

HOW TO ORGANIZE A SUCCESSFUL GROUP CRUISE



By Group University

**Are Cruises
Right for Your
Group?**

15 Tips for
Choosing the
Right Cruise

**How to Make
the Right
Choices During
Planning**

**Critical Best
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Crystal Cruises - Crystal Symphony

WELCOME ABOARD!

While cruising has long been a popular vacation with groups, the unprecedented expansion of the cruise industry has created new options and brought millions of new customers along for the ride. Cruising is one of the most popular group vacation activities today, with over 1/4 of the 18 million annual cruisers coming onboard as part of a pre-formed group.

With hundreds of cruise ship options to choose from and ports of call on all 7 continents, picking the right cruise for your group is challenging. Add to it the complexities of arranging groups, negotiation, flight arrangements, organizational tasks and juggling payments, and the entire process of booking a group cruise can be daunting.

Consider *How to Organize a Successful Group Cruise* your life preserver! Join us as we unpeel the layers of the cruise industry: portraying the players, breaking down the itineraries, and reviewing correct policies and procedures for delivering the perfect cruise experience for your group.

Whether you're planning a reunion, retreat, student trip, meeting or gal's getaway, you'll find the tips, tools and tactics found on these pages to be a valuable resource – whether you're planning your first or tenth group cruise.

Bon Voyage!

The Group University Team

HISTORY OF MODERN DAY CRUISING

This fun and ever dynamic industry has evolved into one with a sophisticated, cutting edge ever since the television hit "The Love Boat" gave cruising a strong foothold in the '70s. "The Love Boat" was escapism television at its best, but also showed that a cruise vacation was affordable, fun, and offered luxury and glamour that ordinary people could enjoy.

Up until then, most people had the mistaken notion that the only cruises offered were trans-Atlantic ones. In addition, other misconceptions existed - only wealthy people could afford to take this type of vacation, and people who cruised faced one boring day at sea after another. Another mistaken concept? There were distinctions onboard, so if you paid a lower rate, you supposedly did not receive the same service and meals as the other passengers. But by the early 1980s, these myths were dispelled, thanks to visionaries like Ted Arison, the founder of Carnival Cruise Lines, and others.

From rather humble beginnings the cruise industry has gone through explosive growth during the past



Carnival Cruise Lines - Carnival Sunshine

three-plus decades. Up until the late 1980s cruise ships were admittedly quite ordinary, casinos were relatively small, there were limited lounges, and usually there was just one dining room, with a small gym included as an afterthought.

Then extraordinary changes occurred. To grow and attract more passengers, cruise lines realized they needed to redesign and upgrade their ships so they would be comparable to the finest resort hotels. Enter Royal Caribbean's *Sovereign of the Seas*, the first ship built exclusively for modern-day cruising. Back in 1988 her design was unique, bold, exciting, innovative and unlike any other ship in the world.

This ship offered a multi-level lobby, expansive pool decks, showroom facilities that allowed Las Vegas-style entertainment, a lounge built around the smokestack of the ship with 360-degree views, and accommodated in excess of 2,000 passengers.

The era of the "mega-liner" was born. Next came "post-Panamax" ships, meaning the vessel was too large to fit through the Panama Canal.

Over 200 new ships have been introduced since 2000, sparking innovative facilities and amenities as well. Rock climbing, bowling alleys, waterparks, and high-speed internet are just a part of today's cruising experience. Other changes include the transformation of dining – flexibility, alternative dining, themed restaurants, partnering with renowned chefs, a refocus on the stateroom itself, and expansive health, fitness and spa facilities.

Today, cruise lines concentrate on designing ships that "bring land to sea." Broadway theater and stage shows with name entertainment, gourmet cuisine, spa services, unrivaled flexibility, unique partnerships to bring the best to their ships and constant innovation are the norm. Ships are among the best vacation products in the world because they have become destinations themselves.

River cruising adds new dimensions. Phenomenal growth and more destination choices, with new river cruise ships entering service each year, provide enhanced options.

Onboard ships today, guests can enjoy lectures by noted experts in topics ranging from anthropology to zoology. Gone are confining staterooms with a small porthole. Today's ships offer full picture windows and affordably priced staterooms with private verandahs. With different levels of sophistication and more choices than ever before, cruising is a tremendous way for groups to travel together. The options are endless on the ocean or on the river.

WHY CRUISES MAKE AN EXCELLENT TRIP CHOICE FOR YOUR GROUP

Think about what your group members enjoyed about their past trips. **What were their key concerns and likes?** They probably wanted some structured activities, yet also wanted a little flexibility to do some things independently.

They liked traveling to new places, experiencing new things, but maybe also wanted some of those “comforts of home.” Group members like camaraderie and the enjoyment of shared experiences with people and associates who have similar interests, right?

If you poll your group members, you’ll probably also find that they enjoy entertainment, want some time to relax, and ultimately, want that “hassle-free” trip. And when they pay for their trip, they want to know exactly what is included in the upfront cost as well as any other charges they might incur, instead of those unexpected, surprise fees that leave one with a bad taste in their mouth.

A cruise can offer your group all of this and more. With new ships being introduced each year, your group has more choices than ever before. And most importantly, a cruise vacation has one of the highest satisfaction rates in the industry.

When people return from a cruise, chances are they can’t wait to sail again! The cruise experience is still relatively new for many travelers, with only 20% of U.S. adults having taken a cruise, so this is a great untapped market.

Cruise lines make it easy for you to organize your group. Group business is an extremely important part of their market - every major cruise line has a dedicated group department to handle special needs and requirements. In addition, cruise lines can offer your group complimentary meeting space on the ship if needed and they can help you coordinate any special events you might wish to include for your group. And by working with the group department, you don’t have to plan everything alone. From beginning to end they are there to help you through the process.



Crystal Cruises - Cove Bar



Edie Rodriguez
President and COO
Crystal Cruises

“The luxury cruise demographic is becoming younger and getting more international.

Much like the cruise industry as a whole, Crystal guests are coming from all over the world to cruise. Our industry will continue to grow as the global audience becomes very bullish on cruising.”

INTRODUCTION



KEY THINGS INVOLVED WHEN BOOKING YOUR GROUP

If you've organized a group trip in the past, you know there are numerous details to take care of, from deciding on the destination, itinerary details & inclusions as well as trip insurance and cancellation waiver options - all before getting group members interested in the upcoming trip.

The next phase includes collecting deposits, submitting those payments, collecting final payments, coordinating itineraries, getting documents and arranging for special side trips.

The responsibilities go on and on.

And as the travel industry becomes more sophisticated (not to mention travelers becoming more sophisticated), there are more options available. The cruise industry is no exception.

Questions You May Encounter:

- Do you stick to booking the airfare provided by the cruise line, or do you try and arrange your group's own separate airfare?
- How do you try to coordinate schedules if your group members need to fly out of different cities?
- How much flexibility and choices do your group members prefer with their cruise experience?
- Do you have your group members purchase the trip insurance or waivers offered through the cruise line or use a separate travel insurance company?

When planning a cruise, the list of organizing details, from submitting payments, deciding on the right insurance option, and tracking monies, to ensuring accuracy can be rather cumbersome, especially if your time is limited.



Azamara Club Cruises at Santorini, Greece

PRO TIP

If you prefer not to handle these arrangements by yourself, qualified travel consultants and specialists can fill that necessary gap, and you can leave the coordinating details to a trusted cruise professional.



USING A CRUISE CONSULTANT

Getting assistance from a knowledgeable professional is a wonderful option and most cruise lines prefer that groups are booked through an agency rather booked directly by the group itself.

During the tremendous growth and expansion the cruise industry has experienced over the past 3+ decades, cruise lines have come and gone. Many have become successful, yet a few cruise lines have failed and filed for bankruptcy, leaving behind an unfortunate legal trail to try and unsnarl to get back any type of refund.

The industry is much more stabilized, but having a professional who can “go to bat for you” should a problem surface is a strong advantage. Recommendations are always good for starters, of course, and there are other avenues available.

Where Can I Find A Professional Consultant?

The travel industry has a variety of professional organizations that can recommend agencies specializing in group cruise bookings, such as Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) and ASTA (American Society of Travel Agents).

Another avenue is checking with **franchise networks** – American Express Retail Travel Network, CruiseOne and Cruise Planners are a few. Also there are excellent travel consortiums (groups) and host agencies – Avoya Travel, Signature Travel Network, Ensemble Travel Group for starters.

Also check to see what **travel agencies** might be in your area.

When using an agency and cruise professional to book your group, it's important to select one who keeps on top of product knowledge and inspects cruise ships on a regular basis.



Seabourn - Atrium

PRO TIP

Key questions to ask when looking for a cruise consultant:

1. Do you work with groups?
2. What cruise lines do you work with? What are your specialties?
3. What types of groups do you book?
4. Will you provide one or two group references?



CHOOSING A CRUISE ITINERARY

The first itinerary that comes to mind for most people is a Caribbean cruise, and granted, during winter months, the Caribbean offers endless possibilities and a great way to escape the cold. But more choices exist today.

Cruise lines offer itineraries around the world.

Departures from home ports across the U.S. have also grown. You can sail from New York year round to Florida, the Bahamas and the Caribbean.

And major cruise lines have increased their presence in other areas of the world. During the summer months, Europe, Alaska, Bermuda, Canada and New England offer great choices for cruises.

Don't forget about the South Pacific, South America, the Orient and Dubai. Adventure cruising is also on the upswing, as travelers seek active, mind-expanding vacation experiences. Going to the Galapagos Islands, sailing on the Amazon River, and doing an expedition cruise to Antarctica are just a few examples.

Another option is looking into river cruises, which have been rapidly growing. This provides a new option for your group if they want to deviate from ocean cruising for a more intimate and all-inclusive experience. Your group can enjoy a river cruise in Europe, but another option is sailing on a river cruise in the U.S., thanks to American Cruise Lines and American Queen Steamboat Company.

Does your group want to cruise around the Hawaiian Islands? Norwegian Cruise Line offers year-round Hawaii cruises with inter-island sailings. Other cruise lines offer periodic cruises departing from the West Coast to the Hawaiian Islands and then sailing back to the continental U.S.



Avalon Waterways



Patrick Clark
Managing Director of
Avalon Waterways

"We have experienced a great deal of diversity within our groups business including affinity, educational, religious, special interests like culinary or music, meeting and corporate incentives. Many of our groups charter entire departures. We value our groups business and anticipate continued growth within this segment of the industry in the years to come."



CHOOSING THE RIGHT SHIP

Yes, the cruise industry is continuing to see new ships added each year, with new classes/categories of ships as well. Royal Caribbean International's *Quantum of the Seas*, launched in November 2014, brought yet another new dimension to cruising.

High technology, with the option of using their new WOWband wristbands (they do everything a keycard can do including opening your stateroom) as well as robot bartenders mixing drinks in the **Bionic Bar** are a few examples.

Quantum of the Seas' **Dynamic Dining** eliminates traditional large two-seating restaurants with five complimentary full-service dining venues, along with specialty restaurants. It's also the first Royal Caribbean ship without a formal night.

But there are numerous options besides the "bigger is better" scenario. Some cruise lines focus on smaller ships, others focus on midsize ones. And cruise lines continually renovate their existing ships to create and maintain product consistency.

6 considerations when choosing a ship:

1. Size, amenities and programs
2. What your group members have sailed on previously
3. Sailing destinations
4. Types of accommodation
5. Entertainment options
6. Onboard ambiance



WHERE DO YOU WANT TO SAIL FROM?

A growing trend has been for cruise lines to increase the U.S. departure ports for "home-based" cruising, making it more feasible for cruise guests to drive to the departure port and eliminate flying, so getting to and from the ship is easier.

Norwegian Cruise Line had plans to introduce its "Homeland Cruising" even before the tragedy of 9/11 because they wanted to focus on offering more roundtrip cruises out of new cities throughout the U.S.

This was a way to tap into new markets as well as enticing new potential cruise passengers who did not want to fly to a departure port city, and the trend continues.

Other cruise lines have been quick to follow Norwegian Cruise Line's lead, and you'll find many more cruise departure port cities available with the other major cruise lines.

This, more than anything, eliminates the hassle and expense of flying to the cruise port, especially for Eastern, Southern and West Coast groups. At the same time, it opens up new pre- and post-cruise land-tour options.



CHOOSING THE CRUISE

Although it's easy to think that all cruise lines are alike, they actually fit into different categories. The categories vary according to cost as well as amenities included.

Cruise line categories include Contemporary, Premium, Deluxe, Luxury and Specialized along with River Cruise Lines.

Contemporary Cruise Lines

Generally speaking, the highest percentage of well-known cruise lines fit into a category usually referred to as "contemporary." These include Carnival Cruise Lines, Royal Caribbean International, Costa Cruises, Princess Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line, Disney Cruise Line and MSC Cruises.

What makes a cruise line contemporary? The daily cost per person usually ranges from \$100 - \$300 per day per person, the ships themselves tend to be larger (in some cases passenger capacity can exceed 4,000 guests), and these cruise lines offer a wide range of shipboard activities and services.

Premium Cruise Lines

Two cruise lines that fit into the "premium" category based on their shipboard experiences and amenities - Celebrity Cruises and Holland America Line. Their daily cost per day can range on the higher end of what the contemporary cruise lines run, but that is not the only criteria to consider.

Passenger capacity of ships in these premium cruise lines tend to easily be under 3,000 guests (most fall under 2,000 guests) with a concentrated effort to offer a bit more sophisticated, upscale cruise experience.

Deluxe Cruise Lines

Deluxe cruise lines typically provide a small-ship, exotic destination type cruise. These include Azamara Club Cruises, launched in 2007 by Celebrity Cruises, and Oceania Cruises, which was formed in 2002.

Luxury Cruise Lines

As the name indicates, a cruise line in the "luxury" category would command a much higher price - upwards of \$800 per day per person.

Cruise lines that fit the "luxury" category include Crystal Cruises, Cunard Line, Silversea Cruises, Seabourn and Regent Seven Seas Cruises.

In addition to commanding a higher price, most of these lines concentrate on offering their passengers discriminating luxury, such as complimentary liquors and wines, more spacious accommodations with fewer passengers onboard and specialty restaurants; many feature open seating for dinner, as well as longer and more exotic itineraries and cultural enrichment onboard.

Specialized Cruise Lines

Two cruise lines fit in the "specialized" category - Pearl Seas Cruises and Windstar Cruises. With smaller ships and more intimate features, they add another dimension for cruising and experiential options.

River Cruise Lines

River cruise lines just don't sail on European waterways. Popular destinations include also China and South America. Lines include AmaWaterways, Avalon Waterways, Scenic Cruises, Tauck, Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection and Viking Cruises. Sailing on U.S. waterways are American Cruise Lines and American Queen Steamboat Company.



CHOOSING A CRUISE BASED ON THE EXPERIENCE

What has been tremendously exciting about the evolution of the cruise industry over the years has been the expansive choices now available to cruise travelers. It's grown from an industry focused on basic choices and regimentation into one that has unrivaled flexibility.

New options for guests abound. Even though there might be some that involve a surcharge (dining at one of the optional supper clubs or specialty restaurants), cruise lines are adamant about making sure they still include services in the price of the cruise. It's really more about elevating the cruise experience for their guests while providing some additional new options.

It's More Than Just Traditional Dining

As a whole, the cruise industry has gone past the regimented "first seating" and "late seating" to more flexible choices for guests onboard.

In addition to 24-hour room service, cruise guests can now choose more casual dining options during the evenings.

Royal Caribbean International's debut of Dynamic Dining onboard *Quantum of the Seas* in 2014 brings a new dimension. Instead of main restaurants, guests enjoy five smaller complimentary restaurants, casual venues and no formal evenings. There are also seven specialty restaurants.

Norwegian Cruise Line has alternative restaurants, which have a small surcharge, offer diverse cuisines. To take the guessing out of the waiting times, there are multiple screens in high-traffic areas that show each alternative restaurant's current availability as well as the wait time.

Guests who want to take advantage of an alternative restaurant but who haven't made advance reservations can stop by that restaurant of choice and pick up a pager along with a wait time to return.



"Meeting planners are choosing to cruise because it offers a unique venue and experience and is an excellent value for the price."

Ken Muskat
Executive Vice President
of Sales, PR and Guest
Services
MSC Cruises USA



HOW TO MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICES

These specialty restaurants include a more customized dining experience with intimate settings and a surcharge/cover charge that varies. Princess Cruises, which began offering the first 24-hour restaurant onboard their ships, also has “Anytime Dining,” and their specialty restaurants include Trattoria Sabatini and the Sterling Steakhouse. Holland America also has an alternative restaurant, Pinnacle Grill.

With the launch of the *Celebrity Solstice*, Celebrity Cruises also introduced new menus as well as cuisine designed by Blau and Associates after Celebrity Cruises and Michel Roux amicably ended their partnership in 2007.

With groups, it’s important to know what your members like, their meal time preferences and whether dining together is critical or not.

A Who’s Who of Celebrity Chefs

Yes, the cruise industry has not only created more flexibility for their guests, but has also partnered with some of the world’s best chefs to upgrade the cuisine experience onboard.

When designing new exclusive features for Queen Mary 2, Cunard Line launched a new dining option by partnering with renowned Chef Todd English for the reservations-only, specialty restaurant called **Todd English Restaurant**.

When Holland America Line began their “Signature of Excellence Program,” it included a partnership with well-known **Master Chef Rudi Sodamin**. Master Chef Sodamin is in charge of all the dining onboard Holland America Line’s ships, and serves as chairman of their Culinary Council.

Jacques Pepin was hired during the planning and designing stages of Oceania Cruises and he has served as executive culinary director for more than a decade. His dishes are featured in the restaurants onboard their ships. Pepin oversees the creation of menu offerings, wine lists and training of the onboard executive chefs.



Carnival Cruise Lines



Holland America - Canaletto



Master Chef Rudi
Sodamin
Chairman
Culinary Council
Holland America



It's More Than Entertainment

Move over Las Vegas-style revues – the cruise industry has come of age. Princess Cruises' "Movies under the Stars" gave new meaning to watching blockbuster movies on the high seas, and Holland America Line's launch of their Culinary Arts Centers allowed guests to learn the secrets of creating fine cuisine firsthand.

Experimentation is key, and bringing land to sea is the best way to describe the changes in shipboard entertainment.

Royal Caribbean International was the first cruise line to feature full licensed, Tony Award-winning Broadway musicals on their ships.

In 2009, **Hairspray** debuted on *Oasis of the Seas*. Guests on *Allure of the Seas* can enjoy shows like **Chicago: The Musical**. *Liberty of the Seas* has **Saturday Night Fever: The Musical**, while *Quantum of the Seas* has **MAMMA MIA!**

Norwegian Cruise Line's exclusive partnership with The Second City Improvisational troupe brought **The Best of Second City** onboard. Since then they've expanded into even more entertainment options, from Blue Man Group to Broadway shows, including **Rock of Ages**, **Burn the Floor** and **Legally Blonde: The Musical**.

Even pool experiences have changed with aqua parks, sports complexes, rope courses, surfing simulators, zip lines and "walking the plank".



PRO TIP

Many cruise lines now have mobile apps that guests can download, and this is another way to stay connected with your group while onboard.



It's More Than Mattresses on Platforms

Even bedding in staterooms has felt the impact of upgrading, partnering and specialization. Not only has the physical bedding been upgraded by many cruise lines, but the caliber of sheets is more luxurious.

Oceania Cruises decided to use bedding as a point of distinction when the cruise line was being developed, and their **Tranquility Bed** launched a trend that other cruise lines began to emulate.

MSC Cruises has taken their bedding within the **MSC Yacht Club** to a new level. In addition to Egyptian cotton bed sheets and bathrobes, guests staying in the MSC Yacht Club can select special pillows from the **Dorelan Pillow Menu**.

It's More Than Just a Stateroom

A stateroom is no longer a place simply to sleep and change clothes; it's evolved into much more. Cruise lines have made staterooms more expansive and passenger-friendly. Private balconies are now affordable and in high demand.

When Norwegian Cruise Line introduced *Norwegian Jewel*, she boasted something never previously featured on a ship. Specially created **Courtyard Villas and Garden Villas** were built around a private courtyard that included an infinity pool complete with Jacuzzi and a lounging area. This has continued on their newer ships.

MSC Cruises' introduction of the MSC Yacht Club on the *MSC Fantasia* in 2008 took this "ship within a ship" concept to a new level. Expansive suites in exclusive key card areas provide special amenities.

Balconies have become the norm today. Some new fun twists? Disney Cruise Line introduced their **virtual portholes** for interior staterooms on the *Disney Dream*. Royal Caribbean International had **virtual balconies** added to interior staterooms on *Navigator of the Seas* when she went through an extensive drydock. And virtual balconies are included on *Quantum of the Seas*.



Oceania - Tranquility Bed in Suite



Norwegian Cruise Line - Balcony Room Layout



Royal Caribbean - Virtual Balcony



It's More Than A Massage

Spas aboard cruise ships are no longer places to go simply for treatments. It's become an experience within itself. Some cruise lines have marquee spas onboard their ships.

When Cunard Line's executives first began planning exclusive features for the *Queen Mary 2*, they consummated an agreement with Canyon Ranch Spa. The **Canyon Ranch Spa Club** was the first of its kind at sea. Holland America Line teamed up with well-known **Greenhouse Spa and Salon**.

Another trend that presents new options for groups are **spa accommodations**.

In 2006, Costa Cruises was the first to have designated spa accommodations, offering direct access to the 20,450-square-foot Samsara Spa. And they've continued these special **Samsara Spa** accommodations on their new ships.

The debut of Celebrity Cruises' *Solstice* in 2008 launched the new **AquaClass** category of veranda accommodations.

Carnival Cruise Lines' *Carnival Splendor*, launched in summer 2008, included 68 exclusive spa staterooms and suites.

Other cruise lines have followed suit.



Holland America - Greenhouse Spa Club



Cunard Line - Canyon Ranch Spa Club

SPOTLIGHT

Cunard Line's Canyon Ranch Spa Club Offers a Full Range of Spa Treatments, Some of Which Include:

Healthy Skin

- Your Transformation Facial
- Your "Total" Transformation Facial
- Cleanse & Polish Back Treatment
- Ageless Oxygen Boost
- Gentlemen's Facial
- Vitamin Infusion Facial
- Gemstone Anti-Aging Facial
- Lash Perfect: Luxurious Semipermanent Lashes

Body Treatments

- Euphoria Ritual
- Revitalising Ritual
- Naturally Nourishing Ritual
- Mermaid's Purse Wrap

Thermal Therapies

- Rasul Ceremony

Massage & Body Work

- Canyon Stone Massage
- Deep Tissue Massage
- Aromatherapy Massage
- Lymphatic Treatment
- Aromatherapy Muscle Soother
- Sole Rejuvenation
- Peppermint Scalp Refresher

Treatments from the East

- Thai Massage
- Reflexology
- Thai Reflexology

Healing Energy

- Reiki

Acupuncture

- Acupuncture
- Acupuncture Massage



15 KEY CONSIDERATIONS WHEN SELECTING A CRUISE FOR YOUR GROUP

Narrowing down the particular itinerary your group wants to take is one part of the decision-making process, but with more alternatives, features and specializations than ever before, deciding on the right ship and cruise line is also critical.

When choosing the right cruise for your group, consider the following key points:

1. What is the approximate length of cruise you want to take?
2. Do your group members prefer a warm-weather destination over a colder destination?
3. Are you locked into any preference as far as flying times, or where the ship departs from? (Are your group members adamant about not wanting to take a flight longer than three or four hours?)
4. Do your group members prefer to depart from a U.S. port where perhaps a flight is not necessary?
5. Do your group members prefer traditional dining or flexibility? Alternative dining, specialty restaurants, with multiple dining choices?
6. Do they enjoy a more resort-casual environment throughout their cruise or still like getting dressed up a few nights?
7. Is it critical that the group all dines together in the same dining room at the same time?
8. What kind of entertainment do they prefer?
9. Do they enjoy more of a gourmet dining experience or multiple choices, including more diverse cuisines?
10. What size ship best fits your group and their needs? Do they prefer a more intimate cruise ship experience, or is a mega-ship more their style?
11. Do your group members have valid passports? Passports must now be valid six months after the end of the cruise.
12. Do your group members want to visit many ports of call, or do they prefer an itinerary that includes a few days at sea?
13. Are your group members willing to return to a destination that they have previously visited, or do they prefer new destinations?

14. Do your group members have a budget amount they prefer to spend?
15. Finally, do your group members fall within one age range or do they consist of different age ranges and generations? Multigenerational groups take a bit more planning, but there are still several cruise lines that are excellent fits.

Once you've had an opportunity to do a quick survey of what your travelers prefer it will help you select a cruise destination. For instance, if your group members prefer warm-weather destinations, an Alaskan cruise won't work. Likewise, if they don't want to take a cruise that involves a long flight, that will eliminate certain cruise destinations. Also, people transition from ocean cruising into river cruising.

When it comes to costs, 7-night Caribbean cruises during "off times" are relatively inexpensive. A general rule of thumb - the more exotic the destination, the more it will cost.

PRO TIP

Passports are now a requirement for any travel outside the United States due to the Homeland Security Act. They need to be valid 6 months after the end of the cruise.



MULTI-GENERATIONAL GROUPS

According to the Cruise Lines International Association, families and multi-generational groups are one of the fastest growing segments of cruising.

And with cruise lines' focus on creating services and ship facilities that are in tune with today's lifestyles, multi-generational cruising is easier than ever.

Where cruise lines excel? Cruise vacations offer high value, and other strengths involve cruise lines' abilities to offer variety, choices, flexibility, value and a relatively seamless experience.

Royal Caribbean International, for instance, has **DreamWorks experience** onboard; they've teamed up with Fisher-Price® and have their complimentary Adventure Ocean® Youth & Teen Program. Yet they have a wide array of entertainment and dining options for adults.

You'll find multi-generational groups on cruise lines besides contemporary ones. Holland America Line offers an exclusive **Friends and Family Program** that rewards families booking eight or more staterooms.

When handling and leading a multi-generational cruise group, make sure the ship, onboard programs, facilities, accommodations and dining options fit.

Handling Special Needs for Group Members

With experienced cruisers getting older, cruise lines have responded by providing options for people who might have a special need.

For guests with mobility issues, cruise lines will vary with what they provide. Getting a complimentary wheelchair for use onboard is no longer the norm, so most guests will need to bring their own. Specialized equipment, such as oxygen, scooters and a wide range of wheelchairs can be booked and paid for through a separate company that's contracted by the line. Two companies that handle these types of rentals include Special Needs Group – Special Needs at Sea, and CareVacations. It's good to do some research first as to their equipment and pricing.

A group leader also should find out what ports might not be accessible to guests with special needs – ones that might include tenders for disembarkation or stairs to climb.

Also keep in mind that when it comes to river cruising in Europe, China and South America, the cruise lines do not offer handicapped-accessible staterooms.



PRO TIP

When leading a multi-generational group cruise, the booking process and organizational needs are similar to booking a group where the passenger ages are similar.



CONSIDERATIONS WHEN PLANNING YOUR GROUP

The key to putting together any successful cruise group is to **begin planning at least a year in advance** of your departure date. This gives you time to promote your group, perhaps offer a cruise night to create some interest, get deposits in, schedule additional installment payments, continue to update your group members, and allow yourself enough time to get final payments in on time.

When you are trying to decide on a cruise itinerary, make sure it appeals to your cruise members and fits into their budgets.

A 10-night cruise through the Tahitian islands might sound appealing, but if the price range is beyond people's budgets, you're not going to get the response you need.

Once you decide on the cruise itinerary, you'll also need to narrow down a sailing date. With these two key items decided, check on the best rates. Cruise lines tend to offer their more competitive group rates on off-peak sailings (shoulder and off-season).

Also, cruise lines will sometimes offer promotions for certain air departure cities, as well as certain stateroom categories.

Stateroom Considerations

Today more variations and options exist beyond limited categories - interior staterooms (with no window), ocean view staterooms, balcony staterooms or suites.

Norwegian Cruise Line's *Norwegian Epic* introduced the cruise industry's first "solo staterooms" called "The Studios." These single-occupancy staterooms accommodate one guest at a special rate, without the extra surcharge. It fits a need.



Mike Julius
Senior Managing Director
of U.S. Trade Sales
Carnival Cruise Lines

"At Carnival, we work with agents to help them build business in their own backyard.

We've seen many agents enjoy great success by working with our sales team on creating strategies to build affinity group business and think this is an area that will continue to grow steadily in the months and years ahead."

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER



Other cruise lines have begun to embrace “solo staterooms” including Holland America Line and Royal Caribbean International. River cruise lines also have some solo options.

Other stateroom options? Cruise lines also have expanded their spas, with special staterooms connected.

Cruise lines normally let groups hold a variety of stateroom types, but you’ll need to assess what your group’s particular needs might be.

Airfare Considerations

Airfare is another part of the cruise package you’ll need to consider.

Will your group members all be departing from the same city or from different cities/airports?

Cruise lines offer airfare from a variety of major cities; however, they cannot guarantee nonstop flights, nor can they guarantee that all of your group members will be on the same departure flight even if they are all departing from the same airport and city.

A nonrefundable surcharge might be involved - many cruise lines charge a small per person nonrefundable fee upon flight confirmation. Once again, this varies from cruise line to cruise line. However, many cruise lines have actually expanded their air/sea departments, and this can be a benefit.

Also, cruise lines might run promotions, and some lines do require a minimum number of guests needed to book airfare through them. Make sure you get specifics on airfare as well as options in any printed material you put together to promote the group.

Dining Considerations

As mentioned previously, shipboard dining has come a long way over the past three decades from offering just the traditional first “main” and second “late” dining options. Now with more choices, alternatives and selections are readily available.

Today it’s important to match your group with the right itinerary and ship, but also consider the right fit with dining.

Complimentary dining options with flexibility, along with specialty restaurants (cover charges ranging from \$15 - \$40 per person), and dinner and a show (surcharge applies) provide more choices. Guests have the option to dine when they want and with whom they want, but make sure they know about fees.

Culinary choices range from sushi bars and French bistros to Teppanyaki, steak houses, and Italian trattorias. Advance reservations are usually needed



and a surcharge usually applies. Luxury cruise lines have alternative dining sans surcharges.

The river cruise segment brings another dimension. With fewer guests onboard, they offer even more flexibility and no assigned dining times, plus wine is often included.

With options available onboard each ship, it's best to find out what your group members prefer and then discuss this with your cruise planner or group sales desk at the cruise line to determine what fits you.

Cruise lines vary when confirming group dining in advance. The increasing number of dining alternatives, cuisines, possible surcharges and time choices involve planning.

- As a group leader it's critical to find out how important it is for your group to dine together all the time.
- Are they open to flexibility rather than traditional dining?
- Are they willing to dine in smaller groups at some of the alternative restaurants?

Another factor that could come into play involves each group member's past passenger status with that cruise line. The amenities extended to the guest by the cruise line vary with their level of membership, so it's critical to know how many times your group members have sailed with that cruise line.



PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER



RESERVING CRUISE SPACE

Once you've decided on your ship, itinerary, sailing date, and the stateroom categories needed, you are ready to reserve the space.

From there, the cruise line will issue a contract that lists the group specifics, such as the prices, the stateroom categories reserved, the air departure city, dining choice and any other details. Also included in the contract will be the deposit and final payment due dates. Although many cruise lines will let you add their own insurance between deposit and final payment time, it's better to include it upfront.

The Initial Deposit

Although most cruise lines simply require a nominal deposit (usually \$50 per person but this varies with the length of cruise and cruise line), **you're better off requiring the higher amount from your guests** (recommend \$250+ per person) to actually get the stateroom assigned.

If your group members are actually serious about going on the cruise, the \$250+ per person amount due is not going to deter them. This separates the serious people from the dreamers.

Deposit is usually due to the cruise line within 30 days of when the contract is finalized. **Keep in mind that cruises of longer durations as well as the luxury cruise lines require higher deposits.** For example, Silversea Cruises and Seabourn require 25% deposit of the total, while Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection has a \$300 per person non-refundable deposit.

Additional Deposits/Final Payments

Sometimes cruise lines require a second deposit. On the flip side, occasionally you'll have group members who prefer to give periodic payments, so they do not have to pay one large final payment. (As a group organizer, if you offer this as an option to your group, make sure you keep the money in a separate secured account, or send it on to your cruise line.)

In addition, if you've reserved extra staterooms to

hold for your group, the cruise line has review dates (average five months prior to the sailing date). The cruise line has the option of taking back unreserved staterooms at that point.

Most cruise lines require final payment 75 days prior to the departure date, but this varies. Costa Cruises requires final pay 90 days prior.

Buffer your deadline by at least two weeks so you can collect all monies. Avoid frustration and set an early due date!

FOCUS ON DOCUMENTS

Today, most cruise line documents are done electronically.

Cruise guests check in online using a special portal on the cruise line's website. You or your travel professional can check your group members in online and provide these electronic documents to them.

It's critical to also include some extra notes and information for your group members with their E- documents. This is a little time-consuming, but it's a necessity. Cover the key things, such as suggestions on dress, which private functions your group has scheduled, shore excursions, proper proof of citizenship, packing suggestions and temperatures.

Emergency phone numbers should also be included. Cruise lines normally include a toll-free number for passengers to use in case they have a delay or problem the day of departure.



Also, cruise lines' cancellation penalties are extremely straightforward, and they DO NOT bend.

Make sure the cruise line cancellation penalties have been given to your entire group well in advance, along with obtaining that signed insurance waiver from anyone who is not purchasing optional trip waivers or trip insurance.

With tight security now the norm, this is also a good time to reiterate again what your group members will need for proof of citizenship. Cruise lines have become very strict on forms of identification needed as well as making sure names are spelled correctly and match the documentation. Boarding can be denied to passengers, with no refund given.

Passports are required by all U.S. citizens traveling outside the United States, and must be valid 6 months after the return date from the cruise.

USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO CREATE EXCITEMENT AMONG GROUP MEMBERS

Most groups are booked about a year out from the actual departure date, and it's good to build excitement in the months and weeks before the big day. Providing fun tips and updates are part of the buildup and helps your cruisers know what to expect while onboard.

Using social media makes this task easier. The first step is to set up a Facebook page just for your particular group and sailing. As the organizer, share photos on your group Facebook page, along with posting regular tips and notices when new people join. Consider having a countdown as the departure date gets closer. News on the itinerary and ports, weather forecasts and special group events you'll be offering, along with packing tips and clothing recommendations, are great ways to engage your group members. Also, if your group has done a previous cruise together, ask them to share photos and videos. Once you get that conversation going, it tends to take off by itself, adding momentum and fun.

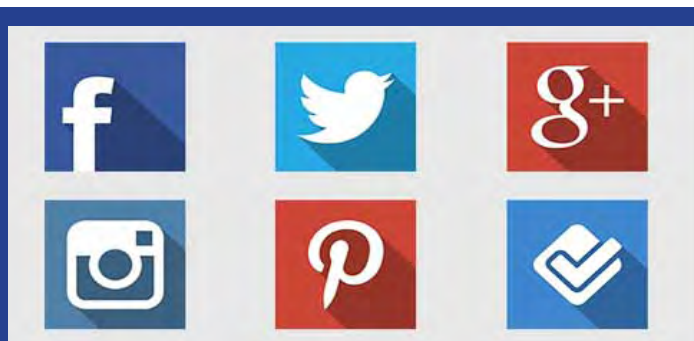
While Facebook is the most popular social media forum and therefore your best chance of reaching group members, there are other options. Consider hosting a Google hangout or conducting a Skype Chatter or live Twitter conversation. Just make sure your group members are fluent in whatever technology you choose to use.

Staying Connected

Many cruise lines now have mobile apps that guests can download, and this is another way to stay connected with your group while onboard.

Examples include Princess Cruises' complimentary Princess@Sea mobile app, which be accessed via a smartphone or tablet, and their Princess@Sea Messenger, which is integrated into it. Norwegian Cruise Line provides the Norwegian iConcierge app, while Royal Caribbean International has their Royal app. These mobile apps let guests keep informed about everything going on during the cruise, from shore excursions to daily activity highlights. Another feature is a messenger/phone feature (usually for a nominal fee) that lets guests keep in touch with each other during the cruise.

Downloading and using these mobile apps provides another way for you to stay in touch with your group members while on the cruise and coordinate some last-minute fun events. Prior to your cruise departure, check with the cruise line to see what mobile app they have for guests.



Finalizing Dining and Seating Requests

Prior to final payment, the cruise line will need a list of what you'll prefer as far as table seating in the dining room – basically, this is a list of who prefers to sit with whom.

If there are any special requests such as dietary needs or anniversaries, these will also need to be noted. If your group is having any special functions, like a private cocktail party, this will also need to be set up and finalized at this point.

ADVANCE PREPARATIONS BEFORE ESCORTING YOUR GROUP

This guide can't begin to cover the entirety of policies, procedures and nuances of escorting a group – it's a very involved process.

But a few basics will help you along the way:

- Anyone escorting the group needs to have complete lists of important details. First, you need a list of all group members, along with a rooming list.
- Make sure you also have home and cell phone numbers or emergency contact information for all your travelers.
- You'll need a complete list of all dining requests and table arrangements, as well as a copy of the flight schedules, seat assignments, and airline reservation phone numbers & websites.
- Make sure you have a phone number for the travel insurance company that your group has used, plus contact numbers for your cruise planner, the cruise line itself, and any transportation company the cruise line/you are using for transfers to the ship.
- Finally, make sure your group members have a way of contacting you should an emergency come up.



PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER



SOME PERKS INVOLVED WHEN BOOKING A GROUP

It's standard among cruise lines to offer a complimentary tour leader berth (free cruise) to the group leader escorting a group when the group meets the necessary number of guests.

The standard for most 7-day Caribbean cruises is once you have 16 passengers booked in eight staterooms, the 16th person is given the free cruise berth.

This person (usually the group leader) still has to pay the additional port charges and government fees, as well as any applicable airfare and transfers, but it's a perk. And the larger the group numbers, the more tour conductor berths given. (Usually there is a maximum number given.)

River cruises tend to offer the complimentary tour leader berth with fewer people in the group. So it's good to check each cruise line individually.

Amenities programs are now a given. These programs include extra options offered to groups and vary with the ship and sailing date.

Most cruise lines have adopted a point system where each ship and sailing is assigned a number of points.

These can be used for shipboard credits, wine, a private cocktail party for the group, to "Dollars Off" discounts or even upgrades.



Carnival Cruises

PRO TIP Fundraising Cruises

If your trip involves fundraising, most cruise lines offer a pre-set amount that will be allocated to the selected non-profit organization to help in your fundraising efforts. Cruise lines vary on amounts.



5 TIPS FOR THE DAY OF DEPARTURE TO DEBARKATION

1. If your travelers are arriving individually at the airport, **be sure that they all get checked in properly for their flights.** If you have travelers departing from various cities, monitor their flights to ensure that everything is going according to schedule.
2. When you arrive and are transferred to the ship, **make sure your group members get checked in first,** and advise the cruise line check-in personnel that you are the group leader and want to re-verify dining room and table assignments, as well as the stateroom list.
3. It's a good idea to **schedule a welcome aboard cocktail party the first night** as a great "how are you doing" meeting with your group. As an escort, it's all part of your job to make sure that the cruise experience goes well for all your group members. If they have a problem, make sure they know you are available for assistance, in addition to the staff members at the lobby desks.
4. Throughout the cruise, make sure you **periodically touch base with all your group members** and let them know how to get in touch with you, or maybe set a specific place and time where you'll be each day to answer questions. You're there to have fun as well, but your first consideration needs to be your passengers.
5. And before the end of the cruise, it's important to gather your group together in one spot to ensure they are aware of how disembarkation procedures will be handled. This is always discussed at a **special disembarkation talk** offered the last full day of the cruise and can also be viewed on the stateroom TV.



LOYALTY PAYS OFF: PAST PASSENGER CLUBS

Loyalty has never been better rewarded than by cruise lines as past passenger clubs have come into their own. It's no longer just an invitation to a captain's cocktail party or a small discount on a future cruise.

How do cruise lines measure a past passenger's loyalty?

Some cruise lines go with the number of past sailings a guest has, others go by the number of days, while some weigh the type of stateroom booked.

Cruise lines also have different levels of benefits based on the levels of membership. Those can include a complimentary wine tasting, priority check-in and disembarkation, free laundry service or dining at a specialty restaurant.

For example, Silversea Cruises awards points for every day sailed, and after 350 sailing days, the guest also gets a free 7-day voyage of his choice. Seabourn gives a free 7-day cruise after sailing 140 days. Most cruise lines have multi-tiered programs.

Obtain your group members' individual past passenger club member numbers. Cruise lines do provide amenities to groups by booking as a group and one key rule applies:

The group department's amenities program can not overlap the past passenger member's perks, that is, there is no "double dipping."

For instance, if the past guest benefit involves a stateroom upgrade, it applies to an individual reservation and cannot be applied to a group rate. But many cruise lines' special rewards and recognitions now involve other perks onboard. These will still be available to that past passenger, so include that guest's past passenger number in the group cruise booking. This way any amenities or benefits can be applied that don't conflict with ones already being extended to the group.



Carnival Cruises

PRO TIP Perks

Don't forget to check into both the past passenger clubs and group leader benefits of the cruise line you are booking. You may save a lot of money and even receive a free stateroom for your group leader!



INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAYERS

The cruise industry has undergone a great deal of consolidation and merger activity.

Back in the mid-1980s, Carnival Cruise Lines' fleet consisted of five ships; now there are over 20 ships plying the waters under the Carnival logo alone. The parent company, Carnival Corporation, actually consists of nine cruise lines called **The World's Leading Cruise Lines**.

These include Carnival Cruise Lines, Costa Cruises, Cunard Line, Holland America Line, Princess Cruises, and Seabourn. All of these cruise lines have kept their separate identities, with distinct products, unique services and a wide range of offerings.

When **Celebrity Cruises became part of the Royal Caribbean International Corporation** in 1997, the cruise lines remained separate, each forging ahead with their own distinct branding.

In 2007 a third cruise line, Azamara Club Cruises, was launched. A premium cruise line, Azamara has more intimate ships sailing to more exclusive destinations.

First established in 1966, and then called Norwegian Caribbean Line, Norwegian Cruise Line was one of the early cruise lines known for industry firsts, such as offering the first private "out island" and famous name entertainment onboard.

Norwegian continued to forge into new markets with unique choices, specializations and new ships. In November 2014, the parent company, **Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings, Ltd., acquired Prestige Cruises International**, which includes Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises.

Another growing cruise line is MSC Cruises. In 2003 they launched a **\$3-billion expansion program**. This continues with more new ships entering service over the next few years. MSC Cruises' parent company,

Mediterranean Shipping Company, is the second largest freight container company in the world.

They've expanded their North American efforts with MSC Cruises USA located in Ft. Lauderdale. Building brand awareness into the North American market is a key focus as the cruise line expands.

In addition, the cruise industry has seen the emergence of the "deluxe/upper premium" category, and growth of the luxury cruise lines. And the explosive expansion of the river cruise industry continues, not just over in Europe, but in the U.S. as well.



Part of the MSC Fleet



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: Contemporary



Carnival Cruise Lines has long been known for its success with the "Fun Ships" branding and has led the way in unique cruise ship designs and themes.

Carnival offers a wide variety of entertainment in its lounges, showrooms, and clubs. Expanding alternative dining options, creating waterparks, and adding more partnerships have created even more options for guests.

In 2011 Carnival Cruise Lines launched their Red Frog Pub, along with a private label beer. In 2014 they entered into an exclusive agreement with Cigar City Brewing and now offer two craft beers on 13 of their ships.

Although the ships vary as far as size, design and passenger capacity, consistency is a key focus. In addition to expanding with new ships, Carnival Cruise Lines enhances their existing ones.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 43
- