over the never-ending sky at sea. Or sneak up on deck after dinner to gaze at the stars; you'll be surprised how many you can see when you've cruised away from land. Cuddle up with your sweetie under a blanket to watch Movies Under the Stars on a Princess cruise, shimmy and conga during one of Disney's or Norwegian's famous deck parties, or sip a drink at a bar tucked away on a back deck.

For all-day sun, splurge on a cabana on cruise lines such as Norwegian, Seabourn, Holland America and Celebrity for fresh air, privacy and an I'm-better-than-you vibe. If you come from an urban, land-locked location, you may not get the chance to catch those sea breezes in this way during the rest of the year.

Plan a Fun Photo

Photos create lasting memories of your vacations, and while candids can make wonderful shots, why leave it to chance? Some of the best cruise photos we've seen have involved families or travel groups planning their Kodak moments in advance. That could be as simple as getting the ship's photographer to snap your photo when you're all dolled up in your formal night attire; we were wowed on Carnival by a group who matched the husband's ties and vests to the colors of their wives' dresses.



Print up group T-shirts or hats for the trip, and take a picture in your matching outfits. If you dig costumes, bring your own for Halloween or Santa's hats for holiday cruises. Some lines even have costume racks so you can dress up before your professional photo session; we dressed up in pink go-go boots and matching feather boas for silly shots on a Holland America cruise.

If you don't want to pay the high prices for professional pics, bring a tripod for your camera, and take your own group shots.

Try Something New

Some of the most memorable moments on cruises happen when you fight back your fears and try something new. Cruise lines offer many opportunities to expand your horizons. The dining room is the place to try new foods -- think caviar or lobster. (Don't worry: If you don't like them, the waiters will bring you another dish, and you won't be charged extra.)

Maybe now's the time to try rock-climbing, surfing, zip-lining, fishing, kayaking or a number of other activities. Onboard, knowledgeable crewmembers can guide you to a new cocktail or wine you might enjoy, a spa treatment out of the norm (like a 24-karat gold facial, seaweed body wrap or a Thai poultice massage) or an activity you never knew you were good at (like line-dancing

Ovation of the Seas – April 2023 Trans-Pacific (Sydney / Bay of Islands / Auckland / Pape'ete / Mo'orea / O'ahu) or making towel animals). Enrichment classes can introduce you to new hobbies -- try art workshops on Crystal, cooking classes on Oceania or lessons on digital photo editing on Holland America.

One moment of fearlessness might just lead to a lifelong passion -- or at least a good laugh that you'll remember long after your cruise ends.

12 Things You Don't Need to Take on a Cruise

If you're the sort of traveler (like we are) who sometimes resorts to sitting on their suitcase to get it closed, you'll be happy to know that you can lighten your load when packing for a cruise. Ships furnish a number of items that you can cross off your packing list.

Here are some of the major things you don't need to pack for a cruise.



Soap and Other Toiletries

Most ships are equipped with soap, shampoo, conditioner, lotion and shower caps. As you move up to higher cabin classes or luxury lines, the amenities increase. You may find cotton swabs, cotton balls, bath salts, sunblock, loofa scrubs, colognes or choices among prestige brands. Of course, if you have preferred toiletries brands, bring them along. Your cabin attendant will replenish toiletries regularly -- and if you have any extra needs, don't hesitate to ask.



Hair Dryer

Ships all come equipped with hair dryers. They may be wall-mounted in the bathroom, or in a closet or vanity drawer. We've even been on one ship that had both a wimpy wall-mounted dryer and a more powerful one stashed in a drawer.

Clothesline

Most ships have a retractable clothesline located in the bathroom. While it may be tempting to toss your swim suit over a balcony chair to dry -- don't. It's a good way to lose a suit to a gust of wind, and it's also against most cruise lines' rules.

Beach Towels

For poolside and beachy ports, ships furnish the towels. You'll find them stashed by the pool, or handed out as you head off the ship.



Dirty Laundry Bag

You'll find a laundry bag in your closet. It's used for the ship's laundry service, but nobody says you can't use it for dirty laundry that you're packing to take home. Just don't take the bag home if it's cloth and not plastic -- you'll be charged.



Books

Don't bother to lug lots of books along, since ships have onboard libraries. Some even have "take a book, leave a book" shelves where you can exchange a book you've read for another one you can keep.

Snacks

If there's one thing ships are loaded with, it's food! You will most likely be able to find something to eat at any time of the day or night, including room service. And if you're concerned about random munchies attacks, you can always collect a stash of cookies from the buffet.

Booze

Most ships don't allow you to bring wine or liquor onboard, although there are a few exceptions. In general, they'll scan any hand luggage every time you board and hold alcoholic beverages for you until you disembark. Most lines allow you to bring wine, but charge a corkage fee (unless you consume it in the privacy of your cabin).



Computer

Most ships have computer terminals available for passenger use, although you'll usually pay to access the internet. They're perfect for a quick email check or printing out your boarding pass. However, if you want to download photos or check sensitive work email, bring your own laptop.



Local Maps

On port days, maps of the area are usually available from guest services or shore excursions personnel -- although sometimes you'll find representatives from local tourism bureaus handing them out, either on the ship or at the port. If you attend port lectures with slideshows, you can snap photos of maps and other info with your phone, too!

A Pillow

Unless you're like the "Princess and the Pea," most ships will have pillow alternatives to accommodate you. Luxury lines and higher cabin classes may even offer a pillow menu, with all sorts to choose from hypo-allergenic to extra-firm. Talk to your cabin steward if you'd like a different pillow.

Exercise Equipment

Leave your yoga mat and resistance bands at home. Cruise ships have fully equipped gyms stocked with everything from weights to Bosu balls and elliptical machines. Personal trainers are on hand to lead group exercise classes, like spinning or Pilates, or offer one-on-one training sessions.



Amorous balcony/open-curtain activities are also the source of much amusement, as are "romantic" moments in glass elevators (a cruise ship's answer to the mile-high club?).

10 Cabin Locations to Avoid on Cruise Ships

Just like there are bad seats on airlines based on location (middle seats!), there is such a thing as a bad cruise ship cabin. Get stuck with one of the worst cabin locations on a cruise ship and your sleeping and alone time may be interrupted by noise, smells and other annoyances.

The good news is just like you may choose whether you want an inside, oceanview or balcony cabin or a suite, in most cases you also get to choose your cabin location when you make your booking (unless you go with a super cheap "guaranteed" category fare where the cruise line decides where you will be staying).

To avoid making a mistake when picking your cabin location, it makes sense to study your cruise ship's deck plans before making your cabin choice. Look at what is above, beside or below your selected cabin location -- and remember, deck plans don't always line up on page the way they do in real life. Match the elevator banks and stairwells on each deck to get a better idea of where your cabin is, spatially.



Or better yet, work with an experienced travel advisor who has access to information and knowledge about which cabin locations are the best -- and the worst.

Let our pain be your gain. Here are our recommendations of cabin locations to avoid.

Near Entertainment Venues



Especially if you are a light sleeper, you don't want to hear pulsing music into the wee hours. Don't book near or under the disco and avoid other entertainment areas -- cabins near the theater, for instance, may experience some sound-bleed, particularly thumping from heavy bass notes. Ditto for the ship's atrium if it is used as an entertainment hub for music and performances.

Other areas to avoid for those craving silence include cabins directly under the Lido deck, because your nap may be interrupted by the poolside band

playing tunes, late-night deck parties, or the sound of scraping as passengers move deck chairs to their desired positions.

At the Bow

That fancy suite may be up top of the ship at the bow, but if you are prone to seasickness, it's best to avoid both forward-facing cabins and higher decks, because the ship's movement tends to be more pronounced there. Cabins in the center of the ship are more stable for those who don't want to feel as much motion on the ocean.

Near the Anchor

In the bow of the ship is the anchor, which you want to avoid being close to because when it is dropped you are guaranteed to hear very loud noises in the very wee hours any time you're in a port that requires tendering and anchoring offshore. These cabins tend to be all the way forward on lower decks, but expect to hear some noise in most extreme-bow cabins.



Obstructed Views

Ah, it's a glorious day! You open your curtains and look outside to admire the view of the cloudless sky and sea, but instead find yourself staring at a big orange lifeboat. Don't let this be you. Choose a cabin without obstructed views, unless you value the reduced price these cabins come with. Pro tip: those lifeboats need maintenance all the time. Expect to see the odd worker passing by your window every now and then.

Close to the Engine Room and the Galleys

While it's less of a problem on today's modern megaships, don't book a cabin near the engine room unless you happen to like the smell of marine diesel and occasional vibrations. If you are sensitive to smell, avoid too booking near the restaurant galleys, which are usually blocked off as large grey technical spaces between dining rooms on deck plans. French fries smell great when you are eating them, but not so much when batch after batch is cooked.



Near Elevator Landings and Stairwells

People tend to talk on elevator landings and in stairwells while heading back to their cabins, even late at night. Maybe especially late at night. So unless you want to hear all about Mary and Joe's day and plans for tomorrow, avoid booking cabins near these areas. Your sensitive ears may also be annoyed by the gentle pinging of elevator buttons.

Under the Jogging Track or Near Children's Playrooms

Noise is an issue if you are directly under the jogging track or promenade deck -- unless you like awakening to a rigorous thump, thump thumping -- and kids are kids and make noise. Also avoid booking directly under the sports court and other fitness areas that could be subject to excessive noise.



Connecting Cabins

If you are very sensitive to noise, don't book a cabin with a connecting door option because through the doors (which are not as heavy as doors to the corridor) you are more likely to hear the folks next door -- whether you know them or not. Connecting cabins are typically indicated with a little symbol on deck plans in between rooms that adjoin.

Near Crew Maintenance Areas and Crew Passageways

Among the possible horrors here is getting a cabin next to the vacuum toilet control system, which means you'll hear constant flushing. Door slamming as the crew goes about their work may be another annoyance.

Around Smoking Areas

For those sensitive to the smell of cigarettes and cigars, avoid areas where smoking is allowed. On some ships, this means not staying near the casino.

Why Germ-Zapping Robots and AI Technology Could Be the Future For Cruise Ships

The use of advanced technology is likely to play a key role in keeping people healthy on cruise ships, according to travel and technology industry experts.



Cruise lines have arguably been well ahead of the game when it comes to new technology in the travel industry -- even before the COVID-19 pandemic took hold in March and led to a global suspension of operations.

As Luis de Carvalho, CEO of Bermello Ajamil and Partners Europe, a global leading consulting practice specializing in port and destination development for the cruise and maritime Industry, said:

"Even prior to COVID-19 we were experiencing a gradual evolution of procedures and tools associated with the cruise experience. What COVID-19 has done is to add a more 'urgent' element that will force the industry to speed up that process of adding to the passenger experience and enhancing health protocols."

Of course, there's a trade-off: A huge part of the cruise experience is meeting people, having a drink together and chatting up new friends at dinner. Is that realistic with social distancing and mask wearing?

As de Carvalho puts it: "Cruise is a people product, and we enjoy socialization, thus elements such as social distancing will need to be carefully managed in the startup and eliminated long-term to preserve the aesthetics of the product."

So while some of the restrictions needed to restart cruising will be gradually eliminated, tech is definitely here to stay. We take a look at how it will reshape the cruise experience.

The Technology is Here Already.

During a roundtable chat in May, Richard Fain, Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. chairman and CEO, said: "Frankly, the technology has helped make health protocols easier, and I think the same thing is going to happen on the cruise ships. We're going to use technology. We're fortunate with ... our touchless system, that will allow us to do things without any contact on signing bills or anything like that."



Most of the major lines have been running with enhanced technology for a couple of years. Examples include Royal Caribbean's fast track check in -- take a selfie and scan your own passport; Celebrity's facial recognition technology; MSC Cruises' artificial intelligence system, Zoe, an Alexa-like onboard assistant; and Princess' Ocean Medallion, a part-app, part token approach to customized cruising.

Some of this technology might have seen gimmicky when it was launched, as technology expert Fran Marcellin says: "Princess Cruises' Ocean Medallion, for example, unlocks the door as you approach so guests don't need to touch their door handle. It was simply a luxurious feature pre-COVID-19; now, in our new world it, holds far more practical importance."

Of course, much of this tech is commonplace at airports -- facial recognition at e-passport gates, mobile boarding passes, self check-in -- and widely accepted by air passengers, who often do not interact with a human until security.

It Starts Before You Get to the Terminal.

Most major cruise lines now offer online check-in, which originally was just a way of removing paperwork and lines but now means you get your boarding pass on your phone.

With facial recognition and passport scanning, passengers can simply wave their phones at a scanner in the embarkation port -- just like at an airport -- and they are through, avoiding any human interaction (if the tech is working).



Another possible change passengers might see are disinfection tunnels leading to the terminal and an entirely biometric system operating in the terminal, according to Jennifer Willy, editor at the European Travel Information and Authorization Systems, which oversees Europe's electronic visa waiver program: "In the long run, many hotels and airports will opt for disinfection tunnels and thermal scanners for passengers to pass through."

"Touchless communication is another big change that will and is taking place at some airports. Delta terminal in Atlanta is operating through an all-biometric check-in system. Right now, this can be seen in Delta only, but it is likely to spread in other airports around the world."

Apple and Google both are developing track and trace apps, which can alert crew whether someone has been near an infected person. As in China, it might be that you have to show you are all clear, rather than the lines basing it on trust when you sign the health questionnaire.

You'll See Changes at the Terminal



And if the thermal imaging cameras aren't placed outside, then you probably will find them in the terminal, as Portsmouth International Port, in the U.K., has done.

Portsmouth was the first British port to introduce thermal imaging cameras to test passengers' temperature; the aim of the technology is to give a ship's medical team the information to decide whether a passenger should be allowed to board.

And Carnival Corp. recently announced it is partnering with a company called Infrared Cameras Inc. to screen passengers and crew using thermal cameras.

Greg Ross-Munro, CEO of Sourcetoad, a software development company that works with the hospitality industry, said: "Most likely to be rolled out first across most cruise lines and port terminals is temperature scanning, for example, thermal imaging using infrared to detect elevated skin temperatures, not only at embarkation, but for monitoring throughout the cruise."

However, terminals of the future may go well beyond simply installing thermal imaging, which de Carvalho describes as "more of a public relations item than a health-screening tool due to the large percentage of asymptomatic people."

"**There** are systems for air purification and pathogen removal for the whole terminal facility that could be implemented, along with UV lighting, and the obvious thermal imaging for temperature checks," he said.

The biometric testing is likely to follow, but not immediately, according to Ross-Munro: "Facial recognition will not likely be utilized across all cruise lines yet, nor at all port terminals, but it will be deployed in busy ports for better crowd control."

We might even see terminals rolling out iris recognition, as well as gesture and voice control, all of which are new technologies being trialed at airports.



Expect Significant Onboard Changes.

A number of lines have detailed what changes we are likely to see onboard in terms of capacity reductions, the use of masks, social distancing and other enhanced health protocols.

One of the main ways to ensure these health protocols are adhered to will be via touchless tech. This is already used widely by the lines in the form of apps, which allow you to do a whole variety of things -- often without the need to log onto onboard Wi-Fi.

Some are more functional than others, but they might: act as a keycard to open your cabin, to order and pay for drinks; make bookings at restaurants, shows and the spa; book shore excursions, check your account, track your loved ones or even control the lights and temperature in your cabin.

As Fran Marcellin says: "As the virus can remain present on surfaces, cruise lines with smartphone apps that include planners and daily information -- such as Carnival's HUB, Royal Caribbean's Royal app, Viking's Viking Voyager and MSC Cruises' MSC for Me -- reduce the need for passengers to touch documentation."

"Those with reservation and cancellation capabilities also mean passengers can avoid contact with others at physical booking zones on board."

She adds: "Smart home technology also helps passengers avoid touching in-room surfaces, like being able to control lighting and temperature through the app on Celebrity Edge."

Travel technology writer Mark Frary said: "Another potential victim of the crisis may be the shared touchscreens that cruise lines frequently use to sell tours, book activities and let passengers browse photos. Few will willingly swipe a screen for half an hour that countless other guests have been using."

"I predict that cruise lines will invest more in making these services more easily accessible on our own devices. Yes, they have the apps but they will need to become more user-friendly and feature-rich."

And we may also have to wave goodbye to paper invitations from the Captain inviting you for dinner, according to Ross-Munro:

"Paperless receipts are provided on many cruise lines, but the move to paperless daily newsletters, activities announcements, and menus has been slower until now. Touchless tech for food and beverage menus has been used by some cruise lines in the higher-end venues, but paperless menus will become ubiquitous (if not mandatory)."

Tech that decentralizes passengers is also being increasingly used for reducing contact. Marty Sprinzen, CEO of VANTIQ, a software development company that works with airports on thermal imaging cameras, said: "For instance, a ship could use virtual queueing apps to limit how many people are able to go to a certain area at any given time, which would make certain there is no crowding at a lunch buffet, in the fitness center or at the pool."

"Indeed, prior to the pandemic, VANTIQ was working with a German tech company creating apps for the cruise industry, such as passenger management and tracking apps that can help passengers navigate the ship."

MSC Cruises' geo-location wristbands mean you can find your friends or family wherever they are on the ship (using your app), rather than meeting them at a central point somewhere.

And by using Ocean Now on some of Princess Cruises' ships, passengers can order food, drink and a selection of other products and receive them in a different location, away from other passengers or shopping areas.

Going back to the accusations of tech gimmickry, one of the most high-profile victims of that was the Bionic Bar, which debuted on Royal Caribbean's Quantum of the Seas in 2014, as Frary said:

"Royal Caribbean's Bionic Bar cocktail maker was surely little more than a publicity stunt when it was conceived but it now seems a prophetic move by the cruise line. People will be understandably worried about food and drink preparation -- and shared buffets in particular - when they return to cruising. We may see an increase in automation as a result."

Which might well go beyond bars.



Is This The End of the Personal Touch?

One of the aspects that we might lose, at least in the short term, is the personal touch -- whether that's being handed your drink at the bar, enjoying a deep-tissue massage at the spa or even close contact with your room steward.

As one Boards members asks, could cruise lines introduce some of the changes that are already being pioneered at hotels such as limited housekeeping, no room service and surfaces devoid of many items to help with cleaning?

One glimpse into the future comes from Xenex, whose LightStrike Germ-Zapping Robots (they've been likened to R2D2) are already being used in hotels, restaurants, food processing facilities, and office buildings -- and it has built protocols for cruise ships. The robots use broad spectrum UV light to quickly decontaminate rooms and public spaces.

A spokesperson for Xenex told Cruise Critic: "Pre-pandemic, norovirus was a concern, and we've been contacted by various companies about stopping the spread of infectious disease on their ships.

"There are lots of companies marketing UV devices right now -- what makes our robot different is the way we create intense bursts of UV light, so the robots work very quickly."

According to Xenex, Texas Biomedical Research Institute tested the robot against the virus that causes COVID-19 and it killed it in two minutes.

And if you're still worried about touching surfaces in your cabin, just ask Zoe to look up information or power items on or off for you – MSC Cruises' voice activated Alexa-like speaker is in every cabin onboard MSC Bellissima and MSC Grandiosa, and is likely to be retrofitted onto other ships in the fleet.

It was initially designed to answer simple questions like what times does the show start or what time does the main dining room open, but as "she" learns, Zoe will be able to increase her knowledge and functionality, such as turning on and off the lights and the TV.

"Voice tech will become important in the new touchless world too. Rather than having to turn off the lights or lower the blinds by hand, just ask 'Alexa' to do it for you," Frary said.

"It will be an expensive time for cruise lines when they can least afford it. Lifelong cruise lovers will return after the pandemic ends but convincing new people to give a cruise a try may rely on ships becoming as touchless as possible."

Ross-Munro is not convinced the personal touch will be eliminated entirely: "Does it mean using voice, sensor, or mobile app technology will replace speaking directly to a steward, waiter, bartender, and all guest services? I think onboard technology will augment the ways guests can communicate and interact with the crew, rather than replace them."

He believes the two areas where AI is most likely going to be used are in chatbots and virtual assistants like MSC's Zoe, but adds: "Once again, completely replacing a human being is unlikely, and handing off conversations will be an important step."

The danger with all this automation -- as Royal Caribbean found out to its cost in 2014 when it first introduced tablets for waiters to take orders, and were hit with a deluge of complaints because it meant waiters were buried in their screens -- is the loss of what makes people want to cruise again and again, as de Carvalho explains:

"Cruising is all about the personal attention and relationships built with crew and other guests."

"Personal contact with the ship board staff is and always has been a very important component of creating memorable experiences. The cruise product cannot eliminate that essence of the cruising experience."

He added: "Otherwise it will be just transportation from one place to another."

How to Sanitize Your Cruise Cabin in 12 Steps

Erica Silverstein, Contributor

Room stewards on cruises work hard to keep your cabin neat and clean, but they don't have the time to deep clean and completely disinfect every cabin every day. If you're a self-proclaimed germophobe -- or worry about catching norovirus or other illnesses onboard -- you might enjoy your cruise a bit more if you take a few minutes at the start of your sailing to ensure your cabin meets your own cleanliness standards.

Follow these 12 steps to sanitize your cruise room, and you'll feel better about your chances of staying healthy on vacation. (Note that you do not have to do any of these things -- most cruisers don't and are just fine.)

Pack the Right Supplies.

If you're serious about deep cleaning your cabin, you'll need to come prepared with the right gear. First, you'll need cleaning supplies, such as Lysol Disinfectant Spray or Clorox wipes. Not all travel wipes and cleaners kill norovirus, so if that's your goal, read labels and pick a product that does the job. (Note that if you buy something strong or hospital grade, containing bleach, you might also need to bring gloves and a mask to keep yourself safe.) Also, pack a zip-top bag; disposable gloves and dish soap are optional.



Do Not Put Your Bags Directly on Your Bed.

If you first enter your room with your luggage or carry-ons, do not put them directly on the bed or couch. Should there be any stowaway bedbugs, direct contact with your bedding is their gangway to board your bed and treat you as their evening buffet. Leave your bags on the floor or put them on top of the provided thick mat, and you won't be introducing new bugs to your cabin.

Wash Your Hands.

You've been walking around onboard, possibly touching elevator buttons and railings and other public-use surfaces. Before you start your sanitization process, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. For even more protection, put on a pair of gloves after you've washed your hands.

Wipe Down All Door Handles and Light Switches.

These high-touch areas are used by everyone in your cabin, as well as housekeeping and anyone else visiting your room. Give them a good wipe down on day one; you might want to revisit the task later in the cruise, as well.

Wipe Down Bathroom Surfaces.

Bathrooms can be germ central, so spray or wipe down all hard surfaces, including the toilet seat and lid.

Quarantine the Remote Control.

It's common knowledge that one of the germiest items in a hotel room is the remote control -- touched by many and with lots of crevices that can't be effectively wiped down. Pick it up with a tissue or gloves, put it in a plastic bag and zip it shut. You can still operate the remote, but never have to actually touch its surface.

Wipe Down the Phone.

Runner-up for germiest item is the telephone, for the same reasons as the remote. You can't put your cabin phone in a bag, so do your best to wipe it down, especially the mouthpiece.

Clean Hard Surfaces in the Cabin.

Related: What Cruise COVID-19 Changes Are Likely Here to Stay -- And What's Not

Wipe down hard surfaces, such as the night table, coffee table, desk and shelves. You don't need to do them all, but prioritize surfaces where you will set down things that will go near your face or in your mouth. (Think shelves that house glassware, or nightstands where you put your glasses.)

Wipe Down Balcony Furniture.

Don't forget to clean your personal outdoor space by spraying or wiping down balcony furniture. Put extra effort into places where you'll rest your arms and head and the table where you might be dining.

Wash Glassware.

Do you intend to use provided glassware for a glass of wine in your room or to rinse out your mouth after brushing your teeth? You'll want to clean those glasses with soap and hot water before you use them. If you haven't packed dish soap, the provided shower gel will work just as well.

Remove Decorative Bedspreads.

Your bed linens might be changed frequently, but decorative blankets, bedspreads and pillows aren't always laundered between sailings. Remove these items from your bed and hide them in a closet or drawer -- or ask your cabin steward to take them out of your room for the duration of your cruise.

Wash Your Hands Again.

Congratulations! Your home away from home is now sanitized to your satisfaction. To be safe -- and since you might have been handling chemicals -- wash your hands one more time once you're finished. Now go and enjoy a healthy vacation, worry-free.

10 Can't-Miss Things to Do on a Cruise Ship

Brittany Chrusciel, Contributor

Cruising is a customizable experience -- while you're sunbathing at the pool, your fellow cruisers might be rock climbing, learning to salsa dance, getting a massage, playing mini-golf or screaming down a waterslide. Depending on the ship's size, it might take you more than a week to try out all the onboard activities and attractions.

So where to begin? We've rounded up 10 can't-miss cruise experiences available on nearly every cruise ship; so whether you think you've seen and done it all, or you're taking your very first cruise, keep this checklist handy to ensure you hit all of the classics.

Have One of Everything

Even modern cruise ships with tons of specialty restaurants still offer complimentary main dining rooms. The joy of dining in one of these venues is unlimited choice -- waiters are more likely to encourage you to sample more than one dish than question your appetite. We're not promoting overeating, we're simply saying that if indecision is the pitfall of rounding out your meal, solve the problem by getting both.

Not sure about escargot? Here is the place to try it. Share a few plates family style or split a ton of appetizers -- it's really up to you, and ordering more than one plate per course is accepted as a norm on a cruise (especially when it comes to dessert).

Take a Photo With Your Towel Animal

A cruise ship signature, towel animals are more or less the mascot of the cruise industry. Swans, frogs and monkeys are created by room stewards who employ origami-like folding techniques (and maybe a few borrowed props from the room) to turn typical towels into a welcome party in your cabin. If photographing your towel animal isn't satisfying enough, create your own towel pet; many cruise lines host towel-folding demos as part of their daytime schedule of activities.

Play Trivia, Bingo or a Pool Game

It might seem, well, trivial to play a round of trivia or bingo if your ship has amusements like a sprawling water park or you consider yourself too sophisticated for tired card games. But humor us and give the old standards a try. You might be surprised by the thrill of knowing the name of every actress in the "Golden Girls" or taking the crown for the biggest cannonball.

Better yet, these interactive events are some of the best ways to meet new people and make friends onboard -- as well as generate some great stories to laugh about with your travel companions post-trip. Sea days, when every other passenger is also looking for something to do, are the best times to participate in an age-old cruise tradition.

Try the Drink of the Day

Not determined to make it a booze cruise? Not a problem. There's more to a cruise getaway than fruity coladas, but they are part of what makes a cruise vacation great. If you're a fan of trying new concoctions, take advantage of shipwide daily drink specials.

Typically inspired by your ports of call, these bright umbrella- and fruit slice-wielding cocktails will bring a bit of the tropics (or wherever you might be) to your palate, for a discounted price. Upgrade to a souvenir cup or ask to cut out the alcohol for a friendlier (and cheaper) version.

Attend a Party on the Lido Deck

Even if neon bracelets and house music under the stars aren't your thing, deck parties are a good time for anyone -- even families -- to get some air and enjoy a little alfresco nightlife. From wearing all white to throwbacks of decades past (anyone miss disco?), party dress codes vary from line to line and themes incorporate everything from crepes prepared by the hotel director to swashbuckling pirate parades. There's no mandate to attend these hallmark cruise ship events, but there's also no reason not to stop by -- you might be surprised by the infectious energy of the crowd.

Do Some Duty-Free Shopping

Sure, you want to pick up some authentic wares in port and there's plenty of time to grab discounted rum on your four-hour layover, but doing a little shopping on the ship is a perfectly excusable way to pass time. Beyond the souvenir and logowear shops sporting branded sweatshirts, shot glasses and all the toiletries you forgot at home, cruise lines are branching out their offerings into mall-like complexes of designer stores, luxury jewelers and art galleries. Fill a bag with gourmet candy or buy a Coach purse to put it in; Michael Kors, Carolina Herrera and even Tiffany's are other household names you can find at sea.

Splurge at the Salon for Formal Night

What better time to stop by the onboard spa and salon than on formal night, when you want to look primped and proper for dinner or evening photo ops? Incorporate two must-do cruise ship activities -- getting a treatment and puttin' on the ritz for your chic evening -- and visit the spa for a manicure, blowout or a hot shave just in time for your sailing's version of a dressy dinner.

You are not required to get fancy unless you decide to dine in certain venues that evening; most lines offer casual dining in the buffet or other venue. But a one-time portrait (photographers will be all around the ship) in your most glam garb could be a sweet memento from your cruise.

Book That Shore Excursion

Will you ever be back in Moscow -- who knows? What you do know is that you have a cruise coming up, and although cruise fare and dining and drinks might begin to take up every last cent of your budget, you can't forget about the excursions. As much as there is to do onboard, part of the appeal of cruising is spending time ashore in different ports. As part of a ship-sponsored tour, transportation, entrance into major attractions, knowledgeable guides and getting back to the ship on time are covered.

If you're on the fence about pricey tickets to the ballet at the Bolshoi, don't think too hard. When in doubt, book the excursion -- the experiences will be what you remember most from your vacation. (Budgeting in advance will help avoid financial shock at the end of your sailing.)

Tour the Bridge (and the Galley)

If you have the opportunity -- and it's not always available -- to tour the captain's control room (bridge) or the cruise ship kitchens (galley), seize the chance. Bridge tours are sometimes offered as a loyalty program perk, but more often than not, you will pay a pretty penny to be part of the small group allowed in the ship's navigational quarters. The tour isn't just for engineering nerds; seeing how a vessel of such size is maneuvered along docks and past other ships is an impressive education for any cruiser.

Likewise, galley tours (offered on their own or as part of chef's table dinners) are an eye-opening glimpse into intricate cruise food prep -- sometimes on a scale that means thousands of portions per meal.

Watch a Sunset at Sea

Trust us: Watching the sun slip through the sky before sinking into the sea is not just for romantics. If you do nothing else -- skip all the games, forfeit formal night, stay put in a lounger and shun your tiny elephant made of towels -- be sure not to miss the sun going down on another relaxing day, no matter which ocean you might be sailing. There's something so peaceful about taking the time to watch the sky turn -- from your balcony in your bathrobe, on deck over a meal or at the very bow of the ship with a loved one; it's what separates the charms of a cruise from any other vacation there is.

Pictures: 11 of the Best Cruise Ship Towel Animals

Dan Askin, Contributor



Photo by Hilary Mason/Flickr

What's secretly handcrafted each night in your cabin by a skilled artisan and looks like a monkey wearing your sunglasses one day, a manta ray holding the TV remote another and an angry spider eating pillow chocolates the next?

If you guessed "towel animals," you've been on a cruise before -- or have at least spent a lot of time here on Cruise Critic.

