



*Chapter
One*

*The Cruise:
A Complete Vacation*

An Introduction to Cruising (With Four Case Studies)

Lively and exciting, yet serene and relaxing; romantic and glamorous, yet interesting and broadening; elegant and luxurious, yet casual and economical; gregarious and convivial, yet intimate and private. All of these descriptions, although antithetical at first glance, in fact apply to the cruise vacation. A cruise is a truly unique travel experience the ultimate escape from reality that does not lend itself to a simple definition.

Taking a cruise vacation is partaking in a varied program of exciting activities with interesting and congenial fellow passengers from diverse walks of life. It may be indulging in the finest gourmet cuisine prepared by Continental chefs and impeccably served by an experienced crew who cater to your every whim. It is unwinding and relaxing in comfortable, posh surroundings with an impressive variety of facilities and modern conveniences. It is traveling to exotic ports of call, viewing breathtaking scenery, and exploring historic points of interest. It is a cool dip in the pool, breakfast in bed, a relaxing sauna and massage, moonlit walks on deck, costume balls, movies, bridge tournaments, games, entertainment, cocktail parties, shopping, sunning, dancing, romance, companionship, enlightenment and, best of all, this can be yours for less than you would spend on any comparable vacation.

Although the price of any cruise will vary on the basis of your accommodations, economy-conscious travelers who book minimum cabins can obtain the best possible buy for their vacation dollar. If you reside in the Southeast, for example, you

can take a seven-day cruise from Miami stopping at four or five Caribbean ports for as little as \$700 to \$950. If you live in the Midwest, you can purchase an “air-sea package” (offered by numerous cruise lines), fly to Puerto Rico, and cruise to South America plus five additional Caribbean islands in a seven-day period for as little as \$1,200, including your room, all meals and entertainment, round-trip air fare, and transfers to and from the airport and ship. Of course the majority of accommodations aboard ships will cost two to three times more depending on the market category of the vessel. To duplicate these trips flying from place to place by plane and frequenting restaurants and hotels with food and accommodations comparable to those found on the ship would easily cost a great deal more.

On a land vacation, you will have a greater opportunity for in-depth sight-seeing and pursuing more time-consuming activities, such as golf and fishing. However, to visit as many varied places and to engage in activities similar to those offered on a cruise would require you to be constantly on the move. One of the most unique characteristics of the cruise vacation is that everything is conveniently located aboard ship. You need not run around seeking out restaurants, nightclubs, hairdressers, laundries, or companionship. It is all right there. Additionally, you are afforded the opportunity to visit many glamorous and diverse foreign countries without the necessity of lugging around heavy baggage, waiting in line at several airports, and constantly changing hotels. After you have spent a busy day in port sightseeing, swimming, and shopping, you can return to your friendly, familiar floating hotel to dine, drink, dance, and be entertained before you finally retire to awake the following morning already delivered to your next exciting port of call.

During the past ten years, the major cruise lines have introduced numerous state-of-the-art vessels with features not found on ships built in the 1970s and 1980s. These features include an abundance of veranda cabins; specialty, reservation-only fine-dining restaurants; elaborate spas with large, fully equipped gyms; lounges and bars dedicated to wines and champagne, cigar smokers, martini drinkers, sport enthusiasts, etc.; computer cafés; and more extravagant décors. Many of the older vessels pale by comparison. Therefore, if you haven’t cruised in several years, you may be pleasantly surprised with the new generation of ships.

Four Case Studies

John and Martha

John, a bookkeeper from Omaha, Nebraska, and his wife, Martha, who have just seen the last of their three children graduate from college, are looking forward to letting loose and having the time of their lives on a very special cruise. They get up early the first morning at sea to watch the sunrise while enjoying some coffee, juice, and rolls on deck. After a few deep knee bends and stretches at the exercise class, they are ready for a hearty breakfast in the dining room with fresh pineapple and melon, smoked salmon, a cheese omelet, sausages, fried potatoes, toast, and pastries.

