



So You're Planning a Cruise?

We at Triple R Travel have cruised many times on several different cruise lines, and we have put some useful information together for our clients to use when planning their next cruise. If you have any questions after reading it over, please feel free to contact us at 919-371-8352.

(*Stateroom and cabin are used interchangeably between cruise lines and mean the same thing. Balcony and verandah are used interchangeably between cruise lines and mean the same thing.)

- Cruising is one of the best vacations available today, and is a very cost effective way to spend your vacation—not to mention all of the F-U-N you will have!
- Once you are booked/confirmed on your cruise, you will receive a reservation/confirmation number from your travel agent which will allow you to go to the cruise line's web site and perform the on-line check-in. Most of the cruise lines today do not send documents in the mail. E-docs are the preferred method, and by doing the on-line check-in and entering all of your travel information, you can print out your cruise documentation that you'll need to take with you to the port so that you may board the ship.
- You do not need a passport if you are going on a close-looped cruise. In other words, if you are going out of and back into the same cruise port, you will not need a passport. However, it is not recommended that you cruise without a passport. In the event that you are hurt while visiting a port city outside of the U.S., you may have to fly home. If this occurs, you will not be able to board the plane without a passport. On closed-looped cruises, you must have a certified copy or the original U.S. government-issued birth certificate and a government-issued photo ID.
- When traveling with your passport, it is recommended that you leave a copy at home where a family member or friend would have easy access to it, and also take a copy with you on your vacation. When you arrive on board the ship, you will find a safe in your stateroom. Put your **original** passport in the safe and keep your copy with you on the days that you leave the ship for shore excursions. If you are stopped by anybody "official" while ashore, you can show them your copy of your passport. Tell them that your **original** is on the ship and that they can go back to the ship with you to see it. If you lose your original passport while ashore, you won't be able to get back into the US or fly home without it. It is also recommended that you carry a second photo ID with you as a back-up (government issued, if possible).

- Most cruise lines offer an “Any Time Dining” option, as well as two set times around 6:00 and 8:00 p.m. (these will vary from line to line). Some cruise lines require you prepay your gratuities in order to have the “Any Time Dining” option; others do not. Please let your travel professional know your preferred time for dining, as well as your table size request and any food allergies so that they can advise the cruise line prior to your boarding.
- There are only a finite number of accessible staterooms on board each ship. If anyone in your party needs an accessible stateroom, please let your travel professional at Triple R Travel know so that they can make sure to secure it at the time of booking.
- There are two ways to configure the two beds that are typically found in staterooms on board cruise ships. 1) two twin beds, or 2) put together as a queen. Be sure to let your stateroom steward know if yours are not set up the way you prefer when you arrive. It can easily be changed, and they want to make your vacation the best it can be.
- Upon check-in at the pier, you will be asked for your credit card that you plan to use while on board the ship. It is then synchronized with your stateroom key. There is **no cash** exchanged while on board the ship. Everything you purchase aboard the ship will be added to your onboard account by using your stateroom key as if it were a credit card.
- There is at least one formal night on each cruise. The number of formal nights per cruise depends on the number of days you are cruising. If you dine in the formal dining room on the designated formal nights, you must wear formal wear. For example, men can wear a suit and dress shirt with a tie or a tuxedo, and women can wear a formal/cocktail dress or black slacks with a dressy top. If, however, you choose not to dine in the formal dining room on those nights, you can dress more casually depending on where you choose to dine. In the buffet area (called something different on each cruise line), you could wear shorts, a t-shirt and flip flops and be perfectly fine. In a specialty dining venue, I would recommend you wear something like you’d wear to work in an office environment: business casual, but no denim or flip flops.
- You can request your table size for your dining experience. Table sizes usually accommodate 2-8 people.
- Each cruise itinerary offers a variety of optional shore excursions. When you do your on-line check-in with the cruise line, you can book these excursions individually. Some cruise lines will allow you to pay for them online when you choose them, and others will add them to your onboard account so that you will pay for them at the end of your cruise. Because excursions are optional, the cost is not included in your cruise fare. At some ports, there is a variety of things to do right at the port—so if you don’t want to go on an excursion, you may have shopping and dining options readily available.
- There are many optional events that take place during a cruise—everything from trivia games, to line dancing, to concerts and shows in the ship’s theater. Please read the daily newsletter that is left in your stateroom each evening. It will cover the next day’s

events, so you can easily scan it and plan your day by notating the things you're interested in.

- Children traveling without their parents (i.e. with grandparents, an aunt or uncle, etc.) must have a notarized form (usually provided by the cruise line) signed by both parents, granting permission for the traveling adult to have the child with them on the cruise. If one parent and a step parent are bringing a child aboard, then the biological parent not going on the cruise must give permission for the custodial parent to take the child with them. If in doubt about this situation, consult with your travel agent to make sure all paperwork is in order. It could keep you from boarding the ship if it isn't complete.
- There are standard drinks -- usually iced tea, punch or lemonade, coffee and water -- that are included in your cruise fare. Cocktails, wine, beer, sodas, specialty coffees and fresh-squeezed and bottled juices are not typically included and will be charged to your onboard account when you purchase them. A small gratuity may be added to each purchase, depending on the cruise line, and you may tip more if you desire.
- Gratuities between \$12-15 per person are added to your onboard account each day of your cruise. These gratuities are divided between 4-5 staff that take care of you while you are on your cruise. This is the only money that these staff members make. The staff will work very hard to make sure you have a memorable and enjoyable cruise experience. If you would like to tip one or all of the staff above this amount, you can either hand them the money directly at the end of the cruise (recommend next-to-last day), or visit the customer service desk and ask them to add it to your onboard account. The same is true if you are unhappy with service you've received and would like to give a staff member less because you've received poor service.
- Please use caution when visiting any of the ports on any itinerary. Treat it as if it were a big city in the U.S. that you were visiting for the first time—don't be paranoid, but do be cautious.
- Packing for a cruise can include everything from shorts and flip flops to parkas and boots, depending on where you're cruising to and what time of year. If in doubt, consult with your travel professional at Triple R Travel.
- If you have food allergies or some other medical condition that requires special attention by the cruise line, please let your travel professional at Triple R Travel know so that they can make sure the cruise line is notified and all necessary paperwork is filled out. This includes vegetarians and kosher diets.
- Most cruise lines have 110-volt outlets in their staterooms, and they provide a blow dryer for your use while on board.
- There are laundry services available on each line and they vary from ship to ship. Some ships will have self-service laundry facilities on board, and all will have paid laundry service on board. Some ships will only have paid laundry service. If you have questions about the availability of laundry service, consult with your travel professional from Triple R Travel.

- There are medical services on board each ship. They do not provide comprehensive medical facilities, but they can provide first response and emergency care to guests until they can get them to a medical facility on shore. You will be required to pay for these services and file with your travel insurance once you arrive home. Make sure to contact your travel insurance company immediately to get a claim number in the event of a medical emergency. If you do not have travel insurance, medical expenses during your trip will most likely not be covered by your regular medical insurance. If you have questions about this coverage, please consult with your travel professional from Triple R Travel.
- There is wi-fi available on most ships these days, and because it is optional, there is a fee for this service. Cruise lines will often offer specials on different days for this service, and some will offer it as an amenity based on the type of cabin you've booked.
- You should check with your cell phone service company prior to cruising to see what plans/coverage is available for the areas you will visit. Remember, too, that ships today have satellite service, so if your cell phone is on, it very well may connect to that satellite service and rack up charges you are unaware of. Many cell phones turn themselves on when you take them off the charger, so be sure to put your cell phone on airplane mode prior to turning it off.
- If you are cruising with a group, consult with your travel professional at Triple R Travel to make sure that you are getting group fares and amenities. Also, have the reservations cross-referenced so you are sitting with (or close to) each other for dining.
- To stay healthy on board, the best “medicine” is to wash your hands. Cruise ships will almost always have hand sanitizer available all over the ship, but the best possible insurance you can have is to wash your hands, as hand sanitizers do not prevent the spread of all communicable illnesses (e.g. noroviruses). Keep your hands away from your face as this will help minimize the possibility of picking up a virus while on board.
- Because of the stabilizers on modern ships, as well as advanced weather notification and the availability of preventative medications, most people don't have issues with motion discomfort. If you think you may have these issues, you can consult with your physician prior to cruising and obtain a patch or bracelet that you wear while on board to help minimize or eliminate that discomfort.
- You can extend your vacation by adding hotel room stays on either end, or very often doing back-to-back cruises. If you have questions about this option, please consult with your travel professional at Triple R Travel.

TOP TEN REASONS TO CHOOSE A CRUISE (CLIA Cruise Q&A brochure)

- Value – One price pays for your accommodations, entertainment, dining and more.
- Romance – A wedding, honeymoon or an anniversary are just some of the romantic reasons to cruise.

- Cuisine – Depending on your mood, you can dine in a traditional restaurant setting, a small bistro or a casual eatery, sampling all types of cuisine.
- Variety – With hundreds of distinctive ships, worldwide ports-of-call, and an unbelievable array of places to see and things to do, there is a perfect cruise for you.
- Activities – Sightseeing, sports, beach excursions, cultural lectures, educational tours, headline entertainers, dance extravaganzas, musical revues, comedy clubs, and more await your arrival.
- Simplicity – Book with your agent, let them handle the details, and nearly everything is paid for before you ever arrive!
- New Horizons – Let the captain do the driving — you fall asleep in one destination and wake up to a new horizon, and you only have to pack and unpack once!
- Family – Because there is a variety of activities for all ages on board, a family cruise is an ideal vacation.
- Pampering – Cruise lines pamper their guests with first-class service around the clock.
- Satisfaction – It is a fact that cruises have among the highest percentage of satisfied customers of all vacation experiences.

Consult with your travel professional from Triple R Travel if you have more questions about cruising.