Towel animals, left behind by room stewards during turndown service, are one of cruise travel's longest-standing traditions. (The towel dodo bird reportedly made an appearance on *Titanic*.) And it's clear that cruisers have a profound love affair with these creatures.

Take a peek at 11 of the best cruise ship towel animals submitted by our readers, and post your favorites on Cruise Critic's Facebook page.



"Piggie Wearing Beach Hat from Curves"

Truth in towels: We do feel like a pig on the beach by the last day of our cruise.

Ship: Unknown

Photo by Nicole Eger DelBuono

Untitled

"I want to suck your bloody Mary," says towel bat on vacation.

Ship: Rhapsody of the Seas

Photo by Jorge L. Orchilles



"Apology from the Cabin Steward and His Assistant Who Failed to Introduce Themselves Until the 3rd Day of the Cruise"

I wonder who has to clean up all those rose petals. We're pretty sure it's not the towel swans.

Ship: Norwegian Jewel

Photo by Diane Strickland

"Our Collection"

Every time you shower, a towel animal dies.

Ship: Carnival Glory

Photo by Derek Hackbardt



"Struttin' Like a...."

Go ahead. Take a chocolate. I dare ya!

Ship: Disney Magic

Photo by Carolyn Spencer Brown



"Venetian Towel Animals"

Lone ranger towel dog does not approve.

Ship: Carnival Dream

Photo by Carrie Donaldson Keller





"Fat Tuesday"

Why we don't let our towels party too hard on theme nights.

Ship: Carnival Fantasy

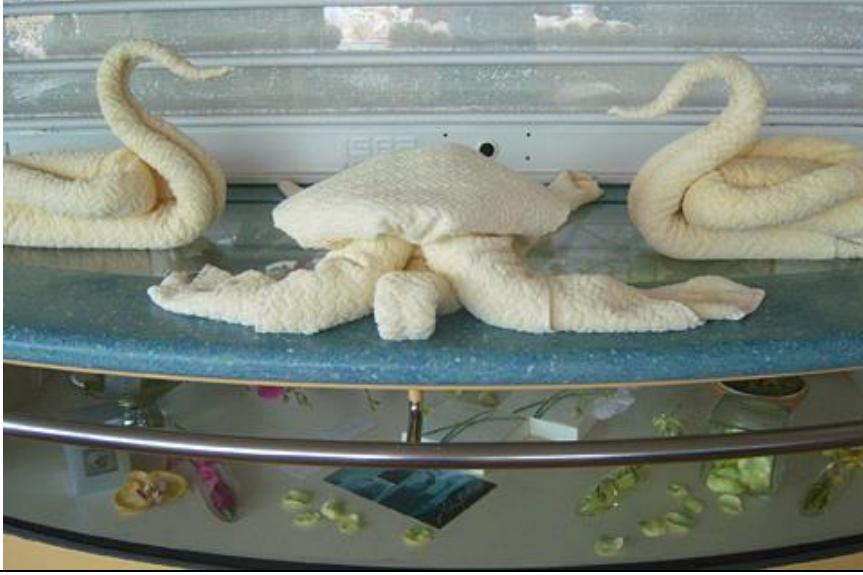
Photo by Cyndi Hollan, AKA Cruise Critic member marcyn

Untitled

Jeepers creepers. We don't wanna know where the cabin steward got those peepers.

Ship: Ryndam

Photo by Susan Wheeler



"Towel Animals on Display"

Welcome to the spa. Our products are not tested on towel animals.

Ship: Celebrity Millennium

Photo by Cheryl Corwin

"Didn't Expect Anyone to Be in Our Cabin"

And the number one way to give your cabinmate a heart attack is ...

Ship: Voyager of the Seas

Photo by Rick Howell



"Elephant Keeping Guard Over HAL Goodies"

If we throw the towel elephant some peanuts, will he relinquish the pillow chocolates?

23 Do's and Don'ts for Your First Day Onboard a Cruise Ship

Erica Silverstein, Contributor

Embarkation day routines may have changed a bit in the current era, but long-time cruisers still have favorite things that they like to do as soon as they get on the ship. Some make a beeline for the poolside bar, while others head to lunch. Some like to explore the ship, posting photos and videos online to make friends jealous. Others start popping seasickness medicines and unpack all their belongings into their proper places.

If you're a first-timer or haven't settled into a familiar cruise routine, here's a list of embarkation day do's and don'ts, culled from our many years cruising, as well as input from Cruise Critic's Facebook fans.



DO's

Tropical Drink - Start your vacation off with a colorful glass with umbrellas and plastic monkeys a-plenty. Just don't assume that drink proffered by a waiter is free ... or that you can't get it cheaper by opting for a regular, non-souvenir glass.

Tour the Ship, get your bearings, and identify which bars and eateries you want to hit first. We recommend starting at the top and working your way down ... unless you want to get in a workout by climbing all the stairs.

Take Photos -- lots of them. Get that first "Hooray, I'm on vacation" shot of your family by the ship's rail; snap a pic of your cabin in pristine condition before it's wrecked with daily schedules, towel animals and your assorted laundry; capture interesting spots onboard before they're overrun with passengers; and feel free to post them online to make your friends drool.

Spa and Salon Appointments - Arrange yours, as the most popular treatment times book up quickly. Not sure what you want? Take a spa tour. You might get to sample a massage or win a free treatment in the first-day raffle.

Take a Dip in the pool or hot tub. They're often uncrowded on the first day because many people haven't followed the advice above and brought a change of clothes. But why wait to begin your vacation? The pool is open!

Specialty Dining Reservations - Make if you haven't done so online before your trip. Choice dining times can sell out or book up.

Book Shore Tours, and ask the tour desk any questions you might have. If you're with your family and have unvaccinated children, you might have to take a ship-sponsored tour as opposed to leaving the ship on your own. Some tours have limited space and sell out, too so book early (if you haven't pre-booked).



Buy a Soda Card or Alcohol Package to get the most use out of them on your cruise. Just the math beforehand to make sure the packages will actually save you money.

Reserve Space on any Fee-Extra Sun Decks (such as Princess' Sanctuary) or cabanas, especially if you want to book them for a sea day. Space is limited and can sell out.

Make your Last Phone Calls, Texts and Tweets while your phone can access land-based cell towers and you're not paying sky-high satellite Internet and roaming fees.

Unpack your suitcases and get that task (and your luggage) out of the way early. Decorate your cabin and door if you like to personalize your home for the vacation.

Meet your Cabin Steward and make any requests you have. Some travelers like to tip their cabin stewards on day one to ensure good service throughout the cruise (but this isn't necessary).

Take a Nap or lounge on your balcony (even if the view is just of an ugly port building). It's your vacation; you can be as active or as laid-back as you want.

Head Up on Deck for Sail-Away. It's festive, with live music and flowing drinks, and it's a fun way to kick off your cruise.

Watch the Sun Set over the ocean, go to the welcome show, hit the casino, sing karaoke and shake your booty at the disco -- your cruise starts tonight!

DON'Ts

Head Straight to the Buffet -- it's one of the most crowded places onboard on embarkation day because everyone comes hungry for lunch. Many buffets are now served, which can also lead to back-ups. Sometimes other venues are open for a first-day lunch, and they aren't such madhouses.

Take the Elevator if you need to. The lifts are super-slow on embark day and with social distancing limits in place, you could be waiting a while. Take the stairs. Then have no guilt when you tuck into dessert at dinner.

Spend the Day in your Winter, Workday or Travel Clothes. Pack a change of clothes in your carry-on so you have to wait for your luggage to arrive for you to slip into sandals, shorts or swimsuits.

Check in at the Kids Club - Sign up your little ones for the onboard camp activities. Sessions and hours have been limited during the pandemic, so you want to check on what's available. There's also often an introductory session for kids and parents to meet the

Ovation of the Seas – April 2023 Trans-Pacific (Sydney / Bay of Islands / Auckland / Pape'ete / Mo'orea / O'ahu)

counselors and get acquainted with the facilities. Better to sign up on day one, even if you're not sure your kids will want to go; there's no requirement to attend.

Settle for Unacceptable Dinner Seatings. The maitre d' is typically available to take questions and make changes, if possible, on embarkation day. If you wanted early dining but got a late seating or want to switch from set-seating to flexible dining, make a visit to the dining room a top priority. It's also good to check in with the maitre d' if you have dietary restrictions to make sure you'll be taken care of onboard.

Assume your Cabin is Pristine and in Working Order, if you tend to worry about such things. Test out the TV, the toilet and the lights; check for bed bugs; sanitize anything you need to. Set your mind at ease early. Then go and enjoy your vacation.

Skip the Muster Drill. While many are done electronically by viewing on your in-room TV or on your phone, the ship will not be able to leave until all passengers have checked in. Be the person whose name is called out over the loudspeaker.

Automatically Eat Dinner in the Main Dining Room. Embarkation day can be a great night to dine out in the specialty restaurants, as they're often less crowded and, on some lines, carry a reduced cover charge.

10 Cruise Alcohol Hacks for Better Drinking on the Cheap

Erica Silverstein - Contributor

One of the hottest topics in cruising is how to drink more for less money. There are some tried and true tricks for drinking on the cheap, but sometimes a little creative thinking is needed. Try some of these alcohol hacks to upgrade your cruise experience without increasing your final bill.



Forgo the souvenir Cup.

The pool deck bar waiter approaches you with drinks of the day in souvenir cups shaped like monkeys or fish or emblazoned with the cruise line's logo. His "special" likely costs a few bucks extra because of the special cup you will bring home, stash in the back of your cupboard and never use again. Ask for the drink in a regular not-to-take-home cup, and save yourself a couple of dollars.



BYO Wine and Make Your Own Sangria or Spritzers.

Cruise lines typically let passengers bring a bottle or two of wine onboard, either for free or for a small corkage fee. So, here's a fun alcohol hack: If you like mixed drinks made with wine, you can get a little creative and drink for less. Grab fruit and sugar from the buffet and some booze from the bar and make your own in-cabin sangria for a happy hour on your balcony. Or BYO seltzer, and make wine spritzers. Your bottle of vino will last longer.

Take Wine to Dinner in a Glass, Not a Bottle.

Some cruise lines let you bring on a limited amount of wine for free, but will charge a corkage fee if you drink it in a public area. However, if you request some wine glasses from your room steward, you can pour glasses of wine in your room before you leave for dinner. The waiters won't know that you didn't buy that wine at the bar pre-dinner, and won't charge you to drink. Just don't spill the wine on your formal duds on the way to the dining room.



But Always Buy Wine by the Bottle.

If you plan on buying cruise ship wine rather than bringing your own, it's always more economical to buy by the bottle than by the glass. Can't finish a bottle at dinner, you say? No problem. Ask your server to cork it for you; depending on ship policy, he'll either

save it for you for the next night (even if you're eating in a different onboard restaurant) or send the bottle back with you to your cabin. Don't forget to see if wine packages can save you money, too.

Be Creative with the Drinks Package.

Some cruise lines are stingier than others regarding which alcohol and cocktails are included in your drinks package, versus which drinks still cost extra. If your favorite cocktail is not included, ask your bartender if they can make you something similar that stays within package rules. You might find they can conjure up a refreshing alternative -- or even sneak you the real deal if you've been a loyal customer and liberal tipper.

Hack Your Frozen Drinks.

If you can't handle the expense -- or the calories -- of ordering the two quintessential cruise ship frozen drinks, consider combining them into one drink. For example, a Miami Vice is half pina colada and half strawberry daiquiri, so in a way you're getting two drinks in one. Also, most frozen blender drinks can be made without alcohol for children and adults who don't drink.

Enhance Your Bloody Marys.

Related: Michael's Genuine Pub on Royal Caribbean Cruises (Plus Menu)

Here's a very specific cruise ship alcohol hack for day drinkers. Cruise ships haven't caught on to the latest "big" Bloody Mary trend, so if you're a fan, BYO hot sauce, beef jerky or pepperoni sticks to spice up your morning beverage.



Look for Boozy Events and Tours Onboard and Ashore.

Wine tastings, mixology classes and demos, and Champagne art auctions are great ways to get drinks, often at reduced prices. You might need to ask some questions about how much you get to drink if you really want to make the economics work out. And don't forget shore tours. Sunset cruises or catamaran rides with free-flowing rum punch or other drinks are a great way to have fun and drink for less at the same time.

Stock Up During Happy Hours and Promos.

Read your daily newsletter, and inquire at every bar. Ships often offer happy-hour discounts and reduced-priced daily specials, some of which are better publicized than others. Some specialty restaurants, such as Carnival's steakhouses, feature free or half-price bottles of wine as an incentive to dine on the first night. Plan your drinking for these money-saving events. Plus, don't be shy; ask if the special applies to unopened bottles of beer that you can buy now and drink later.

Save the Big Party for the Last Night.

Any duty-free liquor you buy at the ship's store or alcohol you bought in port that the ship's staff have saved for you will be delivered to your cabin on the last night of the cruise. So, plan a farewell party night, and drink your duty-free or local beers bought in port, rather than finding a way to lug them home.

6 Royal Caribbean Cruise Hacks

Gina Kramer - Contributor

You cruise to escape the real world and relinquish all your worries, not to wait in long lines for the rock climbing wall or miss the main show because it's sold out. But unless you've sailed with Royal Caribbean a few times, you might not know there are prime times to climb or that it's a good idea to make reservations for certain shows ahead of time.

Luckily, we've been on our fair share of ships and accumulated some helpful tips along the way. Manage your fear of missing out with these six Royal Caribbean hacks.

Time Recreational Activities to Beat the Crowds.

Royal Caribbean ships are like playgrounds for adults. They come with a bunch of recreational activities, ranging from a rock-climbing wall and FlowRider surf simulator to a zipline and indoor skydiving. They're all free. (Hooray!)



The only downside is that everyone wants to try them, usually at the same time. If you've got your heart set on one (or all) of these activities, you should aim to try at least one on embarkation day or while the ship is in port. The lines are significantly shorter -- and who knows, you might even get to go twice!

Reserve Main Theater Shows Before You Board.

Jaw-dropping Broadway, ice-skating and high-diving acrobatic shows make Royal Caribbean one of our favorite cruise lines for entertainment. Not surprisingly, seats for these shows fill up fast. Cruisers have the option to reserve seats after booking, and we highly recommend it -- especially for Broadway shows like "Mamma Mia!" and "Grease."

Bear in mind: Reservations only include admission to a specific show time, not assigned seats. If you don't have reservations, there's still a chance you can get in when booked passengers don't show up. Either way, it's a good idea to arrive at least 15 minutes early to ensure you snag a good spot.

Look Beyond the Buffet for Breakfast and Lunch.

As is the case on nearly every cruise ship, passengers flock to the buffet for breakfast and lunch. It's free, it's quick, and you can stack your plate as high as your little heart desires. On the flip side, it can turn into utter chaos at peak dining times (early morning on port days and around 1 p.m., for example).



To avoid hungry crowds, head to the main dining room or one of the ship's complimentary specialty restaurants. The Solarium Bistro and Johnny Rockets are excellent alternatives for breakfast. Depending on the ship, other lunch options include Sorrento's, Cafe Promenade, Park Cafe (Oasis Class) and Cafe Two70 (Quantum Class).

Make Your Own Pizza at Sorrento's.

Speaking of Sorrento's, we're all for the line's attempt to create a New York pizzeria-style dining venue, but its premade pizzas, conveniently served around the clock, lack that "straight out of the oven" taste. Passengers who are picky about their pies can opt to make their own personal pizzas.

The custom-pizza station allows cruisers to pile as many (or as few) fresh ingredients (such as barbecue chicken, artichokes and jalapenos) as they like onto a thick-crust dough. Creations are baked and served to the table within about 10 minutes. (Gluten-free dough is available upon request.)

Save Money with the Drink of the Day.



Looking for ways to save money on drinks? Royal Caribbean features a "drink of the day," and it costs roughly \$2 to \$4 less than the average cocktail. Check your Cruise Compass (the ship's daily planner) to see what the drink of the day is and where you can find it.

Note: More avid imbibers might want to consider a beverage package, which allows them to pay one base price for unlimited drinks. Already booked? Keep an eye on your Cruise Planner online account. Royal Caribbean has been known to offer limited-time beverage package discounts on select sailings.

Get Creative with your Ice Cream.

With so much to do onboard, Royal Caribbean cruisers love to cool off -- often with ice cream. Self-serve stations are located at the buffet and pool deck. We have one small gripe; they only offer cones, which can get messy if you don't eat them fast enough.

One of our favorite Royal Caribbean hacks: Snag a soup bowl and spoon from the Windjammer Marketplace or a plastic cup from a nearby cafe. You'll have more room for ice cream and won't have to worry about it melting all over your hands.

Craving something a little sweeter? Sprinkle in some cereal as a topping (also available at the Windjammer), or add a little soda (for a fee) to create your own float.

Secrets the Cruise Lines Don't Tell You

Erica Silverstein - Contributor

Cruise ship life can be a little mysterious. Your choices aren't always spelled out in black and white. The more you cruise, the more you pick up on the unofficial secrets the cruise lines don't tell you -- which give you more options, let you save money and generally allow you to have a better time onboard.



Maybe it's knowing what your cabin steward is able to bring you or what the off-the-menu items are at the bar or dining room. Or perhaps it's a tip to getting a good deal on an onboard purchase.

But why wait to figure these things out the hard way -- possibly after you've missed your chance? We trawled through all the great advice on Cruise Critic's Message Boards to bring you some of the worst-kept cruise secrets ... at least among our readers who love to share. But whether you're a first-time cruiser or an old sea dog, you might find there's something here you didn't already know.



Food Secrets

Unlimited Main Dining: You are not limited to one of each appetizer, entree and dessert in the main dining room. You can order two entrees or three desserts if you choose. You can also order appetizer-sized portions of entrees as starters or order a few appetizers for your main meal. It's a great way to try new foods you're not sure you'll like (escargot, anyone?).

Cheap or Free Room Service: Room service is generally free, except for service charges on certain lines. Celebrity's late-night orders bear a \$4.95 fee, while all orders on Royal Caribbean (excluding Continental breakfast) and Norwegian (excluding morning coffee, Continental breakfast and orders placed by Haven Suite passengers) cost \$7.95. Meanwhile, Carnival and Holland America offer for-fee room service menus in addition to their complimentary menus. It's recommended you tip your delivery person, but in-room dining is not the splurge it is at a hotel.

Breakfast Options: For your morning meal, you might have more options than just the buffet and main dining room. O'Sheehan's offers tasty made-to-order omelets and corned beef hash, yet many cruisers still don't know about it. Johnny Rockets are other alternative breakfast venues. Check your daily newsletter to see which restaurants are open in the morning.

Specialty Dining on the First Night: Most people dine in the main dining room or buffet on the first night of the cruise, and many haven't discovered the specialty restaurants yet. Book a reservation at an alternative dining venue for the first night of the cruise, and you might get a discount on select sailings on Celebrity Cruises, or have an easier time getting a reservation for a popular venue.

Complimentary Bites: Specialty coffee at the designated coffee shops onboard comes with an extra fee, but the pastries, sandwiches and other food at these venues are often free. While some specialty items (like chocolate-covered strawberries) will have a charge, don't assume all the small bites do. Celebrity's Martini Bar -- also offer complimentary snacks; all you have to do is ask.



Free Ice cream: Like ice cream? Cruise lines will charge for branded licks like Ben & Jerry's and gelato. However, there's always a free version -- whether soft-serve machines on the Lido Deck or hard-serve stations at the buffet. And do your reconnaissance -- Cruise Critic members report that soft-serve machines on either side of the deck can have different flavors.

Sit-Down Lunch on Embarkation day: On embarkation day, most people head straight to the buffet to have lunch and wait for their cabins to open. It's a mob scene. But many cruise ships have alternative venues open --

the main dining room or a mini-buffet in the solarium or atrium area. Ask a crew member or check your daily newsletter to find an alternative for a calmer first meal.

Menu Sneak Peek: Don't know which night to make specialty dinner reservations? The main dining room menus are planned for the week, and the purser's desk often has access to those menus. Ask to see them so you can decide which nights are less appealing and which you don't want to miss, and plan your cruise accordingly.

Drink Secrets

Open Containers: There's no "open beverage" rule onboard. You can bring drinks from a bar or buffet to your cabin or elsewhere on the ship and no one will bat an eye. (Same goes for food.)



Wine on Reserve: It's often cheaper to buy a bottle of wine than a few glasses -- but what do you do if you don't finish the bottle? Cruise ship waiters can mark the bottle with your room number and save it for another night, even for dinner in another onboard venue. (But beware of restaurant corkage fees if you bring your own bottle of wine.)

Buckets of Beer: Groups of beer drinkers can save by ordering buckets of beer. You get four or five beers in a souvenir bucket at a per-beer cost slightly cheaper than ordering individual bottles.

Soda Savings: On most lines, soda is not free -- but iced tea in the dining room usually is. Save on soda by buying a soda card, offering a set price for unlimited soft drinks.

BYO Limits: Most cruise lines prohibit passengers from bringing beer and liquor onboard, but do let you bring a bottle or two of wine or Champagne. Royal Caribbean and Norwegian passengers are prohibited from bringing any nonalcoholic beverages onboard, while Carnival only allows limited amounts of soda and juice as long as the drinks are in cans or cartons (and not glass containers or plastic bottles).

Souvenir Cup Perks: Enticed by all those special drinks in a souvenir glass? You can refill those glasses at a discount -- or ask to have the drink of the day in a regular glass to save money. Also watch your daily program for drink specials or happy hours with reduced-price beverages.

Cabin Secrets

They're Magnetic: Most cabins are made of metal... and therefore they're magnetic. Bring along some magnets (or buy some as souvenirs) and you can keep all your cocktail party invites, alternative dining reservation notices and daily planners hung up on the walls and doors.

Nightlight Substitute: Inside cabins have no natural light. At all. Turn your TV to the bridge cam station, turn off the sound and -- voila! -- you've got an instant nightlight and a way to see if the sun is up.

Spa Passes: Spa cabins can often be a smart financial decision for avid spa-goers. Carnival's Cloud 9 Spa balcony cabins include access to the thalassotherapy pool, steam room and sauna. The extra you'd pay for the cabin (above a regular balcony room) is often less than what you'd pay for a cruise-length spa pass.

Limited Outlets: With all of the electronics we tote around with us these days, most people find cruise ship outlets to be insufficient, and only the newest ships have USB ports. You can bring your own charging station or power strip (check to see if these are legal on your cruise line), but you might also want to ask your cabin steward. Sometimes there's an extra outlet hidden behind the TV or under the bed.

Bedding by Request: Picky about your bedding? Some lines will provide egg crate mattress toppers, top sheets and alternative pillow types by special request. Feel free to ask, before or during your cruise.

Hidden Storage: Cabin designers are pretty smart about creating as much storage space as possible. Do a little exploring or ask your cabin steward for a tour. You might be surprised to find extra storage under the bed or couch, inside an ottoman or behind a mirror.

Assistance for Seasickness: If you're feeling queasy, don't run out to a pharmacy before making some calls. Room service can bring you green apples and bland crackers (crew members swear by the apple remedy), and often you can get seasickness meds from the purser's desk for free.



Entertainment Secrets

Casino Hack: Casino frequenters can get a hole punched in their room card and a free lanyard from the casino staff for easy play without forgetting your card in the slot machines.

Bonus Internet: Many lines offer free minutes if you sign up for an internet package on the first day of the cruise. You can also get discounts by signing

Day One Spa Discounts: Cruise ship spas often offer discounts for first-day and port-day treatments. Stop by the spa, or check your daily newsletters to find out about deals.

Presentation Reruns: If the port talk is at the same time as your massage, don't worry. Presentations and audience-participation shows are often re-broadcast on the ship's channel on your in-room TV. You can still catch the recording if you miss the live show.

Complimentary Spa Showers: Use of the showers, saunas and stream rooms not located in fancy thermal suites is free. Showering in the spa can often mean access to more clean towels, fancy toiletries and bigger shower stalls -- and prevents fights over who gets cabin bathroom access first. Using the free saunas is also a great remedy for that inevitable vacation head cold that stuffs you up.

Show Up to Sold-Out Shows: If you want to see one of the big-name shows on Royal Caribbean or Norwegian (like "Mamma Mia" or "Rock of Ages"), but tickets are sold out, don't fret. Many people reserve the free tickets but don't show up, so if you get in line prior to showtime, cruise ship staff will let you in if seats are available.

Cruise Line-Specific Secrets

Sweet treats on Celebrity: Depending on the ship and itinerary, Celebrity's buffet secrets include delicious ship-made hard-serve ice cream (for free) in the buffet and made-to-order waffles with a choice of toppings. You can also order a cup of candy toppings with no ice cream if that's your treat of choice.

Royal Caribbean's Solid Cup of Joe: Royal Caribbean's Cafe Promenade offers high-quality coffee without the price tag. It's no Starbuck's, but it's a step above what you'd find at the buffet -- and it's still free.

Getting the Best Sea Views: The North Star on Royal Caribbean's Quantum-class ships offers amazing views any time you go, but you'll get the best views on sea days. That's because the enclosed, glass capsule -- which can rise to 300 feet above sea level -- is often restricted from extending out over the side of the ship while in port.

10 Hidden Costs of Cruising and How to Save

Erica Silverstein - Contributor

A voyage at sea is one of the best values around because all major expenses (lodging, meals, snacks, activities and entertainment) are included. However, there are some items -- mostly of a personal or optional nature -- that are out-of-pocket expenses. Those extra purchases can quickly run up your bill.



Cruise lines tempt travelers to come onboard with sometimes low upfront prices and then charge extra for everything from massages and fruity cocktails to onboard activities and meals outside the main dining room. "All-inclusive" is a term that really only applies to a handful of high-priced luxury cruises.

If you want the full cruise experience, you'll need to set aside some cash to cover these extra expenditures, or make a vacation budget and stick to it. To make sure the incidentals don't break the bank for you, here are 10 things that will cost you extra onboard -- and how to find discounts and savings.

Shore Excursions

Editor's note: Please note, during COVID, it may not be possible to do your own excursions; please check with the line for the latest health and safety protocols.



What You'll Pay - Cruise lines sell shore excursions -- guided tours and experiences in the various ports of call -- but they do inflate prices above what the actual tour operators charge. Prices for these excursions range from about \$35 per person for a quick city and shopping tour to more than \$300 for some all-day tours, overland programs including meals and snacks, and such over-the-top offerings as helicopter flightseeing and hot-air ballooning. Most tours are priced somewhere between \$50 and \$175 per person, depending on length and activities involved, and it is worth noting that prices for many excursions can be higher in some areas of the world. Alaska, for example, consistently has some of the industry's highest per person excursion costs, while many Caribbean itineraries offer tours in the \$35-\$60 range.

Savings Tips - While you might wish to sign up for some of the ship's tours (particularly if you're not familiar with the port and do not speak the language), you also have the option to tour independently at a fraction of the cost -- or even for free, if you go on a self-guided walking tour. Before setting sail, visit the websites of your ports' tourist boards or Cruise Critic's Destinations section to get ideas on things to see and how to get around on your own in port. Online travel guides and apps can also help you plan your time ashore.

Local festivals and craft displays can be sources of good, free entertainment. Parks, beaches, and art galleries are other free or nominal-charge attractions to check out. Or perhaps you prefer to simply wander through town, browsing in shops and stopping for a coffee or snack.

If you decide to hire a car and driver to give you a private tour (generally less expensive than the shipboard excursions, especially if you have a group) or just to take you to the center of town, always agree on the price (and, in the case of a tour, which specific points of interest will be covered) before you get into the car. If you do want an organized tour, you can book directly with a tour operator or through third-party shore excursion sellers; you might save a few dollars that way.

When booking any independent tour, always plan to arrive back at the ship well before the all-aboard time for passengers. Unlike those on ship-sponsored tours, ships will generally not wait for passengers who arrive late to the vessel after independent touring.

Not sure if a cruise line shore tour is worth the splurge? Find out in our feature, **Ship-Sponsored or Independent Shore Excursions: Which Is Right for You?**



Alternative Dining

What You'll Pay - All ships offer free dining in the ship's main dining room and buffet venue, but nearly every ship today sports one or many extra-fee dining venues. You'll pay extra for everything from casual Italian to exclusive private degustation dining experiences and restaurants designed by celebrity chefs.

Even room service, once free 24/7, now comes with a surcharge on many lines, with fees applied for certain items, during certain late-evening hours, or all the time. Lines like Norwegian and Royal Caribbean tack a fee to all room service orders.

Most alternative restaurants charge in the range of \$15 to \$50 per person, but a chef's table experience or wine-paired meal could be upward of \$100 per passenger. Some lines, like Norwegian, are starting to move toward a la carte prices in their alternative venues.

Specialty desserts (ice cream, gelato, cupcakes and other fancy pastries), special dishes in the main dining room (such as high-quality cuts of steak and whole lobsters), dinner theater, pizza delivery and even pub grub could cost extra.

Savings Tips - Don't go! You can typically find 24/7 dining for free onboard, and main dining room meals are often quite good, with multiple courses and decadent desserts. The newest, largest ships often have additional casual, fee-free eateries. Carnival is a good cruise line to choose if you want variety in free dining options.

If you're tempted by the specialty options -- and many are worth a splurge -- just be sure to budget the price of dinner into your onboard spending (or skip those afternoon cocktails or wine with dinner to mitigate the cost). Alternatively, look for cruise deals that offer onboard credit or free meals in specialty venues as part of the incentive package to book.

Some lines, including Celebrity and Royal Caribbean, offer dining packages that bundle several for-fee restaurants for a discounted rate; others, like Holland America, offer lunch in the specialty venues for a lower price than dinner, allowing you to enjoy the alternative dining experience at a lesser cost.

Finally, consider skipping room service if there is a surcharge for it. With the exception of the small hours of the morning, food is usually available almost around-the-clock in other dining venues, and can generally be brought back to your cabin from casual eateries like the buffet or onboard burger joint.



Alcohol and Other Beverages

What You'll Pay - At meals, water, iced tea, milk, coffee, tea and juices are complimentary, but alcoholic beverages are not included in the cruise fare on most lines (with the exception of some luxury lines and river cruises). Plus, many will also charge for soda, bottled water, certain juices and specialty coffees (cappuccinos, lattes and espressos).

Your drink tab can quickly add up as you'll be paying restaurant -- not grocery store -- prices for your beverages, as well as an automatic gratuity on your bill in the range of 18 to 20 percent.

Savings Tips - Many vessels advertise discounted "daily drink specials" or offer happy hour specials that are advertised in the daily cruise planner, and can be a great way to get your drink on without spending a fortune. Holland America Line still offers daily Happy Hour sessions in the Ocean Bar, for example.

If you're ever offered a drink in a souvenir glass (usually at sailaway on the pool deck on the first day), ask for the drink in a regular glass instead; you will likely save a few bucks.