12 GUIDE TO THE CRUISE VACATION

Following breakfast, they participate in a Ping-Pong tournament and deck games at the pool, followed by a free salsa lesson. After a cool dip in the pool, they are ready for an elegant lunch in the dining room with an opportunity to try some exotic foreign dishes. Sunning and swimming fill up the early hours of the afternoon, still leaving time for the duplicate bridge tournament. A little workout on the exercycle at the gym, followed by a sauna and massage, helps John work off a few of those piña coladas he was sipping all afternoon. He then showers and shaves while Martha is having her hair set at the beauty shop.

John and Martha don their fancy clothes in time to attend the captain's cocktail party and practice the new dance steps they learned earlier. Then comes the "welcome aboard" dinner in the dining room, complete from caviar to crêpes suzette. Martha wants to play a few games of bingo before the evening variety show, and John tries his luck at blackjack and roulette in the casino.

After the evening's entertainment in the main lounge, a few cold cuts, cheeses, and desserts at the midnight buffet just hit the spot; and then it is time to go up to the discotheque to swing with the night owls into the wee hours. Following a leisurely stroll around the deck, our active couple is ready for bed. It was never like this in Omaha!

Michael and Vivian

Michael, an overworked New York attorney, and his wife, Vivian, a harassed primary-school teacher, never had a chance to take a trip when they got married last June. This cruise represents a long-overdue honeymoon. They start their first day at sea by enjoying a leisurely breakfast in bed, followed by some quiet hours soaking up the sun on deck. One shuffleboard game, a short swim in the pool, and a stroll up to the bridge are just enough excitement to help them work up an appetite for a delicious buffet lunch served on deck by the pool.

A little more sun, a few chapters of a good book, a first-run movie in the theater, some tea and cakes on the promenade deck, and our honeymooners are ready for rest and relaxation in their cabin before dressing for the evening. They elect to drink the bottle of champagne their travel agent sent them while enjoying some hot hors d'oeuvres in the lounge; then it's off to the dining room for an eight-course gourmet meal. After the evening entertainment, Michael and Vivian have the first opportunity since their wedding to dance to a romantic orchestra. A chance to gaze at the stars on deck caps off the night. What new marriage couldn't use a day like this?

Joan and Ron

Joan, who works in a Miami insurance office, wants to make the most out of her one remaining week of vacation time. She wants to relax and visit some new places, and she wouldn't object to meeting a tall, dark, handsome stranger if he came along. On the first day at sea, she misses breakfast in the dining room but enjoys some juice, croissants, and coffee served on the deck for the late sleepers. Off comes

the cover-up, revealing her new bikini. She takes a stroll around the pool to let all those who are interested know she is aboard.

The eleven o'clock dance class is a must, since it affords her a controlled atmosphere for meeting other passengers. At the class she meets two women from California, and they decide to sit at the same table for lunch. The understanding maître d' arranges a large table for singles, where Joan and her two new friends are joined by another woman traveling alone and four eligible bachelors. The group decides to spend the afternoon at the pool swimming and playing backgammon. Several of the other singles come over to watch, and by the afternoon "singles-only" cocktail party, Joan has already met most of the other single passengers aboard ship.

Ron, one of the eligible bachelors at Joan's table, is an advertising executive from Boston who is recently divorced and in search of some feminine companionship. He initially decides that he and Joan are basically looking for different things; however, her popularity with other single female passengers indicates that she is a good mixer and a potential source of introductions. By participating in the deck games and making frequent trips to the numerous bars, Ron manages to meet a few more women, and those he missed show up at the "singles-only" cocktail party. By dinnertime, he has three or four interesting prospects for the evening. He decides to have a drink with Joan and her friends before dinner; however, he passes up the planned evening entertainment and goes straight to the discotheque where he can dance with all of the other young women he has met.

After dinner, Joan prefers to see the variety show, browse through the shops, and try the "one-arm bandits" before joining the other singles at the discotheque at midnight. By the time she arrives, Ron has already run through a half-dozen possibilities and decided that he really can't relate to any of them. Ron asks Joan to dance, and both feel a strange new chemistry that wasn't evident earlier that evening. Joan and Ron won't give permission to print the rest of the story; therefore, you can select your own ending.

Scotty and Jamie

Scotty, age eight, and his big sister Jamie, age 14, could hardly sleep the night before their mom and dad took them on their first seven-day Caribbean cruise. By sharing a four-berth cabin with their parents, it only cost an extra \$375 apiece to bring them along.

