



## **No More Excuses: Cruise Vacations More Popular than Ever, for Good Reason**

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MIAMI, Jan. 16, 2018 -- When you take a vacation, you want to have confidence in your decision, knowing you are getting value for your hard-earned dollars and will have a great time.

When it comes to taking a cruise vacation, some of the top reasons include affordability, freedom and flexibility, and the opportunity to meet interesting people and have experiences in fascinating destinations such as in the Caribbean, Mediterranean, Western and Northern Europe, Alaska and Australia and New Zealand.

A record 27.2 million people will set sail in 2018, according to the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA). And cruising is growing faster than land-based vacations by 20 percent. Yet, while cruising is more popular than ever, those who have never cruised before may have misconceptions about what a cruise is really like.

Below is a look at common excuses for not cruising – and why those excuses are not true for the millions of people who take cruise vacations each year.

### **"I'll be bored"**

This excuse just doesn't hold water (excuse the pun). You'd have to work hard to be bored on a cruise ship.

Start your day in the state-of-the-art fitness center, perhaps with an energetic cycling class, do a little duty-free shopping, hear a brainy lecture on history or finance and take a class to learn to improve your cooking skills, all before you even hit the pool or zip down a waterslide.

In the afternoon, reserve time for a massage when not participating in fun games or trivia contests, doing a wine tasting or seeing a movie on a big screen – even at an IMAX Theatre on the 3,954-passenger Carnival Vista and soon-to-debut Carnival Horizon.

On cruise ships, there are places to go, events to participate in, people to see even before you visit fascinating destinations. Best of all, you don't have to stick to a regimen – it's all up to what you feel like doing.

### **"There's no nightlife"**

Nighttime entertainment brings a new round of fun options such as live performances by comics, lavish show productions, piano bars, karaoke, ballroom dancing, lively casinos and clubs that are hopping well into the night.

On select Holland America Line ships, including the upcoming 2,650-passenger ms Nieuw Statendam (debuting in December 2018), talented musicians show off their skills at venues including B.B. King Blues Club and Lincoln Center Stage.

For live action of a different sort, attend a theme party – such as Gatsby Night, inspired by the roaring 20s, on P&O Cruises Australia ships.

### **"I can't afford to cruise"**

Cruising offers extraordinary value when compared to land-based vacations – whether you book a standard cabin or splurge on a suite, sample a three- or four-day quick-break cruise, enjoy a week at sea or head off on a 12-day or multi-week adventure. In fact, when compared to a land-based vacation, a cruise vacation is often up to 40 or even 50 percent less expensive.

Cruise fares include accommodations, meals, activities and entertainment. Families or groups of friends sharing a cabin save with reduced third- and fourth-passenger fares, while special group rates mean additional savings for extended families.

With convenient homeports, many people can drive right to the ship, eliminating the need to fly, which is another key cost savings. One brand, Carnival Cruise Line, estimates that about half of America can drive to one of its homeports in several hours, which is one reason why the brand sailed over five million passengers in 2016, topping the industry.

And once on board your ship – which is actually more of a floating city – it will comfortably take you to different ports and countries without you having to worry about where to go next and how to get there. That hassle-free vacation experience is another reason for cruising's growing popularity.

### **"I'll have to be part of a crowd/party"**

Cruise ships are social places, and meeting new people is part of the fun, but even the largest cruise ships have intimate spaces, whether you are seeking a cozy bar for a drink or conversation, or a quiet corner to contemplate the sea.

Relax with your e-reader at the adults-only pool or sun deck, such as The Retreat on select ships of British line P&O Cruises, which comes with a special pampering service.

For couples seeking a romantic date night, specialty restaurants provide tables for two. If you prefer a more intimate experience, book passage on the ultra-luxury small ships of Seabourn, such as the upcoming 600-passenger Seabourn Ovation, sister ship to the award-winning Seabourn Encore.

### **"I won't get a good meal"**

Great food lies at the heart of a cruise vacation and most options are included in your cruise fare.

At the buffets, there's an eye-popping assortment of options from Asian dishes to pizza. Multi-course meals in main dining rooms offer an increasing array of choices and flavors, and may include input from famous chefs – an entire Culinary Council of award-winning chefs advises Holland America Line, recently named the Best Dining line by the editors of the leading website, Cruise Critic. On Italy-based Costa Cruises, Italian culinary traditions are alive, including with mozzarella made fresh onboard.

Specialty restaurants provide intimate surroundings and an elevated level of cuisine. At some you can sample dishes created by famous restaurateurs – leading American chef Thomas Keller on Seabourn and Australian-born chef Curtis Stone on Princess Cruises, for instance. Gala Night menus on P&O Cruises ships feature the creations of legendary British chef Marco Pierre White.

Even the purely fun foods will titillate foodie tastes – such as Guy Fieri's mouth-watering burgers and extraordinary "Championship Pork Butt" on select Carnival Cruise Line ships.

### **"Shore excursions are overpriced"**

Shore excursions are designed to help you make the most of your time in port, whether your goal is to relax with an icy rum drink on the beach, visit a UNESCO World Heritage site, get active on a mountain biking adventure or take part in a once-in-a-lifetime experience such as a helicopter landing on top of a glacier in Alaska.

The tours include transportation and local guides and get you back to the ship in time for departure. They also save you time you would need to spend on DIY planning.

Carnival Cruise Line, Princess Cruises and Holland America Line are so confident in the value of their shore excursions they offer a Best Price Guarantee – find the same excursion you purchase publically advertised at a lower price and you will receive 110 percent of the difference in price as an onboard credit (restrictions apply).

### **"I'll get fat"**

It's true that an impressive array of food is available on ships 24/7, but cruise lines are aware that many of their passengers are health-conscious. Menus include light, vegetarian and vegan dishes and cater to special dietary needs.

Carnival Cruise Line just brought back a Baked Alaska parade, but you can walk off your sweet treat on the jogging track or in the fitness center – where you can even hire a personal trainer and talk to a wellness consultant to get you started on a new health routine.

For a spa immersion experience, lines including Costa Cruises have special spa staterooms that come with unlimited access to spa facilities. Holland America Line ships provide engaging personal growth and wellness activities in partnership with O, The Oprah Magazine.

### **"Cruises are only for seniors/the elite"**

According to independent surveys, cruising has been steadily increasing in popularity across all ages and demographics, including adults, seniors, kids, millennials and Generation Xers.

Across the spectrum, nearly everyone who takes a cruise vacation, no matter his or her age or lifestyle, wants to do it again. A recent J.D. Power survey found Gen Y/Millennials and Gen Xers particularly enthusiastic about repeating the cruise experience.

### **"There's nothing for kids to do"**

Cruises offer endless age-appropriate activities for young guests. Experienced youth staff keep the youngsters occupied in well-equipped play spaces and clubs – giving parents time to relax and do grownup things. Teens get their own cool clubs. Princess Cruises recently enhanced its youth and teen centers and launched Camp Discovery, with hands-on science-focused activities created in partnership with Discovery Communications TV shows.

Restaurants cater to kids with special menus. Family activities abound, which is why Carnival Cruise Line alone now caters to a record-breaking 800,000 kids a year. Atop the Carnival Horizon, which makes its debut this spring, will be the line's first Dr. Seuss-themed WaterWorks waterpark, a reflection of the line's family focus.

Special accommodations are designed for families, including German line AIDA Cruises' first-ever family staterooms on the AIDAnova, which debuts in December.

### **"Cruises are outdated"**

In many ways cruising represents the vacation wave of the future. Carnival Corporation's Ocean Medallion Vacations, introduced on the Regal Princess, use state-of-the-art technology to make recommendations, personalize your experience and enable crew members to exceed guest expectations.

Carnival Corporation also has invested millions in the fastest Wi-Fi connections at sea – making it easy to stay in touch and brag about your cruise vacation experiences on social media. Technology also makes check-in a breeze.

Sail with AIDA Cruises or Costa Cruises and you might meet Pepper, a robot who can read human emotions and help guide you around the ship.

### **"I can't cruise alone"**

Solo travelers never need to worry about dining alone – you can ask to be seated with other guests – or fitting in with a very convivial shipboard atmosphere. Meet-and-greets and other activities assure opportunity to meet others traveling alone.

An increasing number of ships also have solo accommodations created and priced for one. The 15 new solo staterooms on Cunard's Queen Mary 2 all

come with ocean views and are well located near the buzzing social hub of the ship. Six P&O Cruises ships have accommodations for one person, including an impressive 27 solo cabins on the Britannia. The AIDAnova introduces AIDA Cruises' first solo staterooms.

### **"Cruises aren't about cultural experiences"**

There are many ways to gain an understanding of local culture on a cruise vacation, including shipboard – with local experts and performers onboard to immerse guests in the destination.

On shore, the cultural immersion continues, including excursions. In Cuba, for example, people-to-people experiences make cruising the best way to learn about this fascinating country.

With Carnival Corporation's Fathom brand, guests get to the heart of Caribbean communities to gain authentic insights. In destinations around the world, Seabourn guests may have opportunity to visit places not open to the public, thanks to the line's unique partnership with UNESCO.

In some ports, your ship may stay late into the evening or even overnight, affording you opportunity to explore the local nightlife.

With these common myths dispelled, there is really no reason not to join the millions of people who enjoy cruise vacations every year.

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