Look for events with free booze, such as Champagne art auctions or captain's cocktail parties. At meals, you can order a bottle of wine and save whatever you don't finish for the next night, which can be cheaper than ordering wine by the glass. The bottle is simply marked with your room number, and brought to your table the following evening.

Most lines offer beverage packages (everything from just soda to multiple bottles of wine and unlimited alcoholic and nonalcoholic drinks), but you need to make sure you drink enough to actually see savings. Also keep in mind that these packages are priced per

person, not per cabin, and that all members of a stateroom have to purchase them. This can make drink packages very expensive, sometimes pushing nearly \$800 total on top of the price of the cruise -- and most lines will want an 18 percent autogratitude when you purchase the package.

Do the math: if you have to drink six or seven cocktails per day to break even, but only typically have a beer or a few glasses of wine, the cost/value benefit may not be there.

Many lines will allow you to typically bring a bottle or two of wine onboard, but you might have to pay a corkage fee if you drink it in a restaurant.

Spa and Salon Treatments



What You'll Pay - Cruise line spas charge rates equal to high-end salons, and you might be shocked by the prices. A 50-minute massage is typically about \$120 to \$180, with more exotic treatments running into the \$200 to \$400 range (not to mention medi-spa treatments, which can start in the four-figure range). Plus, rates don't include an automatic gratuity that typically runs 18 percent.

Passes to thermal suites and thalassotherapy pools average \$25 to \$40 per day, with cruise-long packages also available that run between \$100 and

\$200 per voyage, with couple's packages offering a slight discount.

Savings Tips - Take advantage of spa discounts, typically offered on embarkation and port days, when the spa is less busy. Check your ship's daily program for spa-treatment specials that might be available one day only or during certain hours. Some lines offer progressive discounts if you book multiple treatments all at once.

Resist the product sales pitch that often (bordering on always) comes at the end of your appointment, or better yet, ask up front not to be bothered with sales pitches at all.

Onboard Activities

What You'll Pay - While many onboard activities are free, other special activities incur extra fees. Among them are fitness classes like Pilates, yoga and spinning (typically \$12 to \$30 per class); wine-tasting events; after-hours group babysitting for the youngest children (about \$5 to \$8 per child, per hour); behind-the-scenes tours; and bingo and casino play (as much as you're willing to lose). New attractions like laser tag, escape rooms and IMAX movies often come with an extra fee that can vary by line and ship.



Savings Tips - You can certainly keep entertained with free activities. Attend the production shows, live-music performances, cooking demos, pool or trivia games and free lectures -- or simply spend your time chilling by the pool, reading a book or chatting with your travel companions. Many of the top entertainment offerings -- Broadway productions, onboard surfing and watersliding, live music and comedy acts -- incur no extra charges (though reservations might be required).

If you're intrigued by the for-fee activities, set a budget and choose the ones you find most interesting.

For the lowdown on which activities are free and which incur a fee, read up on what's included in your cruise fare.



Laundry

What You'll Pay - As at land-based resorts, laundry and dry-cleaning charges on a cruise can be steep (approximately \$3 to \$7 to wash and press a shirt, for instance). Check to see if there is a self-service launderette, and use it. (Typically, washing and drying one load of clothes comes to about \$6, though some lines offer complimentary self-service laundry.)

Savings Tips - You have two options here: Pack enough changes of clothes for the cruise and do the wash back home, or bring your own travel-sized detergent, wash necessities in your cabin sink and hang-dry them in the shower. If you're really motivated, you can also find a laundromat in port -- it could be a cultural experience!

Or stay true to your favorite cruise line. Some upper-tier loyalty program members receive free laundry service as a status perk.

Find out how much cruise line laundry services will cost you. (<https://www.cruisecritic.com/articles.cfm?ID=1614>)

Tipping

What You'll Pay - Tipping policies vary by line; most mainstream cruise lines recommend about \$14 to \$20 per person, per day, to be distributed among those who provide key services: dining room waiters, assistant waiters and cabin stewards. If you have a suite, be prepared to tip extra.

Additionally, bar tabs are automatically charged a 15 to 20 percent gratuity; some lines also add on a 15 to 20 percent gratuity to spa services. When the maître d' performs a special service, such as arranging for a birthday cake to be brought to the table, he should be tipped as well.



Travelers on ships catering to Brits and Australians will find that tips are sometimes built into the cruise fares.

Savings Tips - Generally, tipping is not an area where you can save money. You can adjust the auto-gratuities at the ship's purser's desk or choose to tip below the recommended amount if you feel you've received subpar service. However, Cruise Critic discourages this in most cases. The ship's crew members -- particularly the waiters, assistant waiters and cabin stewards -- work hard and depend on tips to round out their salaries.

If you are disappointed with service, speak in person to guest services while you're still on the ship -- it's more effective and can generally resolve most issues. Don't wait until you are home to complain about an issue.

Souvenir Shopping Onboard and in Port

What You'll Pay - Most people purchase something to remember their cruise, and it can be tough to pass on the beautiful -- and expensive -- figurines, perfumes, designer fashions and leather goods if your budget doesn't allow for them. Even tacky trinkets and T-shirts can add up if you're buying for your extended family-and-friend network. Prices can range from a \$5 tee to a piece of jewelry valued in the hundreds or even thousands of dollars.



Savings Tips - Avoid temptation by not browsing in the boutiques onboard and ashore if you cannot afford to buy. Typically, bargain tables appear on ships toward the end of a cruise, so wait for the latter portion to buy onboard if you're so inclined.

If you do plan to purchase jewelry, clothing or duty-free liquor onboard, check the prices of merchandise at stores back home, and bring a list so you can compare prices. (The prices on ships are not always deals.)

Don't invest in a piece of art at an onboard auction unless you've done your research in advance and know the value of what you're purchasing.

In port, good, inexpensive souvenirs include handicrafts from outdoor markets and street vendors, and local products such as coffee, jellies and candy purchased at grocery stores in port, where souvenirs are generally less expensive. Many souvenir stores carry the same products, so compare prices before buying.



Photos and Camera Equipment

What You'll Pay - Cruise travelers are often lured into dropping big bucks at the onboard photo gallery, where an 8x10 photo can easily cost \$20 or more. Buying additional batteries, memory cards and other camera supplies onboard will likely cost you more money than it would back home.

Savings Tips - If you're worried about blowing your budget on photos, just say "no thanks" when the ship's photographer asks to take your picture. Or resist the urge to "just check out" the photo in the gallery -- once you see the printed version, you're more likely to want it. Take your own pictures, and rely sparingly, if at all, on the ship's photographers. If you do plan on buying a lot of professional photos, look for packages or ask about any specials on offer.

On the equipment side, buy plenty of batteries and other camera supplies at home where they're cheaper -- and bring more than you think you will need, just in case.

Internet

What You'll Pay - Whether you bring your own laptop and take advantage of shipboard Wi-Fi or park yourself at the computer center onboard, you will pay high rates for often slow internet connections. On the up side, connection speeds are improving, and select cruise lines can offer land-like speeds.



Cruise lines are no longer consistent in how they package or price Wi-Fi.

Some lines offer packages good for the entire voyages, while others sell the older-style packages that come with preset time or data limits -- both of which can be really chewed up by modern sites like Facebook or apps that refresh in the background.

Other lines charge daily rates based on how much bandwidth you use and which types of sites you can access. For example, a social media plan on Carnival might be \$7 a day with access to only email and social media sites, while a premium plan with no streaming is \$15 per day. An unlimited plan, including streaming, on Disney is \$89 for 1,000 megabytes.

While lines are slowly moving away from time-and-size-limited plans, if you are still on an old-school "timed" plan, don't forget to log out of your internet package when you are finished browsing!

Savings Tips - Many cruise lines offer Wi-Fi packages as an added perk when booking certain promotions. Also look for free Wi-Fi access in port; you might need to buy a cup of coffee or a snack at a cafe to access it. You can also find cheaper internet centers in port.

Some cellphone plans offer free or package data plans in foreign ports that might be cheaper than the cruise ship options. Plus, new cruise line apps offer certain planning and communication services, often for free or discounted rates, when you're onboard.

What Not to Forget On a Cruise: 13 Things to Remember to Pack

Dori Saltzman – Contributor / Fran Golden - Contributor

We all know that sinking feeling when you realize you've left something important behind, whether it's your phone in the car or your wallet at the restaurant you just left. That feeling is much worse when you're on a cruise and discover that you've forgotten something at home. While not every "oops" will upset your cruise, some will, especially as cruising returns post-pandemic. Others can prove to be enough of headache to put a dent in an otherwise great vacation.

From A to Z, we list a few critical things not to forget the next time you cruise.

Adapter

If you're traveling outside of the North American and Caribbean region and will be spending any time at a hotel, you'll need to bring a power adapter with you. It's an easy item to forget as most cruise ships these days offer both North American and European plug sockets, but hotels do not. We recommend getting an all-in-one world adapter that you just leave in your suitcase all the time; that way you'll always have it when you need it. (Plus, you can use it on your cruise ship to make use of an additional outlet.)

Band-Aids

Unless you're on a warm-weather cruise and plan on plonking yourself down poolside all day or at the beach in every port, you'll probably be doing a lot more walking than you expect. Even your most broken-in shoes might start to feel a little rough in destinations like Alaska and Europe where glacier hikes or walking tours are standard fare. Be prepared for the inevitable blister or two with Band-Aids at hand, in whatever bag you carry with you off the ship and some spare ones onboard.

Chargers

Don't waste half a port day chasing down a laptop charger like one Cruise Critic senior editor was forced to do after switching laptop bags and forgetting to move the charger to the new bag. If you're bringing anything that needs to be charged, make sure to double-check you've got the charger for it. There are lots of cruise destinations where getting a replacement charger could be near to impossible. You do not want to be stuck in a picture-perfect setting with no way to take a picture! Keep cords organized with an electronics gear bag.

Emergency Contact List

Sure, we've all got our contact numbers stored in our cell phones these days, but what if someone else needs to make a call on your behalf and your phone requires a PIN or thumbprint? Or what if the phone is missing or the battery is dead? Having a hard copy of all your emergency contacts in your wallet or stored in your in-cabin safe could turn out to be a lifesaver.

This is especially true on post-pandemic cruises. You will want to keep your family updated should your itinerary change due to any COVID-19 cases aboard your ship or if you yourself become ill (a rare occurrence but best to be prepared).

Hand sanitizer and wipes

As part of their COVID-19-related health and safety protocols, cruise lines have added more hand washing and sanitizer stations around the ship to prevent the spread of germs. However, you will want your own little handy squirt bottle and we suggest wipes too. These are useful for cleaning down everything from your airplane seat to the deck chair at the pool. Touch something, wash your hands!

Identification

Sadly, we've read horror stories of people showing up to cruise ports without their passports, birth certificates or required visas and getting turned away. If it's the last thing you do before you walk out your door, always check to make sure you've got all the identification and paperwork that is required for every step of your trip.

Masks

The latest cruise ship cabin amenity is disposable masks, but you may want to bring you most comfortable masks from home. You will also need to wear a mask at the airport and on the plane if you are flying to your embarkation city. And everyone needs to wear a mask in the cruise terminal during embarkation and disembarkation.

Medications

Other than a handful of over-the-counter remedies (cold pills, pain relievers and seasickness treatments) sold at inflated prices, cruise ships carry only a limited supply of prescription medications, and these are given out only in emergencies. If you take any kind of medicine on a daily basis, be it prescription, vitamin or something else, it's imperative you bring enough with you to last your entire cruise -- and even a few days longer just in case some type of travel delay prevents you from getting home on time.

Even though most cruise ships do carry pills for seasickness prevention either in the sundries shop or in the medical center if you're prone to seasickness you shouldn't forget to bring your own supply as well. Store it all in a sleek pill organizer that doesn't scream "senior."

Sweater

Even on warm-weather cruises you're likely to run into unexpected chilly air, particularly in public areas of your cruise ship where the A/C is often set to "blast." Plus, you never know when Mexico or the Caribbean will be hit by a cold spell. Forgetting to bring a pullover, cardigan, sweatshirt, or sweater could result in spending extra money on an over-priced piece of clothing you never wear again.

Snack bars/packs

Going to be off your cruise ship for an entire day? Bussing it out to a remote shore expedition locale where there might not be any convenience stores? It's never a bad idea to have a snack with you when getting off the ship as you don't always know if you'll be

able to get something to eat if you need it. (This is especially essential if you've got kids in tow or have issues with low blood sugar.)

But taking food off a cruise ship is always a no-no unless it's a prepackaged, sealed snack bar or snack pack. Since these types of snack foods are rarely sold on cruise ships, don't forget to throw a handful into your luggage when packing.

Tampons & pads

Ladies, listen up! Don't forget to bring your preferred brand of tampons and pads when you cruise. Whether you're due for your period or not, it's always a good idea to have a stash on hand, particularly if your cruise sailing includes lots of sea days or visits exotic locations where sanitary products might not be readily available.

Vaccination card

Cruise lines are either requiring or encouraging guests aged 12 and older to be vaccinated. If you are not vaccinated, you will face more intense health and safety protocols including COVID-19 tests (which you will have to pay for) and may not be allowed in certain areas of the ship – such as the casino, spa, and some specialty restaurants. If you are not vaccinated, you may also find you are not allowed off the ship except on shore excursions – even in places where vaccinated guests are free to roam. If you are vaccinated, be prepared to prove it with an official vaccine card.

Ziploc bags

You can use Ziploc bags in a variety of sizes for practically anything, from an impromptu protector for your phone from the sand and water if you're hanging on the beach to something to throw your wet bathing suit into if you've got the time to change after snorkeling. They're also great if you want to grab some food from the buffet for a late-night snack in your room or for storing a sandwich if you don't want to give up your prime lounger by the pool at lunch time.

10 Things Not to Do on a Sea Day

Jeannine Williamson - Contributor

Shorter itineraries, fewer ports of call and even sailings to nowhere, are some of the changes you can expect to see when cruising returns. But don't let that deter you if you have never been a great fan of sea days (although many people are). To make the most of days when you're all at sea check out our guide on 10 things that you should not do when you're onboard 24/7 in the current climate.

Throw yourself into all the activities on the first day

Yes, we're just as excited as you about getting back onboard and sampling everything cruises have to offer. That said, if you're on a big ship don't burn yourself out on the first day trying to cram everything in. With fewer or even no ports of call you will have plenty of time to pace yourself -- maybe three or five days at sea when it was just one before -- and enjoy everything on offer. To comply with social distancing lines will be putting on extra shows and extending restaurant opening hours so nobody will miss out.



Shun speciality dining

In the past you might have steered clear of speciality restaurants, or only dined there on birthdays and special occasions, because of the additional supplements. Now is the time to treat yourself. With all the extra time at sea you'll be saving money on shore excursions and buying drinks and snacks at bars and cafes during free time in ports of call. Instead treat yourself to some leisurely lunches and dinners at the special dining venues, where the extra fee is far less than you'd pay for a similar meal on land. Enjoy!

Leave it too late to book a spa treatment



Sea days are always the times when spas and thermal suites are busiest, and this will stay the same as even more passengers opt for a spot of pampering and relaxation to while away some indulgent hours. Many people don't realise the majority of lines offer the option to pre-book spa treatments online or via the cruise planner app ahead of sailing. This also saves rushing to the spa on embarkation day to join a long queue (and nobody wants that right now) to reserve a treatment on the day and time of your choice. Also, for-fee thermal suites with steam rooms, saunas and splash pools are limited by numbers, so to avoid disappointment and being left out in the cold book them in advance too.

Throw away your masks during the first couple of days

We've all got used to wearing face masks right now, and it's going to be no different on a cruise except you're going to need a lot more of them than you do at home. If you use disposable ones work out how many you will need so you don't end up throwing them all away and running out within a couple of days and having to buy more onboard. Some of the more expensive lines will be giving reusable custom masks to passengers (we can see them becoming something of a collector's item in years to come); or consider bringing your own eco-friendly fabric masks. There are some great designs out there and you could make a statement by co-ordinating them with some of your outfits.



Say no to things you haven't done before



In the past you've probably skimmed through the daily programme and dismissed some of the free activities on offer because they don't really tickle your fancy or you simply haven't had the time as you've been out and about on shore excursions. You might have taken up a new pastime during lockdown and a cruise is no different. Now is the time to give new things a go -- a beginner's bridge class, craft workshop, guest lecture or gym session, to name just a few. Who knows, you could end up finding a new hobby for life and if you don't try you'll never find out.

Log onto the ship's GSM

Even if you're staying in home waters, such as embarking on a round-Britain cruise, don't leave home without sorting out a roaming package with your mobile provider. You don't need to be that far out before the network switches to a cellular at sea service, and with few or no ports of call to pick up your regular service you could end up with eye-watering roaming fees on your next bill. Similarly, if you plan to use a lot of data check out the ship's Wi-Fi set up in advance and opt for the most cost-effective package best suited to your needs, which nowadays will probably be one for the duration of the sailing rather than one based on more expensive hourly or per-day usage when there was the chance to hook up to free Wi-Fi at ports.



Pack the wrong things



With limited or no shore excursions, coupled with more time onboard, you need to rethink your packing. It's unlikely you're going to need rugged walking shoes and outdoor gear this time around. Instead pack more casual clothes for days at sea, including several swimsuits, sandals, flip-flops and beach cover-ups such as shorts, T-shirts and kimonos for popping into the restaurant. And if you enjoy getting spruced up at night, now's the ideal time to take more evening clothes as you won't be rushing back from shore excursions and will have plenty of time to dress for dinner. And you don't

need to worry about overpacking and taking clean clothes for every day as with more time onboard you'll have time to use the self-service laundry available on larger ships.

Make a mess in your cabin

Your stateroom is your floating home from home with the added benefit that you don't have to do any housework. However, spare a thought for the cabin stewards. They will be working harder than ever with more passengers on board for more of the time and increased levels of daily cleaning and enhanced deep cleaning protocols before the next passengers embark. You can make their lives a whole lot easier by keeping everything shipshape and also hang up towels after use as on many lines they will no longer be changed twice daily.



Read all your magazines on the first day

Magazines and other items that are handled by multiple people are going to disappear for the foreseeable future, so you'll need to bring your own and make sure you've got enough to last for several days. The same goes for books as libraries are likely to have a restricted operation and you won't be able to browse like before. To save lugging magazines and books in your suitcase -- and running out of things to read -- download titles onto your tablet or e-reader.



Use the lift (unless you have to)

Even in lifts, it can take a long time to get from A to B on sea days when they can stop on every deck along the way, particularly at peak periods such as mealtimes. Also, new protocols will mean the maximum capacity will be reduced to comply with social distancing guidelines; most likely four people in a lift at any one time or only members of one family or travel group. Unless you're physically unable to do so, use the stairs instead. An added bonus is that you'll also walk off some of those indulgent cruise ship calories!

Updated July 07, 2021

Onboard Health and Safety Essentials to Pack for Your Next Cruise

Cruise Critic Staff

No one wants to get sick on vacation, but it happens. Take preventative measures by packing these items for your next cruise. If nothing else, they'll keep you in tip-top shape for exploring during your voyage; if you do feel under the weather, they might bring you some comfort while you're recuperating away from home.



Hydration is one of the best ways to be -- and stay -- healthy. Don't rely on cumbersome single-use plastic water bottles to quench your thirst. Increasingly, they have been banned from cruise ships and even cruise line private islands, so they might not be available for purchase. Keep hydrated with your own

Bottle refill stations are popping up across airports and ships, but you can always refill your own using water at the buffet. Just be sure to use a clean cup to do so, or ask a crew member to assist you.

If you plan on taking an exotic cruise, consider a bottle with a built-in water filter.

Pick a fun design so you won't confuse it with anyone else's; in this case, not sharing with the family is totally okay. Consider accessories like a carabiner or water bottle sling for long days in port on the go, and a few metal straws to have on hand if you need them.

Disinfectant Wipes

If the quick swipe of a cloth can reduce -- or, better yet, kill -- harmful bacteria and viruses, then why not give those surfaces a quick once over? Clorox Disinfecting Wipes kill 99.9 percent of bacteria and viruses and come in travel packs.

Cruise ships are thoroughly cleaned after each voyage, but it never hurts to wipe down some of the most commonly touched items in your cabin, including the door and balcony handles, remote controls, telephone, toilet and sink.

Hand Sanitizer

More important than keeping surfaces cleanly is your own personal sanitation. Handwashing is still the best method, but when that is not available, your own "washy washy" or spritz of sanitizer will help reduce the spread of disease. A sanitizer with aloe will help to keep your hands from becoming irritated or dried out from constant use.

It's hard to avoid touching public surfaces and also your face, but the less you do both, the more likely you are able to avoid coming into contact with nasty germs. By keeping your hands clean, you increase your odds of avoiding germs. Never pass up handwashing or sanitizing before a meal -- especially on a cruise ship.

Laundry Soap

Handy for longer voyages but just as useful on shorter sailings, laundry detergent transforms your cabin sink or tub into a mini-washing machine in a pinch. Some cruise ships also offer self-service laundry rooms, but typically the detergent is for purchase only. Sure, you don't want to have to do a load of laundry on vacation, but if you need to wash something for yourself or a family member, you can manage up to 50 loads with these effortless laundry soap sheets from Sea to Summit



Easy to pack and TSA-friendly, dry detergent sheets bypass airline liquid restrictions and eliminate spillage in luggage. They are also biodegradable and environmentally friendly. You might be tempted to freshen up your wardrobe, just because you can.



Medication Supply

Avid cruisers know never to pack medications in checked luggage and to keep necessary meds on hand and accessible. But packing medication to last well beyond your trip is over is not necessarily a given. In the event of an emergency, it is prudent to pack a few additional days' worth of pills, insulin or inhalers -- anything considered an essential medication -- in case you won't have immediate access to more.

A travel organizer for medicines helps to keep everything ... well, organized, so you can track daily doses in addition to your reserves. This organizer is water- and moisture-proof to prevent damage to pills. Tuck in some extra vitamins, including Emergen-C packets, so you can give your immune system a boost if you should come down with a cold or fatigue.

Emergency Kit

A small emergency kit of items could come in handy during "worst case scenarios." Packing one might seem overkill -- until you actually need it.

You can pack your own with custom items for you and your travel party, or buy one online that comes with a variety of items prepackaged. A company called "CruisePaks" sells kits in a medium travel bag with 150 items from eye wash and lip balm to allergy pills. Consider it a first aid kit with a few additional items.

E-reader

Don't underestimate the power of keeping your mind active, even on a trip intended for you to unwind. If you find yourself laid up with a bug, you might tire of the same channels on your cabin TV, and boredom can quickly turn to ennui. Consider bringing an e-reader to occupy yourself -- even on healthy days in the sun or waiting for a flight at the airport.



We are among those who prefer hard copies of beloved books, but to travel light and smart, an e-reader like the Kindle Paperwhite can hold up to 32 GB of data, which translates to a library of thousands of books on hand. It's also glare-free, waterproof and much easier to disinfect than a paper novel.



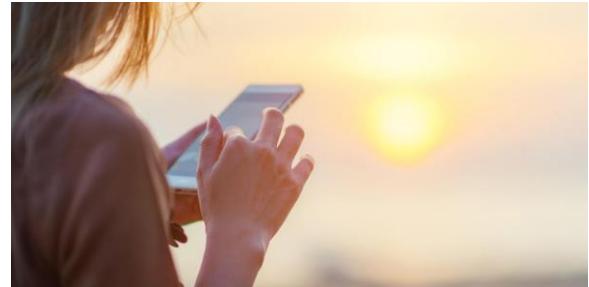
Comfort Items

Mental health is just as important as staying physically fit. It's ideal to travel with a few things that aren't totally necessary but are still nice to have. These items are individual to each person, but they can include a cozy, oversized sweater; a variety of your favorite instant coffee or tea bags; a hard copy of a beloved photograph; or a bag of your favorite candy.

Don't forget about how important sleep is for optimum wellness. Make sure you have what you need to ease into a restful night's sleep with items like essential oils or lavender-scented lotions, a favorite pair of pajamas, a travel blanket or pillow, a travel-sized sound machine or something as simple as an eye mask and earplugs.

Phone Plan

Consider getting a data plan ahead of your cruise. Disconnecting from reality is a great way to rejuvenate your spirit, and a cruise can certainly accomplish that. However, given a situation in which you would need to keep in touch with loved ones or keep in contact overseas, having access to the right phone plan can reduce stress and maintain that important communication.



Onboard, connecting to the ship's Wi-Fi via an internet plan is a helpful way to go online or make Wi-Fi calls. However, if you're off the ship in a foreign land or the internet connection is poor, you will want phone service to make calls or send texts without spending a fortune. Each carrier is different, so do some research before you leave on your cruise, and check out our quick tips for using your phone on a cruise ship

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Updated July 07, 2021

The Big Debate ... Tipping

Cruising in 2022: Why Onboard Tipping is More Important Than Ever

Katherine Alex Beaven – CruiseCritic Associate Editor

Call them what you will – cruise gratuities, tips, service charges or crew appreciation – there's no denying that cruise crew rely on our monetary recognition of their hard work and good service.

As the cruise industry continues to rebound from myriad challenges the pandemic has thrown its way, capacity levels on ships, particularly mega ships, have been making an slower-than-expected comeback.



While this may be great for cruisers who relish the extra space and lack of lines on board some cruise ships at the moment, it's not so great for your cruise's crew members who rely on a fixed percentage of the overall tips received per passenger.

In short, lower than usual capacity numbers mean these smiling service people – many who out of a job for months during the cruising pause --- are being short-changed when it comes to their tips, at a time when they are more reliant on them than ever

This means tipping on your upcoming cruise (and topping up on your prepaid tips if you can afford it) is more important and appreciated than ever – even if you've already opted-into prepaid gratuities.

How Prepaid Gratuities Get Distributed to Cruise Ship Staff

Prepaid gratuities work by creating a pool of tips from passengers that the cruise line then get distributed to cruise service staff based off a percentage. Typically, 100% of your prepaid cruise crew appreciation will go directly to cruise staff, minus any credit card transaction fees. Tips are often distributed to your sailing's service crew in lump sums every few months but may also be given out as bonuses, though this can vary by line.

Adding an Extra Tip Can Really Make a Difference Right Now

It's no secret that staff on board cruise ships, much like waiters and bartenders who work for a minimum wage, have always counted on our gestures of generosity to supplement their income.

Right now, your cruise tips are worth even more.

As mentioned, cruise ship staff tips are based off percentages and paid out from the overall tipping pool. This means the tip amounts for each crew members are directly affected by the number of passengers on a particular sailing. Put in perspective, if your cruise sets sail at just 40% capacity, at best your cruise crew is only going to receive 40% of their potential tips.

Consider Tipping on Top of Your Prepaid Cruise Gratuities (If You Can)

It's easy to see how, over time, lower-than-usually capacity numbers can add up to a big drop in income for cruise service staff. It's one of the reasons Eric Plum, CEO and founder of UpTip, recommends showing a little extra love to your cruise crew now by "tipping early and often, even if a basic tip amount is included in the price."

And we couldn't be more on board. We're not just walking the walk, either. Cruise Critic staff have all individually adopted a practice of tipping a little extra on top of our prepaid gratuities, especially if the service goes above and beyond.

This doesn't mean you need to go to extremes. During my recent sailing aboard Carnival Radiance, I simply added a buck or two to all my beverage slips and added a 20% tip to my spa treatment. These were on top of the automatic gratuities that the line already adds for these. If I'd had cash, I would have also left \$20 or \$40 for my room steward on the counter (just like the old days, pre-prepaid gratuities!).

Tipping service workers extra during COVID-19 isn't a new concept on land. We've all added a few extra bucks on top of our usual tips for food delivery workers, restaurant servers, bartenders and ride share drivers. If you're not in a place where you can tip extra, don't sweat it. If you can spare it, consider it. You can even stand out with these alternative ways to tip your cruise crew and say thanks.

"Many of us are fortunate to be able to work remotely from home, on the road, or on a cruise," says Plum. "Service workers don't have that luxury. Share some of the good fortune you've had with people who are trying to make your voyage enjoyable."

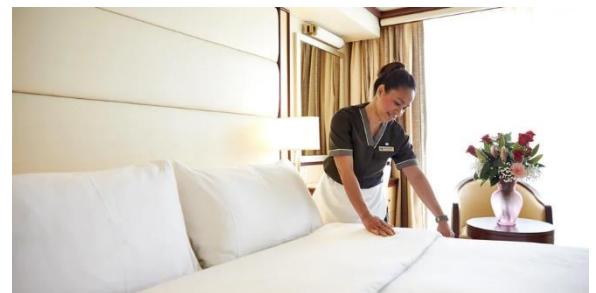
The pandemic has not only reminded us just how much we love – and missed cruising – but that we need to have each other's backs. Remember, we're all in this together.

Updated February 02, 2022

How Much Should I Tip My Room Steward on a Cruise?

Cynthia Drake – CruiseCritic Contributor

One of the most luxurious aspects of cruising is the service of room stewards -- that team of people who often go unseen in their daily mission to keep your cruise cabin sparkling fresh and clean.



They cheerfully attend to your requests, tidying your home away from home from the moment you leave in the morning to the last turn-down before bed.

(Admit it: You tend to miss those nightly pillow chocolates and towel animals after you get home.) Many passengers rave long after their vacation is over about the service of stewards who go above and beyond.

Given the high level of service, passengers often wonder how much they should plan to tip their cabin steward, particularly when a stateroom attendant exceeds expectations.

Here's a guide to help you navigate ways to show your appreciation for these hard workers.

How (and How Much) to Tip Your Cabin Steward

Most cruise lines offer automated gratuity options that charge a standard daily gratuity fee to the credit card you've placed on file for each day of your cruise. This fee ranges anywhere from \$12.50 to upward of \$20 per person, per day, depending on the cruise line -- usually on the higher end if you're staying in a suite.

This gratuity goes not only to your cabin steward but is also shared among the entire crew that works to make your cruise successful: the dining room, buffet and specialty restaurant wait staff, cooks, laundry staff and the general housekeeping staff that cleans the ship's common areas, for example.

Critics of this system (which has evolved in the last several decades from strictly cash-based gratuities) say that under this tip pooling arrangement, cabin attendants and wait staff aren't getting recognized for exemplary work the same as they were in the old days. Some claim they are making less money than they formerly did with cash tips.



Though automated gratuities are the easiest and most common way to tip, some passengers prefer to instead tip their attendants in cash, either in addition to the automated gratuity or in place of it. Note that paying in cash does not necessarily circumvent the pooling system -- attendants are officially required to turn in any cash gratuities to put toward the pool.

