**Cruise Line Comments3**

When I am talking to people about travel, a frequent question is “What do you think about cruises?” This article is mostly about Ocean cruises. There are also cruises that are on Rivers and other inland waterways. Some people are avid cruisers; others just are interested in what the experience is like. The basics are the same: you leave from a port; there are some number of days; there are ports to visit (some docked and some tendered); dinner meals are pretty good; there is evening entertainment in a show room; you return to a port. For many 7-day cruises, that is right back where you started from. There are lots of people in a small space and lots of walking around. The ship can rock around if the seas are high. Playing table tennis has its own challenges as the floor moves. The main activity onboard ship other than eating and sleeping seems to be alcohol consumption or sunburn competition; other possibilities are the casino (air pollution), or some form of water activity (pools, hot tubs, slides).

There are three general classes of ship: 1. Large and cheap, over 1000 guests. 2. Medium, from 200 to 1000 guests, 3. Expedition and expensive, less than 200 guests. Since I am relatively cheap and just go on cruises to visit the various ports, I have some experience with the large category. I am going to restrict this category even further by evaluating cruise lines where ENGLISH is the primary language on board. For a general comparison on price, I will also show what the usual cost per person is for a 7-day cruise with the listed price (from the [***Vacations To Go***](https://www.vacationstogo.com) website) plus an additional $200 for including port fees, taxes, and service charges (tips). Shore excursions are generally extra cost unless included as a part of a special deal. Please note that the usual cruise fare is for two people in a cabin; I have selected a balcony for comparison. Much cheaper rates can be achieved in there are 3-4 people in an interior or window cabin, but that is cramped. Suites can cost much more for a given trip. Pricing is dependent on the area visited and the season. June/July/August are more expensive further north.

* ***Carnival*** – the fun line? Largest cruise company by number of ships. Appeals to the 20s and 30s generation with a party atmosphere. Numerous on-deck activities. Noted for fancy neon décor. I really like the cold soups. Mostly leaves from USA ports with shorter cruises, generally 7 days or less. Many cruises from Port of Long Beach, so it is convenient for Los Angeles area residents. Some good last-minute deals.

**1) Alaska**, 7 nights departing Seattle May 19, 2020, balcony $1149, [FastDeal # 33902](https://www.vacationstogo.com/fastdeal.cfm?deal=33902)
2) **Caribbean**, 7 nights departing Port Canaveral May 2, 2020, balcony $919, [FastDeal # 31792](https://www.vacationstogo.com/fastdeal.cfm?deal=31792)
3) **Mexico**, 7 nights departing Long Beach May 9, 2020, (new ship) balcony $862, [FastDeal # 24983](https://www.vacationstogo.com/fastdeal.cfm?deal=24983)

4) **Central America,** 7 nights departing New Orleans May 10, 2020, balcony $869, [FastDeal # 37554](https://www.vacationstogo.com/fastdeal.cfm?deal=37554)

* ***Princess*** – owned by Carnival; one step up from Carnival in elegance and dining. Preferred by the 50+ budget crowd with fewer lively onboard activities. Used to be better. World-wide cruise options.

 **1) Alaska**, 7 nights departing Seattle May 30, 2020, balcony $1122, [FastDeal # 34475](https://www.vacationstogo.com/fastdeal.cfm?deal=33042)

2) **Caribbean**, 7 nights departing Fort Lauderdale May 30, 2020, balcony $1109, [FastDeal # 30779](https://www.vacationstogo.com/fastdeal.cfm?deal=43041)
3) **Mexico**, 7 nights departing Los Angeles May 2, 2020, balcony $646 [FastDeal # 32283](https://www.vacationstogo.com/fastdeal.cfm?deal=10433)

4) **Japan,** 7 nights departing Kobe May 30, 2020, balcony $1750, [FastDeal # 15497](https://www.vacationstogo.com/fastdeal.cfm?deal=18589)

Pricing is quite variable. Cruise locations change frequently

* ***Norwegian*** – cheap, some entertainment value, they switched my reserved window cabin to a porthole cabin without any compensation. I will not take them again. Generally overpriced balcony; the only cruise around Hawaii. Alaska $1760, Carib $1274, Med $2342, Hawaii $2349
* ***Royal Caribbean*** – “of the Seas” has some really huge ships: 5400 passengers. This line carries the most passengers. The second largest cruise company. Their newer ultra-large ships have many interesting features. Mostly 7-day cruises. Emphasizes family atmosphere.

