

Cruise Travel Tips

Traveling on a cruise can raise concerns for a family with a child with autism. Large ships, activities, food, people, and balconies are just a few concerns parents may bring up initially. Here are some tips to consider when booking a cruise for your family.

- **Contact with your cruise line or travel professional:** Make your travel professional and/or cruise line aware of any special accommodations or food allergies prior to setting sail. This communication is important to establish early on.
- **Cruise Duration:** A cruise can last from three days, to five, seven days and even longer. Take into consideration any sensitivities prior to booking your cruise. It may be best to start small and work your way up depending on your needs.
- **Ship Size:** A larger ship may seem like it would be overwhelming, but it may be better for your child with autism. If it's a larger ship, there will be more passengers, but they will be spread out. There will be more activities planned and the crowd you're surrounded by can essentially be smaller.
- **Express Boarding:** To avoid the hassle of waiting in long lines, you can request express boarding.
- **Room Booking:** The average cabin inside a cruise ship is about 160 square feet, which can feel a bit small. There are options you may want to consider for a bigger room or two adjoining rooms. A room with a balcony may not be the best choice due to safety reasons, especially for younger children who don't have a clear understanding of danger.
- **Make a go-bag:** Fill a bag with pre-established calming tools. Some examples are:
 - Sea-band or Dramamine
 - Favorite toy/stuffed animal
 - Hat/sunglasses
 - Chewing gum
 - Sunblock
 - Weighted blanket
 - Water Shoes
 - Pillow
 - Headphones with music or game
 - Lap-pad
 - Fidget toys: silly putty/worry stone
 - Healthy Snacks
 - Earplugs
 - Clothes for layering

- **Excursions:** Speak to your travel professional about autism friendly excursions. Selecting your excursions during your original cruise booking will allow you time to prepare and save you the hassle of lines onboard.
- **Dining:** If you want to dine in the dining room quickly with little waiting time, you should speak with the maître d ahead of time and ask for a space in the dining room that would best accommodate your family. If they have a special event or loud singing, you may want to request a quiet corner, or permission to take the food out of the dining area in case of emergency.
- **Food Allergies:** You should let your cruise line or travel professional know of any food allergies or sensitivities for your child ahead of time. Most will be able to work with you on a safe menu, and even approve food to be brought from home.
- **Phone Access:** Request a phone to communicate with the dining and kids' club staff throughout your cruise. This request should be made ahead of time and you may want to keep your confirmation on hand to show staff when embarking the ship.

If you have questions, please contact us.

Thank you.

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