The first afternoon aboard ship was exciting. The band was playing, passengers were partying and throwing colorful streamers overboard, and crew members were passing out drinks and sandwiches. Upon arriving at their cabin, Scotty was delighted to find that he had been assigned an upper berth, but Jamie pouted when her dad told her that the other top bunk was hers.

After the ship set sail, Scotty migrated to the electronic game room, where he met numerous other youngsters around his age. After a while, he and a new friend went up on deck to play Ping-Pong and shuffleboard by the pool. At five o'clock, there was a get-together at the disco for teens, which Jamie anxiously attended. A

14 GUIDE TO THE CRUISE VACATION

member of the ship's social staff outlined the special events and programs that would be offered throughout the cruise for the teenage set. At the same time, there was a similar meeting for the pre-teens at the ice-cream emporium. Here Scotty learned about the daily movies, bingo, deck sports, pool games, scavenger hunts, masquerade balls, talent shows, and "Coke-tail" parties that would dominate his days aboard ship.

After dinner, Scotty and his new friend went to the movies, followed by pizza and a soda in the special pizzeria restaurant. Jamie attended the first-night-aboard party in the show lounge, where she was introduced to the cruise staff and took part in the audience participation games. After the party, she went to the disco, which was already packed to the rafters with enthusiastic young passengers getting to know each other.

Days ashore were especially enjoyable. The varied ports of call offered pristine white-sand beaches, water sports, horseback riding, tennis, historic sights, cute souvenir shops, and scenic drives. Mealtimes were also great fun. Each evening, the dining room was decorated in a different ethnic theme and the attentive waiters were dressed to blend in. Scotty was able to order hamburgers and hot dogs for lunch and a big, fat steak and fries for dinner. Jamie, an aspiring gourmet, elected to sample the more esoteric offerings.

On the last evening aboard, the lights were turned down and all the waiters paraded around the dining room carrying baked Alaskas with sparklers while the passengers sang "Auld Lang Syne." The seven days had passed too quickly and our two young sailors were very sad the morning the ship sailed back into its homeport. They had visited exciting and different islands, made many new friends, and participated in numerous good times. As for Mom and Dad . . . they showed up at dinner, bedtime, and when the youngsters needed quarters for the game machines. When Scotty and Jamie were asked how they liked the cruise, their joint answer was, "Awesome!"

The remaining chapters of this book are designed to familiarize you with the different aspects of the cruise vacation. Chapter 2, entitled "Getting Ready for the Cruise," starts by detailing how to go about planning and booking a cruise and proceeds to set forth objective standards for selecting a ship. The chapter goes on to delineate the factors that will determine the cost of your cabin and list the items you will want to be certain to bring along. Chapter 3 describes your day at sea, depicting the customary facilities found aboard ship as well as the typical program of round-the-clock activities. The dining experience is then portrayed with descriptions of the numerous meals and varieties of cuisine as well as some suggestions relating to multiple sittings and tipping. Chapter 4 analyzes the pros and cons of cruising for singles. The desirability and cost of bringing along your children are explored in chapter 5, together with a description of the events and facilities aboard ships that are designed specifically for their interests. In chapter 6, you will find a summary of the various cruise areas and highlights of the most popular cruise stops, with suggestions on what you can see and do during your day in



port. Chapters 7, 8, and 9, respectively, describe where to go in each port to swim, play tennis, and jog.

Chapter 10 evaluates the major airlines, the equipment, and differences in the various classes of travel and goes on to make suggestions on obtaining the cheapest air fares. Chapter 11 includes a description of every major cruise line and cruise ship, including my overall ratings (in the form of Star Awards), photographs, sample menus, and daily programs. Chapter 12 describes the most expensive, top-luxury suites on vessels that offer such accommodations, and chapter 13 describes alternative dining specialty restaurants that recently have been added to many ships. Chapter 14 summarizes my Star Awards and goes on to evaluate sample ships of each line in eleven specific categories.

The growing concern of prospective cruisers as to available medical facilities on the various ships is covered in this edition. An analysis of medical care at sea is discussed in chapter two, and the facilities, equipment, and personnel available aboard each ship (as represented by the cruise lines) is included in chapter 11.



