

## General Cruise Questions



### QUESTION 1

Is cruising a good and affordable value?



Cruising is the best vacation value! There are cruise vacations to suit every budget. Your cruise fare includes your stateroom, your meals and onboard entertainment. Your only extra expenses will typically involve eating at specialty restaurants, escaping on shore excursions, indulging in alcoholic drinks, relaxing via massages or getting salon treatments. When you cruise, you know the basic cost of your trip before you go. Compare that with unexpected costs of other kinds of vacations. You'll be amazed!

## QUESTION 2

How long are cruises?



They're as long or as short as you'd like them to be. Destinations Café works with cruise lines that offer itineraries from as short as three days to three months or longer.

## QUESTION 3

Where can I go?



Wherever you'd like! Cruise ships visit more than 1,800 ports worldwide... practically every destination accessible by water. Check out the In-Sites and Search Yourself options on our home page to see all the available options.

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#### QUESTION 4

#### How do I book a cruise?

You have choices. You can call us directly or leave a written message for our veteran cruise specialists by using the green Travel Date bar or the Let Us Help option on every page of our site. You can also use the Search Yourself option to book your own vacation without our assistance.



#### QUESTION 5

#### Are all ships fairly similar?



Far from it. Your choices of ships range from intimate yacht-like boats to gargantuan resort-like vessels. You can sail with fewer than 100 guests or more than 6,000. Enjoy atmospheres ranging from casual to formal and contemporary to classic. You can even choose sail-assisted ships. Take part in endless activities offered on a modern resort-style craft or immerse yourself in the culture of your destination on a special interest cruise. You can view profiles of hundreds of ships operated by dozens of cruise lines by visiting the In-Sites and Search Yourself sections of this site.

## QUESTION 6

### Are there different types of cruises?



There are cruises to suit virtually any kind of interest or personal preference.

There are boutique luxury cruises with globetrotting itineraries; there are large contemporary ships with a fascinating array of recreational facilities; there are classic vessels evoking time-honored traditions of cruising; and there are special interest cruises specializing in unique destinations with an accent on cultural enrichment.

Some cruise lines feature soft expeditions to unusual and rustic frontiers like the ice floes of Antarctica, the rain forests of the Amazon River basin and the wild reaches of the African Serengeti. You can also discover historical and seasonal legacies closer to home along enlightening itineraries past the autumn trees of New England, the French-influenced Canadian provinces and notable landmarks of Colonial America.

Experienced travelers may be interested in destination-focused cruises that feature premium, culturally-rich ports of call with itineraries dedicated to illuminating world-class treasures like the antiquities of ancient Greece, the Polynesian paradise of Hawaii or the fabled Norwegian fjords.

You may choose to experience an ideal vacation full of non-stop fun and sun on a tropical resort-style cruise to the Caribbean and sample a wide variety of island cultures while working on a perfect suntan.

If that isn't enough variety for you, consider cruises featuring special onboard themes with entertainment ranging from jazz festivals, heavy metal concerts, classical music presentations, golf clinics and murder mysteries.

**QUESTION 7**

**Are there any special educational programs onboard?**



To complement the spirit of discovery travel invokes, many cruise lines feature extensive onboard enrichment seminars presented by distinguished educators. In addition to sessions highlighting the sights and history of the ports you visit, there may also be in-depth presentations ranging from exotic subjects like the history-changing influence of Renaissance art to the epicurean secrets of classic French cuisine.

**QUESTION 8**

**What's an air-sea cruise?**

In addition to your cruise package, an air-sea vacation includes either free or reduced-fare air transportation to and from your port of embarkation. This sort of money-saving option includes baggage handling as well as ground transportation to and from airports in most major American cities.

## QUESTION 9

### Will I need a passport?

The requirement of a passport depends on the type of cruise you take and the destination involved. For the most part, if you visit a port outside the territorial waters of the United States, you will need a current passport to return. In every case, you will need some sort of identification. You will receive comprehensive information about required documentation well in advance of your departure.



## QUESTION 10

### Are there different classes of service?



On today's cruise ships there are no class distinctions. Everyone can use all of the ship's facilities regardless of the fare they pay for their stateroom. Regardless of the size or category of your cabin, you will enjoy the same service, food, activities and entertainment as every other guest.

## QUESTION 11

Will I get bored or feel confined?



Hardly! Being at sea affords a feeling of freedom no land-based resort can offer. There's typically so much room it can take a couple of days to discover everything onboard. In addition, you'll be able to look forward to exploring exciting destinations at your ship's ports of call.

Cruise ships are floating resorts with all the inviting activities of the finest land-based resorts. If you just wish to relax, on the other hand, you can lie back in a lounge chair, soak up the sun, read a book or watch the ever-changing scenery.

When you feel like being active, you can join exercise or dance sessions or dive into sports contests. You can practice your golf swing on a putting green, enjoy the fresh sea air on the jogging deck, stretch your muscles in the swimming pool, work out in the gym or relax in the sauna. There is nearly always something to do.

QUESTION 12

What is there to do at the ports-of-call?



There's so much to do, you'll probably have a hard time choosing! Explore on your own or take a guided tour on a shore excursion. Search ancient ruins or hunt for shopping bargains. Ride a river-rapid raft or go horseback riding across miles of hills and beaches. Climb to the top of a waterfall or an ancient pyramid. Follow the footsteps of history or ski in the wake of a power boat. Play golf or tennis. Bathe at the world's best beaches. Catch fish. Sail, snorkel or scuba dive. Ride a cable car to the top of a mountain. Explore dark catacombs. Cruising is the perfect way to sample exotic destinations and try things you've only dreamed about.

#### QUESTION 13

**Do I have to participate in the activities?**



Although you'll undoubtedly be invited to participate, you can do whatever you'd like whenever you'd like on a cruise. You can do everything or absolutely nothing. It's your vacation!

#### QUESTION 14

**Do cruise lines welcome families with kids?**



These days, more and more cruise vacations are booked by families with children. Most cruise lines provide plenty of supervised activities for kids, especially during school holidays. If your children enjoy swimming, sports, games, movies and new places, they'll love a family cruise. Children tend to adapt to shipboard life with ease, and parents don't have to wonder what they're up to. Friendly, engaging youth counselors will keep your children busy and entertained. Many cruise lines offer age-appropriate activities suitable for toddlers to teens. Best of all, children often travel at reduced rates!

QUESTION 15

What's there to do at night?



When the stars come out, cruise ships truly come to life! Immerse yourself in dancing and live entertainment at the nightclubs, bury yourself in a feature film at a theater, gamble to your heart's content at a casino or party the night away with new friends. Many cruises host special events like the Captain's Cocktail Party, Passenger Talent Night, Broadway-style shows and Vegas-type revues. Nighttime is the best time on a cruise ship.

QUESTION 16

Is there a charge for entertainment?



There are never extra charges for onboard entertainment. Sometimes, there may be a premium added to the price of your stateroom if you would like to be part of specialty activities, like an annual heavy-metal concert series, but; otherwise, entertainment is on the house. There is no cover, no minimum and no charge for admission. Live, first-rate shows during your entire cruise are included in your fare.

QUESTION 17

Will there be people like me onboard?



Who is like you? There is no such thing as a typical cruise passenger. All types of people from all walks of life take cruises. If you're looking for a lasting experience, and you're willing to be spontaneous, you may find yourself becoming friends with anyone from anywhere. Start a conversation. Have some real fun. Put yourself out there. Nobody is like you.

QUESTION 18

What should I pack?



Pack like you would for any casual vacation. If you plan to stay on the ship, bring backyard clothing like tee-shirts and shorts. If you plan to participate in nighttime activities, bring semi-formal attire. If you would like to meet the captain, carry along a formal suit or gown. If you wish to go onshore, do your homework. It's all part of the adventure.

Otherwise, you will be provided with daily amenities like soap, washcloths, towels and shampoo. Keep in mind, however, you are going on vacation, sometimes into unusual and unfamiliar environments. Part of your adventure may involve circumstances we may not have anticipated. That's part of the fun of a vacation! Use your wits and pack whatever you think you'll need in every circumstance.

#### QUESTION 19

Will I need a tuxedo?



Don't buy a tuxedo! Most cruise lines do not require formal dress for attendance to night-time activities. Depending on the cruise you choose, though, a tuxedo sometimes may be the best choice. Formal dinners can be part of the fun when going on traditional, Queen Mary-type cruises. Even on the most formal of ships, a dark suit and tie are fine for the dressiest of occasions. If you have a hankering for wearing a tuxedo, most luxury ships offer tuxedo rental services.

#### QUESTION 20

Can singles have fun on a cruise?



Cruising is ideal for single travelers because it's so easy to meet people. In fact, most ships have parties for singles early in the cruise so they'll be able to get to know someone right away. Many ships staff social hosts who can be dance partners, dinner companions or a fourth at cards.

Most ships also have single cabins as well as single rates for double staterooms. If you ask, many cruise lines will even find you a roommate to share a cabin so you can obtain the double occupancy rate, saving you even more on a great vacation.

QUESTION 21

Can I use my hair dryer or shaver?

Most cruise ships have 110/120 volt outlets and hair dryers in the staterooms. Check with your travel agent to be sure.

QUESTION 22

Do I have to eat at specific times?



Not necessarily. Many ships offer a choice of eating times and locations. Others encourage you to eat whenever you like. More traditional ships have two seating times in their formal dining rooms: typically 6:00 pm and 8:30 pm. You'll be asked while you're booking your cruise which formal dining time you prefer.

Frequently you can choose to dine someplace other than the formal dining room like intimate Italian, Chinese or Japanese restaurants, pizzerias, and espresso bars. More and more cruise lines are now opening their lido decks for evening dining under the stars, where the dress code is always casual. A large number of ships also offer in-cabin dining.

**QUESTION 23**

Is cruise ship dining as good as I've been told?



Everything you've been told about cruise ship dining is true. At each meal you'll find a wide selection of appetizers, salads, soups, entrees and desserts, and each day you'll find a different selection. If you wish to experiment with a particular type of food or dish, feel free to place more than one order! However, just because your cruise ship offers plenty of delicious choices, don't assume you'll come home out of shape. You'll be able to get low-cal, vegetarian or fitness menu selections that are just as tempting as the regular menu fare. The one thing you'll never see on a cruise ship menu is a price because your meals are included in the price of your trip.

**QUESTION 23**

Can I get a special diet?



Most ships can accommodate salt-free, low carbohydrate, low cholesterol, Kosher or other diet preferences. These requests almost always need to be made in advance, so be sure to advise your travel agent when you book your cruise.

#### QUESTION 25

What about dining companions? Can I sit with my family and friends only or will I be assigned tablemates?



Experienced cruisers say they prefer sitting at a table with several other diners. Some lifelong friendships have begun this way. However, cruise lines are prepared to accommodate each guest's wishes, and it is possible to request a table for two or four. In the unlikely event that you wish to change tablemates, the maitre d' will discretely and politely make every effort to seat you with whomever you wish.

#### QUESTION 26

**Are there non-smoking areas?**



Virtually all cruise ships have both smoking and non-smoking sections in the public areas and on deck. In fact, some entire ships are now totally smoke-free. If you wish to dine in a non-smoking area, let your travel agent know when you book your voyage. While onboard, you can advise the maitre d' of your preference.

#### QUESTION 27

**Can we celebrate a special occasion?**



Absolutely! Most cruise lines will even treat you to a complimentary cake and a chorus of “Happy Whatever!” to honor the occasion. Your special occasion can also be made more festive with champagne, flowers or canapés. You can even arrange for a special party. All you have to do is advise your travel agent while booking your cruise.

#### QUESTION 28

**Is cruising right for honeymooners?**



Without a doubt. Cruising offers an atmosphere that’s just right for romance... cozy dinners for two, strolling on deck at sunset, dancing the night away and more. Most lines provide special services – from Sunday or Monday departures to champagne and breakfast in bed. Some ships also offer opportunities to perform marriage ceremonies or renew marriage vows.

QUESTION 29

Can we stay in touch with the outside world?



Quite easily. Most ships have daily newsletters with news, headlines, stock quotes and sports scores. Many staterooms have televisions and satellite or cellular telephone capabilities. You can also call someone onshore with the help of the ship's radio officer while at sea. In addition, most ships have faxing capabilities and Internet cafes.

QUESTION 30

What about tipping?



Tipping is a matter of personal preference. A general rule is to plan for about \$12.00 of gratuities per passenger per day. A few cruise lines include tipping for your cabin steward and waiter in the price of the fare. Most others allow you to add shipboard gratuities to the price of your trip while you're booking your cruise. Other crew members can be tipped for special services at your discretion.

QUESTION 31

Are there medical services onboard?

Virtually every ship, except for some smaller vessels operating in coastal waters, has a medical facility and a health care staff ready to handle almost any emergency. If you have a medical condition that might put you at risk, discuss it with your doctor and inform the cruise line while booking your cruise. Whenever you travel, check to see what your health insurance covers before you go.

QUESTION 32

Are there laundry services?



Almost all cruise ships have laundry facilities, and many provide dry-cleaning services. These services involve an additional charge. On some ships there are self-service laundrettes.

### QUESTION 33

**Do cruise lines accept group bookings?**



Most cruise lines welcome groups – often at special rates, depending on how many people are involved. Policies vary from line to line and sometimes during certain times of the year. Consult your Destinations Cafe travel agent for details.

### QUESTION 34

**Are there meeting rooms onboard?**



Just about every full-sized ship has public rooms and conference centers available as meeting spaces for private or corporate groups. If you'd like to make meeting arrangements, advise your travel agent or contact the cruise line's group sales department to coordinate schedules and arrange for special needs. Your crew may be able to provide audio-visual equipment, communications, meeting coordinators, secretarial services, printing capabilities and more.

**QUESTION 35**

**Can I extend my cruise vacation?**



Usually not if you wish to stay on the ship; however, you can often arrange with cruise lines for pre or post-trip hotel packages that allow you to extend your vacation at the beginning or end of your cruise.

**QUESTION 36**

**Is motion discomfort a problem?**



Rarely. Popular cruise itineraries take place in some of the calmest waters in the world. In addition, stabilizers on modern ships, the availability of advance weather information and effective preventative medications have for the most part eliminated your chances of having motion discomfort.

QUESTION 37

All this sounds too good to be true! Is it?



The one complaint we hear again and again is that cruise vacations end far too soon! Beyond that it's hard to find any negatives. All you have to do is relax and enjoy your vacation. Most importantly, every crew and staff member is dedicated to making your cruise the best vacation of your life (until you top it the next time!)

**Have a wonderful vacation!**