Though cruise lines usually state up front that tipping is still at the discretion of the passenger, keep in mind: As with most employees in the service industry (at least in the U.S.), most of the wages cruise employees make come from these tips. There are instances of passengers who prefer not to tip, usually either because they disagree with tipping on principle or they've experienced unsatisfactory service. This practice can eat into the regular wages and livelihood of hardworking crew and is not advised. (Learn more about when and when not to pay auto-gratuities.)

On luxury cruise lines, such as Azamara, Crystal, Seabourn, Silversea, Tauck World Discovery and Uniworld, gratuities are already included in the cost of the cruise, and additional tipping is not expected.

How to Recognize Excellent Service

There may be cases where you'd like to tip your cabin steward more than what he or she will receive after your automated gratuity is pooled and shared out.

Maybe your stateroom attendant delivered when you made a special request, or you loved how your steward always sweetly arranged your children's stuffed animals before bed every night -- or maybe you just want to show a little extra appreciation in the universal language of money.



Often cruise lines provide additional envelopes to tuck a little extra cash at the end of the cruise just for this purpose. There aren't any hard-and-fast guidelines for this type of tip since it's contingent on your experience, but \$25 to \$40 on behalf of a couple roughly works out to an extra \$2 to \$3 per person, per day, for a seven-night cruise. The extra cash may or may not end up in your steward's pocket, but he'll appreciate the gesture nonetheless.

Want to give something beyond cash? First of all, don't neglect any post-cruise questionnaires, which provide an opportunity to rave about your cabin attendant directly to his or her employer. There are also usually comment cards available at the purser's desk or online for additional recognition. Your glowing review can help a hardworking crew member earn a promotion or raise.

Passengers sometimes plan in advance to bring small gifts to leave with their cabin stewards, either at the beginning or end of the cruise. Keep in mind that cruise crew members live in tight quarters, so small (and edible) gifts are preferred. Beyond that, consider writing a heartfelt note of thanks. A kind word costs nothing and is always appreciated.

Updated January 08, 2020

Tipping on Ships: An Australian Culture Clash

Sally Macmillan – CruiseCritic Contributor

Note: The following piece is an ***opinion*** column. The views expressed about tipping are those of the writer. For a comprehensive look at 'official' tipping rules, check out our Cruise Line Tipping Policies

Are Australians stingy or is our reluctance to tip a cultural thing? In Australia, we don't generally tip taxi drivers, hairdressers, hotel porters or bartenders. We will tip for dinner in a restaurant, but an automatic service charge added to a bill is not always appreciated, particularly if we don't feel the service deserved a personal reward.

However, as Australians are cruising the world in ever-increasing numbers, we're discovering that the culture of tipping is embedded in many fare structures. When used to seeing the total price stated upfront, it can come as a surprise to first-timers that many cruise lines add a recommended daily gratuity charge to passengers' accounts. In fact, having gratuities automatically charged to their accounts was so unpopular with local cruisers that in 2010, Australia-based P&O Cruises decided to stop it completely. Now P&O leaves it up to each passenger to decide whether to tip for outstanding service or not ... and do it personally with cash. Other cruise lines, such as Princess, Carnival, Celebrity and Royal Caribbean soon followed this no-tipping policy on their Australia-based ships.

How has it worked out? A P&O Cruises spokesperson says: "We don't track tipping habits, but anecdotally we believe many of our passengers continue to tip our cruise staff for good service. In the Australian way, they like the freedom to do this at their discretion."

The Australian Way

Historically, the reason for not tipping seems to be based on the theory that the minimum wage paid to workers in the Australian hospitality industry was more generous than in other countries. So, while Americans are accustomed to tipping in order to bump up the wages of their waiter or bartender, Aussies haven't felt the need to do so.

These days, however, most Australians accept that you are expected to add about 10 per cent on your bill for service in many restaurants, particularly the more upmarket establishments where service is (or should be) a big part of the dining experience.



Confused? You're not alone. To find out more, we asked Juliana Payne, CEO of the Restaurant & Catering Industry Association for her take on Aussie tipping style.

"The propensity to tip is as varied as the guests that the industry serves -- some will tip as a matter of course and others wouldn't dream of it," says Payne. "Given that hospitality is a service industry, it is convention that a tip is offered for great service."



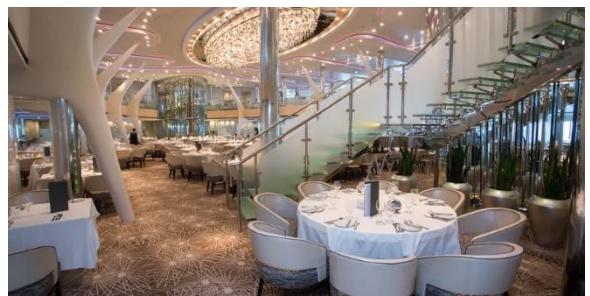
"Where the staff have gone above and beyond and made a difference to your enjoyment, it's encouraging for them to receive a gratuity to recognise that great level of service. Naturally the style of business will affect the tipping culture. In a fine diner where the level of service and care is higher, guests may be more likely to tip a percentage of the bill. In a casual café there may be a tip jar on the counter where guests may offer a smaller gratuity. Either way tips are appreciated by the staff and may bring better service at your next visit."

"Tipping policies vary across businesses too, with some staff keeping tips directly but more commonly tips being shared across the team working the shift. Some policies share a portion of tips with the kitchen staff, in recognition of their contribution to the meal, others reserve tips for front-of-house staff only."

What seems to rankle with Aussies is when discretionary tipping for good service is exchanged for mandatory tipping with no regard for the level of service. The big question: Why do cruise passengers have to tip anyway?

The Cruise Industry Way

Within the cruise industry, which generally pays very low wages, tips from passengers have always been an essential boost to crewmembers' income. How much and whom to tip still varies on smaller cruise lines, but the policy on mainstream lines today is to add a fixed daily sum to each passenger's bill, which is paid at the end of the cruise along with the bill for other expenses incurred along the way. That automatic gratuity is, we're told, shared between crewmembers such as the dining staff and housekeeping who directly serve passengers. And whatever you feel about tipping, automatically deducted or otherwise, you can't get away from the fact that it is part of the crews' pay structure. Withholding a relatively small sum of money makes a very big difference to the people who work long and hard to make your cruise as pleasurable as possible.



Whether or not the automatic gratuity system is an improvement (for the crew) on the traditional practice of passengers personally handing over an envelope of cash to their cabin steward, regular waiter and favourite bartender at the end of the cruise is open to debate. Also open to debate is whether service levels have fallen since automatic gratuities were introduced; many cruisers believe this is true, but we can find no concrete evidence.

Automatic gratuities on mainstream cruise lines, sailing outside Australia and New Zealand, range from US\$14 to US\$20 per person, per day, depending on the level of accommodation. Some lines levy a fee for children, and most charge a slightly higher sum for passengers in suites. In most cases, you can prepay the daily gratuity charge when you book your fare.

On some ships, envelopes for gratuities are left in cabins. On others, you can pick them up at reception. While envelopes are certainly the way to go in giving most tips, it is much nicer to use your own. I always bring a supply of gift enclosure envelopes, available from stationery shops. I always write thank you on the envelope, include my cabin number or table number and sitting time and sign my name. I want my waiters to know who tipped them and how much.



Passengers do have the option of visiting the reception desk at the end of the cruise to request that the automatic gratuity charges be changed or dropped if they feel the service is not up to expected levels. And, of course, you're still free to give a cash tip to individual crew on top of the automatic gratuity, and many passengers do so.

Seas Cruises, Seabourn and Silversea include all gratuities in their fares -- which is one reason their base fares are more expensive.

The best advice is to ask about gratuity charges and tipping policies when you book your cruise and add that sum to your budget. It's also worth noting that luxury cruise lines Crystal Cruises, Hapag-Lloyd Cruises, Regent Seven

Tipping on Australia Based Ships

So when you're cruising Down Under, what's the usual practice? Again, there isn't a one-size-fits-all answer. P&O Australia, as we stated earlier, has eliminated all gratuities, leaving the choice to tip completely to each individual cruiser.

Carnival Cruise Lines' Carnival Spirit and Carnival Legend are two American ships that underwent an "Aussification" program, which included abolishing compulsory gratuities. CCL Australia's vice president Jennifer Vandekreeke said: "Tipping is not part of the culture for Australians and we respect that."

Similarly, there are no gratuity charges on Princess Cruises' voyages when they are booked in Australia and New Zealand, for sailings in Australia and New Zealand. A 15 per cent service charge is applied to bar bills, dining-room wine accounts and Lotus Spa services.



Royal Caribbean and Celebrity have a different policy again: for all Celebrity and Royal Caribbean bookings made by Australian and New Zealand passengers, a service charge is incorporated in the fare. Any booking made in Australian or New Zealand dollars will have the service charge included and it's not limited to Australian-based ships or departures. Guests can of course still reward any crew member individually if they would like to. Bar, spa and in-room dining for Royal Caribbean, Celebrity and Azamara have an 18 per cent gratuity charge.

Holland America Line, whose ships Noordam and Maasdam are regular visitors to Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific, has the same tipping policy aboard all its ships. A daily hotel service charge of US\$16 per person per day is added to suite guests' accounts and \$US14.50 for other staterooms. HAL says that if service "exceeds or fails to meet your expectations", you can adjust the amount at the end of your voyage. A 15 per cent bar service charge is automatically added to bar bills and dining room wine purchases.

Last but not least, homegrown cruise line Coral Expeditions, which operates small expedition ships in Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, West Papua and the Spice Islands, keeps tipping optional. According to the line, "On a Coral Expeditions cruise, our crew have no other agenda than your delight and tipping is completely optional. Should you choose to recognise the service provided by the staff please make any gratuities payable to the Purser for equal distribution to all crew."



In the end, only you can decide how much, if anything, you are going to leave as a tip. However, if the whole process makes you feel uncomfortable, perhaps you should consider paying a little more up front to cruise with lines that include all gratuities in the fare.

Updated January 08, 2020

8 Things Not to Eat at the Cruise Ship Buffet

Ashley Koscioletk – Contributor / Katherine Alex Beaven – Associate Editor



Stereotypically, cruising is synonymous with overindulgence: relaxing, gambling and especially eating and drinking. For many cruisers, when it comes to getting their fill of good eats, they head straight for the buffet. Love them or loathe them, buffets serve as the mother lode on many ships where hungry cruisers can get their hands on everything from light bites to dense delights and several different types of cuisine, all with the ability to shamelessly go back for more self-served seconds, thirds or even more.

However, as with so many other things, the COVID-19 pandemic put the future of this popular ship feature in question. As cruises began to restart after the long, forced shutdown, these legendary buffets came back more like cafeterias with ship staff doling out the goods as passengers walked through the line, or eschewing all in favor of table service.

As cruise lines continue to navigate through the global health pandemic, most are still opting for an alternative approach to the onboard buffet, though Carnival was quick to jump ship, bringing back its self-serve buffet on ships as early as July 2021. And, if the rumors prove correct, it looks like other lines may soon be following suit thanks to full-ship vaccination mandates (we're looking at you, Viking).

But whether you're being served by crew or helping yourself to all of the mouthwatering options available on the ship's buffet, it's still worth asking: Are there any offerings that you should be avoiding?

To help us make our best-informed buffet choices, we consulted Ali Shapiro, a Pittsburgh-based integrated health coach, who offered some tips on how to better navigate the sometimes overwhelming options that abound at the buffet. Here's the list of foods she recommends skipping on your next cruise.

1. Sushi

Although cruise lines take safe food handling extremely seriously, nothing is foolproof. If you're feeling lucky, take it to the casino; don't gamble with the freshness of that spicy tuna roll. If there's sushi on the buffet and you don't know how long it's been there, consider giving it a pass for something you can see being made right in front of you.

2. Soft Serve Ice Cream Cones

If you're like us, you use your dominant hand to work the lever on the soft-serve machine -- a lever that sees a lot of other hands, both clean and otherwise -- before switching the cone to the same hand that just touched said lever. Avoid the ick factor by using a napkin to pull down the level or switch to a bowl instead of a cone. And, considering the current COVID-19 situation, it can never hurt to have some trusty hand sanitizer at the ready.

3. Scrambled Eggs

That vat of scrambled eggs you see on the buffet at breakfast each morning is likely powdered, and powdered eggs can often be wet and/or squishy. Instead, opt for a trip to the made-to-order egg and omelet station. But, "Don't just eat the egg whites," says Shapiro. "Eat the egg yolks, too." Despite what we've always been taught, egg yolks won't raise cholesterol, and they contain "good" fats, which help to stabilize blood sugar early in the day so you'll be less likely to snack on sweets from the buffet later on. Plus, consider that there's really no way to know how long that tub of raw egg whites has been sitting out, right there next to the grill.

4. Old Pizza

If the pizza has that congealed-cheese look, it's probably been sitting out for a while, particularly if it's a non-peak dining time. Don't feel bad about asking for a new pie or heading to the onboard pizza shop -- just about every ship has one -- for a slice.

5. Communal Condiments

Giant bottles of shared ketchup, mustard and other condiments can breed germs since so many people touch them. Ask buffet staff if they can add on your condiments for you or give you individual single-serve condiment packets. If both are a no-go, use a napkin to dispense what you need and apply a squirt of hand sanitizer before you handle your food.

6. Compromised Food

If you notice the person in front of you touching food and putting it back, realize that someone has contaminated a vegetable-only dish by using utensils meant for meat or if you see that the tongs have fallen completely into the food, handle and all, alert a crew member, and avoid taking any of the potentially contaminated dishes until they've been replaced with fresh ones.

7. More Than One Plate at a Time

We know you're probably excited about all the free food at the buffet, but there's no need to hoard plate after plate as if eating is going out of style. You can always go back for additional helpings (with a fresh, clean plate, of course). It's better to dish out one plate at a time so you'll waste less if you suddenly find yourself full or end up not liking some of the items you picked. It also leaves one hand free for you to grab a drink.

8. Dessert During the Day

If you're concerned about avoiding a few extra pounds, try limiting your dessert intake to dinnertime only. "Wait until evening to eat dessert so you crave less sugar," Shapiro advises. "The more sugar you eat, the more you're going to want." If you wait until the last meal of the day to indulge in sweets, you have bedtime to eliminate cravings before the following day.

17 Worst Cruise Packing Mistakes

Brittany Chrusciel – Contributor

Packing for a cruise isn't just troublesome for newbies; even repeat cruisers make the mistake of packing everything they own ... or leaving the most important item on the kitchen table. In theory, our checklist is at hand every time, but to err is human. Cruise Critic reached out to our forum members as well as fellow staffers for their packing mishaps. From forgetting underwear to nearly leaving the ship in just underwear, to weeding out plastic weapons from your toddler's bag, we learned some big lessons from some pretty gnarly packing mishaps. Laugh along with 17 of the worst cruise packing mistakes.



1. Bringing Contraband

"Worst packing mistake was packing an item that was considered contraband. Last year we were on Carnival Dream for a Halloween cruise and we took costumes. I was a police officer and my DH husband was my prisoner. I took a pair of PLASTIC handcuffs. My DH was in the cabin while I was on the deck. He got a call to report to the gangway. He went and they presented him with the handcuffs and told him they were forbidden. He told them they were taking his fun away and they all had a big laugh. I am SO thankful that he went down there instead of me. How embarrassing!" **suzy cruiser2**



2. Leaking Toiletries

"I made the mistake of having a bag of liquids/gels too close to the front side of my suitcase, where it wasn't well padded. When they gate-checked it and threw it around, one of the bottles burst. Fortunately it was in a plastic bag, but it was still kind of a mess ..." **Sarah Schlichter, senior editor, SmarterTravel**

Editor's note: We heard this one a lot.

3. Forgetting Formalwear

"My brother-in-law is infamous for forgetting important pieces of clothing. On their honeymoon he forgot to bring dress shoes to wear with his suit on formal night, so he just wore socks to the dining room. Why he didn't just wear his gym shoes or sandals is beyond me." **Jeaf1**

"Almost had to go Chippendales style once, as I packed my tux but forgot my shirt!" **GROUCHPUSS**

4. Bringing Toy Weapons

"Check your kid's carry-on." **Jennifer Kuhn, Community Support Specialist, Cruise Critic**

5. Packing Fish

"The first year I worked for the airlines, I worked in the lost luggage department where you see just about everything under the sun. My favorite one was the gentleman who came in from Alaska to report his bag did not arrive with him -- it was one of those soft garment bags that used to be so popular. As we do, I asked him to describe any unique contents to help identify the bag should it no longer have its tags. He told me that it contained a suit and dress shirts, and that he had wrapped some of his shirts around the very special fish he was bringing home for his father's 80th birthday. I struggled to keep a straight face



Ovation of the Seas – April 2023 Trans-Pacific (Sydney / Bay of Islands / Auckland / Pape'ete / Mo'orea / O'ahu)

as I asked him about the fish -- so it was frozen? No -- fresh, he had caught a salmon. We returned his bag to him later that day, but I'm sure there was no hope for saving any of the contents!" **Roatanfans**

6. Not Covering Toothbrushes

"Don't judge me, people. Before our first cruise in 2008, I had no idea what the bathroom situation would be like. For some reason, I had this irrational fear something would happen to our toothbrushes -- I kept seeing them falling into the toilet. It never occurred to me to simply buy a few toothbrush covers. So I took 36 disposable toothbrushes -- two for each day." **Swell1**

7. Spilling Detergent

"My box of powdered detergent opened in my suitcase ... all over my clothes. As I fished them out I sneezed and sneezed ... (duh) should have put the box in a Ziploc ... ah-choo!" **mmemichele**



8. Not Stashing a Change of Clothes in Your Carry-On

"If it's not too much of a 'duh,' my worst mistake was not packing a carry-on with the things I needed immediately. My luggage was lost, and I had to go three days with only a bathing suit and the clothes (and single pair of undies) I was wearing." **Ashley Kosciolek, Contributor, Cruise Critic**

"Before he was DH **my husband** and I did his packing, **he** forgot to pack his boxers ... which was a real problem because our first two days were at sea.

Fortunately for him, I had packed a pair that he'd left at my house in my carry-on. I don't remember why he couldn't buy a pair in the ship's store but first order of business upon arrival in St. Thomas was a trip to Kmart." **trish1c**

9. Bringing Too Many Shoes

"This isn't necessarily a 'worst packing mistake' but on a 12-day Med cruise my sister and I had 32 pairs of shoes between the two of us with about 25 of those pairs being hers alone. The floor of our interior room closet was completely covered. Not sure if all those shoes were worn or not, but we had a great time and still laugh about all those shoes." **BabySarge**

"I know a woman who broke her leg right before a cruise; her doctor told her she was OK to go. However, she only needed a shoe for the one foot because the other was in a cast. She brought both shoes any way ... all 12 pairs. (No, it wasn't me ...)" **Cruisercl**

10. Letting Clothes Wrinkle

"The worst mistake I made was neglecting to iron my clothes before my first cruise, assuming there would be an iron and ironing board in my cabin!" **Amanda Norcross, Contributor, Family Vacation Critic**

11. Overpacking

"My worst mistake was my first cruise and I just completely overpacked. I am a list-maker and cross things off as I pack. I think it would totally bug me if all my stuff wasn't in my bag. I do feel like within the last few cruises I have gotten better with my overpacking and have learned how to cut things down. I now don't think I need at least one outfit for every day, I just mix and match things. I also don't need one pair of shoes for every outfit!" **Kelkel2**



Editor's note: This is the numero uno packing mistake we heard again and again.

12. Packing Electronics in Checked Luggage

"Packing an Xbox to try to keep the kids entertained only to find out that the power transformer wouldn't work. No problem though, the Xbox didn't come out of the other end of security anyway ... confiscated or stolen out of checked bags. Total packing/Xbox fail." **Mike Ewing, General Manager, Cruise Critic**

13. Forgetting Jackets

"We booked a cruise to the Bahamas in October leaving from NY. Because we didn't want to worry about the hassle of parking at the terminal we opted to be adventurous and take the Megabus. When we left it was a balmy 72 degrees in New York, so left our jackets in the car thinking, "who needs these?", and proceeded to board the bus, and head for the cruise port. The entire cruise the weather was warm, wonderful and never a degree below 68. However, when we arrived home a week later (reaching port earlier than anticipated), it was snowing ... full on winter wonderland, which left us sitting outside at the bus stop wearing the heaviest item of clothing (being "I [heart](#) NY" sweatshirts we bought from the only shop that was open). Unfortunately for DH [my husband](#), the only XL they had at the time was bright pink ... emblazoned with a glittering Statue of Liberty." [Trynity](#)

14. Not Bringing Socks

"Check for socks -- I've got caught out not having socks but needing them for things like bowling or bungee trampolining (yes, on a cruise)." [Erica Silverstein, Contributor, Cruise Critic](#)



15. Packing Your Last Day Outfit

"Our cruising friend failed to hold onto the pants to her outfit to wear off of the ship. She put her luggage out the night before disembarking and didn't realize her mistake until the morning. We received her frantic call and were running all over the ship trying to find an open shop to sell us something she could cover herself with to walk off the ship. FYI -- all shops are closed up tight. Her desperate plan was to take her husband's jeans and have him walk off in his boxer shorts! In a stroke of luck, our daughter-in-law had not

packed her evening outfit, so had two pairs of pants." [CamCruiser](#)

16. Not Padding Your Wine Purchases

"So far no disasters, but a friend of ours (a newbie) packed a bottle of red wine in his luggage. We told him to put it in a sealable baggie in case it got broken. He didn't believe us, and the bottle broke and wine was all over his clothes. He and his wife spent two days doing laundry and most of his clothing was unwearable." [Elliair](#)

17. Packing Passport in Checked Luggage

"My biggest mistake was when we were leaving the ship! I was late to put bags out, so my daughter thought she would help and she put them out; not knowing I had hidden the passports in my purse in the suitcase! Thankfully, when we got to the terminal I was able to retrieve everything! Didn't sleep well that night!" [KAR3600](#)

Updated July 23, 2021

11 Signs You Should Not Buy a Cruise Beverage Package

Gina Kramer / Contributor



Promotional lingo touting "free drinks" and "big savings" often makes buying a cruise line beverage package sound like a no-brainer -- but it's not always a good deal. There are several instances where cruisers can actually lose money (and we've heard horror stories from some of our Cruise Critic members) if they give in to the temptation of a package without considering the reasons why it might not be the best fit. Avoid getting ripped off by paying attention to these 11 signs you should not buy a beverage package.

1. Two cocktails have you under the table.

In other words, you're not a big drinker. This might seem like an obvious sign, but it's easy to assume you'll be able to drink your money's worth if you order up an extra drink or two throughout the entire day. To determine if that drink package is right for you,

calculate how much you'd likely spend on drinks a la carte; then compare the two totals. The general rule of thumb is if you don't foresee imbibing more than five alcoholic drinks a day, a package will not save you money.

2. You've got expensive taste.

Cruise line beverage packages come with a catch: Drinks must be valued at a certain amount, usually about \$9 to \$15 each. (Bear in mind: Drinks from the mini-bar, room service and onboard shops are not included.) If you're brand-loyal to a premium spirit or wine, expect to pay out of pocket for that drink. You also will pay for specialty cocktails and other items, such as Celebrity Cruises' famed martini flight, that surpass the dollar limit of what's included.



3. Your ship already includes some alcoholic beverages in its fares.

Sail on luxury lines such as Viking Ocean Cruises or Azamara, and chances are, you won't feel the need to get a beverage package. These cruises usually serve complimentary house wine, beer and soft drinks, but offer beverage packages for those who wish to splurge on premium offerings. (Some river cruise lines have similar beverage options.) If you're content with what's included, there's no need to pay extra for the package

4. Your cruise line allows you to bring some beverages onboard at embarkation.

Most cruise lines let you bring at least one to two (sometimes more) bottles of wine onboard with you at embarkation. Others allow a certain amount of soft drinks, like water, soda and juice. While you'll be responsible for a corkage fee when you consume the wine onboard, you might find that what you're able to bring onboard will suffice your needs for the duration of your sailing.

5. You spend a lot of time off the ship.

If you're on a port-intensive itinerary with limited sea days, it's important to consider how much time you'll spend off the ship. You can't use your beverage package in port -- unless you're on a cruise line private island that allows it -- so all that money spent on per-day drinks goes to waste unless you plan on knocking back five or six drinks every evening.

6. Your cabin mate is a teetotaler.

Or at least is not a big drinker. Some cruise lines impose the stipulation that if one adult in a cabin purchases a beverage package, all other occupants 21 and over must purchase one as well. Cruise Critic members suspect the rule is in place because many have been known to "share" packages in order to save money. Nevertheless, if you sail with a cruise line that enforces this, and your cabin mate doesn't drink much, you're far better off paying for drinks individually.

7. You're part of a cruise line's loyalty program.

Staying loyal to one cruise line comes with many benefits -- among them is free drinks, often in the form of cocktail parties and vouchers. You'll be limited in what you can drink at the cocktail parties, but if you don't mind house selections and basic draft beer (offerings vary by cruise line), you can savor the perks and put the money you otherwise would have spent on a beverage package toward shore excursions or spa treatments.

8. Gin and slimline tonic is your go-to.



Be aware of alcoholic beverage packages that don't include non-fountain sodas. We've heard stories of passengers trying to order a gin and tonic with slimline (diet) tonic, only to be told they'd have to pay full price because the cocktails covered in their beverage package cover only fountain soda. The same goes for any other drink mixed with a specialty soda. (Note: The ginger beer used in cocktails such as the Moscow Mule and Dark and Stormy is considered a mixer and therefore is generally covered under beverage packages.)

9. You like to gamble ... a lot.

Casinos work a little differently at sea than they do on land; on a cruise, you don't get free drinks just by playing the tables or slots. However, many cruise lines allow you to accrue points as you play; reach a certain status in the line's players club and you'll be rewarded with free drinks. If you tend to spend a good chunk of time in the casino while you cruise, there's no need to shell out money for a beverage package.

10. Smuggling booze onboard doesn't scare you.

We can think of several reasons why you shouldn't sneak alcohol on a cruise, but the truth is: There will always be those who rebel. If you're brave enough to smuggle in purpose-made containers filled with your favorite liquor, then there's no reason to purchase a beverage package.

11. You're staying in a suite.

Booked in a suite? Find out what perks are included before you buy a beverage package. There's no need to spend more money if your suite comes with a stocked mini-bar, invitations to exclusive cocktail parties or access to a special, suite-only lounge or bar where the booze flows freely. Some cruise lines up the ante by including free all-inclusive beverage packages with suite bookings.

Royal Caribbean Mariner of the Seas vs Royal Caribbean Ovation of the Seas

The only cruise that my wife and I have been on was Mariner of the Seas in April 2018. Boarded in Dubai, UAE, with stops in Jordan, Israel and Crete before stopping in Barcelona. We've heard that Ovation is a bigger cruise ship ... but just "how much" bigger?

The Royal Caribbean Mariner of the Seas was built in 2003. It was renovated in 2018. It's 13 years older than the Ovation of the Seas, which was built in 2016.

Ship Size

The Mariner of the Seas is considered a medium size ship. Coming in at 1,020 ft long and 157 ft wide, it's roughly the length of 2.8 football fields, as wide as 3 tractor trailers and the same height as a 14 story building.

Compared to the Royal Caribbean Ovation of the Seas, the Mariner of the Seas is 17% smaller in terms of overall tons.

Number of Passengers

Royal Caribbean Mariner of the Seas holds 20% fewer passengers than the Ovation of the Seas based on double occupancy (two people per room). When you compare the total tonnage of the ship to the number of passengers, or what we call the "Space Ratio," the Mariner of the Seas has more space per person compared to the Ovation of the Seas. This means that you might have a bit more space to yourself on the ship, although there could be some crowded areas like buffets, pools, etc.

	Mariner of the Seas	Ovation of the Seas
Class	Voyager	Quantum
Gross Tonnage	139,863	168,666
Length	1,020	1,138
Beam/Width	157	136
Passenger Decks	14	14
Passengers (double occupancy)	3,344	4,180

Crew	1,200	1,500
Passenger to Crew Ratio	2.8	2.8
Space Ratio (tons of ship per passenger)	42	40

Dining Establishments

Food is a big part of any cruise, and the ship you choose can make a huge difference in your food experience.

The Mariner of the Seas has 14 different dining options like Cafe Promenade, Playmakers, and Jamie's Italian. Of those options, 7 are complementary, or included with your cruise fare. The other 7 options have an additional fee.

The Ovation of the Seas has 5 more more dining venues. Some of its popular venues are Dog House, Solarium Bistro, and Main Dining Room. 10 of these restaurants are complementary and the other 9 have an additional fee.

If you like having a variety of places to eat, the Ovation of the Seas might be a better choice. It has 36% more dining options than the Mariner of the Seas.

Both ships have a similar number of paid versus included dining options.

Royal Caribbean	Mariner of the Seas	Ovation of the Seas
Total Dining Options	14	19
Complimentary Dining Options:	7	10
Additional Fee Dining Options:	7	9
% of Included Options	50%	53%

Pools and Hot Tubs

	
Main pool areas on the Mariner of the Seas	The main pool on Royal Caribbean's Ovation of the Seas

Nothing beats relaxing by a pool with a nice drink in hand as you feel the fresh sea breeze pass by you. The problem is that with thousands of people on a ship, there's not always room. We're a firm believer that if you want to just spend all day in a pool, a cruise isn't for you. You would have a much better bet choosing a resort with a huge pool complex. That being said, a quick dip in the pool can be nice on a hot day. The Royal Caribbean Mariner of the Seas has a total of 3 pools and 5 hot tubs. Tired of loud kids and splashing? 1 of the pools and 2 of the hot tubs are adults only.

Royal Caribbean Ovation of the Seas has more pools than the Mariner of the Seas and fewer hot tubs.

	Mariner of the Seas	Ovation of the Seas
Total Pools	3	4
Pools - General Access	2	3
Pools - Adults Only	1	1

Pools - Exclusive	0	0
Total Hot Tubs	5	4
Hot Tubs - General Access	3	4
Hot Tubs - Adults Only	2	0
Hot Tubs - Exclusive	0	0

Amenities

Both ships have lots of activities to keep you busy throughout your cruise. Below you'll see a list of some of the major features on these ships. On the Mariner of the Seas, 84% of the activities below are included in the cruise fare. On the Ovation of the Seas, only 70% of the activities are included, meaning you might spend more money while on board.

