

Elite Global Travel Services

Specializing in exotic destinations, cultural immersion experiences and European, Asian & African small boat and river cruises

Helpful Information for First Time Cruisers*

What is included in the price of my cruise?

Cruising is the best vacation value! There are cruise vacations to suit every budget and taste. In general, the cruise price includes your choice of accommodations, as well as onboard activities and entertainment, most meals, plus transportation from port to port. You'll know what your vacation will cost before you go. Your only extra expenses will be drinks, specialty restaurants, optional shore excursions, spa services, and any other optional incidentals you may choose to purchase while onboard or ashore.

Specific Inclusions at **No Additional Cost to You****

- Well-appointed stateroom of your choice with in-room safe, in-room climate-controlled temperature and other amenities
- Children's programs – supervised age-specific activities for children from 2 years old to 17 years old
- Use of pools, whirlpool and waterslides
- Use of fitness center
- 24-hour snacks, including ice cream and frozen yogurt
- Multiple dining options for breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks, and late-night dining
- Daily entertainment, which can include Broadway-like shows, movies, live entertainment and comedy shows
- Lemonade, ice tea, non-bottled water, and certain teas
- The opportunity to explore the towns and cities of the cruise ports

Can I afford a cruise?

In fact, you could save money by taking a cruise. Just to prove it, use the handy chart below to compare what is included in the cost of a cruise versus what costs would be a la carte (\$) in a typical land-based vacation. Chances are, when you add it all up, you'll probably get a lot more vacation taking a cruise for a lot less money. Cruise rates can be as low as \$40 per day.

Cruise vs Land Vacations	Cruise Vacation	Land Vacation
Room (Accommodations)	Included	\$\$\$
Transportation (port to port; city to city)	Included	\$\$\$
Ground Transfers	Included	\$\$\$
Breakfast	Included	\$\$\$
Lunch	Included	\$\$\$
Dinner	Included	\$\$\$
Sports Activities	Included	\$\$\$
Entertainment	Included	\$\$\$
Night Club/Shows	Included	\$\$\$

(\$ = a la carte)

Standard meals are included in the price of your cruise. Some lines include pre-paid drink cards, wine packages and other cost saving incidental bundles.

Are there different types of cruises?

Yes! There are cruises designed to suit virtually every interest and personal preference. The choices include: boutique, luxury cruises with globetrotting itineraries; large, contemporary ships with a fantastic array of recreational and entertainment facilities; classic vessels evoking the time-honored traditions of cruising; special-interest or exploration cruises focusing on unique destinations with an emphasis on cultural enrichment; and river voyages into the heart of a destination. Cruise lines offer a wide variety of long, medium and short cruise options.

There are cruise lines that feature soft adventure expeditions to unique frontiers, such as Antarctica, the Amazon Rain Forest or the African Serengeti. You can discover historical legacies closer to home with enlightening itineraries to New England, French Canada, Colonial America, and America's rivers. For experienced travelers, destination-focused cruises specialize in culturally-rich ports of call with itineraries dedicated to illuminating such historic, world-class treasures as the antiquities of classical Greece and Turkey, the Polynesian paradise of Hawaii, the fabled splendor of Norwegian fjords or the castles and museums along Europe's rivers.

For many, the perfect vacation is all about the non-stop fun and sun of a tropical resort-style cruise to the Caribbean, where you can sample a variety of island cultures and cuisines in total relaxation. Plus, many cruise lines create special "themes" onboard, with entertainment ranging from jazz festivals and classical music concerts to golf clinics and murder mysteries at sea. Whether you want to "get your feet wet," or just relax, you'll find a cruise to suit your lifestyle.

One thing is for sure...you'll never run out of things to see or do on a cruise!

What are my choices when picking a cruise ship?

Ships range from U.S. and European riverboats, intimate and yacht-like ships to vessels stretching longer than three football fields. You can sail with fewer than 100 fellow guests or with more than 5,000. Enjoy atmospheres ranging from casual to formal, contemporary to classic. Enjoy the endless activities offered on a contemporary resort-style cruise, or immerse yourself in the culture of a destination on a special interest cruise.

Where can I go on a cruise?

Wherever in the world there is navigable water – and since the earth is 70% water, that's pretty much everywhere! Cruises visit over 500 ports worldwide and practically every destination accessible by water. You can embark on your cruise vacation from one of the over 30 North American ports or from any of the other ports around the world.

What can I do in port?

You can explore on your own or take a guided tour (referred to as shore excursions). Search ancient ruins or shop for bargains. Ride a raft over river rapids or a horse across miles of hills and beaches. Explore a waterfall or pyramid. Follow in the footsteps of history or in the wake of a waterskiing boat. If there's still time, improve your golf or tennis game on one of the many famous courses and courts your cruise may visit. Learn how to windsurf. Sun and swim at some of the world's best beaches. Catch a record marlin. Sail, snorkel or scuba dive. Take a cable car to the top of a mountain. Explore dark catacombs. The list is endless. Cruising is the perfect way to sample a wide variety of new destinations and try all the things you've ever (or never) dreamed of doing. [See](#) all of the destinations you can visit on a cruise!

What should I pack?

Pack like you would for any resort vacation. Cruise vacations are casual by day, whether you're on the ship or ashore. In the evening, the dress code varies by ship and by occasion. Some ships may have a Captain's Gala, for example, and you'll probably want to wear something more formal, such as a dark suit, or cocktail dress, perhaps even a dinner jacket or gown. Reflecting today's lifestyle trends, many cruise lines now feature a more relaxed and casual approach to dress throughout the cruise – while on others, formal dinners or parties are part of the fun. But don't buy a tuxedo just for the trip. Even on the most formal of ships, a dark suit and tie are fine for the dressiest occasions.

What if I have special dietary requirements?

Most ships can accommodate salt-free, low-carbohydrate, low cholesterol, diabetic, and select other diet preferences. This request should be made in advance, so be sure to advise Elite Global Travel Services when you book your cruise.

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What about dining companions - can I sit with my spouse and friends only, or will I have other tablemates?

Increasingly, the shipboard dining experience has become more casual and often there is open seating, allowing you to dine when, where, and with whom you wish. However, experienced cruisers say they prefer sitting at a table with several other diners; some lifelong friendships have been made this way. Some lines have assigned seating in the main dining rooms, others offer open seating with or without reservations. It is best to choose a line that offers the type of experience that you prefer. But the cruise lines are geared to accommodate each guest's wishes, and it is possible to request a table for two or four. In the unlikely event that you do wish to change tablemates, speak with the maître d', who will make every effort to seat you with more compatible dining companions...discretely and politely.

What about tipping?

Tipping is a matter of individual preference. In general terms, the average (inclusive of stateroom steward/ stewardess, waiter, assistant waiter, head waiter) is approximately \$10-\$15 per person, per day. Any shipboard personnel can be tipped for special services received or at your discretion. For your convenience, most lines add the standard gratuity to bar service tabs. In most cases, general gratuities may be charged to your stateroom. Some lines include gratuities in the price of your cruise, while others maintain a "no tipping" policy.

How are special occasions celebrated on a cruise?

Most cruise lines will treat you to a complimentary special dessert and a chorus of "Happy Whatever" to honor the occasion. Cruise staff can make your birthday or anniversary more festive with champagne, flowers or whatever the occasion demands. You can even arrange for a special private party. All you have to do is advise Elite Global Travel Services in advance, so that we can advise the cruise line prior to your cruise.

How can I stay connected while cruising?

If you must, you can! Most staterooms are equipped with televisions and telephones. You can even use your own cell phone on some ships, where cellular service is available. Many cruise ships are now Wi-Fi enabled, so you can check your e-mail on your laptop in your stateroom or go to the onboard Internet facility – specially designed to meet your online needs onboard. In addition, most ships have a daily newsletter with news, headlines, selected stock quotes and sports scores. Additional charges apply for phone, internet and cellular service; have Elite Global Travel Services check with the cruise line for current rate and information.

What are the smoking policies?

Virtually all dining rooms and many other public areas are smoke-free. Some public rooms have designated areas for smoking. Policies vary by line.

Is motion discomfort a problem?

Rarely. Popular cruise itineraries sail some of the calmest waters in the world. In addition, stabilizers on modern ships, availability of advance weather information, and development of effective preventive medications have, for the most part, reduced or eliminated the incidence of motion discomfort.

Cruising is extremely safe and one of the safest forms of travel among all comparable forms of passenger transportation. All cruise ships must be designed and operated in compliance with strict requirements of international law. Ships must follow an extraordinary number of rules and regulations to protect passengers and crew while onboard.

Ship Captains and all crew undertake extensive and ongoing training, certification and drills for emergency situations, including ship evacuations.

What are the minimum safety requirements for cruise ships?

The average cruise ship carrying approximately 2,700 passengers and 800 crew, typically has 5 firefighting teams, 4,000 smoke detectors, 500 fire extinguishers, 16 miles of sprinkler piping, 5,000 sprinkler heads and 6 miles of fire hose. All cruise ships are required to have:

- Lifeboats, life rafts and life preservers for every person on board as well as additional capacity
- Lifeboats capable of being loaded, launched and maneuvered away from a ship within 30 minutes of a Captain's order
- Safety drills in multiple languages held prior to departure from port
- Advanced navigational instruments and systems

What happens if I become sick or injured on a cruise ship?

Doctors on board international ships are trained and licensed with at least three years of clinical experience, including minor surgery and emergency care. Modern cruise ships also have sophisticated medical facilities ranging from intensive care units to x-ray suites and laboratories for blood testing.

What should I know about norovirus?

Historic incidence rates of gastrointestinal illness aboard cruise ships are low and the vast majority of outbreaks occur in land-based settings such as schools, hospitals, and nursing homes. The cruise industry has taken steps to prevent sick passengers from bringing norovirus on board a ship and, in the rare instances of an outbreak, immediately employ numerous practices to mitigate its spread and treat ill passengers and crew.

Your Safety

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Before you go...

- Book all cruise vacations through a trusted travel professional (like Elite Global Travel Services) who can assist you through the entire travel planning process or help if there is a problem with your trip.
- Keep a photocopied packet of your passport, credit card information, and insurance information and driver's license at home or with friends/family where it can be accessed if needed.
- Make an emergency plan with those you are sailing with.
- It is a good idea to purchase travel insurance. Consult with Elite Global Travel Services for all of the details.

While onboard...

- Attend all mandatory safety drills and listen carefully to instructions.
- Familiarize yourself with your surroundings - exits, evacuation stations, stairways, location of life vests, etc.
- Inform the ship's staff of any special requirements or allergies, etc. you may have.
- Be sure to ask any questions you may have about safety procedures.
- Avoid participation in risky behaviors like excessive consumption of alcohol and admitting strangers to your cabin. Report any concerns to ship security.
- In short, do what you would do at home to ensure your health and safety.

*Sourced from Cruise Lines International Association

**On most cruise lines