**1) Alaska**, 7 nights departing Vancouver May 31, 2020, balcony $1208, [FastDeal # 33042](https://www.vacationstogo.com/fastdeal.cfm?deal=33042)
2) **Bahamas**, 7 nights departing Bayonne May 31, 2020, balcony $888, [FastDeal # 34238](https://www.vacationstogo.com/fastdeal.cfm?deal=34238)

3) **Caribbean**, 7 nights departing Puerto Rico May 24, 2020, balcony $965, [FastDeal # 43041](https://www.vacationstogo.com/fastdeal.cfm?deal=43041)
4) **Mediterranean**, 7 nights departing Barcelona May 31, 2020, balcony $1121, [FastDeal # 10433](https://www.vacationstogo.com/fastdeal.cfm?deal=10433)

5) **China,** 7 nights departing Shanghai May 24, 2020, balcony $813, [FastDeal # 18589](https://www.vacationstogo.com/fastdeal.cfm?deal=18589)

* ***Celebrity*** – owned by Royal Caribbean. Attempts to be an upgrade but fails on older ships. Several newer ships are likely better. These ships are in the 2000-3000 passenger class. The Flora and Xpedition (Galapagos) are 100-passenger.

**1) Alaska**, 7 nights departing Vancouver May 31, 2020, balcony $1296[, FastDeal # 13826](https://www.vacationstogo.com/fastdeal.cfm?deal=13826)

2) **Caribbean**, 7 nights departing Puerto Rico April 25, 2020, balcony $877, [FastDeal # 31140](https://www.vacationstogo.com/fastdeal.cfm?deal=31140)
3) **Norway**, 7 nights departing Southampton May 9, 2020, balcony $1547, [FastDeal # 38140](https://www.vacationstogo.com/fastdeal.cfm?deal=38140" \t "_blank)

* ***MSC*** – stands for Mediterranean Shipping Company. Water is the only free lunch/dinner beverage. Food quality is poor; entertainment quality is good. Many extra-cost restaurants. There are six languages used on the dining menu and for important announcements. Mostly European clientele. **1) Baltic**, 7 nights departing Copenhagen May 17, 2020, balcony $1265, [FastDeal # 37245](https://www.vacationstogo.com/fastdeal.cfm?deal=37245)

2) **Caribbean**, 7 nights departing Miami May 23, 2020, balcony $731, [FastDeal # 38387](https://www.vacationstogo.com/fastdeal.cfm?deal=38387)
3) **Mediterranean**, 7 nights departing Marseille May 23, 2020, balcony $974, [FastDeal # 36937](https://www.vacationstogo.com/fastdeal.cfm?deal=36937" \t "_blank)

This cruise line has a wide variety of Med/Dubai cruises with huge 4500-6300 passenger ships.

* ***Costa*** – owned by Carnival, but mainly Italian. Five languages used. The Concordia was sunk by crew incompetence. Many Italy based cruises. Disqualified.
* ***Cunard*** – also owned by Carnival with a British flair. Huge ships with a stuffed-shirt attitude. Most cruises are longer than 7 days. Still does the USA-Europe routes. Their larger ships are better on the rough Atlantic Ocean. Asia $1661, Australia $1981, Europe $2187, Atlantic $2061.
* ***Disney*** – like all things Disney: appeals to children, overpriced, charming characters. Many shorter cruises from Florida, combined with Disney World. Alaska $2731, Carib $2219
* ***Holland America*** – owned by Carnival. Used to have liberal smoking rules; ships are painted black. Many older ships. Large presence in Alaska. Also disqualified
* ***P & O Cruises*** – Australia based. Owned by Carnival. Need more information. Older ships.

The medium class of cruise ship generally has better meals, and larger accommodations.

* ***Oceania*** – uses four old R-class ships from years 2000-2002. Airfare and choice of alcohol, excursions, or onboard credit are included with Olife Choice at extra cost. There are also two newer, larger ships.

1) **Mediterranean**, 10 nights departing Barcelona April 29,2020, balcony $3599,
2) **Tahiti**, 10 nights departing Papeete April 4,2020, balcony $4899,
3) **Alaska**, 7 nights departing Seattle June 18, 2020, balcony $2899,

* ***Azamara*** – also uses three R-class ships, owned by Royal Caribbean.

Azamara Quest is an R-class cruise ship that entered service for Azamara Cruises on 24 October 2007. She was built in 2000 for Renaissance Cruises as R Seven. One of the R ships is the Pacific Princess. All of R-1 to R-8 are mostly identical and all were originally non-smoking. These ships became available when Renaissance Cruises declared bankruptcy. They are nice small ships with few verandas as built. Pricing is very inconsistent. Carib $1368, Med $3799

* ***WindStar*** – 6 old ships built from 1988-1992, 3 with sails. 200-300 passengers. Balcony not available. Some people like the older sailboat atmosphere. Carib $2200

The small and very deluxe cruise ships generally include all costs (including liquor, shore excursions, service charges, port fees, internet) in the up-front price. I am unqualified to judge such cruise lines since they appeal to people who are not me. I am not interested in being on a cruise with liquor included since that means I am traveling with people who like to drink. Such people add negative value to the cruise experience. These luxury cruise lines generally have longer point-to-point cruises. Similarly, all-inclusive vacation resorts are excluded, and they do not go anywhere.

The small class of cruise ship may be required to visit many small ports or regulation-controlled areas like Antarctica where the large ships are not allowed to dock/land. In such cases, the large ships can only cruise on by. This is noted by the word “cruising” on the itinerary. Trips that land on Antarctica can be really expensive with prices that are around $12,000 per person. Small boat trips around the Galapagos are also higher priced. I was not happy with Hurtigruten service in Norway or their ship arrangement. The AAA in Southern California refuses to book this cruise line due to complaints. I did like the river cruise pricing and service from Grand Circle Travel [www.gct.com](http://www.gct.com) (not available through a travel agency). They also have some ocean-going small ships. The local Calabasas company, AMA Cruises, offers first-class river travel experiences for a higher price. The National Geographic trips have the reputation for small groups and maximum cost.

* ***Regent*** – all suite ships, ultra-all-inclusive; deluxe shore excursions at extra cost. The Smiths like this luxury, all-inclusive line. The three older ships (Alaska $5099) are not as nice as the newer ships: Explorer and Splendor (Baltic $6499)
* ***Silversea*** – less well-known; advertises personalized service, all-inclusive, ultra-luxury. Nine ships ranging from 100-600 passengers. Ships contain mostly suites of various sizes. 2020 trp examples:

1) **Mediterranean**, 7 nights departing Athens April 10,2020, suite $3950, [FastDeal # 18786](https://www.vacationstogo.com/fastdeal.cfm?deal=18786)
2) **Baltic**, 7 nights departing Copenhagen Aug 20,2020, suite $4590, [FastDeal # 19211](https://www.vacationstogo.com/fastdeal.cfm?deal=19211)
3) **Alaska**, 7 nights departing Vancouver June 11, 2020, suite $3660, [FastDeal # 15211](https://www.vacationstogo.com/fastdeal.cfm?deal=15211)

* ***Seabourn*** – has that really classy British feeling; all suites; mostly longer trips. Asia $2499, Baltic $5348
* ***Crystal*** – best food service in the business; Dwight’s mom says so. Three ships are 16-30 years old; Alaska $3030, Asia $3049, Carib $2495. The refurbished Crystal Esprit (62 passengers) is a non-smoking vessel. Greece $6629.
* ***Viking*** – 7 new ships from 2015-2019, all have 930 passengers, no people under 18 allowed. Typically runs 14-day cruises. Carib $3200. Started from the river cruise business in Europe.

Disclaimer: some evaluations are not based on any experience or facts. None of the information should be considered accurate. Subject to change with proximity to cruise date and sale incentives.