	Mariner of the Seas	Ovation of the Seas
Adult Only Relaxation Area	✓	✓
Arcade	✓	✓
Archery		✓
Basketball	✓	✓
Bumper Cars		✓
Casino	✓	✓
Climbing Wall	✓	✓
Escape Room	✓	
Fitness Center	✓	✓
Flow Rider	✓	✓
Ice Skating	✓	
Indoor Sky Diving		✓
Jogging Track	✓	
Laser Tag	✓	
Mini golf	✓	
North Star		✓
Pool-side Movies	✓	✓
Shows - Broadway play		✓
Shows - musical review	✓	✓
Sky Pad	✓	
Spa	✓	✓
Splash park		✓
Water slides	✓	

13 Cruise Fees That Might Take You By Surprise

Gina Kramer – CruiseCritic Contributor / Elissa Garay – CruiseCritic Contributor

Like any vacation, cruising can come with good and bad surprises. Finding out your favorite specialty restaurant is bargain-priced for lunch or that spa treatments are discounted on port days might make you feel like you've discovered buried treasure. On the flipside, realizing you have to pay a \$15 corkage fee to drink the wine you brought onboard or that the room service you ordered is saddled with a surcharge can be a real letdown.

Despite the "all inclusive" lingo commonly used to describe cruises, all lines have "hidden" cruise fees. Additionally, each cruise line has its own policy when it comes to tipping, room service and more. Ordering bacon and eggs from your cabin might be free on one cruise line, but cost you on another.

If you're under the impression something is included, having to pay can put a damper on your worry-free vacation mood and potentially leave your budget in a bind. So how do you prepare for fees that aren't as obvious? Here are 13 cruise fees that might take you by surprise.

1. Room Service

Most cruise lines offer free room service, but some have now implemented a service charge for each order placed. Expect to pay \$7.95 per order on Royal Caribbean if you order from the All Day Menu and from the American Section of the breakfast menu. (Continental breakfast options remain complimentary.) Norwegian, too, charges \$7.95 per order, although this charge does not apply to passengers in The Haven suite complex.

Celebrity charges \$4.95 for late-night orders placed 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. Similarly, Carnival room service orders placed between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. are subject to a service charge between \$2 and \$6 per item.

Some lines like Disney and Holland America offer free basic room service, though certain menu items (like M&M's on Disney) carry supplemental fees.

2. Gratuities

While gratuities are commonly included in the upfront rates on luxury cruise lines, that's not the case on the mainstream lines. Instead, gratuities are automatically charged to your onboard account (\$14.50 per person, per day, on average for standard staterooms; note that suite-level passengers usually pay a couple of dollars more each day). While this eases the process of tipping everyone who provided you service throughout your sailing, it can come as a surprise to new cruisers who haven't read the fine print.

In addition, not everyone is covered under the auto-gratuity. For instance, spa and beverage service typically carries a gratuity surcharge of 15 to 18 percent. Room service stewards, baggage handlers and tour guides should be tipped on the spot -- so it's good to have a little extra cash on hand.

3. Select Menu Items



It's no secret that specialty restaurants -- which offer higher-quality food and a more intimate ambiance than the main dining room or buffet -- carry a fee on most cruise lines. But if you want to upgrade your dinner with, say, a dry-aged steak or Maine lobster, it could cost you, whether you're in a specialty venue or in the main dining room.

For instance, filet mignon will cost you \$16.95 in Royal Caribbean's main dining venue while lobster or the surf and turf combo will set you back \$20 in Carnival's. Princess Cruises' typically free buffet venue hosts the pop-up Crab Shack, which carries a per-person charges of \$29. Note, too, that for refined palates, some luxury lines have caviar menus carrying staggering supplemental fees.

4. Corkage Fees

On most lines cruisers can bring wine and Champagne onboard to avoid paying inflated alcohol rates on the ship, or to simply enjoy a favorite label from home or to sample something new that they've found in port. But before you hit the liquor store or local

winery, know that most cruise lines limit how many bottles you can bring -- and often charge a corkage fee. (Most luxury lines don't apply the fee.)

You'll pay \$10 to \$30 just to drink your cabernet or merlot in the main dining room, but you can usually curtail the charge if you opt to consume the bottle inside your stateroom instead.

5. Babysitting

For parents in need of grown-up time, a number of cruise lines offer free group babysitting via their onboard kids' clubs, which are conducted during the day and are generally reserved for kids age 3 and up. For late-night sitting (usually after 10 p.m.), you'll be shelling out an hourly per-kid fee for "late-night parties" (aka, group babysitting); a couple of lines also offer in-room babysitting, which is paid by the hour.

For an hourly fee, some lines like Disney and Royal Caribbean provides nursery care for those ages 6 months to 3 years. (Note that many of the upscale lines -- like Azamara, Regent Seven Seas, Seabourn, Silversea, etc. -- don't offer babysitting services at all.)

6. Soda and Bottled Water



Despite the fact that most iced tea, lemonade, milk, coffee, tea, hot chocolate and breakfast juices are complimentary on cruise ships, soda and bottles of water are not. (The exceptions are luxury lines, which do include them; Disney also offers free soft drinks with meals.) One can of soda costs roughly \$3, and a large bottle of water closer to \$4.

The best way to combat these prices is by purchasing a soft drink package, which average \$7 to \$13 per day for an adult with a reduced rate for children, or by bringing your own soda and water onboard. (Just make sure it's allowed before you pack it.)

7. Specialty Coffee

Got a latte addiction? Free coffee can easily be found at the buffet or ordered in the main dining room, but anything higher quality or fancier than a plain cuppa joe will almost always cost you (on the non-luxury lines, at least). Most cruise ships have cafes serving up specialty coffee a la carte, where a cup will typically run in the \$2-to-\$6 range.

8. Sauna and Steam Room

While use of the spa-area saunas and steam rooms are free on most ships that have them, some cruise lines charge per day or offer a cruise-length pass to their fancier hydrotherapy areas/thermal suites.

For example, Carnival's sauna and steam room is free, but access to the thalassotherapy pool and thermal suites will cost you \$40 per day (or \$159 for an eight-day cruise). Norwegian Cruise Line charges \$199 per week to access the sauna, steam room, heated loungers, hot tubs, thalassotherapy pool and other spa extras in its thermal suite. (The line offers \$20 off for packages booked online.)

9. Adults-Only Sun Decks



On big cruise ships where kids run wild, nothing sounds more inviting than a peaceful, adults-only sun deck. But that respite comes with a price tag on some cruise lines. For \$40 per day, passengers on most Princess Cruises ships can lounge around in the Sanctuary while servers proffer complimentary infused water and snacks. If you work up a bigger appetite, expect to pay an additional \$3 for food delivery.

Norwegian Cruise Line, on the other hand, offers 18-and-over retreats on only a few ships. Vibe Beach Club and Posh cost \$25 per day (\$99 for a weeklong pass) and pamper passengers with padded lounge chairs, whirlpools, chilled towels, fruit skewers and water spritzers. Vibe occupants also receive a \$30 food and beverage credit with a day pass, or \$100 with a cruise-length pass.

10. Select Onboard Activities

Onboard activities, like salsa classes and towel-folding demos, are generally free, but you might find some attractive pastimes that cause you to spend extra. Drink tastings (prices vary) and bingo (usually at \$10 per card) are the most prevalent, but noteworthy onboard splurges include MSC Divina's wine-blending class and Holland America Line's America's Test Kitchen cooking classes.

Other for-fee attractions include Norwegian's race car track and laser tag arena, Royal Caribbean's sky-diving simulator (after the first free ride) and MSC Cruises' zip line and F1 simulator. Some cruise ships also have bowling alleys that can end up costing up to \$40 for one hour of playtime. Fancy art classes -- such as Norwegian's Canvas By U (social painting experience akin to the land-based company, Painting With a Twist) and Celebrity's glass-blowing classes -- cost upwards of \$35 (but you do get to take home an original souvenir).

11. Fitness Classes

While morning stretches and basic abs workouts are generally included in your cruise fare, as is independent use of onboard fitness facilities, specialty classes like spinning, Pilates and yoga will cost you at least \$12 each. You'll have to shell out even more for specialty workouts like TRX training and boot camp. Many mainstream cruise ships also offer their own custom workouts, which can cost anywhere from about \$20 to \$25.

12. Cruise Taxes and Fees



Don't be fooled into thinking that an attractively low cruise fare is all you'll need to pay aside from extras like gratuities and shore excursions. Cruise taxes and fees -- which include U.S. and/or foreign government taxes, U.S. custom fees and port charges to cover the ship when leaving, entering, docking and anchoring -- can nearly double the advertised cruise fare depending on the line, itinerary and length of your sailing.

For example, we priced out a four-night Bahamas cruise on Carnival with a lead rate of \$189 per person that jumped to \$292 per person after \$103 in taxes, fees and port expenses; a seven-night Bermuda cruise on Holland America that cost \$499 per person climbed to \$709 after \$210 in taxes, fees and port expenses. Make sure you factor these hidden fees into your budget when choosing sailings.

13. Transfers

If you're flying to meet your cruise, you'll need to get yourself from the airport to the cruise port, which can be quite a trek when you travel to places like Rome and London. You can purchase the cruise line's ground transfers to the terminal, but chances are that you'll pay just as much as -- if not more than -- a taxi or shared van service. It's easy to book transfers with your cruise line, but as long as you're arranging a ride in advance, you can sometimes save quite a few bucks by going on your own -- especially if you can split the fare.

23 Things Cruisers Love to Complain About

Ashley Kosciolek - Contributor

A cruise is supposed to be a time for fun and relaxation, but vacations don't always go as planned. It's frustrating when that happens, but before you storm off to the guest services desk, here are some of the top things you might be inclined to complain about -- and why the situation probably isn't as bad as you think.



1. Ship Size

Not everybody is cut out to sail on every size ship. Some cruisers prefer a small, intimate experience, while others are happiest on mega-ships with thousands of passengers and a dizzying selection of activities. If you find yourself bored on a ship that's too tiny or overwhelmed on one that's too big, don't fret; you'll know for next time.

Before your next sailing, do your homework by finding the right ship size for you.

2. Cruise Fares

We've heard many complaints from soon-to-be passengers who are frustrated that their cruise fares have dropped after they've made their final payment. We understand their angst, but that's why it's important to check prices often and wait as long as possible to pay off the balance for your next sailing.



removing them from your bill only hurts hardworking crew members (including those who help out behind the scenes, such as dishwashers and cooks).

4. Extra-Fee Items



3. Gratuities

Few subjects heat up cruisers more than gratuities. Also called daily service charges, they're added to the onboard accounts of passengers sailing mainstream cruise lines and divided among crew to supplement what cruise lines pay them.

There are two kinds of people: Ones who complain about said gratuities and ones who complain about the complainers. Bottom line: You might not like having to pay the extra fee, but until cruise lines change their policies,

As cruise lines look for new ways to make money while giving passengers more options, they've introduced increasingly high-tech and jaw-dropping amenities like virtual-reality arcades, puzzle rooms, IMAX movies and interactive dining -- for a fee. The answer is simple: If you don't want to pay for these things, don't. If you're prone to FOMO, consider booking your voyage with a line that includes most offerings in its fares. But, extra-fee attractions are here to stay and help keep base cruise fares low, so no matter what you say, nothing is going to change.

5. Embarkation

Embarkation day can be stressful, especially if you're not prepared. There are lots that can go wrong if you bring contraband, show up sick or forget proper documentation. Plus, sometimes the wait can be long, the port facilities crowded and the parking situation less than ideal.

6. Alcohol

It's no secret that cruise alcohol costs are high, and not everybody wants to pay for overpriced beer or souvenir glasses. Even set-price packages are expensive and come with daily drink limits and restrictions on top-shelf liquor. With most lines banning passengers from bringing their own booze onboard, it's no wonder that alcohol gripes are common among cruisers.

But, think of it this way: You're on vacation. If drinking is important to you, budget for it, as you would for any other added cost -- flights, parking, lunch ashore, new clothes or luggage, shore excursions -- associated with your travels.

7. Canceled or Changed Itineraries

This is a biggie. Of course, it's a bummer if your sailing is shortened or -- worse -- canceled completely, but don't take it personally. Cruise lines most often make these changes in the interest of passenger safety due to weather, political or social unrest, or mechanical issues.

If you understand only one thing about your cruise contract, let it be this: Cruise lines reserve the right to change or cancel your cruise (or parts of it) for any reason, and they don't owe you anything if that happens, especially if the change is the result of something out of their control.

8. Cabins

Over the years, we've heard it all in terms of cabin complaints. Maybe your stateroom is too large or too small, the bed is uncomfortable, there's not enough storage or you can hear your next-door neighbors through the walls. There's a lot that can go wrong with your home away from home, but remember: It's temporary.



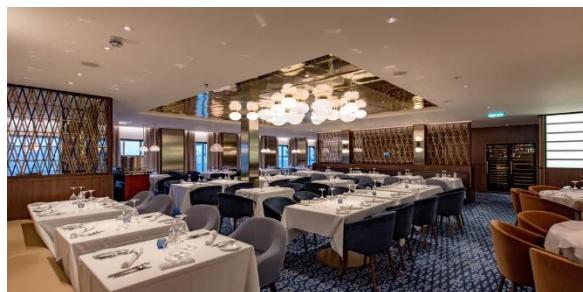
9. Dining

Whether you're a foodie or someone with a less sophisticated palate, sustenance is subjective, which means it's difficult for cruise lines to please everybody. Although they do an impressive job in most cases, it won't stop some hangry cruisers from griping about food quality and temperature, too much time between courses, a lack of menu or cuisine choices or even the seating arrangements.

10. Loyalty Perks

We don't know about you, but if we hear one more complaint about a free perk or gift, we're going to scream. Don't be the tacky passenger who airs grievances over a kind gesture of appreciation that the cruise line is, in no way, obligated to provide to you. Complimentary extras are nice, but you should cruise with a line because you genuinely enjoy it -- not because you want a free tote bag.

11. Dress Codes



and, often, a handful of alternative eateries.

Raise your hand if you've ever been confused by a cruise line's dress code. We're guessing a lot of proverbial arms were in the air just now. It can be difficult to discern what, exactly, you're supposed to wear to dinner, and it can also be irritating when what you're supposed to wear isn't what you want to wear. Even more so, cruisers like to complain about shipmates who do not follow the dress codes as exactly as they should.

We know it's your vacation, but it's polite to respect the rules. If you're not feeling the formal night vibe, you have more casual options like the buffet

12. Smoking Policies

Smoking is one of the most hotly debated cruise topics, eliciting complaints from both sides -- those who smoke and those who don't (in other words, those who say there aren't enough places in which to smoke and those who think there should be fewer).

Smoking is banned in most places on most ships, with just a few designated areas for anyone wishing to puff in peace. In addition to keeping the air pleasant for nonsmoking passengers, limiting smoking areas also decreases the likelihood of fire, which is the biggest threat to any cruise ship.

13. Age Policies

All cruisers think their kids are special, and we're sure they are, but that doesn't mean age restrictions don't apply to them. If the adult comedy show says nobody younger than 18 is allowed, then no, your 16-year-old isn't welcome. If the onboard drinking age is 21, it doesn't matter whether you allow your 18-year-old to down a beer or two at home, and we aren't interested in how mature your 17-year-old is if the minimum age for the adult sun deck is 18. There's no use whining about it.

While we agree that it would be nice if your shy child could join his or her sibling in another age group within the kids' club, it's often not allowed. We assure you, though, that it's not the end of the world.

14. Chair Hogs

We'll be blunt: Cruisers are well within their rights to complain about chair hogs. These inconsiderate swine reserve prime seats on the pool deck, in the



buffet and at the theater, even if they (or their friends) aren't there, preventing other passengers from using them. If you fit the profile, shame on you.

15. Service

Fortunately, we've never experienced truly abysmal service on a cruise, but we're told some passengers have. Even if you think your waiter, room steward or guest services representative is the worst, take a breath and realize crew are human, too. They have bad days just like everyone else. Then ask yourself if what they've done is truly so bad it needs to be reported.

16. Sanitation

Because many cruise experiences will have you sharing a relatively small amount of space with several thousand strangers, sanitation is extremely important to keep germs and potential illness from spreading. That means it's perfectly acceptable to report instances (rather than just muttering under your breath) where cleanliness standards aren't upheld -- by passengers or crew.

If you see someone making a mess or becoming ill, report it to a crew member so it can be properly cleaned up. If you notice someone not washing their hands in the restroom, speak up. Ditto if you spot someone touching food in the buffet with their bare hands. And, for goodness' sake, use the hand sanitizer; it's there for a reason.

17. Buffet Etiquette

When it's feeding time, all bets are off -- or at least that's how it seems in just about every cruise ship buffet ever. But, that doesn't mean we should throw etiquette completely out the window. Gripe-worthy infractions include cutting in line, saving seats (particularly at tables far too big for your group) and failing to use provided utensils to put food on your plate.

Do your part to make the buffet experience more enjoyable for everyone by reading our 10 commandments of cruise ship buffet etiquette.



What is it about buffets that makes so many of us ditch the politeness and revert to an I-need-it-now mentality? I'm not going to lie: I've been there, stuck in line behind the guy staring vacantly at three choices and taking forever to make a decision, and I can't be bothered waiting, so I swoop around him and take what I want. Would it have killed me to wait an extra minute? Would I have starved? Missed all of trivia? The answer, simply, is no.

Sadly, I'm not alone (though happily for me I'm not the worst offender by far). Something about a buffet line just makes the rules of decent behavior disappear as quickly as a tray of cocktail shrimp.

Not that it should. "Whether you're being served at a table or serving yourself, the rules of decent behavior apply," says Lisa Mirza Grotts, an etiquette expert and consultant. "It's no different on a cruise ship."

Cruise Critic reached out to Mirza Grotts, author of "A Traveler's Passport to Etiquette" and a former director of protocol for the city of San Francisco, to get an expert's take on the etiquette do's and don't's of cruise ship buffets.

Her first words of wisdom for cruise passengers: "There is enough food for a small country on every ship; getting food should not be a problem." In other words, be patient.

So with Mirza Grotts' help, we bring to you (drum roll, please)...

The 10 Commandments of Cruise Buffet Etiquette:



I. Thou Shalt Not Cut the Line: You wouldn't do it at the grocery store, so don't do it on a cruise ship. Even when someone is lollygagging, you should wait patiently -- though that person should remember there's an entire line of people waiting. If she or he really is taking a long time, it's O.K. to ask if you may pass, but don't just walk around them. Also, if you've already been in line but forgotten one item, like dressing or a tomato, again it's O.K. to ask if you can grab the one item. Asking permission is just courteous behavior.

II. Thou Shalt Not Switch Direction: Buffets go in one direction only. Don't start making your way through the line from the opposite direction. That's the equivalent of cutting the line.

III. Thou Shalt Watch Thy Children: Always escort your young children, say 10 or younger, to the buffet. They need you to remind them to not cut the line and not use their fingers. Food items such as nuts, crudites and bread are tempting for kids to grab with their bare hands. Smaller kids might also be prone to running around and risk bumping into people carrying trays or drinks. Keeping them close to you can prevent unnecessary accidents.

IV. Thou Shalt Keep Thy Fingers to Thyself: Kids aren't the only offenders here. Adults are just as likely to grab the top cucumber or the front slice of bread with their hands. Don't do it. There are tongs for a reason.

V. Thou Shalt Not Move Tongs: Speaking of tongs, never, ever move the tongs from one platter or hot food station to another. What if the person behind you has allergies to shrimp and you've just moved the tongs from a shrimp dish to a chicken dish? What if that person is kosher or vegetarian? Be courteous, even if it means you have to wait for someone to bring you another serving utensil. Remember, the food isn't going anywhere.

VI. Thou Shalt Not Eat in Line: The food on your plate isn't going anywhere either, so there's no need to start nibbling while you're in line. Unless you're diabetic or hypoglycemic, you're not going to die from waiting a few more minutes to eat.

VII. Thou Shalt Not Take More Than Thou Can Eat: Buffet dining, by its very nature, is gluttonous, but that doesn't mean you have to be a glutton. Don't load up your plate; take a few items on your first pass through the line, then go back for seconds if you still want more. Similarly, don't take the last piece of something; it's rude to leave the people behind you with nothing. Instead, alert a server that the item needs to be replenished, and wait for the refill before serving yourself. It's the polite thing to do.

VIII. Thou Shalt Use a New Plate Each Time: If you go back for seconds, leave your dirty plate at the table and get a fresh one each time. Your fork has touched the dirty plate, so you don't want the serving spoon or tongs to touch it.

IX. Thou Shalt Wash Thy Hands: Sticking with the hygiene theme, always wash your hands before getting in the buffet line. You might not be touching the food directly, but you will be handling the serving utensils. You wouldn't want the person in front of you touching everything with dirty hands; don't be that guy to the person behind you.

X. Thou Shalt Not Make a Doggie Bag: There are no doggie bags at buffets, no exceptions. On a cruise ship, you can make a phone call to room service 24/7 and get food, so there's never a need to bag anything.

18. Tendering

Tendering -- when a harbor is too shallow for a cruise ship to dock and, instead, passengers are ferried ashore in groups using small boats -- is often a slow and frustrating (or even impossible) process, especially if you're on a larger ship or if you're a passenger with mobility issues. Some cruise lines require cruisers to obtain color-coded tickets that determine the order in which they're allowed to disembark via tender, but not all operations are that organized, leaving cruisers complaining about long wait times and crowded areas near the gangway. Calls on tender ports prone to bad weather are often canceled if conditions are too rough, eliciting further groans and grumbles from passengers.

One solution is to book a ship-sponsored shore excursion, which ensures you'll be allowed ashore with enough time to avoid missing your tour. Another is to pay for a perks program that provides priority disembarkation and tendering.

19. Kids

Kids are great, and we understand that it's their vacation, too, but they still need structure. We hear tons of reports of children hanging out in stairwells and disrupting the flow of traffic, running up and down passenger hallways while screaming, taking over hot tubs and venturing into places where they shouldn't be.

Combat an unruly child's behavior before setting foot onboard by checking out this bit on how to control your kids on a cruise.

20. Elevators

Although taking the stairs can help to offset some of the calories we eat onboard, not everyone has that option. When your only choice to get from deck to deck is a limited number of elevators, it can be frustrating -- and lead to reasonable complaints -- if they're slow or overly crowded. (We're looking at you, embarkation day.)



If you simply must take the lift, observe some common courtesy by allowing people to exit before you enter when it stops at your floor, moving in so others can fit, refraining from -- ahem -- releasing any bodily functions while inside and keeping your kids in check so they don't push every. Single. Button.

21. Banned Items

Apart from providing you with a fun vacation, a cruise line's top priority is keeping you safe. In that vein, there are certain items passengers are banned from bringing onboard and that draws complaints from unhappy cruisers about why candles should be allowed or why it's OK to sneak liquor onboard. The lists of banned items are long and vary by line, but they generally include weapons, electrical items with heating elements, alcohol and various other things that could pose a safety threat.

We know electrical outlets are a hot commodity in passenger cabins, but take note that surge protected power strips are also a no-go. Be sure to plan ahead so you can keep the complaints to a minimum on your next voyage.

22. Shore Excursions

Shore excursions are a crapshoot. People complain that they're too expensive, don't allow enough time to experience a destination or attraction, have mediocre guides, don't include meals but get back too late for lunch -- the list goes on. Passengers can take some comfort in the fact that the often overpriced tours they book through their cruise line have been vetted for safety and won't leave them behind if they're late returning to the ship. Independent tours, which are often more affordable, can offer smaller crowds and a more "authentic" experience.

But, with either type of booking, no matter how carefully planned, there are still times when things don't go as expected. Infuriating as it might be, the best thing you can do is let the cruise line know and write a review of the tour and its provider to let others know. (Don't forget to review positive experiences, too.)



23. Weather

There are lots of things we can control; unfortunately, weather isn't one of them. We hear lots of sob stories from cruisers who were crushed when it rained all day in the port they were looking forward to most, when their Caribbean sailings were plagued by chilly temperatures or when their voyages were altered because of strong winds or rough seas.

10 Tips for a Speedy Trip Through TSA Screening



by Christina Ianzito, AARP, Updated May 13, 2022

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is asking the public for patience, courtesy and compliance as it adjusts to the growing number of passengers passing through security. The numbers have skyrocketed in the past few months — more than 2.02 million people passed through airport security on May 11, for example. That's nearing the approximately 2.34 million who did so on May 11, 2019, pre-pandemic, and a huge leap from the 1.42 million who flew on the same date last year.

The agency recently issued a statement on the growing demand for air travel, noting that it "is prepared for a busy summer travel season with anticipated passenger volumes that will match and may occasionally exceed those of 2019 for the first time since the pandemic began."

Passengers are no longer required to wear a face mask in the airport and on the plane, since a federal judge overturned the COVID-related order last month (it's not yet clear whether the Justice Department will appeal the ruling). The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), however, is recommending that travelers continue to wear masks covering their nose and mouth "in indoor areas of public transportation (including airplanes) and indoors in U.S. transportation hubs (including airports)."

If you are wearing a mask, the TSA screening officer at the travel document checker station will likely ask you to briefly lower your face mask to verify your identity.

At a media briefing this week the TSA described some of its new high-tech tools, including computed tomography (CT) units, which can provide detailed, rotating 3D images of a carry-on bag's contents, giving more accurate pictures than the old-school X-ray machines — and, the TSA hopes, speed the screening process by reducing the need for physical searches. They've been installed at 163 airports around the country. It has also begun using Credential Authentication Technology (CAT) for ID authentication and reservation verification in some airports, and is testing facial-recognition technology.

For a smooth and safe screening process, follow the TSA's current tips and protocols.

1. Double-check the list of banned items (no cattle prods, please).

2. Arrive at the airport early to make sure there's sufficient time to make your flight in case lines are long due to increased passenger volume and TSA staffing shortages. You're encouraged to sign up for TSA PreCheck, which allows for speedier passage through screening (you don't need to take off your shoes and belt, and you can leave liquids and laptops in your carry-on). Note that those 75 and older can leave on their shoes and a light jacket during screening, even without PreCheck.

3. Organize your personal items before screening. Remove your belt, keys and other items from your pockets, and put them in your carry-on bag before lining up for screening. (This does not apply to TSA PreCheck members.)

4. TSA officials no longer physically handle boarding passes, so place your paper or electronic pass on the code reader and hold it for the officer to inspect. Again, the agent may ask you to briefly lower your mask to confirm your identity.

5. If you're bringing food, it may need to be inspected, although in most cases, the TSA says, "food or snacks such as fruit, health bars and sandwiches can stay inside your carry-on bag," as can cakes and other baked goods. Consider putting them in a clear plastic bag so a TSA officer can see the contents easily. The agency notes that foods such as gravy and cranberry sauce should be packed in a checked bag because they are not solids (TSA guidance: "If you can spill it, spray it, pump it or pour it, then it's not a solid"). Ask a TSA officer if you are unsure.

6. Up to 12 ounces of hand sanitizer is permitted through security, but the TSA asks that it be removed from carry-on bags before screening. You can also bring alcohol wipes or antibacterial wipes in carry-on bags.

7. Personal electronic devices larger than a cellphone need to be removed from your carry-on bag and placed in a bin with nothing on or under them for X-ray screening.

8. The TSA will accept a driver's license or state-issued ID up to a year after expiration for those who have been unable to renew theirs during the pandemic. Note that you now have until May 3, 2023, to acquire a security-enhanced [Real ID](#) instead of a regular driver's license in order to get through airport security.

9. Passengers are asked to remain aware of and report suspicious activities ("If You See Something, Say Something" is the motto of the public safety campaign). Find out more at the Department of Homeland Security website.

10. Ask for help. If you have any questions about the procedures, you can call the TSA's customer service center at 866-289-9673, or get in touch through Twitter (@AskTSA) or Ask TSA on Facebook. If you require assistance because of medical or disability issues, contact TSA Cares at least 72 hours in advance of your flight at 855-787-2227.

A few more tips to make air travel easier for yourself and others:

- Make sure you know the correct terminal that your flight will be departing from; you don't want to waste time by getting dropped off at the wrong one.
- If you know you will need to take your shoes off at security, wear socks and shoes without laces.

- Have your boarding pass pulled up on your phone and your ID ready before you reach the checkpoint. Remember that you can only bring one carry-on bag and one personal item on most flights. A personal item is something like a purse or laptop bag that can fit under the seat in front of you.
- Be nice. Many people are tense when they travel, and TSA and airline staff are facing their own stresses. And have a great trip!

Editor’s note: This article was originally published on May 21, 2020. It’s been updated to reflect new TSA procedures.

7 Ways to Outsmart Deck Chair Hogs

Ashley Koscielek / Contributor

In the wee hours of the morning, under the cover of darkness, they creep. Their flip-flops smack across the pool decks of cruise ships everywhere as they shuffle like a horde of zombies armed with towels, sunscreen and books. If it sounds like a scene from a horror movie, you’re on the right track. We’re talking about deck chair hogs -- those inconsiderate fellow passengers who rise before the sun to stake out prime poolside real estate, mark it with personal belongings and then abandon it, rendering it useless to others.

If you’ve had enough, we urge you to stand up to these selfish sunbathers and claim the deck chair that’s rightfully yours. Join the peaceful revolution by employing the following seven tips for outsmarting deck chair hogs.

1. Rise Early

Beat them at their own game. Set your alarm ungodly early, and make your way to the pool deck to take your pick of the best deck chairs your ship has to offer. Just be sure you’re actually using them; otherwise, you’ll become a chair hog yourself.



2. Ask a Crew Member to Intervene

If you notice that a chair has been passively occupied by sunglasses and half-empty drinks for an extended period of time and don’t want to create a disturbance yourself, you’re well within your rights to tell a crew member and ask him or her to remove the items on your behalf.

3. Remove Their Belongings Yourself

A bit braver? Gently round up the offending items, and take them to the nearest towel stand for safekeeping until their owner can reclaim them. Note: Many ships require towels to be signed out, and the signee will incur a charge if a towel goes unreturned. If you’re feeling extra feisty, hide the towel elsewhere on the pool deck.

4. Remove the Chair

If you’d rather not be responsible for moving someone else’s things but still don’t want to involve a crew member, simply take the chair instead. Remove the items on the chair, place them on the ground underneath, then pick up the chair and take it with you to your sunny (or shaded) spot of choice. The chair hog will find his belongings where he left them, but will only have hard deck rather than a comfortable chair for seating.

5. Call Them Out

If you’ve got some extra time on your hands before your next cruise, print out sheets of paper that say “CHAIR HOG.” Take them onboard with you, along with a cheap set of safety pins, and fasten them to (un)occupied chairs to let the guilty parties know just what you think of them.

6. Find Another Deck

If you can’t find the ideal spot but don’t mind taking the high road -- literally and figuratively -- head to an upper deck, where you’ll likely find more chairs and fewer crowds. The downside: You might also find less shade.

