

Cruises – Where to Go!

Gary is a professional cruise evaluator and online blogger about cruising. His recommendations are based upon his experiences and professional preferences. After all, he is from England and places a higher value on such things as formality and afternoon tea service. His preferences are well thought out and considered. I happen to agree in general with the evaluations.

1. **Antarctica** The continent is a completely different southern world. However, many larger ships just cruise on by. Due to international treaties, no more than 100 people can be on shore at one time. The Traveler's Century Club does not count a visit to an area where the traveler does not set foot on the territory. Flying over or cruising by does not count as a visit to that location. Consequently, visiting Antarctica is a cold and expensive expedition, generally requiring special clothing to keep people visible and reasonably warm. Penguins.
2. **Alaska** Different northern world here. Glaciers down to the water and more accessible for large cruise ships. Salmon, halibut, and king crab are what to eat here. The experience is more like train trips, wilderness, dog sledding, helicopters, float planes, and isolated settlements. Only readily accessible in the northern hemisphere summer. Not Polar Bears. Those are better found in the Canadian Arctic.
3. **Norway** Much of this country is above the Arctic Circle with long fjords reaching inland. Warmer than other northern areas due to the gulf stream. Rugged territory and great views. Many offshore islands and fishing villages. Snow covered mountains. Almost everyone speaks good English and the language is required for all children in school. Breakfasts feature homemade baked goods, jams, and fishes.
4. **Danube** This category covers an area from Holland across Europe to Romania on the Black Sea. All kinds of companies have cruises on the river for parts or all of the journey. The complete trip is sometimes called "Route 66" for the number of locks along the trip. I took my bicycle along and explored the cities along the waterway.
5. **Mekong** Welcome to the jungle of southeast Asia, and the site of the very unfortunate Vietnam war that the United States should not have been involved in. There are the temples of Thailand, along with the overgrown civilization of the Khmer Empire and the ancient city of Angkor Wat.
6. **Trans-Atlantic** This is the trip of history from Columbus to the New World, the Titanic, fancy ocean liners, and now airplane travel. Many of the ancestors of some people in the United States came across the ocean to settle, never to return to other side. However, two World Wars followed by tourism may have altered some of those plans.
7. **Panama Canal** A tremendous feat of engineering started in 1882, and connected the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans for shipping in 1914. The canal was expanded for larger ships in 2016. Going through the canal can be done through the old set of locks or the newer and larger set of locks. Right now, the limit on ship size is the height limit from the Bridge of the Americas which connects the road over the canal.
8. **Japan** Back in 1850, this was an isolated country with a completely different culture. There are many different experiences depending upon which area is visited and the style of visit. I really liked the cherry trees and the azaleas in bloom in the spring.
9. **Iceland** Many volcanic sights, active lava flows sometimes, hot springs, desolate terrain, waterfalls, geysers, steam vents are found in many areas. History of ocean exploration.

10. **Tahiti** There are several tropical islands with delicate flora and different features. They have provided inspiration for many artists. Snorkeling and scuba diving are good to explore the vast differences of underwater coral and fishes.
11. **Galapagos** Back in time to Charles Darwin and the Theory of Evolution. Many creatures such as tortoises and birds that are found nowhere else in the world. Also, good areas for underwater exploration as this set of varied islands are right on the Equator. Each island is subtly different.

Please note that most cruise ships do not go to any of these places. Most of the large cruise ship ports are either in the United States where the ships mostly visit the islands and ports around the Caribbean OR on the Europe shores of the Mediterranean where the ships visit the old civilizations around the sea.

Morgan Adams of Los Angeles, California, holds the distinction of paying the first toll received by the U.S. government for the use of the Panama Canal by a pleasure boat. His boat *Lasata* passed through the Zone on August 14, 1914. The crossing occurred during a 10,000-kilometer (6,000-mile) sea voyage from Jacksonville, Florida, to Los Angeles in 1914.

This article was written on August 14, 2023 to commemorate the 109th anniversary of that first paid crossing of the Panama Canal. Since this is a cruise article, I thought I should see what cruises are available on the 90- day ticker today.

LOCATION	Cruise Count	Comment
Alaska	44	Better in June
Antarctica	3	More in January, less ice
Australia	8	Warmer in January
Bahamas	36	Lots of very short cruises from Florida
Bermuda	2	Pink sand in the middle of the ocean
Canary Islands	2	Sometimes volcanic
Caribbean	50	Warm water and hurricane season
Eastern Canada	35	Fall colors
Hawaii	16	Time to leave right now
Mediterranean	71	End of the tourist season
Northern Europe	24	Always interesting
Pacific USA/Canada	18	Vancouver, here we come
Pacific USA/Mexico	21	Closest foreign port to LA, Ensenada next
Panama	10	How to change oceans
Reposition Atlantic	25	Move port locations in Europe/Africa
Trans-Atlantic	12	The classic cruise but slower
Trans-Pacific	14	Want to go around the world?
Visit Tahiti Islands	13	Bring your underwater gear