

Cruising Terminology

Today more people are cruising than ever before. However, there are still a lot of people who have never cruised before and wonder how to begin. We are going to explain the terms you need to know for cruising so you can book your cruise sounding like a pro.

Accommodations

Regardless of who you call, the original questions are the same. What type of cabin do you want; suite, inside, outside or balcony? Your cabin/stateroom is your room, similar to that of a hotel room, for the length of your cruise. The category of the cabin is usually based on its size, location, and amenities. An inside cabin does not have a porthole or window. It is similar to a large walk-in closet. An outside cabin will have either a porthole or a window that does not usually open. A veranda/balcony cabin is one where you have a balcony that you can either stand or sit on. Suites are larger than inside, oceanview and veranda cabins; can come with or without balconies and usually includes additional amenities. On some ships, they have what are known as Family Friendly Accommodations. These cabins/staterooms are specially designed to comfortably sleep up to two adults and three children.

Pricing for a cabin is generally based on two people in a room, also known as a double. Three would be a triple and four a quad. If you are looking to cruise alone, you will be charged a Single Supplement – a surcharge for one passenger occupying a cabin that sleeps two. More cruise lines are starting to have single cabins available so it doesn't hurt to ask.

You will also be asked about being upgraded. Being upgraded is when you are moved from a lower category to a higher one. Beware that there is generally a charge; however, the cruise lines often have specials where you can book a cabin at one level with the possibility of an upgrade. This is up to the cruise line.

Dining

Cruise lines offer set times for meals; this is known as Traditional Seating. There are two seatings (or sometimes four, with staggered start times) for each meal, with some flexibility offered for breakfast and lunch. You will need to choose which time you wish to dine. With two dining times, you are generally looking at somewhere around 6 PM or 9 PM for dinner. More cruise lines are now adding

"your time" dining. Here no times are established for dining, there is typically a window provided for your dinner meal.

There is always an alternative to the dining room. This can be a more casual evening dining option typically a buffet.

Alternative Restaurants are typically a smaller, more intimate restaurant where passengers may choose to dine for a nominal fee; reservations are usually required.

Yes, most cruise ships offer in-room dining aka room service – often 24 hours a day. Choices are limited unless you are in a suite. The galley (kitchen) does not run fully staffed 24/7.

Ship's Specific Terms

When you are in port and getting ready to board the ship, you will be walking up the gangway. You generally enter the ship in the middle (midship).

If you face the front of the ship, you are facing the bow; the back of the ship is the aft. This becomes important when you have to know which side of the ship is port side and which side is starboard. My partner was in the US Navy and he says if you remember port and left have the same number of letters you will know which side is the port side. This generally isn't important however, when you are on a cruise such as Alaska, the side you want to be on is important.

There are a lot of different terms you may hear while onboard. The Captain of the ship will generally make announcements from the bridge. The bridge is where the Captain and his crew manage the ship's journey. You will hear them refer to the speed and distance the ship travels. The speed is known as "knots". One knot equals one nautical mile per hour. While distance is measured in nautical miles. One nautical mile is 6,080.2 feet or slightly more than 1.15 land miles.

The tender is a small boat used to transport passengers from the ship to the shore when the harbor is not deep enough for the ship to dock.

Ship's Crew

There are a few crew members that you need to know. Most important, of course, is the Captain/Master of the ship. This person is in charge of the entire ship.

While you are onboard if you have a problem or concern, go to the Purser's desk. This area is staffed 24/7 so you will always be able to get an answer.

The Cruise Director heads up the entertainment staff and is usually the emcee for all of the activities and shows onboard.

The one person who will have the most contact with will be your room steward/ess. They are the one who mysteriously cleans your cabin when you are not there.

Destination Related

Embarkation day is sailing day. This is the day you board the ship for your cruise vacation.

One thing that most travelers want to know is their port of calls. These are the destinations on your cruise where the ship docks or anchors so you can disembark (get off the ship) and explore. The cruise line offers shore excursions which can be escorted or unescorted that are sold onboard the cruise ship. One benefit of booking on the ship is that if there is a problem and your excursion is late getting back, the ship will wait for you. This is generally the only reason the ship waits. If you are off on your own and are late getting back to the ship, it is your responsibility to get to the next port of call.

Disembarkation is exiting the ship to explore a port of call. It is also the end of the sailing.

Now you can book your cruise and sound like a pro. You'll also be able to understand what the crew is saying when they give directions.

Thanks for reading our newsletter. If you have questions, please contact us.

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