7. Avoid the Situation Entirely

If you'd rather not worry yourself with this issue at all, combat the conundrum by booking a cabin with its own private outdoor space. A balcony offers a private seating area, but it might not be big enough for a lounger. If that's the case, opt instead for suites that h14 Ways to Get Free (or Cheaper) Drinks on a Cruise

14 Ways to Get Free (or Cheaper) Drinks on a Cruise

Dan Askin – Cruise Critic Contributor / Gina Kramer – Cruise Critic Contributor

At-sea alcohol prices are anything but cheap, yet savvy cruisers know how to keep from drowning in their bar bill. We polled our editors and readers to compile these 14 great tips and tricks for scoring free or discounted pours on cruise ships.

One quick caveat: With a few justified exceptions, the following tips do not include wine. Policies vary, but most mainstream lines allow passengers to bring vino onboard in some fashion, though you'll likely have to pay a corkage fee to drink it in a restaurant.

1. Loyalty Pays ... in Booze

When it comes to gratis pours, cruise lines can be generous with their past passengers. Sail just once with Holland America and you can attend the complimentary Mariner Society Brunch, complete with sparkling wine. Amass 75 days at sea, and you'll also get 25 percent off mini-bar purchases and drinks at Explorations Cafe. Those with 200-plus days under their belts will enjoy half off the aforementioned offerings, plus a complimentary wine tasting. Royal Caribbean ups the ante by hosting nightly happy hours for its Diamond, Diamond Plus and Pinnacle members on select ships with Diamond Lounges. On other ships, these highest-tier loyalty members receive complimentary drink vouchers each night in lieu of the happy hour. Read more about cruise line past passenger programs to find out what liquid perks you're entitled to on a variety of lines.



2. Attend a Party

Disney Cruise Line's captain's cocktail party, which is open to all passengers on formal night, provides complimentary drinks. Princess Cruises and Oceania Cruises have similar welcome parties with free cocktails or Champagne.

3. Be Nice to the Bartender



"My husband and I have always found that if we frequent the same bar staff during the majority of the cruise, and be sure to tip generously, we get excellent service," writes Cruise Critic reader Linda. "May not always be free, but the bar staff tend to be more generous." Linda also recommends asking your favorite barkeep where he or she is going to be when. Tim agrees. "They will treat you right with strong pours and drinks that never find their way to your tab," he says.

4. Check Out an Art Auction

At-sea art auctions and free, cheap sparkling wine go together like surrealists and curly moustaches. Whether you bid, buy or pass, the drinks are free. (Should you bid, buy or pass? Learn more about cruise ship art auctions.)

5. Look for Two-for-Ones

Happy hours with discounted or two-for-one drinks and drinks of the day can give your wallet a break, especially if you save your cocktail purchases for these hours. Oceania has nightly happy hours with two-for-one specials at 5 p.m. and again at 10:30 p.m. in select bars. Princess and Holland America also tend to have BOGO specials at certain times. Always peruse the daily newsletter in your cabin for time and place, and note the fine print, such as drink exclusions or a requirement to purchase two of the same drink.

6. Sit Down at the Game Tables

As long as you're splashing chips (or inserting pennies) in Vegas or Atlantic City establishments, the beer tap remains open. Not so at sea. Comped beverages generally aren't part of the action -- unless you're a player. Sign up for the Casinos at Sea Players Club -- offered by Norwegian Cruise Line and its sister brands, Regent Seven Seas Cruises and Oceania Cruises -- make sure to have the pit boss swipe your card each time you play, and you could be on your way to getting free drinks. Once you've accrued 5,000 points on Norwegian, and 35,000 on the other lines, you'll receive complimentary house drinks when playing in the casino.



Same with Carnival; join its Players Club, and you'll receive a complimentary Drinks on Us card after earning 1,000 points on sailings less than five nights and 1,500 points on those longer than five nights, in slot play or a comparable level of table play. Passengers who play a certain amount on one cruise might even get the free drink card as soon as they board the next cruise. Even if you don't reach a certain status in your cruise line's players club, know that pit bosses have the discretion to hand out perks and might buy a round of drinks for players who have been playing in the casino for a few hours or who show up regularly.

7. Use a Travel Agent Who Loves You

There are few better ways of saying, "Thanks for your business" than with the gift of vino. "Our travel agent buys us a bottle of wine for every cruise we book through her," writes reader Gloria. Be loyal to your travel agent, and you might find complimentary wine or Champagne waiting in your cabin on embarkation day.

8. Opt for In-cabin Bottle Service

"Some of the lines offer bottles of liquor via room service," writes Scott. "So, we often will order a bottle of vodka, and a six pack of 7-Up or Sprite, and mix our own vodka-seven cocktails. It actually can save a lot of money, and you can have a cocktail in your room instead of having to go find a bar and wait in line." Not all lines offer this bottle service option, but those that do include Oceania, Holland America, and Princess. Prices do vary by line, and so, too, will savings. (Bring your own cans of soda to save more.)

9. Buy Yourself the Gift of Liquor

"We always buy ourselves a 'bon voyage' gift or two," writes Kim, referring to the pre-cruise order options, which can be delivered to your cabin. "Liquor is a particularly good deal. You are not supposed to take these drinks out of the cabin, but we have never been questioned when doing so." Lines that allow you to gift yourself alcohol include Carnival, Royal Caribbean and Oceania. As with the previous advice, you'll need to do some math to determine whether the liquor purchases will save you money compared with ordering drinks a la carte.

10. Consider an All-You-Can-Drink Package



Most cruise lines offer beverage packages that let cruisers pay one price for unlimited (or near to unlimited) drinks (the type of which usually vary by package). Some lines, such as Carnival and Royal Caribbean, have only one option, while others, like Celebrity, have multiple options, including different types of beverages and price points. Cruise lines typically charge \$45 to \$65 per person, per day (with some even closer to or more than \$100 per person, per day), so depending on how much you drink, a package could be a good deal or waste of money. Prefer not to pay? Look for cruise line promotions that include a complimentary beverage package in your up-front cruise fare.

11. Upgrade to Luxury

On upscale lines like Seabourn and Silversea, all alcoholic beverages -- including Champagne -- are included in the fare, plus there's a stocked bar in every suite. (Note: Ultra-premium wines typically cost extra.) However, you'll be paying a pretty penny to book passage on one of these small, luxury ships.

12. A River of Beer and Wine

"Take a river cruise," suggests reader Drew G. "We are taking a Viking cruise in Europe, and were told we could bring anything we wanted onboard. Booze. Beer. Wine. They volunteered the information. Plus, wine and beer are complimentary at night." Indeed,

most river cruise lines include wine and beer, often locally sourced, with your evening meal and some offer these drinks at lunch, as well. Most are also liberal about passengers taking on local ales or vintages. River cruise fares are certainly more expensive than those found on a mainstream mega-ship line, but the inclusivity and hassle-free attitude is a welcome touch. Read more about this type of sailing on our River Cruises page.

13. Suite Guests Stay Lubricated

Book any suite (excluding a junior suite) on a Royal Caribbean ship, and you'll have access to the Concierge Club Lounge, found on Enchantment of the Seas and all Radiance- and Voyager-class ships. Inside, you'll find a self-service honor bar (with no fees). Similarly, passengers staying in Celebrity Cruises' top suites -- Penthouses, Royal Suites, Reflection Suites, Iconic Suites and Edge Villas -- receive Premium Beverage packages as well as stocked mini-bars free of charge. The line's suite lounges, including Michael's Club and the Retreat Lounge, serve some complimentary drinks; the latter also offers an afternoon tea service with Champagne.



14. Liquid Courage?

While we can't condone alcohol smuggling -- mainstream mega-ships are nearly unanimous in their restrictive policies (save for the aforementioned wine) -- many of you offered various means of subterfuge. But, be warned: Cruise lines have gotten savvy to smuggling tricks and have tightened rules for bringing any beverages onboard. Carnival, for example, no longer allows passengers to bring onboard nonalcoholic beverages in bottles (often used to hide clear booze like vodka), requiring water, soda, juice and tea to be brought onboard in unopened cans. Norwegian prohibits passengers from bringing onboard any drinks, other than a limited amount of wine (which is then charged a corkage fee).

Updated April 24, 2020

26 Secrets the Cruise Lines Don't Tell You

Erica Silverstein / Contributor; Melinda Crow / Contributor

The more you cruise, the more you pick up on cruise tips and secrets the cruise lines don't always tell you. Even seasoned cruisers can sometimes miss out on the little cruise secrets that save money, make life in a cruise cabin comfier or even lead to the best food options onboard.

To help you find more cruise tips and secrets, we trawled through the advice on Cruise Critic's Member Boards. Whether you're a first-time cruiser or a cruise regular, our list just might help you find secret food and drinks, tips on Carnival and Royal Caribbean, and shore excursion hacks you didn't know.



1. Unlimited Main Dining Room Meals: There are literally no limits on what you can order from the main dining room menu. It's okay to go rogue and order only appetizers or three desserts. Oh, and it's also okay to take your dessert to go if eating under the stars on the pool deck is your thing.

2. Cheap or Free Room Service: Room service on a ship is one of the small joys you'll find on a cruise. Fancy a donut with your morning coffee before heading up to your real breakfast? Go for it, but pay attention to those room service menus. Some lines charge for certain room service menu items, others charge during peak dining times.

However, no matter how you cut it, room service fees on cruises are far and away cheaper than at hotels and resorts on dry land.

3. Breakfast Options Are Often Numerous: You just might have more breakfast options on your than you think (read: The buffet often isn't the only place to dine in the morning). Free breakfast at Johnny Rockets is one of Royal Caribbean's yummiest cruise secrets, though there are fees to eat here at other times of day. And free all-day breakfast at Big Chicken is a late sleeper's best cruise secret on Carnival. Check your daily program or the cruise line's app to see which restaurants are open in the morning.

4. Don't Limit Yourself During Lunch: You may be surprised to find free pasta bars at your ship's Italian specialty restaurant or sliders at your favorite lounge. These are sometimes posted in the daily program, but it never hurts to do a little lunch reconnaissance in the early days of your cruise to help you break away from the standard fare -- and the crowds.

5. Free Light Bites Throughout the Day: Specialty coffee at the coffee shops onboard comes with an extra fee, but the pastries, sandwiches and other food at these venues are often free. While some specialty items will have a charge, don't assume all the small bites do. And don't forget to check the bars. Aboard Celebrity ships, the Martini Bar offers complimentary snacks -- all you have to do is ask. Princess' Vines wine bar serves complimentary tapas and antipasti with the purchase of a glass of wine (even on the drink package). You'll also find all-day pastry and small-plate options at all-day mini-buffets on ships like Norwegian Bliss.

6. Look Beyond the Buffet on Embarkation Day: Upon boarding the ship on day one, most people head straight to the buffet to have lunch and wait for their cabins to open. It's a mob scene. But many cruise ships have alternative venues open -- the main dining room or a mini-buffet in the solarium or atrium area. Also be sure to check counter service eateries like Guy's Burger Joint on Carnival. Ask a crew member or check your daily program to find an alternative for a calmer first meal.

7. Plan Your Main Dining Room Nights By Checking Out the Week's Menu: Don't know which night to make specialty dinner reservations? Main dining room menus are planned for the week, and you can often find the full menus in the cruise line's app, sometimes as early as a week before boarding. A sneak peek allows you to decide which nights you don't want to miss and which nights should be for specialty dining.



8. Open Containers Are Allowed on Cruises: Unlike many destinations on dry land, there's no open container ban onboard cruise ships. You're free to roam around the ship with any beverage from any venue. It's perfectly normal to walk into the dining room carrying your pre-dinner cocktail or to take your unfinished glass of wine from the dinner table to the theater for the evening's show.

9. Keep Your Unfinished Dinner Wine for Another Night:

It's often cheaper to buy a bottle of wine than a few glasses at dinner -- but what do you do if you don't finish the bottle? Cruise ship waiters can mark the bottle with your room number and save it for another night, or even for dinner in another onboard venue.

10. Buckets of Beer Save You Cash: Beer drinkers can save on their cruise drink of choice by ordering buckets of beer. Holland America's bucket of five 12-ounce Coronas is 25% cheaper than buying bottles individually. Oh, and nobody ever said you have to drink those five beers all at once or at the location where you purchased it. Feel free to take your bucket of beer anywhere, including back to your balcony to drink at your leisure.

11. Check Out Wine Packages for a Money-Saving Addition to Your Meals: Some cruise lines offer wine packages with a set price. You then choose four to eight bottles from a list of selected wines to carry you through dinners during your cruise. Be sure to ask the sommelier in the main dining room upon embarkation or during your first dinner if wine packages are available.

12. Bring Your Own Water Bottle: You aren't locked into buying bottled water, whether for drinking onboard or carrying with you on excursions. All water on a cruise ship is drinkable.

13. Souvenir Cup Drink Perks: You can refill your eye-catching souvenir cups at a discount -- or ask to have the drink of the day in a regular glass to save money. Also watch your daily program for drink specials or happy hours with reduced-price beverages.

14. They're Magnetic: Most cruise cabins are made of metal. Bring along some magnets (or buy some as souvenirs) and you can keep all your cocktail party invites, dining reservation notices, excursion tickets and daily planner printouts hung up on the walls and doors. And magnetic hooks are perfect for hanging swimwear, jackets, and hats. Look for hooks designed to hang barbecue utensils -- they'll usually hold more than 20 pounds.



15. Use Your TV as a Nightlight in Inside Cabins: Inside cabins often get no natural light. At all. Turn your TV to the bridge cam station, turn off the sound and -- voila! -- you've got an instant nightlight and a way to see if the sun is up.

16. Consider Saving on Spa Access by Booking a Spa Cabin: It can pay to do the math on spa cabins if you're seeking a pampering, wellness escape on your cruise. For example, Carnival's Cloud 9 Spa balcony cabins include access to the thalassotherapy pool, steam room and sauna, plus discounts on treatments and classes. The extra you'd pay for the cabin might be less than what you'd pay at the spa a la carte.

17. Plan for Limited Electrical Outlets in Your Cruise Cabin: Most people find cruise ship outlets and USB ports to be insufficient for their gear. You can usually bring your own charging station or power strip -- as long as they aren't surge protectors (which will be confiscated if found).

18. Up the Comfort of Your Bed to Your Liking: Some lines will supply egg crate mattress toppers, top sheets and alternative pillow types by special request.

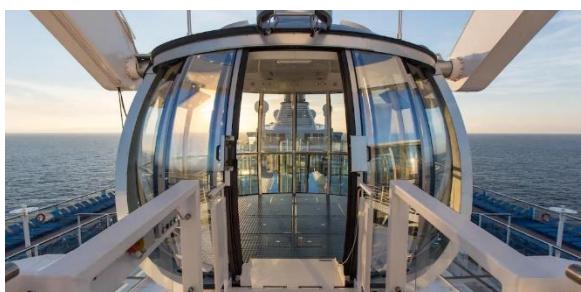
19. Ask for Seasickness Aids from the Ship Staff: If you're feeling queasy, room service can bring you green apples and bland crackers (crew members swear by the apple remedy), and often you can get seasickness meds from the purser's desk for free.



20. Score Onboard Perks in the Casino: Gamblers rack up points that can earn free play, future discounts, free drinks and even free cruises in the casino. Ask the casino host for details, who have all the casino information from tournaments and prize drawings and earning loyalty benefits.

21. Use Your Cruise Loyalty Status for Free or Discounted Wi-Fi: Wi-Fi is often cheaper by signing up online before your cruise. But loyalty programs can also bring down that Wi-Fi bill, including free days and more. If you're a loyalty club member on a specific cruise line, you might do better waiting to sign up onboard so you can take full advantage of those perks.

22. Showers, Saunas and Steam Rooms in Cruise Gyms Are Free: Use of the showers, saunas and steam rooms in the spa locker rooms (as opposed to inside fancy thermal suites) is free. If you expect shower sharing issues with your cabin mates, book a room with easy access to the spa entrance and nobody will ever know your secret.



23. Carnival Cruise Secret Tip: Carnival allows you to join the VIFP loyalty program before you cruise with them. The VIFP perks are a bit skimpy with zero cruises under your belt, but it's the key to special VIFP cruise offers you wouldn't otherwise see. The secret, then, is to join ahead of booking your first Carnival cruise and always sign in before you shop for subsequent cruises.

23. Celebrity Cruise Secret Tip: Depending on the ship and itinerary, Celebrity's dining secrets include delicious ship-made hard-serve ice cream (for free) in the buffet and made-to-order waffles with a choice of toppings.

24. Disney Cruise Secret Tip: Room service milk and cookies (and almost everything else you'd want to eat) is free on Disney. Plus, Disney Cruise ships have the best self-serve laundry facilities at sea. You can swipe your card and charge the cost of the washer or dryer to your stateroom. No cash needed.

25. Holland America Cruise Secret Tip: On Holland America, lunch is discounted at Pinnacle Grill, which is a great way to score a meal at what is otherwise a pricey dinner spot.

26. Royal Caribbean Secret Tip: For coffee drinkers who don't drink enough other beverages to make any drink package a good value, there's a coffee punch card that will save you money on specialty espresso-based coffees. Ask for it at any non-Starbucks onboard coffee shop.

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6 Simple Ways to Speed Up Your Cruise Ship Embarkation Process

Gina Kramer / Contributor & Katherine Alex Beaven / Contributor



From the moment you lock eyes with your cruise ship on embarkation day, you want nothing more than to rush through the lines, get on board and start your vacation pronto. Unless you've planned ahead, though, it might not be that easy. Little hurdles, like forgetting to print your boarding pass or arriving at peak boarding time without realizing it, can keep you in line longer and drag out the boarding process.

Preparing ahead of time will make getting to your cruise ship a breeze, but there also are a few ways you can combat the lines once you get to the terminal.

Follow these six tips to speed up the cruise embarkation process so you can enjoy that pool-deck umbrella drink sooner (and people watch all the unprepared cruisers still stuck in line at the terminal).

1. Schedule any COVID-19 tests required before your cruise: One of the biggest things you can do to prepare for a smooth embarkation is to make sure you've scheduled any required health screenings or testing, such as for COVID-19, with enough time before your sailing. For COVID-19, pre-testing requirements are always being updated, so be sure to know if you'll need to provide test results taken within 24, 48, 72 or any other window of time before your check-in.

You may also be required to show proof of full COVID-19 vaccination and will need to be sure you've met the requirements for the waiting period between your last vaccination dose and your sailing.

2. Check in before you arrive at the cruise terminal: Cruise lines offer the ability to check in online at least a few days prior to sailing, so be sure to take advantage. By getting this step out of the way before you arrive, you'll be able to fill out forms you otherwise have to do at the terminal. You also can print your boarding pass and luggage tags, which will help speed up the process as soon as you arrive. Make sure you attach those printed luggage tags (which indicate your cabin number) to your bags.

3. Avoid arriving at peak boarding time: It's hard to say when the best or worst time to board is -- every cruise is different -- but generally speaking, the terminal is busiest roughly when regular check-in begins through about 2 p.m.

We recommend getting to the terminal either early, before the rush, or late (after 2 p.m.), when most people are already onboard. You might still have a little wait, but it won't be anything compared to peak boarding time. Just don't arrive too early, as you might find yourself waiting even longer for the previous cruise's passengers to disembark.

During the coronavirus pandemic, most cruise lines started assigning passengers check-in windows based on status level and cruise ship cabin type. This helps to avoid bottleneck congestion at the terminal. If you have an assigned window, be sure to arrive no earlier or later than 15 minutes on either side of the window.

4. Bypass the lines with priority boarding: Priority boarding is a perk enjoyed by many suite passengers and upper-tier cruise line loyalty members, but a number of cruise lines allow regular passengers to pay for the same privileges with programs such as Faster to the Fun on Carnival Cruises.

With priority boarding, you'll have access to a dedicated security and check-in lane, which saves you from waiting in the usual lines. In some cases, this also means your accommodations will be ready before others. If you can't avoid peak boarding time, or simply can't stand to wait in line, upgrading to priority boarding is worth the splurge.

Again, during the coronavirus pandemic, things have worked a little differently, and priority boarding times may not be available for purchase but rather assigned through status level or stateroom type. There may also be a dedicated line for first-time cruisers, so be sure to keep your eyes peeled if that's you.

5. Drop off your luggage with the porters: When you arrive at the terminal, porters will be there to greet you and take your luggage -- which will be delivered to your cabin -- so you don't have to lug around all that weight yourself. (Don't forget to tip the porters a few bucks.) You're not obliged to hand over your bags; however, doing so will make it easier for you to move through the security and check-in lines.

Our advice? Pack a comfortable carry-on bag with all your essentials, since there's no guarantee how quickly your bags will arrive to your cabin.

6. Have your official documents handy: You'll be asked to show your official documents -- passport or other legal form of ID, boarding pass and visa and COVID-19 vaccination and test results (if required) -- more than once during check-in, so it's a good idea to keep them somewhere easily accessible. This way, you're not stuck digging for them at the bottom of your bag, when you could be moving swiftly through the lines.

Learn more about which travel documents you'll need for your cruise, as well as other cruise rules and regulations, and don't forget to check up-to-date COVID-19 testing and vaccine proof requirements for your sailing.

Updated December 15, 2021

11 Things to Do the Week Before You Cruise

Cynthia Drake / Contributor

The countdown was agony when you booked your cruise all those months ago, but now it's here—just one week away—and you're walking on sunshine with that unmistakable pre-cruise anticipatory glow (trust us, it's real). Given your current level of pre-vacation elation, it might be easy to let a few things slip off your to-do list, but no worries. Here's an updated list of 11 things cruise passengers should do in the week leading up to their cruise, not only to make for a smoother vacation, but also to make for a more bearable reentry back to normal life (sorry to bring this up) once that magical journey is over.



1. Pack for Your Cruise

This one might seem sort of self-explanatory, but we recommend packing sooner rather than later (helps to catch all those last-minute items you may forget if you wait until the last minute). Check the weather forecast for your ports of call as close to your trip as you can to make sure you're getting good intel on whether there might be rain, snow, or maybe strong weather systems predicted (in which case, it's good to at least talk through your Plan Bs and Cs). Pack accordingly—a poncho, umbrella or extra jacket can be worth their weight in gold once you're on board with limited shopping options. Try on clothes you haven't put on in a while to ensure proper fit and visualize each day on and off the ship as much as you can, packing your formal evening attire as well as your comfortable shore excursion wear. Be sure to check our ultimate packing list for all the necessary items.

2. Check In Online and Double Check Your Documentation

Perhaps even more important than anything else when it comes to cruise preparation is ensuring that your documents are in order. No passport (or in some cases, birth certificate)? No cruise. That goes extra for pandemic-era cruising when vaccination and testing documents are a requirement for embarkation. We'll get more to that below.

So in the week before your cruise, check in online, upload any required documents, make sure that your shipboard account is ready for your charges, and (if it's an option) snap your security photo to ensure boarding goes as quickly as possible. Ensure that your passport is in a location where you aren't going to forget it when it's time to leave for the airport or cruise terminal. Finally, print out your boarding pass, your luggage tags, your airline boarding pass, and any other documents that might be necessary to have with you (always handy to have a paper backup in case you lose internet access or your cell phone battery dies).

3. Get COVID Tests (If Applicable)



Though the cruise industry is constantly updating its protocols in response to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic health advisories and legislation, many cruise lines currently require proof of full COVID vaccination or a negative COVID test (many times both) in order to set sail. It's important that you familiarize yourself with your cruise line's policies and procedures, and ensure that if testing is required within a certain time frame of your sail date (for example, 48 hours), that you have a plan to do that and have your results in hand or digitally in time for your bon voyage.

4. Get Your House in Order

This is one of the least fun parts of vacay prep, but pretty important in terms of ensuring a good reentry back home: Prep your home for your time away. Initiate a mail hold with the post office, inform a trusted neighbor about your vacation and ask friends or family

to keep an eye on your house periodically and snag any errant packages that might get delivered in your absence. Ensure that your pet care arrangements are set, water your plants, recalibrate your thermostat, and shut off your water line, if that’s something you typically do. We like to come home to a clean house and a freshly made bed, too—just something that dulls the pain of reentry. If you want to go the extra mile for yourself, line up a grocery delivery for the day of your return so your staples will be ready.

5. Money Matters

If you haven’t done so already, run out to the ATM to make sure you have some cash on hand for airport/road trip snacks, gas if you’re driving, money for cabs and tips for shuttles and porters. If you’re traveling abroad, having cash in the local currency will help, but if you forgot to make it to the bank, you’ll be able to withdraw local money at ATMs in that country. Always call your bank before traveling abroad to put a travel notice on your card. It’s easier to make one phone call from home than to figure out why your card was blocked during your cruise. While you’re on the phone, check to see what foreign transaction fees your debit or credit cards are subject to. Now might also be a good time to have a budget chat with your family to make sure you’re on the same page on spending limits (we’re looking at you, souvenir-happy kids).

6. Plan Your Ports of Call

Though you might have already done your research on your ports of call, now is a great time to make any last-minute reservations or changes to shore excursions. Popular excursions tend to book quickly and reservations can be hard to come by once you’re on board, so it’s a good idea to snag any remaining tickets now. Spend some time checking local news sites to familiarize yourself with any noteworthy news, such as advisories or upcoming events, in your ports of call, as well as a few handy phrases or greetings in any foreign languages.



7. Make On-Board Reservations — And Don’t Forget Celebrations

Aside from shore excursions, highly sought-after specialty restaurant reservations can be hard to snag once you board the ship, too, so if you have your heart set on dining at a specific venue (or on a specific night), make those reservations in advance. This also goes for other specialty reservations, such as on-board attractions, spa appointments, shows, and cabanas. And if you’re celebrating a birthday, anniversary, or other special occasion, make sure to give the cruise line a head’s up now. Most cruise lines offer the option of pre-ordering flowers, champagne, or even door decorations on your stateroom, so you can begin the celebration the minute you set foot on the ship.

8. Post on Cruise Critic

If you’re a member on the Cruise Critic boards, it’s always fun to follow up a long cruise countdown with a post that you’re headed out to sea. Did you join a Roll Call? By signing up, you can virtually meet other Cruise Critic members who are sailing with you. You can plan group excursions, organize a Meet & Mingle and chat about everything related to your cruise holiday with people who are just as excited as you are.

9. Arrange Your Transportation.

If you haven’t booked a package that includes port transfers through your cruise line, think through and book reservations for getting from the airport to the terminal, and then from the ship back to the airport at the end of your cruise. Intrepid cruisers often turn to rideshare services like Uber and Lyft to get to and from the ship, but it’s worth taking a few moments to familiarize yourself with any local information about how and where to find those rides —and whether better options might exist.



10. Download the Apps

Familiarize yourself with your cruise line’s communication options. Many offer free apps you can download to your cell phone in advance, allowing you to text and chat with your fellow cruise companions while on board. Occasionally, there might be some hidden benefits to doing this before you leave home (such as completing a special pre-cruise quest on Disney Cruise), but in all cases, it’s a great idea to do this while you have access to WiFi.

11. Sleep

Despite all the last-minute fussing and anticipation, it's also important to get some shut-eye the night before your cruise. Resting up before a busy day of traveling, boarding and exploring the ship could be the difference between catching a show on the first night or sneaking in a nap (that might just turn into a full eight hours of Zs).

What Not to Do at Cruise Ship Disembarkation

Dori Saltzman / Contributor

It's disembarkation day. You've had an excellent cruise, so don't let a mistake on your very last day drag the entire experience down. From unexpected charges and forgotten items to empty stomachs and overweight suitcases, cruise ship disembarkation can be riddled with pitfalls. But if you avoid these rookie mistakes, you can hold on to your happy cruise buzz for just a little longer.



Here are nine things disembarking cruise ship passengers should never do.

1. Walk off Without Checking Your Bill

It goes without saying you should always check your bill to make sure you haven't been charged for something you didn't purchase. But if you wait to do this until after you're off your cruise ship, you might be out of luck when it comes to getting reimbursed. As any veteran cruiser will tell you, customer service on a cruise ship is very different from that off a ship. It's much easier to convince the guy or gal behind the counter at Guest Services that you didn't purchase six Cucumber Sunrises at the Alchemy Bar than to try and get someone on the phone at Carnival's land offices to authorize a refund.



2. Buy Photos

Waiting to buy photos until the morning of disembarkation can be a bit of a crapshoot. All might go well, but we've sadly heard stories of people discovering the photo gallery staff had already started tossing pics by the time they headed over to make their purchases -- this is especially true the later you show up on that last morning. If you've got your heart set on purchasing photos as cruise souvenirs, it's much better to do it on your last night. Whatever you do, don't leave the ship without purchasing photos if you want them; even on ships where photos are stored electronically, once the cruise is over, those photos are discarded.

3. Leave Your Stuff in the Safe

The night before disembarkation can be a hectic one. Trying to get in some last-minute fun, while also getting your suitcase packed up and out in the hallway before the pick-up deadline could understandably lead to a few things left behind. Part of your cruise ship morning disembarkation ritual should always include checking your safe before walking out the door to make sure you've definitely remember your passport, phones, tablets, jewelry or anything else you deemed important enough to lock away.

4. End up in PJs or Slippers

Speaking of packing up your stuff on the last night of your cruise, don't forget to leave out something to wear on disembarkation morning -- including shoes! We've heard plenty of stories of people stuck in their overnight best because they forgot to leave a pair of pants and a top out to wear the next day. If you do end up in your PJs or a pair of slippers on your last morning, hold your head high and don't feel embarrassed as you leave the ship. You'll never see any of these people again.

5. Forget Your Keycard in the Cabin

Getting off a cruise ship is not like leaving a hotel. You can't just leave your keycard behind in the room and walk out the door. Ship security staff needs to monitor who is on and off the ship at any given moment; this is especially important at the end of a cruise when a ship must be officially declared cleared of all previous passengers before new cruisers can get on. To do this, everyone must swipe their card one last time when getting off to record their departure. If you've forgotten your keycard, you're going to have to go back to your cabin to get it. You won't be allowed off the ship until you do.

6. Take the Bathrobe

While any slippers you might be given in your cabin are yours to take home with you, the same cannot be said of bathrobes. These are only for your use on the ship. Don't think waiting until the last morning when you've already received your bill will enable you to sneak off the ship with one without paying for it. You'll still be charged for it; the charge will just appear on your credit card bill separately from the rest of your onboard bill.

7. Skip Breakfast

Unless you're on a tight timeline and need to reach the airport in order to make your flight, don't feel like you have to rush right off the ship. Take the time to have one last (free) breakfast. You can even have sit-down service if you get up early enough as the main dining room will be open, along with the buffet. Why not extend your vacation that extra half-hour?



8. Linger Where You Shouldn't

Want to drive the crew crazy? Staying in your cabin past when you've been asked to leave or lingering in the atrium before your debarkation group has been called will do both as these will slow down the entire disembarkation process, delaying everything. Cabin stewards are under a lot of pressure to get rooms cleaned as quickly as possible and lingering in the room will make that significantly more difficult. Hanging around in the atrium also slows things down by making lines longer and forcing crew to control a milling crowd -- all of which mean waiting passengers have to wait longer. Instead choose a lounge to relax in with a book or stay a little longer in the buffet.

