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& cruise

SKY CHANNEL 284



Holiday & Cruise Channel's First Time Guide To Cruising.

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Cruise holidays have never been more popular.

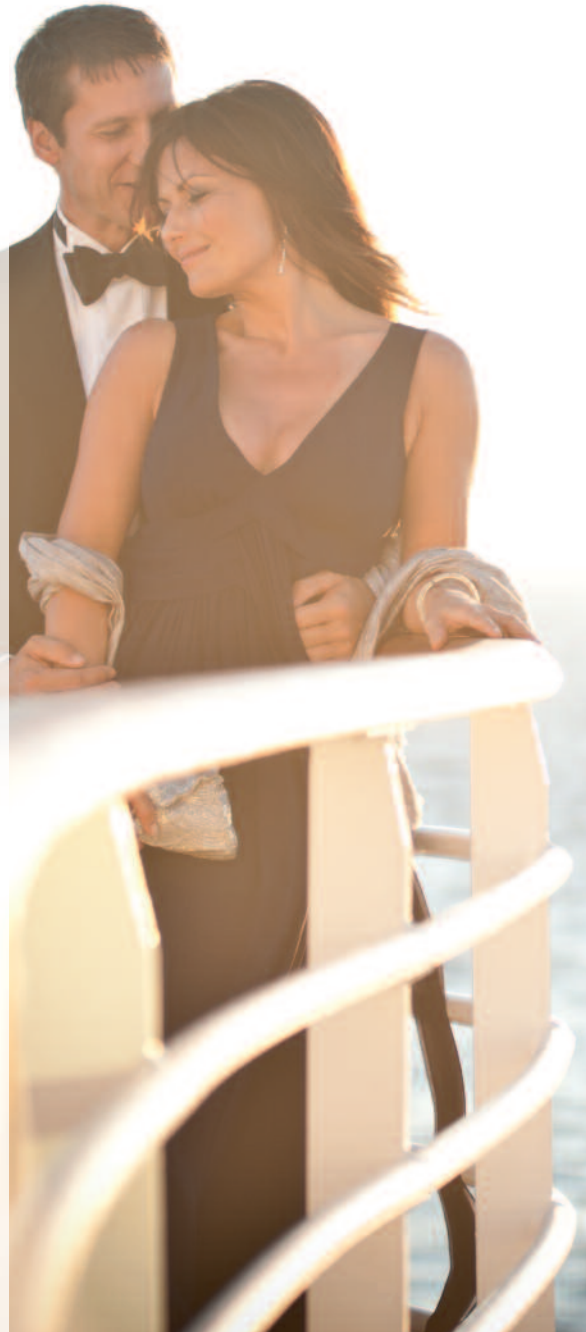
For many people however, it's quite daunting to know where to begin. Will I enjoy it? Who is cruising for? Will I be bored? These are a few of the many questions asked by all first-time cruisers. The answer is simple. No matter what your lifestyle, or time of life, there is a cruise ship to suit your every requirement. There are child-free and child-friendly ships to choose from, ships that range from the contemporary and innovative, to the traditional. So whether you are travelling with children, on your own, as a couple or in a group, you will find nowhere more welcoming.

So what is there to do on a ship?

You get so much more than an ordinary land-based holiday, you'll have luxury accommodation, exquisite food and professional entertainment, together with ever-changing scenery. Wake up to a new destination almost every day, giving you the opportunity to explore new places or just relax, whether it's an exotic Caribbean island, or the hustle and bustle of a cosmopolitan city. Life on board, however, is ultimately just as inviting as your time ashore. Most ships are equipped with swimming pools, a fitness room and spa, shops, stylish cafés and bars, and a whole programme of entertainment, including guest speakers from Soap stars to former ministers, the variety is amazing, and they are all people with a story to tell. For those of you seeking pure tranquillity and relaxation, there are always plenty of areas on board designed with you in mind, whether it's a library, a quiet sundeck, or an adults only pool to name but a few.

What's included in the fare?

The fare is generally made up of your choice of cabin accommodation and meals on a full board basis (although some alternative dining options carry a surcharge). Daytime entertainment is included, for example swimming pools, Jacuzzis, gymnasium, sports court, and library to name but a few. By night these 'floating resorts' offer evening entertainment such as lavish stage shows, west end theme shows, live bands, comedians, and night club etc. On Fly Cruise Holidays, All international flights to and from the UK are included, along with transfers to/from the overseas airport/port. There are also 'Spa' areas on the ships that offer 'Pamper treatments' as well as hairdressing for an additional fee.





How do I get to the port and check-in?

Depending where you are joining your cruise, it really is very simple. If you are sailing from the UK, you can either drive and park at the port, where you pull-up outside the cruise terminal, and porters take your luggage, and the next time you see it, it will be outside your stateroom or cabin, then you just park your car. If you are travelling by coach, many cruise lines have coaches direct to the ship from pick-up points around the UK, just ask when you book, once again, as you leave the coach, the porters take your luggage, and it's taken to your cabin for you. If you are travelling by train or By air, there are usually busses that link between the station or airport and the port, or you can hail a cab, once again your luggage will be looked after when you arrive at the Port. Once you have left your luggage, you just proceed to check-in, where you will have a photograph taken, your tickets and passports will be checked, and you will be given your boarding card, and then usually you go right on board.

If you are on a fly cruise, obviously you have to make your own way to the airport in the UK, and your luggage allowance will be restricted by the airlines luggage policy, so make sure you check it before you fly. When you get to your destination airport, unless otherwise advised, there is usually a representative of the cruise line waiting to take you to the ship on a coach from the airport, it is your responsibility to take the luggage to the coach, then, normally the next time you see your luggage it will be outside your cabin or stateroom. But make sure you attach the luggage labels the cruise line send to you on the luggage, so they know where to deliver the luggage to.

Will I Need a Passport?

Yes. No matter where you are cruising, even if it is a 'round Britain Cruise' you will need a valid passport for everyone travelling, as you will be sailing into international waters.



How much luggage can I take with me?

On any sailing commencing from a U.K. port you are not restricted to the number of cases you take with you. However, do remember that your cases will have to be accommodated with you in your cabin or stateroom and with too many cases there could be the problem of space! On any "fly cruise" the weight of luggage will be determined by the requirements of the airline. Please don't forget the weight and size of the presents you will be returning with from the various destinations of your cruise!

What should I wear?

The primary consideration in packing your case is that you are going on a holiday to relax and therefore keep it simple! By day, we would advise wearing casual wear and shorts for hot weather and importantly comfortable shoes for your shore excursions and strolling on the decks. Cruising has today become more relaxed and in the evening there

will be a combination of formal, informal and smart casual evenings. Some cruise lines now offer completely informal sailings. Please call us for more details. Normally there will be one formal on a 7 night cruise and two formal nights in a 10/14 day Cruise where gentlemen will wear a dress suit with a tie or 'Black Tie' and the ladies are able to dress in all their finery.

Are there things for Children to do on board?

Depending on the ship you choose, yes, there are lots of things for children on some of the larger ships including Ice Rinks, climbing walls and many ships have children and teen clubs as well, some cruise lines only operate these during the main school holiday periods, but others offer them year round, just ask when you are booking. If you are thinking of taking the family, book early, as the larger cabins and state rooms that sleep families do book up first, and as always its first come first served basis. (It is also worth noting that some ships are for adults only)





Where and when do I eat?

All meals are included in the fare, most ships offer a main dining room, which is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, usually with waiter service. Most ships do offer alternative dining areas, from self-service to silver service, A la Carte venues, and snack bars (often open 24 hours). There is also 'Freedom' dining on some ships where you can eat when and where you like. Some of the larger vessels have many restaurants, ranging from Mediterranean cuisine to Japanese, Steakhouses to Celebrity created restaurants, such as Chef Marco Pierre White's restaurant onboard P&O's Azura, these 'Special' do have an additional charge, but are not anything like you would pay in a normal restaurant at home.

I require a special diet - Can I arrange this prior to the Cruise?

Naturally, the Cruise Line can provide a wide variety of special diets but you are requested to state at the time of the booking the precise dietary requirements for the passengers on the reservation. Meals form an important element of the cruise experience and the Cruise Lines will attempt to accommodate all requests within the facilities available.

Which type of cabin or Stateroom should I choose?

Whichever grade of cabin or stateroom you choose it will be discreetly attended to by your cabin steward, so you'll always find it in shipshape condition. You'll return to find your bed turned down, fresh clean towels and a sparkling bathroom. You're often given the choice of comfortable twin or double beds and most cabins are equipped with dressing table and chairs, ample wardrobe space and on British ships, (Like P&O, Fred. Olsen etc) tea and coffee making facilities. And that's the least you can expect. For a slight increase in fare you can enjoy some panoramic sea views, or better still why not opt for a touch more luxury and take advantage of your own private balcony - an ideal place for breakfast or cocktails. If you're celebrating a special occasion or simply feeling a little indulgent you can choose from a range of opulent suites with additional space, a private balcony, a luxurious bathroom and special butler service.

What happens when the ship in port, do I have to get off?

When you join the cruise you will be given full details of all your ports of call. Many cruise lines send you details a few weeks before you depart. At each port there is a large variety of different shore excursions available, which you can book before you depart or on board the cruise. However you don't have to take any excursions, and you can just explore each destination yourself. Alternatively, if you just want to stay and relax onboard, you can, as all the restaurants bars and other facilities remain open whilst the ship is in port, and many passengers enjoy that as the ship is a lot quieter.

What about tipping?

It is customary, on the majority of ships, to offer tips to staff who you feel have given you excellent service and attention, as a way of saying 'Thank you'. Each ship varies the suggested amount but you will be given a guideline, either before you travel or in your cabin. On some cruise lines you can pre-pay these, so you can plan your holiday spends, and some cruise lines include them in the price of the cruise, just ask when you are booking, the agent should know the recommended tips on each cruise line.

Do I require a Passport or Visa?

A full Passport is required for all passengers and it is essential that the Passport is valid for a minimum period of six months AFTER your return to the U.K. Please check the expiry date of your current Passport. If you need to renew or extend the validity of your Passport please allow at least one month for your application to be processed. U.K. Citizens will require Visas for a few destinations should they wish to proceed ashore independently but in the vast majority of instances these are not required. We would advise you to visit www.fco.gov.uk for further details on Visas before you travel. If you are visiting the USA you will need to complete an ESTA form. For more details on passports & Visas, visit our website www.holidayandcruisechannel.co.uk and click on Holidays tab.





Do I require vaccinations and additional medicines?

Health regulations alter periodically with the improvements to the standards of health and safety and we suggest that you check your requirements with your local GP at least 12 weeks prior to your departure. You can also contact MASTA (Medical Advisory Service for Travellers Abroad) at enquiries@masta.org who will issue advice on the requirements of your individual destinations. It should be remembered that in some foreign countries the general standards of hygiene and safety may differ from those we accept as the "norm" in the U.K. Therefore exercise some common sense and prudence when choosing to sample local cuisine. We would recommend you do not indulge in any activity, which may give rise to some illness and perhaps infringe on the conditions of your insurance policy, for instance extreme sports.

Do I require Travel Insurance?

Yes. All passengers must have adequate insurance against cancellation, illness, loss of luggage etc. Most travel agents no longer offer insurance, so you will need to look for this from an Insurance provider, and advise the cruise line of your insurance details. Insurance is a small cost for the potential risks, which may arise, and it should be regarded as an essential part of the holiday booking. Please ensure you double check the level and type of cover offered by annual insurance, as some do not cover you adequately.

I have a physical disability - Can I still go on the Cruise?

If you require any form of assistance or are physically disabled you must be accompanied by a passenger who will take responsibility for any assistance required during the cruise or in an emergency. You should advise the cruise line of your disabilities at the time of the booking, and, whether or not you require assistance on departure or return to the U.K. port or airport. Please remember the width restrictions of certain areas of the ship and the fact that some ports of call require tenders to go ashore, may restrict wheelchair bound passengers from going ashore. However, most ships do cater for partially disabled passengers and they will seek to ensure that these passengers will encounter the minimum of inconvenience.



How will I go Ashore at the Ports of Call?

Most ships will seek to dock alongside the berth, which will enable passengers to go ashore and return at liberty via the ships gangway. Inevitably, with the larger vessels visiting the smaller ports the ship will anchor at sea and launches will provide a free and frequent service to the shore. You will be free to go and return at your leisure whilst the ship is at anchor. Whilst the ship is in port all the ships bars, restaurants and facilities (other than the ships duty-free shop) will remain open for those passengers not proceeding to the shore. The times of arrival and departure at the ports will be advised in the daily bulletin and normally passengers may go ashore about an hour after the ship arrival in port.



What currency should I take with me on the Cruise?

On Board the ship there is a 'Cashless' society, where you put any purchases on to your on-board account, which you can either settle on a daily basis as you go, or at the end of your cruise. The currency this is based on depends on the cruise line but is usually either pounds, US Dollars or Euros. Naturally on a Cruise you will visit a number of destinations and countries who will all have their individual currencies. There is a virtue in taking travellers cheques, which can be cashed both on the ship and ashore. Furthermore, if they were lost you would normally be able to replace them by reporting the loss to the originating Bank. You may obtain the currency of your local destination from the Purser's Office on board the ship but it is suggested not to leave your need to change currency to the last minute on the ship as they may have limited facilities. In most destinations the Euro or United States dollar (dependent on where you are travelling) is acceptable as a currency. You should however be aware that the exchange rate could vary on a daily basis and dependent on the exchange location you use.



What happens if I have a problem?

There is always a 24 hour reception on the ship, with people employed as customer service representative to make sure all your holiday goes smoothly. If you do have any problems, just go to the reception desk, and they will be able to help from a faulty TV to needing more pillows.

