

IS CRUISING RIGHT FOR YOU? THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE BOOKING A CRUISE.



A cruise can be an exciting way to travel, offering a blend of relaxation, exploration, and convenience. But before you book, you should consider several factors to ensure the experience aligns with your expectations. Careful planning can make all the difference, from choosing the right itinerary and ship size to understanding onboard costs and excursion options.

This guide will walk you through key considerations such as destination choices, cruise styles, budgets, and travel logistics—helping you determine if a cruise is the right fit for your next trip.



TIMING

Seasonality & Weather - Different cruise destinations have peak and off-peak seasons based on weather patterns. For example, Caribbean cruises are most popular in winter when the weather is warm and hurricane risks are lower, while Alaska cruises are only available during summer months when conditions are optimal.

Pricing & Demand - Cruise fares fluctuate based on demand, with peak travel periods (such as holidays, spring break, and summer) often commanding higher prices. Shoulder seasons often have lower rates and fewer crowds.

Crowds & Onboard Experience - Sailing during peak seasons can mean more people onboard and at ports, which can affect dining reservations, excursion availability, and overall ship ambiance. Off-peak times can provide a more relaxed experience if your dates are flexible. For peak season, we highly recommend reserving your cruise early. Often, we can take reservations up to two years in advance.

Port Conditions & Excursions - Some destinations may have limited access during certain times of the year due to weather conditions or seasonal business closures. Timing your cruise to match the best conditions for your chosen ports ensures you get the most out of your excursions.

Special Events & Promotions - Some cruise lines offer themed sailings, special onboard events, or promotional deals at different times of the year. If you're interested in a particular experience—like a holiday cruise or a wine-themed sailing—timing your trip accordingly is essential.



DESTINATION

Your destination influences your trip's itinerary, activities, climate, and overall vibe. Here's why it matters:

Climate & Seasonality - Some destinations are best visited during specific times of the year. Some destinations (like Alaska) have limited sailing months, so book early for the best options.

- Caribbean: Avoid the risk of hurricane season (June–November).
- Antarctica : Best from May to September for wildlife and good weather.
- Mediterranean: Spring & fall have potential of fewer crowds than summer and aren't as hot.
- Europe Christmas Markets: November–December for a festive vibe.

Shore Excursions & Activities - The ports you visit determine what excursions are available.

Cruise Length & Travel Time - Some destinations require longer sailings. If you only have a few days, a short Bahamas or Mexican Riviera cruise may work best. Transatlantic, European, or South Pacific itineraries often require more travel time.

Cultural & Logistical Considerations - Several regions have specific visa requirements, currency differences, or language barriers that may require extra planning.

Ship Size & Port Accessibility - Certain destinations, like the Galápagos or certain Greek islands, are only accessible via smaller ships, while major cities and popular beach destinations can accommodate larger cruise liners.

CRUISE LINE & SHIP TYPE

Not all cruises are the same, and the cruise line and ship you choose can significantly impact your experience. These factors, from the atmosphere onboard to the amenities available, help determine whether your cruise will meet your expectations.

1. Cruise Line Personality & Style

Each cruise line has its own vibe, catering to different types of travelers:

- **Luxury vs. Budget-Friendly:** High-end lines like Regent Seven Seas, Silversea or Explora offer all-inclusive luxury, while Premium lines like Royal Caribbean & Norwegian provide a more affordable, family-friendly experience.
- **Adventure vs. Relaxation:** Expedition-focused lines like Lindblad Expeditions or Uncruise prioritize adventure and off-the-beaten-path destinations, while lines like Celebrity or Princess offer a more traditional, laid-back cruise experience.
- **Family vs. Adults-Only:** Some lines cater to families with kids' clubs and waterparks (Disney, Norwegian), while others focus on adults with upscale dining and sophisticated entertainment (Viking, Virgin Voyages).
- **Premium Cruiselines:** Premium cruise lines like Oceania, Azamara and Atlas offer a "country club casual" experience, featuring smaller, boutique-style ships, exceptional destination-focused itineraries, and gourmet dining—all without the need for formal attire.
- **Ocean vs. River Cruises:** River cruise lines such as AmaWaterways, Viking River, and Uniworld deliver a more intimate, culturally immersive journey with smaller ships, scenic daytime sailing, and frequent stops in charming towns along iconic rivers in Europe, Asia, and beyond.
- **Luxury Yachts:** While mega ships offer a wide array of entertainment, dining, and activities for thousands of guests, luxury yacht experiences like SeaDream, Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection, and Four Seasons Yachts (coming soon) focus on exclusivity, personalized service, and access to smaller, off-the-beaten-path ports—all in an ultra-refined, intimate setting.

CRUISE LINE & SHIP TYPE

2. Ship Size & Atmosphere

The size of the ship affects everything from the number of passengers to onboard amenities:

- **Large Ships (3,000+ passengers):** Offer a wide range of entertainment, dining options, and activities like water slides, Broadway-style shows, and casinos.
- **Mid-Size Ships (1,000–3,000 passengers):** Provide a balance of entertainment, amenities, and a more intimate atmosphere without feeling overwhelming.
- **Small Ships (Under 1,000 passengers):** Focus on personalized service, unique destinations, and a quieter experience, often with higher-end accommodations.
- **River Cruises (100–200 passengers):** Deliver a relaxed, scenic journey with smaller ships that sail through inland waterways, offering immersive cultural experiences and daily stops in historic towns.
- **Luxury Yachts (100 passengers or fewer):** Designed for ultra-personalized, high-end travel, these vessels access exclusive ports and offer a refined, resort-like atmosphere with top-tier service and privacy.

3. Onboard Amenities & Activities

Each ship offers different amenities, which can shape your experience:

- **Adventure & Thrill Seekers:** Larger ships may feature zip lines, rock climbing walls, surf simulators, and water parks.
- **Relaxation & Wellness:** Some ships emphasize spa services, thermal suites, and wellness programs.
- **Culinary & Entertainment:** High-end ships may have Michelin-starred chef restaurants, wine tastings, and Broadway-style performances.

4. Itinerary & Port Access

The ship you choose determines the destinations you can visit:

- **Large Ships:** Typically dock at major ports with well-developed tourist infrastructure. Larger ships may also have to tender more and dock further from the main town, especially in Europe.
- **Small Ships & Expedition Cruises:** Can access remote locations like the Galápagos, Antarctica, or smaller Mediterranean islands that large ships can't reach.



TRAVEL COMPANIONS

Honeymooners will have very different vacation requirements than a couple celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. Thinking about your travel companions' interests, activity levels, and budget helps everyone have a memorable and enjoyable experience.

1. Family-Friendly vs. Adults-Only Cruises

- **Families with Kids:** Most cruise lines, like Disney, Royal Caribbean, and Norwegian, are designed for families, offering kid-friendly activities, water parks, character experiences, and complimentary kids' clubs (with babysitting available for a fee). Luxury lines like Silversea and Regent also accommodate children but with fewer dedicated kid-focused amenities.
- **Adults-Only:** If you're traveling without children, you may prefer an adults-only cruise (Virgin Voyages, Viking, SilverSeas, Regent Seven Seas) or a ship with designated adults-only areas for a quieter, more relaxed experience.

2. Group Size & Interests

- **Couples:** If you're looking for a romantic getaway, consider smaller luxury ships or cruises with fine dining, spa experiences, and intimate excursions.
- **Large Groups & Friends:** Ships with a variety of entertainment, nightlife, and group-friendly accommodations (such as multi-room suites or connecting cabins) work best for social travelers.

TIP: Group cruises (family reunions, friend getaways) can get perks like discounted cabins and private events.

- **Solo Travelers:** Some cruise lines offer solo cabins and social meet-ups for independent travelers, making it easier to connect with others.
- **Celebrating a special occasion?** Cruises are a fantastic way to mark birthdays, anniversaries, and honeymoons, with many lines offering special dining experiences, spa treatments, and romantic touches to make your trip unforgettable.

TRAVEL COMPANIONS

3. Multigenerational Travel

- When traveling with multiple generations, look for cruises that offer activities for all age groups. Some lines, like Celebrity and Princess, cater to a broad range of travelers, providing kids' programming alongside sophisticated dining and cultural experiences for adults. With plenty of options, everyone in the family can enjoy activities at their own pace during the day and come together for dinner and a show in the evening.

4. Activity & Adventure Preferences

- If you're traveling with active adventurers, an expedition cruise or a ship with outdoor excursions (hiking, diving, or kayaking) may be ideal. Consider Linblad and Ponant.
- For those who prefer relaxation, a luxury cruise with spa services, poolside lounging, and cultural enrichment programs might be a better fit.



CABIN CHOICE & LOCATION

- **Inside Cabin:** Budget-friendly, no windows, but great for napping!
- **Oceanview:** Small window for natural light.
- **Balcony:** Private outdoor space—great for scenic cruises! A private outdoor space to relax or socialize.
- **Suite:** More space, luxury perks, priority services.

Location matters!

- Mid-ship = Less motion (great for seasickness).
- Avoid cabins under nightclubs or above loud dining areas.
- Cabins near elevators can be loud.
- Cabins at the end of a hall may have a long walk.
- TIP: If you're prone to seasickness, avoid forward and aft cabins.



We always pick the best stateroom for you!



ITINERARY & PORT STOPS

1. Port-heavy vs. Relaxing at Sea:

Do you want daily adventures or more sea days to unwind?

- Consider private islands (like Royal Caribbean's CocoCay) for a stress-free beach day. However, many amenities, such as a private cabana, incur an extra charge.
- TIP: Research ports in advance—some require tender boats, while others allow you to walk off the ship. This is important if a member in your party has mobility issues.



TRAVEL LOGISTICS

- Runway Travel recommends arriving at **least one day before embarkation**. Don't let a flight delay, lost luggage or damaged strollers ruin your cruise.
- If you need a passport, check the expiration date! Some countries require six months' validity past your return date.
- We strongly recommend travel insurance—it can cover trip cancellations, missed connections, and medical emergencies.
- Runway Travel can offer private shore excursions not booked through the cruiseline for a more personalized experience.

Whether you set sail on a cruise or explore other travel options, Runway Travel will curate the perfect vacation tailored to your style, preferences, and dream destination. [Contact us](#) or call us at 571-210-5340.