9. Opt for Self-Assist Disembarkation if You Can't Handle Your Luggage

Self-assist really does mean what it sounds like. Each cruiser is responsible for carrying all of his or her own luggage. There is no porter service; the random crew member in the hallway is not available to help you up or down the stairs. If you can't carry everything you brought with you by yourself, don't choose self-assist. Instead, put out your bags the night before, wait for your debarkation group to be called in the morning, and pick up that heavy luggage (or pay a port baggage handler to do it for you) once you reach the cruise terminal.

What Not to Forget On a Cruise: 14 Things You'll Need on Your Cruise

Dori Saltzman / Contributor

Fran Golden / Contributor

Forgetting an essential item for a cruise can put a damper in your plans. We've all been in the car or at the airport with that sinking feeling, after all, worried about the impact that one thing we forgot will have on our vacation.

While not every item you forget will ruin your cruise (with one or two important exceptions), they might cause just enough of a headache to tarnish your vacation vibes for a day or two. Whether it's forgetting your ID or neglecting basics like medications, there are a lot of details to remember to pack before you leave home.

Read on for our guide to the 14 critical things you need to pack to make sure your cruise goes off without a hitch (arranged A to Z).

1. An International Adapter to Charge Your Electronics



If you're traveling outside of the North American and Caribbean region and will be spending any time at a hotel, don't forget to pack a power adapter. It's an easy item to forget as most cruise ships these days offer both North American and European plug sockets, but hotels do not. These small items fit easily in any backpack, purse or other carry-all you might take on shore excursions. We recommend getting an all-in-one world adapter that you can leave in your suitcase all the time; that way you'll always have it when you need it. Plus, you can use it on your cruise ship to make use of an additional outlet.

2. Band-Aids to Treat Blisters or Minor Scrapes

While cruising might conjure images of lazy days by the pool, you'll probably be doing a lot more walking than you expect, whether navigating the numerous decks of today's megaships or touring destinations on shore excursions. Even your most broken-in shoes

might start to feel a little rough in destinations like Alaska and Europe, where glacier hikes or walking tours are standard fare. Be prepared for the inevitable blister or two with Band-Aids at hand, in whatever bag you carry with you off the ship and some spare ones onboard. They'll also come in handy for minor injuries and scrapes (we've needed them more than once while blindly digging through packed carry-on bags searching for something we need).

3. Portable Battery Packs for On-the-Go Charging

As electronics become more essential to everything we do, keeping them charged is a must. Don't forget to pack a portable battery pack in your carry-on. Charge it fully before you leave and keep an eye on how full it is in case you need to recharge it overnight (they can take quite a bit of time to fully charge). Most brands are no bigger than a thick wallet and easily fit in any purse or backpack on your shore excursions. After all, you don't want to get lost while touring a big city without an online map (or miss that once-in-a-lifetime photo).



4. Chargers and Cables for Your Electronics

Portable battery packs and adapters are only useful if you have the appropriate cables and chargers for them. Don't bank on finding these in port or for sale on your ship. There are lots of cruise destinations where getting a replacement charger could be near to impossible. If you're bringing anything that needs to be charged, make sure to double-check you've got the charger for it.

5. Handwritten Emergency Contacts for Unexpected Situations

Storing emergency contact numbers in your phone doesn't cut it anymore. Why? Your battery might be dead. The phone may be stolen or lost. Your password, thumbprint or face ID may prevent anyone from opening it if you're incapacitated.

That's why having a hard copy of all your emergency contacts in your wallet or in a notebook can make all of the difference. Cruises are one of the safest forms of travel, but that doesn't mean that accidents, injuries and unexpected sped bumps don't happen. If you're traveling with someone, make sure they know where you've stored these contact numbers and be sure to provide one to the cruise line when booking your cruise or updating your cruise profile as well.

This is especially true in this COVID-19 era. You will want to keep your family updated should your itinerary change due to any COVID-19 cases aboard your ship or if you yourself become ill (a rare occurrence but best to be prepared).



6. Hand Sanitizer and Wipes to Spot Clean and Kill Germs

Cruise ships have modified protocols more than once in the face of illnesses that can be spread onboard. Even with plans in place to safeguard against things like COVID-19 and the norovirus, everyone knows even a so-called 24-hour bug can wreck a vacation. A little hand sanitizer and a pack of antiviral wipes can go a long way in defending you against some (but not all) transmissible diseases. And if you want to prevent yourself from catching a pesky travel cold, up your game with an N95 mask.

7. ID to Board the Ship

Sadly, we've read horror stories of people showing up to cruise ports without their passports, birth certificates or required visas and getting turned away. If it's the last thing you do before you walk out your door, always check to make sure you've got all the identification and paperwork that is required for every step of your trip. If you don't, your vacation will likely be called off.

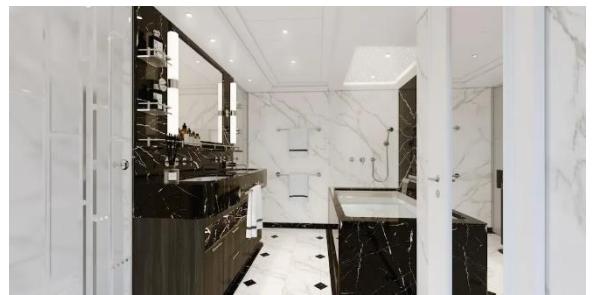
8. Masks for Unexpected Local and Destination Regulations

While masks have been cast off across much of the U.S. and on cruises, there are still destinations and activities that will require you to wear one. They also come in handy in crowded settings like airplanes and airports to prevent non-COVID airborne illnesses. Pack a handful of N95 masks in your luggage even if you long ago stopped wearing them at home.

9. Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medications

Cruise ships have medical centers, but both over-the-counter and prescription medicines are incredibly expensive. You also won't find too many options (antibiotics and over-the-counter pain relievers are about the extent of it). The limited prescription medications a cruise ship may have are also only given out in emergencies.

If you take any kind of medicine on a daily basis -- be it a prescription, vitamin or something else -- it's imperative you bring enough with you to last your entire cruise. You'd also be wise to bring an additional few days' worth in case some type of travel delay prevents you from getting home on time.



Even though most cruise ships do carry pills for seasickness prevention either in the sundries shop or in the medical center, if you're prone to seasickness you shouldn't forget to bring your own supply as well.

10. At Least One Sweater or Hoodie

We've all been in airplanes that are frigid due to aggressive climate control. The same can sometimes be true of cruise ships as well. Even on warm-weather cruises you're likely to run into unexpected chilly air, particularly in public areas of your cruise ship where the air-conditioning is often set to high. Plus, you never know when Mexico or the Caribbean will be hit by a cold spell. Forgetting to bring a pullover, cardigan, sweatshirt or sweater could result in spending extra money on an over-priced piece of clothing you'll never wear again.



11. Snack Bars for Shore Excursions

It's never a bad idea to have a snack with you when getting off the ship as you don't always know if you'll be able to get something to eat if you need it. This is especially essential if you've got kids in tow or have issues with low blood sugar. Though you'll be able to find food in larger towns and cities, some ports are more focused on far-flung outdoor adventures like hikes or whale watching. You'll want to pack a handful before you leave home, as you'll rarely find them for sale on cruise ships (unlike resorts or hotels, you'll rarely find a sundry shop on a cruise).

12. Tampons or Other Period Products

Don't forget to bring your preferred brand of tampons and pads when you cruise. Whether you're due for your period or not, it's always a good idea to have a stash on hand, particularly if your cruise sailing includes lots of sea days or visits locations where sanitary products might not be readily available.

13. COVID-19 Vaccination Card

As with mask requirements, vaccine requirements are changing all of the time. With that in mind, it pays to have your vaccine card on you. Rules may suddenly reappear or change during your cruise and you may run into issues if you can't prove that you're vaccinated. As a backup, take a photo of the card (front and back) as well.

14. Ziploc Bags or Other Waterproof Storage

You can use Ziploc bags in a variety of sizes for practically anything, from impromptu sand-and-water protection for your phone at the beach to storage for your wet bathing suit while on shore. They're also great if you want to grab some food from the buffet for a late-night snack in your room or for storing a sandwich if you don't want to give up your prime lounger by the pool at lunch time.



Theft on Cruise Ships: 6 Ways to Keep Your Belongings Safe



Cruising is one of the most carefree forms of travel, but on a ship with so many people, you should always continue to follow basic safety principles, including keeping a close watch on your belongings. We'd like to believe theft on cruise ships isn't possible and our fellow cruisers are good Samaritans, but that's not a chance you want to take. As is the case on any vacation, theft can occur on cruise ships if you're not careful; the risk is even higher when you're in port, depending on the destination you're visiting. Here are six measures you can take to avoid theft on cruise ships and in port.

1. Keep your valuables to a minimum when packing.

"Leave your valuables at home" is one of the most widely asserted tips from travel experts. Truth is, you might want to bring some fine jewelry to wear on formal night. If you must pack any valuables, we recommend keeping them to a minimum and suggest you don't take them off the ship. Flashing bling in port will make you a target for theft.

2. Don't bring huge wads of cash.

Cruise ships utilize a cash-free spending system, meaning any purchases made onboard are carried out with your key card, which is tied to either your credit card or a set amount of cash you deposited at the beginning of the cruise. While there's no need to carry cash around the ship, you will want to bring a couple hundred for emergency funds, spending in port and tips for luggage handlers, tour guides and drivers.



3. Use the ship's safe, or bring your own.

When not in use, your jewelry and cash should be kept in a safe. Every cruise ship cabin comes with a safe; there also are portable safes you can purchase for added security. (Crewmembers, like any hotel staff, have the ability to open your safe in the event you're locked out.) We haven't heard of any cruise ship safe breaches, but a portable safe certainly offers more guaranteed security, especially if you plan to stay at a hotel or bed-and-breakfast before or after your cruise.



4. Avoid leaving your belongings unattended.

This might seem like a no-brainer, but the overwhelming excitement of cruising and all its amenities can distract us to the point of letting our guard down. Maybe you put down your bags for a moment to take some pictures, or perhaps after hours of sunbathing, you decide to cool off in the pool, leaving your cell phone (under a towel) on your deck chair. Never leave your belongings unattended. Put them somewhere safe, or have your travel buddy keep an eye on them for you.

5. Consider using anti-theft accessories.

Safety warnings vary by destination, but pickpocketing can occur in any congested city. In addition to taking basic precautions like keeping cash to a minimum and your wallet in a secure location, you can add more peace of mind by using anti-theft accessories. From backpacks and wallets to belts and clothes, there's a wide range of products designed to keep your belongings secure via "hidden" zippers and RFID-blocking pockets, while also making them easily accessible to you. (Check out some of our favorite cruise bags, including an anti-theft option that ups the ante with cut-proof material that doesn't sacrifice style.)



6. Label your luggage correctly.

Upon arrival at the cruise terminal on embarkation day, you'll be greeted by porters who are responsible for delivering your luggage to your cabin. Your job is to make sure you put the correct name and cabin number on your bags so they get to the right place and don't end up at the mercy of another passenger's potentially sticky fingers.

10 Hidden Costs of Cruising and How to Save Money

Erica Silverstein / Contributor

Cruises can be money-saving vacations if you're savvy. Think about it: lodging, meals, snacks, activities and entertainment are all free to some extent aboard your cruise ship. Those basics are often not included with vacations on dry land. However, there are some things you may want to do or experience on your cruise that may cost extra. And those fees can quickly run up your cruise bill.

While it's perfectly acceptable to stick to what's actually included with your cruise fare, the truth is that most cruisers add on one or a few extras. That can include shore excursions, dinners at specialty restaurants that aren't built into your fare, spa treatments, cocktails and soda, Wi-Fi and more. In truth, "all-inclusive" is a term that really only applies to a handful of high-priced luxury cruises.



If you want the full cruise experience, you'll need to set aside some cash to cover these extra expenses. To make sure the incidentals don't break the bank for you, here are 10 things that will cost you extra onboard (and how to score them at a discount).

1. How to Save Money on Shore Excursions



Cruise lines sell shore excursions -- guided tours and experiences in the various ports of call -- but they do inflate prices above what the actual tour operators charge. Prices for these excursions range from about \$35 per person for a quick city and shopping tour to more than \$300 for some all-day tours, overland programs including meals and snacks, and such over-the-top offerings as helicopter flightseeing and hot-air ballooning. Most tours are priced somewhere between \$50 and \$175 per person, depending on length and activities involved, and it is worth noting that prices for many excursions can be higher in some areas of the world. Alaska, for example, consistently has some of

the industry's highest per person excursion costs, while many Caribbean itineraries offer tours in the \$35 to \$60 range.

Self-Guided Tours Can Save You Cash

While you might wish to sign up for some of the ship's tours (particularly if you're not familiar with the port and do not speak the language), you also have the option to tour independently at a fraction of the cost -- or even for free, if you go on a self-guided walking tour. Before setting sail, visit the websites of your ports' tourist boards or Cruise Critic's Destinations section to get ideas on things to see and how to get around on your own in port. Online travel guides and apps can also help you plan your time ashore.

Look for Free Local Festivals for Entertainment Onshore

Local festivals and craft displays can be sources of good, free entertainment. Parks, beaches and art galleries are other free or nominal-charge attractions to check out. Or perhaps you prefer to simply wander through town, browsing in shops and stopping for a coffee or snack.

Book an Independent Tour Through Tripadvisor, Viator, or Other Trusted Tour Resource

If you decide to hire a car and driver to give you a private tour (generally less expensive than the shipboard excursions, especially if you have a group) or just to take you to the center of town, always agree on the price (and, in the case of a tour, which specific points of interest will be covered) before you get into the car. If you do want an organized tour, you can book directly with a tour operator or through third-party shore excursion sellers; you might save a few dollars that way.

When booking any independent tour, always plan to arrive back at the ship well before the all-aboard time for passengers. Unlike those on ship-sponsored tours, ships will generally not wait for passengers who arrive late to the vessel after independent touring.

2. How to Save Money on For-Fee Specialty Dining

All ships offer free dining in the ship's main dining room and buffet, but nearly every ship today has one or many extra-fee dining venues (specialty restaurants). You'll pay extra for everything from casual Italian to exclusive private degustation experiences and restaurants designed by celebrity chefs. Even room service, once free 24/7, now comes with a surcharge on many lines, with fees applied for certain items, during certain late-evening hours, or all the time. Lines like Norwegian and Royal Caribbean tack on a fee to all room service orders.

Most alternative restaurants charge in the range of \$15 to \$60 per person, but a chef's table experience or wine-paired meal could be upward of \$100 per passenger. Some lines, like Norwegian, are starting to move toward a la carte prices in their alternative venues. Specialty dessert venues, dinner theater, pizza delivery and even pub grub could cost extra.



Stick to the Free Dining Options on Your Cruise:

You can typically find 24/7 dining for free onboard, and main dining room meals are often quite good, with multiple courses and decadent desserts. The newest, largest ships often have additional casual, fee-free eateries. Carnival is a good cruise line to choose if you want variety in free dining options.

Leverage Any Onboard Credit Toward a Specialty Dining Charge:

If you're tempted by the specialty options -- and many are worth a splurge -- just be sure to budget the price of dinner into your onboard spending (or skip those afternoon cocktails or wine with dinner to mitigate the cost). Alternatively, look for cruise deals that offer onboard credit or free meals in specialty venues as part of the incentive package to book.

Look for Package Bundles of Curated Specialty Restaurants

Some lines, including Celebrity and Royal Caribbean, offer dining packages that bundle several for-fee restaurants for a discounted rate; others, like Holland America, offer lunch in the specialty venues for a lower price than dinner, allowing you to enjoy the alternative dining experience at a lesser cost.

Avoid Room Service to Save on Fees That Add Up:

Finally, consider skipping room service if there is a surcharge for it. With the exception of the small hours of the morning, food is usually available almost around-the-clock in other dining venues, and can generally be brought back to your cabin from casual eateries like the buffet or onboard burger joint.

3. How to Save Money on Alcohol and Other Beverages

Water, iced tea, milk, coffee, tea and juices are free during meals, but alcoholic beverages are not included in the cruise fare on most lines (with the exception of some luxury lines and river cruises). Many cruises also charge for soda, bottled water, certain juices and espresso-based drinks. Your drink tab can quickly add up as you'll be paying restaurant -- not grocery store -- prices for your beverages, as well as an automatic gratuity on your bill in the range of 18 to 20 percent.



Look for Daily Drink Specials and Happy Hours to Lower Your Drink Bill

Many cruise ships advertise discounted daily drink specials or offer happy hour specials that are advertised in the daily cruise planner. These can be a great way to get your drink on without spending a fortune. Holland America Line still offers daily happy hours in the Ocean Bar, for example.

Never Bought a Souvenir Glass? Consider One on Your Cruise

If you're ever offered a drink in a souvenir glass (usually at sailaway on the pool deck on the first day), ask for the drink in a regular glass instead; you will likely save a few bucks.

Ship-Hosted Events Might Include Free Drinks

Look for events with free booze, such as Champagne art auctions or captain's cocktail parties. At meals, you can order a bottle of wine and save whatever you don't finish for the next night, which can be cheaper than ordering wine by the glass. The bottle is simply marked with your room number, and brought to your table the following evening.

Check Out Drink Packages and Consider Your Beverage Consumption Needs

Most lines offer beverage packages (everything from just soda to multiple bottles of wine and unlimited alcoholic and nonalcoholic drinks), but you need to make sure you drink enough to actually see savings. Also keep in mind that these packages are priced per person, not per cabin, and that all members of a stateroom have to purchase them. This can make drink packages very expensive, sometimes pushing nearly \$800 total on top of the price of the cruise -- and most lines will want an 18 percent autogratuity when you purchase the package.

Do the math: if you have to drink six or seven cocktails per day to break even, but only typically have a beer or a few glasses of wine, the cost/value benefit may not be there.

Many lines will allow you to typically bring a bottle or two of wine onboard, but you might have to pay a corkage fee if you drink it in a restaurant.

Cruise line alcohol policies are highly restrictive, so be sure to read your line's rules.

4. How to Save Money on Cruise Spa and Salon Treatments



Cruise line spas charge rates equal to high-end salons, and you might be shocked by the prices. A 50-minute massage is typically about \$120 to \$180, with more exotic treatments running into the \$200 to \$400 range (not to mention medi-spa treatments, which can start in the four-figure range). Plus, rates don't include an automatic gratuity that typically runs 18 percent.

Passes to thermal suites and thalassotherapy pools average \$25 to \$40 per day, with cruise-long packages also available that run between \$100 and \$200 per voyage, with couple's packages offering a slight discount.

Time Your Spa Visits for Discounted Days

Take advantage of spa discounts, typically offered on embarkation and port days, when the spa is less busy. Check your ship's daily program for spa-treatment specials that might be available one day only or during certain hours. Some lines offer progressive discounts if you book multiple treatments all at once.

Avoid the After-Treatment Sales Pitch

Resist the product sales pitch that often (bordering on always) comes at the end of your appointment, or better yet, ask up front not to be bothered with sales pitches at all.

5. How to Save Money on Activities on Your Cruise Ship

While many onboard activities are free, other special activities incur extra fees. Among them are fitness classes like Pilates, yoga and spinning (typically \$12 to \$30 per class); wine-tasting events; after-hours group babysitting for the youngest children (about \$5 to \$8 per child, per hour); behind-the-scenes tours; and bingo and casino play (as much as you're willing to lose). New attractions like laser tag, escape rooms and IMAX movies often come with an extra fee that can vary by line and ship.



Free Entertainment Abounds on Cruise Ships -- Use It

You can certainly stay entertained with free activities. Attend shows, live music performances, cooking demos, pool or trivia games and free lectures -- or simply spend your time chilling by the pool, reading a book or chatting with your travel companions. Many of the top entertainment offerings -- Broadway productions, onboard surfing and watersliding, live music and comedy acts -- are free (though reservations might be required).

If you're intrigued by the for-fee activities, set a budget and choose the ones you find most interesting.

6. How to Save Money on Laundry on Your Cruise

Laundry and dry-cleaning charges on a cruise can be steep (approximately \$3 to \$7 to wash and press a shirt, for instance). Check to see if there is a self-service launderette, and use it. (Typically, washing and drying one load of clothes comes to about \$6, though some lines offer complimentary self-service laundry.)



Opt for Extra Clothing in Your Luggage or Consider Light Washing in Your Bathroom Sink

You have two options here: Pack enough changes of clothes for the cruise and do the wash back home, or bring your own travel-sized detergent, wash necessities in your cabin sink and hang-dry them in the shower. If you're really motivated, you can also find a laundromat in port -- it could be a cultural experience!

Or stay true to your favorite cruise line. Some upper-tier loyalty program members receive free laundry service as a status perk.

Find out how much cruise line laundry services will cost you.

7. How to Save Money on Cruise Tipping

Tipping policies vary by line; most mainstream cruise lines recommend about \$14 to \$20 per person, per day, to be distributed among those who provide key services: dining room waiters, assistant waiters, and cabin stewards. If you have a suite, be prepared to tip extra. These are generally automatically added to your cruise account.



Additionally, bar tabs are automatically charged a 15 to 20 percent gratuity; some lines also add-on a 15 to 20 percent gratuity to spa services. When the maître-d' performs a special service, such as arranging for a birthday cake to be brought to the table, he should be tipped as well. Travelers on ships catering to Brits and Australians will find that tips are sometimes built into the cruise fares.

Cruise Staff Work Hard -- Allow the Autogratuities to Stand

Generally, tipping is not and should not be an area where you can save money. You can adjust the auto-gratuities at the ship's purser's desk or choose to tip below the recommended amount if you feel you've received subpar service. However, Cruise Critic discourages this in most cases. The ship's crew members -- particularly the waiters, assistant waiters, and cabin stewards -- work hard and depend on tips to round out their salaries.

If you are disappointed with service, speak in person to guest services while you're still on the ship -- it's more effective and can generally resolve most issues. Don't wait until you are home to complain about an issue.

8. How to Save Money on Cruise Souvenir Shopping

Most people purchase something to remember their cruise, and it can be tough to pass on the beautiful -- and expensive -- figurines, perfumes, designer fashions and leather goods if your budget doesn't allow for them. Even tacky trinkets and T-shirts can add up if you're buying for your extended family-and-friend network. Prices can range from a \$5 tee to a piece of jewelry valued in the hundreds or even thousands of dollars.



Wait Until the End of Your Cruise for Big Souvenir Sales

Avoid temptation by not browsing in the boutiques onboard and ashore if you cannot afford to buy. Typically, bargain tables appear on ships toward the end of a cruise, so wait for the latter portion to buy onboard if you're so inclined.

Compare Prices on Items You Can Easily Buy at Home Instead

If you do plan to purchase jewelry, clothing or duty-free liquor onboard, check the prices of merchandise at stores back home, and bring a list so you can compare prices. (The prices on ships are not always deals.)

Consider Skipping the Art Auction

Don't invest in a piece of art at an onboard auction unless you've done your research in advance and know the value of what you're purchasing.

Stick to Handicrafts and Food Items in Port to Keep Your Souvenir Bill Low

In port, good, inexpensive souvenirs include handicrafts from outdoor markets and street vendors, and local products such as coffee, jellies and candy purchased at grocery stores in port, where souvenirs are generally less expensive. Many souvenir stores carry the same products, so compare prices before buying.

9. How to Save Money on Photos and Camera Equipment



Cruise travelers are often lured into dropping big bucks at the onboard photo gallery, where an 8x10 photo can easily cost \$20 or more. Buying additional batteries, memory cards and other camera supplies onboard will likely cost you more money than it would back home.

Use Your Own Camera or Consider Photo Packages

If you're worried about blowing your budget on photos, just say "no thanks" when the ship's photographer asks to take your picture. Or resist the urge to check out the photo in the gallery -- once you see the printed version, you're

more likely to want it. Take your own pictures, and rely sparingly, if at all, on the ship's photographers. If you do plan on buying a lot of professional photos, look for packages or ask about any specials on offer.

Pack Extra Camera Batteries and Your Charger

On the equipment side, buy plenty of batteries and other camera supplies at home where they're cheaper -- and bring more than you think you will need, just in case.

You won't need to rely on the ship's photographers if you heed our top tips for taking better pictures on your next cruise.

10. How to Save Money on Cruise Wi-Fi

Whether you bring your own laptop and use Wi-Fi on your cruise, or park yourself at the computer center onboard, you will pay high rates for often slow to mediocre connections. On the up-side, connection speeds are improving, and select cruise lines can offer land-like speeds.



Cruise lines are no longer consistent in how they package or price Wi-Fi. Some lines offer packages for the entire voyages, while others sell packages that come with preset time or data limits. The latter (and sometimes the former) can be chewed up by modern sites like Facebook or apps that refresh in the background. You may also see packages only meant for email and social media usage. In any case, the fees will add up (especially if you want streaming and high-download access).

Look for Promotions When Booking Your Cruise

Many cruise lines offer Wi-Fi packages as an added perk when booking certain promotions. Also look for free Wi-Fi access in port; you might need to buy a cup of coffee or a snack at a cafe to access it. You can also find cheaper internet centers in port.

Use Your Cruise Line App to Communicate with Fellow Cruisers

New cruise line apps offer certain planning and communication services, often for free or discounted rates, when you're onboard.

Updated September 16, 2022

How to Sleep on a Plane

We asked the experts for tips and tricks on how to catch some z's at 36,000 feet

The last time I had a really good sleep on a plane was nearly two decades ago, when my family and I lived in Singapore and we had the good fortune of flying back and forth to the U.S. in business class on Singapore Airlines. Not only were the fully reclining seats set in private little cocoons of bliss, but the flight attendants graciously watched my two young children while I slept.

These days, I mostly travel between Boston and London in coach, and I board the red-eye with little expectation of getting any real sleep. I bring my favorite pashmina and fuzzy socks, but I spend most of the flight watching movies, occasionally nodding off for an hour at the most. I arrive in London the next morning completely exhausted and struggle to stay awake for the rest of the day so I can adjust to the local time.

Each trip I wonder: Is it possible to get quality sleep on a plane without being in first class? To find out how, I went to the experts.

Rachel Salas, M.D., a sleep neurologist at the Johns Hopkins Center for Sleep and Wellness, says that sleep is particularly important for older adults and has an impact on our overall health. As we get older, our sleep is broken up more because of things like medication or getting up to use the bathroom, and this affects our quality of sleep. She adds that traveling across time zones can wreak havoc on our circadian rhythms, particularly for the more than half of those over 65 who are at high risk for a sleep disorder.

When traveling, Salas recommends making a plan and keeping your sleep-wake cycle as consistent as possible. If you normally go to bed at 9 p.m. and your flight leaves at 8 p.m. (and you're not changing time zones), try to go to sleep at 9 p.m. "If you are changing time zones, you may not want to sleep. That way, when you get there, you can assume the new time zone," Salas says.

She adds, "More people are feeling comfortable using their CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) machine on a plane, particularly for longer flights." It's especially important for people who have moderate to severe sleep apnea — to protect their health and so their snoring doesn't disturb the other passengers.



When it comes to using prescription sleep aids, Salas says to proceed with caution, not to get medications from friends and never to try a new medication on a flight.

"The last thing you want is to be taking something for the first time on a long flight," Salas says. Even if you've taken the medication previously, many medications have side effects, and if you didn't have side effects previously, you might have them on the plane. "You're in a public space and you want to be alert in case there's an emergency." She adds that taking melatonin — a hormone produced in the brain in response to darkness — can be helpful as a circadian rhythm sleep anchor, but she emphasizes that it's not a sleep aid, and you should consult your doctor before taking it.

Brian Kelly, founder of The Points Guy, a travel advice website, flies roughly 250,000 miles annually. His sleep routine begins with booking.

When possible, he avoids red-eye flights, particularly when flying within the U.S. "When it's a four-hour domestic flight, you are guaranteeing yourself a horrible night's sleep," Kelly says.

He also chooses the newest airplanes, which are quieter and smoother and have much better air filtration systems — all of which aid sleep. (Websites like Airfleets.net and Planespotters.net can help you find the age of the aircraft before booking.)

The afternoon of the trip, he does a cardio workout and eats a healthy meal at home. "If you wait for meal service, you're wasting prime time to sleep," he says.

Though he's 6 feet, 7 inches tall, Kelly prefers the window, where he can lean up against the side of the plane and is less likely to be disturbed by seatmates climbing over him to go to the bathroom and carts smashing into his arm.

Whenever he's on a long-haul or overnight flight, Kelly wears compression socks and sleeps with his legs uncrossed to reduce swelling and the risk of deep-vein thrombosis. He also brings a pair of slip-on shoes so he can go to the restroom without fumbling.

Lastly, Kelly says he stays hydrated and keeps alcohol consumption to a minimum. "The hangover will be twice as bad and, even if you sleep, you're not getting quality sleep if you have too much alcohol."

Do's and Don'ts of Sleeping on a Plane

Here are some expert tips from Rachel Salas, M.D., a sleep neurologist at the Johns Hopkins Center for Sleep and Wellness.

Do

Adjust your sleep schedule to the new time zone. If you're going to be in the new time zone for a week or longer, start moving to the new time a few days before you travel. This can be especially helpful if you have a tight agenda once you arrive and need to hit the ground running.

Listen to white noise. White noise is consistent and can help drown out ambient noise. Music, on the other hand, is not constant and the fluctuations can affect your sleep quality.

Carry an extra pair of socks. If you've been traveling in your socks all day and have trapped moisture, that can cool you down, so bring an extra pair of clean, dry socks for the flight.

Don't

Drink alcohol. Any sedative will relax your muscles, which can make sleep apnea worse (and your snoring may disturb others on the plane). Alcohol can also cause you to wake up, even if the alcohol initially helps you get to sleep.

Watch a movie or use a screen device. The devices' blue light can affect your circadian rhythm so that even if you're tired, you may not be able to fall asleep. The content might also be stimulating or scary, which may keep you awake, and the program might be interrupted by announcements on the plane, which can interfere with the timing of your plan.

by Jaimie Seaton, AARP, September 19, 2022

Cruise Ship Facts That Are Rarely Talked About

Jason Pasos | This article was originally published on [Travlerz](#)

For some people, cruises are the ultimate getaway when planning their travels. They're like miniature worlds, with accommodation, food, and anything you might need all in one place. But they also come with their own set of rules and realities. So whether you're a luxury liner expert or thinking of taking one for the first time, you'll want to look through these cruise secrets before hopping on board. From unheard-of amenities to things crew members know but never tell the guests, these facts will shed new light on the whole experience.

