



## Top 9 Things I Love About Cruising

From Linda Garrison

I will be the first to admit that cruise travel is not for everyone; however, with hundreds of ships and hundreds of itineraries to choose from, there is a cruise ship to suit most travelers. When people ask me what I love about cruising, here is the list I give them, in no particular order of importance. How does it compare to yours?

1. Most important decisions are made before you leave home.

Many people have stressful jobs and are very busy. When they get to their vacation destination, rest and relaxation should be their number one priority, not making decisions as to how long to stay, where to stay, where to eat, how to get from one place to the next, etc. Once you have selected a cruise itinerary and cruise ship, these important vacation decisions are complete. You can board the ship and relax.

2. You get just a taste of several different cities and ports of call.

I love exploring new cities and ports of call. It is amazing how much you can do and see in just one day! Sometimes I would enjoy spending more time in a port, but that just means I need to return for a longer stay.

3. Cruise ships travel the world via the seas, lakes, and rivers.

Cruise ships sail to all seven continents and travelers can enjoy many of the great rivers of the world in addition to the ocean ports. Many of the most important cities of the world are on a cruise itinerary, and other sites can be visited via pre- or post-cruise extensions.

4. You only have to unpack once.

For those who haven't learned to travel light (and you know who you are), unpacking one time is a treat. Anyone who has ever done a bus tour will appreciate how wonderful it is to have your bed move with you to the next place you are visiting. Just think -- all that precious vacation time you spent pawing through your suitcase can be used for fun!

5. You are always near the water with a balcony cabin.

If you travel to a resort, the oceanfront rooms are very pricey. A balcony cabin is more expensive on a cruise ship too, but your oceanview is always changing. I can't think of anything more relaxing than sitting on the verandah of my balcony cabin with a good book, an ocean breeze, and an icy drink.

6. You have the opportunity to meet the most interesting people.  
Cruise travelers are an interesting group of people. I've met people from all over the world and of almost all economic groups on a cruise. It is easy to strike up a conversation with someone in a lounge or over dinner because you already have something in common--your love of travel and your means of transportation.

7. Consistency of food, service, and accommodations.  
Although some cruise ships are certainly better than others, you are almost always guaranteed a good basic level of food, service, and accommodations on a cruise. Room, board, and transportation for less than \$100 a day is a great vacation deal.

8. Almost everything is paid for before your leave home.  
Room, board, and transportation are often the three most expensive parts of a vacation. These are all included in your basic cruise price. Unfortunately, more and more cruise "extras" come with a price, but many of those you can avoid if you are truly on a budget.

9. You can try exotic foods at no extra charge.  
Have you ever gotten adventuresome in a restaurant and ordered "something new", only to find it was not to your liking? No problem if you are on a cruise ship, you can just order something else. Since you have already paid for your meals, you can afford to try foods you might never order in a restaurant for fear that you would be stuck paying for something you did not like. Go ahead, try that goose liver or sushi!