

Top 9 Cruise Lines To Consider For Your Next Vacation

Find a cruise for any occasion or lifestyle



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Not all cruises are created equal. There are things common to all cruise ships and vacations at sea. Every cruise has passenger cabins, the Captain's dinner, activities, excursions, and usually the opportunity to add a few extra pounds at the buffet tables. The purpose of this short report is to help you find the exact cruise and cruise ship line that meets your expectations and hopefully, exceeds them.

Please note that the Cruise Lines are listed alphabetically not by recommendation or for any other purpose.

[Let's set sail!](#)



Azamara Club Cruises: High End/Quality



In 2007 Royal Caribbean International announced the formation of a spin off cruise line designed to appeal to travelers looking for exotic destinations and itineraries to fit a taste for adventure rather than simple on deck relaxation. And so, Azamara Club Cruises was born. It was a simple idea: have only 2 cruise ships and keep them filled with passengers looking for a [unique experience on the high seas](#).

Azamara is a deluxe cruise line offering concierge style amenities, items you would need to pay a much higher price for on other ships. The Azamara fleet is comprised of smaller ships typically carrying around 700 passengers per voyage. This offers the traveler a more intimate experience both with the crew and fellow adventurers. The ship is easy to find your way around on, something a more seasoned cruiser will appreciate. If you've ever stayed at a boutique hotel you will be able relate to the on board feel.

One of the great appeals of an Azamara cruise are the enrichment programs and guest speakers available to further enhance your stops at the less traveled ports of call you are going to be visiting. Imagine docking in Bergen, Norway having had a short history lesson on board about Norway during World War 2 and been shown the beautiful wooden homes and narrow streets that are its charm.



Dining is always a question when choosing a cruise line. Azamara offers a contemporary and lighter cuisine while still providing some of your traditional favorites. As a higher end passenger you are given more access to the various on board specialty restaurants. However, stateroom guests can dine in these eateries if seating is available and with a reservation. You might be surprised to learn that there are no "formal" nights aboard ship. Men are not required to wear a jacket and tie but their peers will likely be sporting them.

Items Of Note:

- Unlike most other cruise ship offerings these days Azamara Club Cruises does not offer a children's program. These cruises are definitely adult oriented.
- Ships are, for the most part, non-smoking
- An Azamara cruise is not an all-inclusive cruise
- A rewards club is available, Le Club Voyage, and any repeat cruisers from the Royal Caribbean Family are offered reciprocal membership benefits

Destinations: Northern/Western Europe, West Indies, Transoceanic, South America, Asia & The Pacific, Mediterranean/Black Sea, Special Event Voyages ie British Open/Monaco Grand Prix, Extended Voyage ie combine various cruises for "world tour"

In closing, an Azamara cruise is great for an adult traveler with a taste for luxury but not a luxury budget. You are getting a high end product at an affordable price and an opportunity to visit ports of call other cruises simply bypass.

Celebrity Cruises: Quality/Value



Celebrity cruises have been around for a while and have earned themselves a reputation for great cuisine and spacious accommodations.

The on board fare on a Celebrity ship is the highlight of any of their cruises. Not just the food but they also provide a Cellarmaster selection of wines. It has been said that Celebrity has some of the best restaurants at sea. The surroundings are elegant and the meals delicious. Don't worry however, if you are not into the splendor of the more formal dining areas. There are less formal alternatives available if you are not in the mood to dress up.

Speaking of formal, there are two formal nights on the longer cruises and, unlike some of the other cruise lines, most passengers will observe the dress code. In fact, it's almost required.

Finding yourself in a stateroom that resembles your broom closet at home can be a real disappointment on your cruise. Celebrity provides large standard staterooms with ample storage. The suites include butler service while a room booked in the ConciergeClass gets you the VIP treatment.

If you are considering bringing the younger generation on board with you Celebrity does offer a kids program. That being said, the [ships cater more to an adult crowd](#). Entertainment has never been a priority for Celebrity and most cruises are fairly quiet. If you are looking for a relaxing treat it's been said that the AquaSpa facilities are one of the finest aboard any cruise line.



Items Of Note:

- For those who don't like constant interruptions over the Public Address system you will be pleased to know that Celebrity does limit these announcements.
- Guest lecturers are happy to educate and entertain during your time aboard ship.
- Weddings and reunions are offered.
- Celebrity does provide [Theme Cruise options](#).

Destinations: Europe, Transatlantic, Australia/New Zealand, Canada/New England, Galapagos, Alaska, South America, Asia, Bermuda, Panama Canal, Caribbean, Hawaii, Pacific Coastal, Transpacific

Booking a cruise on one of Celebrity's many ships to any of their destinations will turn into an experience you will never forget. If you are looking for an upscale atmosphere at a reasonable price check out Celebrity Cruises today and have a spectacular voyage.

Cunard Line: High End/Quality/Specialty



Just about any traveler has heard mention of one of the oldest cruise lines in the business, the Cunard Line. It has been one of the most distinguished names in cruising since 1840 and was a rival in the day to the White Star Line of Titanic fame. Today, it is owned by Carnival Corporation and still maintains its English flair and lifestyle aboard all its ships from the entertainment to the authentic pubs.

Sailing aboard one of the three Cunard ships is like a throwback to the golden age of cruising. Traditional items such as afternoon tea and the ringing of the ship's bell at high noon are strictly adhered to. A [cruise with Cunard](#) is all about the glamour. Dress codes are quite formal and quietly observed with the strictness of say, a British nanny. Passengers are instructed to pack formal, informal and casual clothing as they prepare for their days at sea.

Remember the scenes from Titanic where the passengers in steerage are trying to get to the deck to save themselves? Good news, today Cunard does not have steerage



accommodations. However, traditional class distinctions are observed aboard ship. For example, certain areas are reserved for the higher end clients. You will be pointed in a different direction if you stray. Dining is also done by ship class. Understand that these ships are old school formal liners through and through.

For the younger passengers there are programs to keep them entertained during their stay. However, infants are not allowed. The good news is children 1-2 years of age travel free. English nannies are available.

As with most cruises these days, enrichment programs are available. Comparatively speaking though, they tend to be on a higher end than some offerings on other lines. Artists, designers and chefs are invited to teach workshops. Without question a relaxing way to spend your days at sea.

Items Of Note:

- The Cunard ships are huge so beware, a lot of walking is involved
- There is a casino on board

Destinations: Mediterranean, Africa, British Isles & North West Europe, Middle East, United States & Canada, Caribbean, The Baltic/Scandinavia & Iceland, Australia & Pacific Islands, Hawaii, Far East, Atlantic Isles & Canaries, Central American & Panama Canal

There is no doubt a Cunard cruise is definitely high end. You will be pampered and treated like the royalty you feel like while aboard ship. Just remember that this luxury does not come cheap. You will be asked to frequently pay extras and it will be worthwhile just to experience a cruise on one the most famous cruise lines in history.

Disney Cruise Lines: High End/Family



It's all about the mouse on a Disney Cruise Line vacation. Of all the cruise companies being reviewed here, the Disney line is without question, family and child oriented just like at any of their theme parks. In fact, Disney took the theme park formula and put it on a cruise ship. Smart move!

A Disney vacation is all about the fun. The entertainment is centered around Disney themes and characters. After all, that's why you chose Disney. And, just like at the theme parks, the food is nothing to write home about if you're an adult. There is no "gourmet" on these ships. There is a higher end French themed restaurant as well as an adult only fancier Italian option for those trying to run away from burgers and chicken fingers.

When we say kid friendly this is no truer than on one of the several Disney ships. They thought of everything including a no adults allowed teen club. In return, there are no kids allowed bars and lounges throughout in case you are looking for a little respite from your precious children. Parents can enjoy peace of mind knowing that there are pagers issued to them so they can be in contact with their kids when needed.

One thing to keep in mind when [planning your Disney cruise](#) is that you are still on a cruise and with that comes semi-formal and formal evenings aboard. Resort style casual is acceptable in most of the dining areas at other times. A Disney cruise is like being guests of a country club for several days.



Items Of Note:

- Limited smoking areas are available.
- There are no casinos on board.
- Weddings and meetings are welcome.
- Voted #1 in the Large Ship Cruise Line For Families category in Travel + Leisure magazine's "World's Best Awards".

Destinations: Alaska, Transatlantic, Europe, Bahamas, Panama Canal, Caribbean, Disney's Castaway Cay, California Coast

A cruise with Disney is for the young and the young at heart. You have to either be a kid or love kids. One thing to remember...do not expect to bond with your children on this vacation. They will be having way too much fun to want to spend any time with their parents.

Holland America Line: Value/Quality/Specialty



Holland America, like the Cunard Line, has been in existence for over one hundred years having been founded in 1873. It has an extremely distinguished history of transatlantic crossings, traditional cruises as well as world exploration. While it may not be your grandfather's cruise line it certainly is one of the most recognized today for sheer relaxation and its popular mid-size ships.

Holland America has kept up with the changes in the cruising industry while still maintaining its offerings of classic style cruises appealing to the younger crowd and families. This is a welcome option from the Disney style cruise. Entertainment is more on a par with Broadway shows than a Las Vegas act thus making it more acceptable for all age groups aboard. Programs are available for all children's age groups and teens will enjoy their separate lounge area to be sure.

In the old world style of cruising Holland America Line ships are not party ships. They offer Culinary Arts Center cooking demonstrations and a Digital Workshop powered by Windows®. Afternoon tea, a classic European tradition, is a staple.



Aboard Holland America you will enjoy a presentation of modern continental cuisine. There will be American fare but try to have an open mind as you experience the flair of chefs from across Europe. Many cruise lines do not have an open seating option. Holland America does making meal times a little more flexible for busy families.

Seven day cruises will have two formal nights. At other times country club attire is expected for dinner. This means sports jackets on the men is recommended. Shorts, t-shirts and jeans are not welcome in the public areas after 6pm.

Items Of Note:

- There is a casino on board.
- Meeting and conference room facilities are available.
- Weddings welcome.

Destinations: Alaska & Yukon, South America & Antarctica, Europe, Panama Canal, Asia & Pacific, Mexico, Hawaii & Tahiti, Canada/New England, Pacific Northwest & Pacific Coast, Caribbean, Grand Voyages, [Australia/New Zealand & South Pacific](#)

You can't go wrong on a Holland America cruise. You are welcomed with open arms and the staff treats you with a warm European heart. Take the kids and enjoy a relaxing cruise aboard one of their fifteen ships.

MSC Cruises: Quality/Up & Coming



MSC is an Italian based cruise line now the fourth largest in the world behind only Carnival, Royal Caribbean and Norwegian. It is becoming a force to be reckoned with in the European and Caribbean markets. They set sail year round in the Mediterranean area.

MSC is not trying to compete with the likes of Cunard. Their interior décor's elegance is simple and welcome in a world of glitz and clutter. Nothing is over stated. You are in for a largely Italian flavor on board any MSC cruise. If you are expecting things to be done in the "American way" this may not be the line for you. Announcements are made in several different languages to accommodate the international array of passengers aboard ship.

The food on board is a mix of Italian and Continental cuisine. Dishes are authentic featuring Mediterranean regional specialties. Every attempt has been made to keep to the European tradition while offering American passengers dishes their taste buds are familiar with. Seating is assigned for dinner. Many lines have done away with the midnight buffet but not MSC.



As with most cruise lines, there are two formal evenings on the longer cruises while during other times casual attire is expected. They request no shorts in public areas after 6pm.

As you can probably guess, the evening entertainment caters to mostly Mediterranean themes. Enrichment programs and workshops are available during the day for those interested in learning more about the region they are exploring.

MSC Cruises welcomes children of all ages with daily programs for age specific groups. There are Family Suites available and a Kids Cruise Free program is in place for the 11 and under category. MSC has not forgotten the teens, providing them with a Teen Club of their own.

Items Of Note:

- [Weddings, conventions and meeting facilities](#)
- Sign up for the MSC Club, their loyalty program

Destinations: Caribbean, Transatlantic, Mediterranean, Red Sea, Northern Europe, South Africa, South America – market leader in Mediterranean, Brazil & South Africa

MSC Cruises will give you a premium cruise to remember at a fair price. Just remember, you will have a great experience if you keep an open mind and can accept that they cater primarily to European lifestyles, different and exciting at the same time.

Norwegian Cruise Line: Quality/Value



Norwegian Cruise Line, with its stellar reputation, has become the Number 3 cruise ship operator in North America. They decided to go where no previous company had gone before and began offering winter departures from New York City and Miami some years ago. The idea caught on and Norwegian has maintained a loyalty superior to none.

What sets Norwegian apart from the other cruise lines is their innovative packages they call Freestyle Cruising®. With Freestyle Cruising® passengers have the opportunity to pick and choose their own dining, activities and entertainment. In fact, they are creating their own custom cruising experience. Add the fact that Norwegian Cruise Line is kid friendly and you have an explosive mix of goodwill and fun for everyone.

This line has styled their ships to have the highest percentage of balcony staterooms over any other cruise ship company. Balconies are a luxury when you get tired of looking at four walls and just want to sit outside in private, smell the sea air and enjoy the company of your travel partner. Not only private balconies but Norwegian has included The Studios – staterooms for the solo traveler. Don't feel left out if you're traveling with a family. They have you covered also with their large 2 Bedroom Family Suites.



Many cruise ships enjoy formal nights with mandatory formal attire. At Norwegian you choose whether you want to dress up or dress down. Don't feel like packing that tux then don't. You're still welcome aboard a Norwegian ship.

Items Of Note:

- Group travel welcome.
- Accommodations for meetings.
- AARP discount.

- Latitudes Rewards club.

Destinations: Weekend, Bahamas/Florida, Canada/New England, Transatlantic, Alaska, Bermuda, Hawaii, Panama Canal, Mexican Riviera, [Caribbean](#), Pacific Coast, Europe

Norwegian Cruise Lines has come up with a winning combination of good food and friendly service along with great rates to satisfy active adults and families looking for a great cruise experience. NCL was named top large-ship cruise line for families in the Travel + Leisure 2012 World's Best Awards. What are you waiting for? Your ship awaits you.

Oceania Cruises: High End/Quality



The name, Oceania Cruises, may not be as well known to cruising newcomers as Norwegian or Royal Caribbean but old salty dogs know this cruise line is perfect for the traveler looking for interesting ports of call and a ship with upscale touches all at a price much lower than you might think.

The Oceania fleet is comprised of what is coming to be known as boutique style ships: mid-size ships with fewer passengers. The onboard feel is a relaxed, sophisticated atmosphere catering to adults. There are no programs for children on an Oceania cruise. Social interaction between travelers interested in common places accompanied by an extensive library are what make these cruises special. [Passengers can find cozy, intimate places to get together](#) over coffee or drinks to discuss the day's events. In fact, it's encouraged.

What do you do during a day at sea? Oceania serves up culinary demonstrations by guest chefs and always has a group of guest speakers ready to give lectures on their favorite topics. There are no big after dinner shows and only small casinos for the odd chance at a jackpot on the slot machine.



An Oceania cruise brings with it some of the best food prepared at sea. They specialize in French-Continental cuisine that would satisfy any palate. If you don't want to don that sports jacket tonight there are other casual dining options available.

There is no need to bring any formal wear on board with you. A jacket and tie is never required. It's a totally casual atmosphere more like a local country club than anything else. Jeans, sneakers and t-shirts are

however, discouraged in the evenings in public areas.

Items Of Note:

- Largely non-smoking ships.
- Oceania Club for loyalty customers.

Destinations: Alaska, Baltic/Scandinavia, South Pacific, Australia/New Zealand, western Mediterranean, Eastern Mediterranean, Asia, South America, Canada/New England, Caribbean, Transoceanic, Grand Voyages

Oceania Cruises is a cruise line that charges far less than luxury rates which still providing its clientele with superb service. For the traveler looking for something off the beaten path and without all the loud party types on board then Oceania is the cruise option for you.

Royal Caribbean Cruise Line: Quality/Value



Royal Caribbean was the first cruise line to put the mega-cruise ships into service. These ships are popular with passengers of all ages because of their unique daring and whimsical on board activities such as surfing pools and ice skating rinks. And, you still get the cruising ambience you'd expect while sailing the high seas. A great combination if that's what you are looking for.

As with most of the cruise lines above, Royal Caribbean has Port talks rather than enrichment programs. The difference being that a Port talk lets the passengers know about shopping available at the next stop and pushes the sale of [shore excursions](#).



Each of the RCCL ships offers formal dining rooms but also some laid back alternatives. There are two formal nights on the longer cruises and dress code is stricter than with some of the other cruise lines. They request no shorts in public places after 6pm.

Children are welcome on board all Royal Caribbean cruises. Teens have access to an adult-free gathering spot complete with disco to hang out with their new friends. In addition,

RCCL has exclusive rights to the Dreamworks® Experience, activities geared towards the kids complete with appearances by some of their favorite characters like Shrek and Kung Fu Panda. Ice and aqua shows along with 3D movies make this fun perfect for family cruising.

Items Of Note:

- Due to the size of the ships there tend to be long lines and lots of announcements throughout the day
- Weddings and meetings are welcome
- The Crown & Anchor society is RCCL's brand of rewards club

Destinations: Europe, Transatlantic, Australia/New Zealand, Bahamas, Canada/New England, Dubai/Emirates, Alaska, South America, Asia, Bermuda, Panama Canal, Caribbean, Hawaii

Royal Caribbean has one of the largest fleets in service at 23 ships and counting currently in service. There is a destination and a cruise for anyone looking for an activity filled vacation that the whole family can enjoy, if you chose to bring them along.

Conclusion

It's time for you to decide which cruise fits your lifestyle. These nine cruise lines have you covered no matter what your destination, how active you want to be and who you want to spend your vacation at sea with. There's no time like the present to start making plans for your next adventure on the high seas. See you on board...

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