A Morgue Lurks Within Every Cruise Ship

Vacations and cruises are supposed to be a time to let go and have fun. However, there's often a darker side to many cruises that passengers don't see. Since a large portion of the clientele usually tends to be older people, it's actually not all that uncommon for people to pass away while on a cruise. At least, that's what one former crew member said when they estimated that around three people pass away every month on a cruise.

For this reason, all cruise ships are required to have a morgue on board, which is off-limits to passengers and usually has room for around three to six bodies.



It Might Sound Eerie but Crew Members Write Down Everything That Guests Do

Because crew members are required to be as pleasant as possible to passengers, they don't usually get a chance to say everything they'd like to say. So, cruise ships keep a log where they write down everything that happens while on a trip. These logs can include something as big as a fire that happened or something as mundane as a comment a guest made. It all serves a purpose.

All of that information helps an incoming crew best prepare and spot potential hazards and how to manage them best. We're sure the log is also sometimes just used as a venting mechanism.

The Creepy Hidden Pools of Cruise Ships

If you've ever seen photos of a cruise ship's pool, then you probably know that these are often the most crowded places on the ship. People just gravitate toward the pools on ships for some reason. Anyway, it turns out that most cruise ships have

"secret" pools reserved for their staff. These are usually much less crowded since only the staff are permitted to use them, but it's also possible for guests to be invited.

Of course, a guest would have to make quite the impression on the crew in order to be invited to the secret pool, which might actually be more difficult than you'd think, considering some of the rules on board.



Crew Members Speak in Code to Keep Guests in the Dark



Maintaining passengers' safety onboard is paramount for the crew. So, sometimes they're forced to speak in code, so they don't incite panic while still being able to act quickly during an emergency. Some of these codes are used for cleaning up spills, dealing with medical emergencies, reacting to a fire, or responding if someone falls overboard. And if you're curious about what code word is usually used for the last item on that list, then it's "oscar."

This actually makes a lot of sense, considering the last thing you want is to scare passengers or create enough panic to impede your ability to respond to a situation.

Gambling Rules on Board Aren't as Legal as You Think



Many cruise ships have casinos on board, and since they spend a lot of time traveling through international waters, it's perfectly legal. However, that also means that they aren't subject to a single area's laws concerning gambling. So, the rules onboard will sometimes change depending on whatever country or city is nearest. For example, your odds of winning can change dramatically depending on where in the ocean you are.

Cruise ships might switch up the number of decks they use for blackjack, etc. In short, just be aware that the rules governing their games aren't set in stone, and they often change.



Even Cruise Ships Are Vulnerable to Mysterious Accidents

The captain has the final say when you're on a boat or ship. That's a great system when it works, and it usually does. After all, you'd rather have one person with experience calling the shots during an emergency than two or more people wasting time arguing over a decision in a crisis. However, even captains make mistakes, and sometimes those mistakes can be disastrous for a ship or its passengers.

It doesn't happen very often, which is why when it does, it usually makes the news. But a few cruise ships have been sunk when close to port due to a captain's decisions.

You Can Hire Someone to Follow You Around Like a Butler



Many cruise lines offer a special service they refer to as "genies." Genies act like personal wait staff and can bring you almost anything you ask for, and a lot of people who take cruises swear by this service. However, this is the top-tier package for most cruise lines, and the price reflects that. Still, they can do things like bring dinner directly to your room and get you special tickets to events.

Since they're so expensive, many choose to use genies as their concierge and ask them to do everything from bringing them coffee in the morning to booking reservations for dinner at night.

Sometimes Passengers Vanish at Sea and Go Missing



Weird things happen while out at sea, and one of those weird things involves people going missing. Around 165 people reportedly went missing while on a cruise from 1995 to 2011. Some people think that number is possibly higher. And we're not talking about passengers that fall overboard — although that is one likely explanation for those numbers. We're talking about people who simply disappeared without a trace and were never seen again.

Apart from going overboard, other likely explanations include people being kidnapped and taking their own lives while on a cruise. However, we wouldn't completely rule out the possibility of a passenger throwing another person overboard.

Cruise Ships Struggle in Rough Waters Because of Their Size

This might not immediately come to mind when thinking about a cruise since most cruise line commercials show ships sailing in calm waters. But no ship is completely immune to rough seas, especially not cruise ships. They may be large, but they're still fairly top-heavy, and that makes them more prone to rock and sway while navigating through storms and rough seas. As you might imagine, the experience is not a comfortable one.

If you haven't gotten your sea legs under you yet, then you're probably going to spend a lot of your time in the bathroom waiting for the water to calm.



There's a Risk of Pirates Coming Onboard

Sometimes you'll hear that pirates attacked a cargo ship or something similar, but you don't often hear of a cruise ship being targeted. Still, it does happen, and the crew is trained for it. A cruise ship was targeted in 2005, and the crew used some kind of acoustic weapon to assault the pirates' eardrums. It worked; the attack was foiled, and everyone on board went about enjoying their vacations.

However, as a precaution, pretty much every crew member is trained on how to deal with pirates if an attack does occur. But the details of that training are closely guarded.

Crew Members and Their Forbidden Desires for Each Other

This one makes a lot of sense if you think about it; it's not uncommon for crew members to cozy up to one another while on a trip. After all, they're spending weeks and sometimes maybe even longer out on the ocean together. It's apparently so common that there are unwritten rules associated with hooking up with coworkers, such as mutual understanding about how long relationships are expected to last.

Some former cruise ship employees have even described the culture around hooking up with coworkers to be on par, if not worse, than that of college dorms.



There Are Consequences for Crew Members if They Fraternize With Guests



While crew members frequently hook up with their coworkers, they are not allowed to fraternize with passengers while on board. In fact, even being suspected of doing so is sometimes enough to get them into big trouble. This rule is mainly in place to protect the crew from being accused of anything inappropriate and, of course, to also keep the cruise company safe from being sued by a passenger.

After all, it's much easier and less public for a cruise company to take care of issues within its staff than it is to take care of issues involving passengers.

Don't Get Throw Into Cruise Ship Jail

Odds are you've heard of the brig before. It's basically a jail cell on a ship, and it's reserved for passengers that break the law, get in fights, or otherwise threaten the safety of other passengers or crew. There is no judge on a ship, at least not one that's there for work, so if you're thrown in the brig, you'll most likely spend the rest of your vacation there.

At least until the ship makes port and can offload you to the authorities, which may or may not be in the same country that you sailed from in the first place.



Some Ships Have Hidden Armed Guards on Board

Most ships have a brig for a reason, and they're probably used more than most people would like to think. There have been a number of high-profile crimes committed on cruise ships, but most are usually pretty petty. Luckily, cruise ships are equipped with cameras pretty much everywhere, and crews are trained on all to deal with all types of crimes. Some ships even carry armed guards though they are often out of sight.

There has been everything from bomb threats to assaults on cruises. There have also been missing people, which likely involved a heinous act on more than one occasion.

There's No Guarantee the Cruise Will Dock Where You Expect It to

This doesn't happen often, but unfortunately, it's always a possibility. Even though a cruise itinerary might say it will stop at certain ports, whether or not the ship actually stops depends on a couple of factors. Firstly, the captain will decide if the ship stops or doesn't, which is usually decided based on safety reasons. Secondly, the port itself has the final say in whether or not passengers can disembark.

For those reasons, most trips will say in fine print that there's always a possibility the ship might not dock as expected when you go to book your ticket.



Rescuing Passengers Who Went Overboard Isn't Simple



It's never good when a passenger goes overboard, especially in rough seas. That's why it's important to know what to do. If someone goes overboard during a cruise, you might see crew members or other passengers throwing stuff over the side in order to mark where they are in the water. It might seem like a simple task to remember where someone went overboard, but it's actually extremely difficult.

There are no landmarks in the ocean, meaning your brain doesn't have anything to refer to when trying to locate an overboard passenger from the top of a very high cruise ship.

Even Crew Members Are Drinking All Day on Cruises

If you ever notice that your crew seems particularly happy or in a good mood, then it might be because they've had a little bit to drink. Crew members get steep discounts on alcohol. That said, most cruise lines say they randomly test their employees to ensure that they're not drinking while on the job. Still, we're sure it happens from time to time. And according to former crew members, it happens more than from time to time.

Some former crew members have also come out and said that drinking among crew members is much more common than some cruise companies would have their passengers believe.



Even With an All-Inclusive Package, It's Easy to Get Scammed With Random Charges



Even though most cruise lines do offer all-inclusive options, it's still not uncommon for them to hit you with some unexpected charges and fees while on board. For example, if you're eating at a restaurant, you might get charged for soda or alcoholic beverages depending on the package you booked. That's why it's important to read the fine print and work out exactly what you're paying for and what it covers.

That said, no matter how much you order or what package you book, the same level of service you get on a ship is usually going to be cheaper than what you'd pay on land.

You're Being Watched All of the Time

Similar to casinos, the security and surveillance on cruise ships are tight. Like, really tight. You can pretty much expect to be watched anywhere you while on a cruise ship, except your own room. This is done for a couple of reasons, including passenger safety in case of a crime or someone falling overboard. However, it's also done so that people can review footage after an emergency to determine what went wrong.

Think of all of that security, kind of like a ship's version of a black box you might find on an airplane. It's there to make sure nothing bad happens and fix any issues in the event something does happen.



The Crew Often Isn't Paid Well



Living on a cruise ship and working almost constantly might seem like it would merit decent pay, but that's actually not the case. More often than not, crew members on ships aren't paid very well at all. This is because of a couple of reasons, but the main one is that operating in international waters means that cruise ships aren't required to follow laws as strictly as other employers.

It puts them in a sort of grey area, which means that they can pretty much ignore things like overtime and minimum wage if they so choose. This doesn't mean that all cruise lines do this, but many have definitely been documented doing so.

Disease Outbreaks Aren't Uncommon

Everyone remembers the outbreaks onboard cruise ships whenever covid-19 hit. They just seemed to be especially bad onboard cruise ships, and that was because that's simply what happens when you have thousands of people situated together in a tight space. It creates a perfect storm for bacteria and viruses to spread. However, there have been plenty of outbreaks onboard cruise ships even before the pandemic. One such outbreak happened in 2014.

That's when around eight cruise ships and many of their passengers were hit with the norovirus. There have been more procedures and rules to limit the spread of sickness during an outbreak in recent years, but the risk is always going to be there.



Crew Members Are Mostly From Outside of the USA

There are a lot of reasons, many of which are on this list, that cruise lines don't tend to hire American workers. However, one of the reasons is simply that Americans wouldn't put up with the long hours required on a cruise ship. The typical American work week is around 40 hours long, compared to the sometimes 100-hour long work week on a cruise ship.

Pair that with different and less generous overtime rules and lower pay, and it's not hard to see why there aren't as many Americans in the cruise industry as there are in other sectors.

Medical Care Can Be Spotty

Because cruise ships aren't really required to operate to the same standards as other companies in the U.S., the medical care available to passengers can sometimes be hit or miss. It's not uncommon for cruise ships to hire doctors from countries with lower medical standards than in the U.S. It's also not uncommon for the facilities on board a cruise ship to be not quite as great as you'd find on land.

Pair that with the fact that doctors on cruise ships basically can't be sued for malpractice, and it paints a not-so-great picture of what potential care is like on a lot of cruise ships.



Most Doors Onboard Aren't Locked

This one might seem kind of horrifying at first, but it's actually for a good reason. Most of the doors on cruise ships, except passengers' cabin doors, don't actually lock. This is for safety reasons. If there is an emergency on a ship, the crew and passengers must be able to get to wherever they need to go in order to evacuate or look for other passengers.

You can also imagine the issue with people accidentally being locked in somewhere if a ship sank or there was a fire on board somewhere.

Cruise Ships Have Been Caught Dumping Tons of Waste Into the Ocean

Where does the human waste go when you're on a ship and out at the ocean, you might ask? Well, it goes exactly where you probably expected it to go: out into the ocean. Cruise ships simply dump waste when they are around 12 miles from shore. Of course, they are required to treat it first, but it still isn't great for the environment. Not all countries have the same laws either.

This means that sometimes cruise ships will discharge waste when they're nearer a country with more lax laws, such was the case recently when Canadians complained about U.S. cruise ships dumping near British Columbia.



There's Always a Fire Risk



For as long as people have been building boats, they've had to worry about those boats catching on fire. When you're out at sea, one of the worst things that can happen is for a fire to break out. And the bigger the boat, the more likely there will be a fire. That's because all of those events, entertainment venues, and amenities are powered by electricity and sometimes even involve flames.

Since 2005, there have been about 79 reported fires aboard cruise ships. That might not sound like a lot, but any one of those could've ended in a boat being sunk if they got out of hand.

Cramped Quarters for the Crew

Rooms for crew members are usually much different than the rooms for guests on cruise ships. Crew quarters are cramped in comparison, and more often than not, crew members share a room. That said, crew members do have their own break areas with things like crew-only events, classes, and even a pool reserved for staff. However, they don't really get to enjoy all of that stuff very often, considering they're working most of the time.

It turns out that working on a cruise ship is much less glamorous than most people might imagine and even downright difficult. At least they get discounted drinks, we suppose.



Cruise Ships Might Soon Be More Expensive

One of the big reasons that cruise lines are able to keep their trips so affordable is that they use tax loopholes. If you know a little bit about maritime shipping, then you're probably aware that a lot of shipping companies will register their boats in foreign countries in order to avoid having to pay U.S. taxes. The same is true of a lot of cruise companies.

That said, cruise costs might one day be a bit more expensive since, recently, many places have called for addressing this loophole. But for now, it's one of the main reasons cruises are so cheap.

Adult-Only Areas Are Great for a Little Peace and Quiet

There are usually thousands of people packed onboard a cruise ship. That includes families and their kids, meaning that sometimes it might be difficult to find a little relaxation while you're on vacation. Luckily, there's a special area on cruises you can go to find just that. Most cruise ships have an adult-only area for passengers looking to escape from the crowds. These areas usually aren't too hard to find.

However, if you do find yourself in need of a break, you can usually just ask a member of the crew, and they'll be able to tell you where the area is.



It's Almost Impossible to Get a Refund



Because of the nature of cruises, it's really difficult to cancel your ticket and still get a refund. Usually, you're going to be left paying for that ticket you booked even if it turns out that you can't make the cruise. Not only that, but if you booked a stay while in port, then you're probably still going to have to pay for those accommodations as well, in addition to anything else you booked through the cruise line.

Strangely enough, many cruise lines used to be much more flexible with their cancellation policies and refunds, which temporarily saw a return during the height of the covid-19 pandemic.

"All You Can Eat" Has a Very Real Downside to It

This one isn't really a secret, nor is it sinister, but it is something to watch out for a while on board a cruise ship. And that is how much you consume while you're on vacation. It might sound kind of shocking to some, but most people will gain around 5 to 10 pounds after their cruise. That said, pretty much every cruise ship out there is equipped with a gym.

Exercising is the last thing most people want to do on vacation, but this is probably one of those times when it really pays to stick to your routine or even start a new one.



Cruise Ships Wait For No One



This is kind of a no-brainer, but it's important to remember that a cruise ship isn't going to wait at port for a couple of passengers who failed to get back in time. Instead, if you're late to getting back to the ship, you're going to likely be watching from shore as your ship sails off into the distance. It just doesn't make sense that a cruise ship with thousands of passengers would wait for a couple of people.

That's why it's important that you always remember to get back to the ship well before it's scheduled to depart. It's also not a bad idea to carry your documents and passport with you just in case you're left behind.

They're (really, Really) Bad for the Environment

Cruise ships are among the worst offenders when it comes to environmental impact. Part of the reason for this is that they use a fuel that's sometimes referred to as "bunker fuel." It has around 5,000 times more sulfur in it than normal gasoline. Needless to say, that makes it absolutely terrible for the environment. In recent years, some cruise ships have installed filters in order to trap some of their emissions.

It's actually estimated that cruise ships produce more carbon dioxide annually than any other type of ship, partly due to all of the amenities they have to keep running on board.



Crews Rely on Reviews for a Good Paycheck

Everything about a cruise ship ensures that passengers have a good time while on board. For example, even much of the crew's pay is determined by reviews that passengers leave. If passengers leave crew members good reviews, then they receive a nice bonus to help offset their low earnings. However, if they get bad reviews, then they can kiss their bonus goodbye, and they're just left with a meager salary.

It's kind of similar to the way waiters rely on tips instead of a base salary. However, it also means that many crew members aren't really paid all that well to do their base jobs.

Preparing the Kitchen Is Done With Military Precision

It's no surprise that most cruise ship kitchens run their operations with military-like precision. They have to ensure that they have enough food on board for everyone while also ensuring that they're not wasting any money by purchasing more food than is necessary. Some kitchens are reportedly so precise that they can predict consumption down to a margin of two meals for a week, which is really impressive considering the number of people on board.



Sometimes crews even change up how much they order based on the nationality of their guests, according to some former members of cruise ships and directors. For example, a ship with many Americans might order more ketchup than one with a majority of other nationalities.



Some Cruise Ships Have Special Themes

Because the cruise industry is so competitive, no one cruise is the same. Different cruises and companies offer their guests very different services than their competitors. For example, some might offer free coffee or other amenities to set themselves apart from the competition. It's also one of the reasons why themed cruises are such a big thing. It's so that the industry appeals to every different type of passenger possible.

That's why it's important to research the specific company and cruise you plan on taking, as each one is different, and they all have their own strengths and weaknesses.

Hiding Drinks Isn't Easy

No matter where you go or where you stay, drinks will always be one of the more expensive parts of your vacation. Cruise lines are no different, only that instead of having the option to go to a cheap bar, you're forced to use the bars on the ship. For this reason, people have figured out how to smuggle their own booze onto cruises, and we have to say, these methods are pretty inventive.

One method of sneaking alcohol on board a cruise ship involves filling a plastic bladder with booze in order to evade x-ray detection. Another involves filling mouthwash bottles with alcohol and then using food coloring to dye them a specific color.



What Happens on the Cruise Stays on the Cruise

We imagine spending long amounts of time on board a cruise ship that's out to sea is a bit like working any other job away from home for long amounts of time. It tends to lead to people creating these sorts of double lives for themselves. For example, it gives crew members a chance to be someone they weren't while they were back at home or might even cause them to omit telling colleagues about important portions of their lives.

In short, it pretty much means that whatever happens on a cruise ship pretty much stays on a cruise ship unless, of course, you break the law or company rules.

They Can Charge For Just About Anything

Even after you pay for your ticket, you're likely going to find yourself paying for things you never would've thought about paying for before. It's no secret that a cruise line is going to make you pay for things like drinks and such, but some will even make you pay for a boat ride to land or wifi. It's not uncommon for around a quarter of a cruise's profit to come directly from surcharges.

That's why it's so important always to read the fine print so that you're not surprised when you get hit with an expensive bill out of nowhere. Reading or watching reviews can also help.





Crew Members Get to Party for Cheap

There are rules against crew members partying too much, especially with guests, but it's not uncommon to see them unwinding and letting go just a bit. A large part of this has to do with just how much they work and how little they actually have to spend on drinks. They usually pay around \$1 to \$2 per drink. Compare that with passenger drinks which can set you back \$10 or usually more, and it's not hard to see why crew members might be the life of the party.

Still, most cruise lines will have at least a couple of clauses in their contracts that dictate how much crew members can drink and how much they can interact with guests.

Not All Rooms Are Spacious

If you don't splurge the big bucks on a room, chances are you'll get stuck in a tiny cabin without much space for everyone. Cramped quarters are never good, especially if you brought kids along. Luckily, there's usually tons to do on cruise ships so you won't have to spend much time in the room. Still, in the evening and morning hours, it's not much fun to be stuck together in such a small space.

Unless you want to be packed in like a sardine, we really suggest investing in a larger room. This way, everyone has the space to move around comfortably.



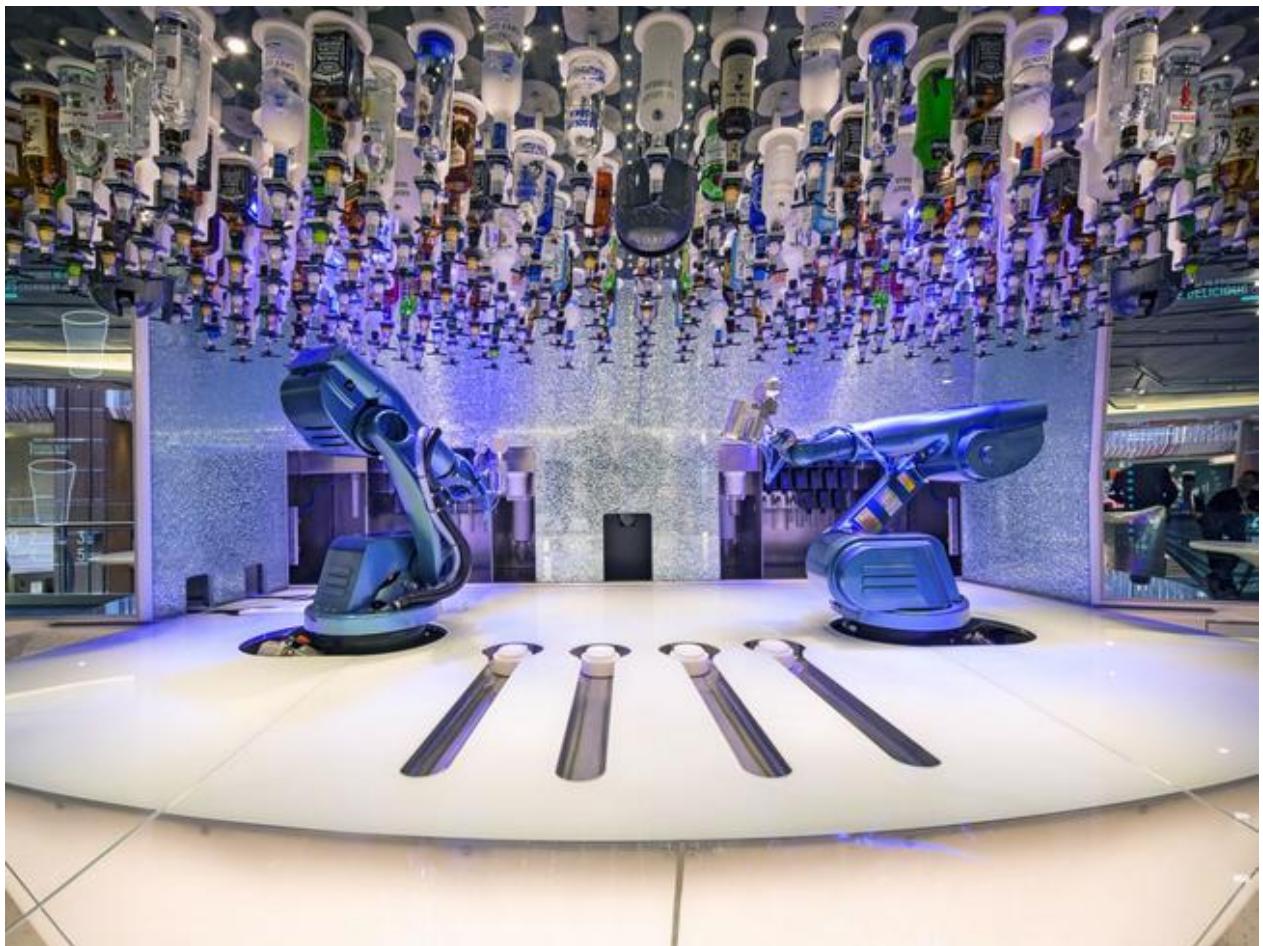
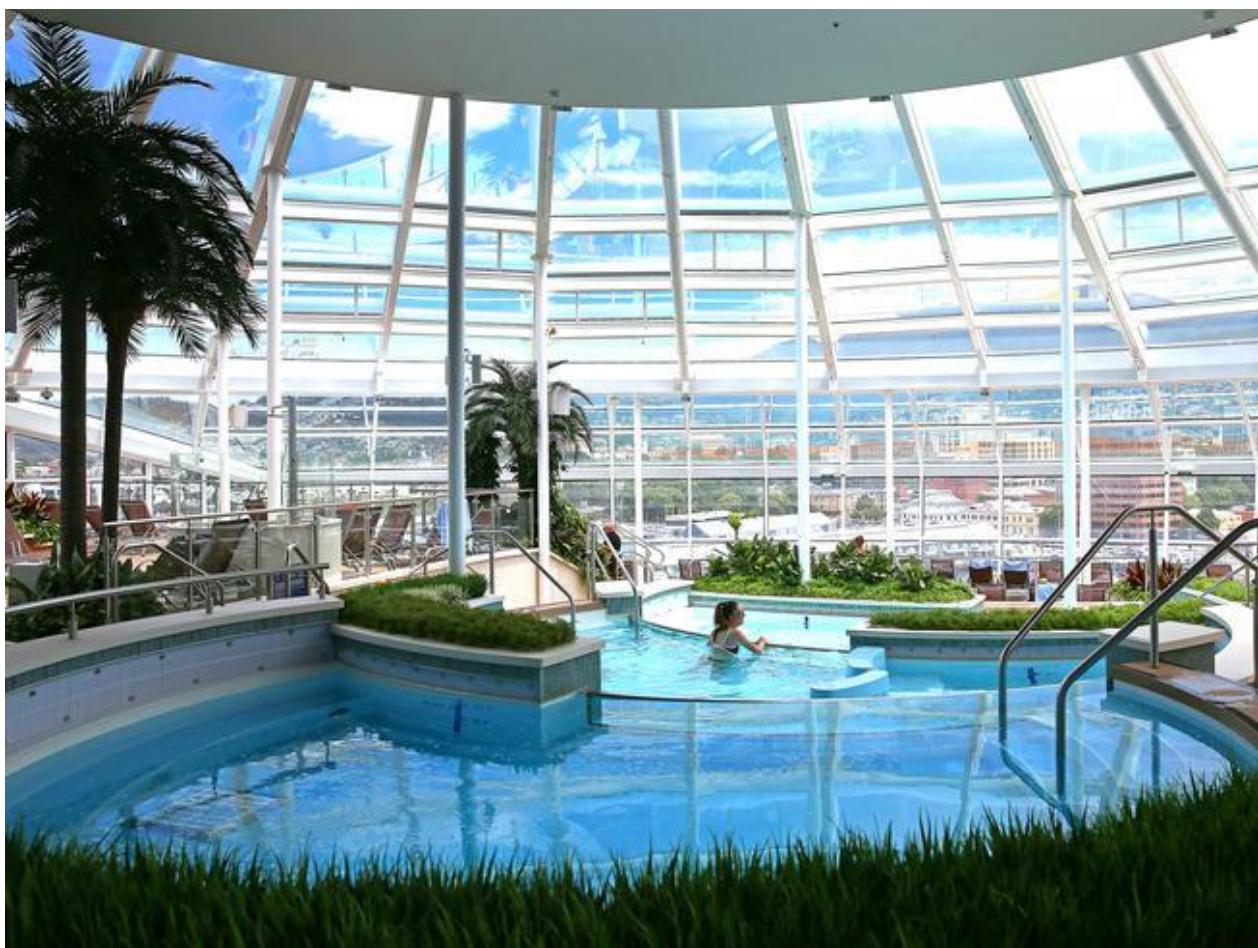


Packing List

PACK THIS!

# DAYS	DESTINATION	SPECIAL EVENTS	DESTINATION WEATHER		
BASICS	TRAVEL AIDES	Motion-Sickness Remedy	Debit Card	Travel Tickets	
	Pleasure Reading	Sleeping Pills	Foreign Currency	Travel Confirmations	
	Chewing Gum	Anxiety Medication		Travel Membership Cards	
	Snacks		TRAVEL INFO		Travel Guides
	Bottled Water	FUNDS	Passport & Visas		
	Earplugs	Wallet	Driver's License		
	Sleeping Mask	Cash	Itinerary		
	Travel Pillow	Credit Cards	Maps & Directions		
MISCELLANEOUS	DOCUMENTS	Collapsible Tote	Luggage Tags	Audiobooks	
	Copies of Travel Docs	Money Belt	Hospitality Gifts	Music & Videos	
	Copies of Credit Cards	Shoulder Straps	Journal	Headphones	
	Copies of Passport	Plastic Bags	Sports Gear	Voltage Adapters	
	Credit-Card Contact Info			Batteries	
	Emergency Contact Info	LAUNDRY		Flashlight	
	Medical Insurance Card	Laundry Bag	Address Book	Binoculars	
	Medical History	Laundry Kit	Important Numbers	Alarm Clock	
	List of Medications	Stain Remover	Datebook		
	Prescriptions	Sewing Kit	Business Cards	WORK	
	Travel Insurance	Travel Iron		Work documents	
	Car Insurance Card		Work reading		
		MISCELLANEOUS		Office Supplies	
	BAGS	Umbrella	Cell Phone & Charger	Notebook	
	Backpack / Daybag	House Keys	Tablet & Charger	To-Do List	
	Purses	Travel Locks & Keys	Laptop & Charger		
			Camera & Charger		
CLOTHES		QTY		QTY	QTY
	BASICS	Slacks	CASUAL	Sandals / Flip-Flops	
	Underwear	Skirts	T-shirts	Slippers	
	Socks	Dresses	Tank tops		
	Undershirts	Suits	Sweatshirts	ACCESSORIES	
	Bras	Tuxedo / Cufflinks / etc.	Jeans	Belts	
	Pantyhose		Shorts	Ties	
	Sleepwear	OUTERWEAR		Wristwatches	
	Robe	Jackets	Exercise Clothing	Jewelry	
		Coats	Swimsuits / Cover-Ups	Glasses	
	DRESSY	Raincoats	FOOTWEAR		Sunglasses
	Dress Shirts	Hats	Athletic Shoes	Reading Glasses	
	Sweaters	Gloves	Leisure Shoes	Glass Cases	
	Blazers	Scarves	Dress Shoes		
HYGIENE	Toothbrush	Hair Dryer	Shaving Cream	Tissues	
	Toothpaste	Curling / Flat Iron	Razor	Cotton Balls	
	Dental Floss	Styling Products	Perfume / Cologne	Cotton Swabs	
	Mouthwash	Hair Accessories	Makeup	Tweezers	
	Soap	Mirror	Makeup Remover	Lint Roller	
	Washcloth	Cleanser	Birth Control	Insect Repellant	
	Deodorant	Sunscreen	Feminine Hygiene	Medications	
	Shampoo	Moisturizer	Nail Clippers	Pain Reliever	
	Conditioner	Lip Balm	Nail File	Vitamins	
	Brush	Contact Lenses & Cases	Nail Polish Remover	First Aid Kit	
	Comb	Saline Solution	Hand Wipes	Band Aids	
WRITE-IN		QTY		QTY	QTY

BRING HALF OF WHAT YOU THINK YOU NEED - AND TWICE AS MUCH MONEY!





Notes: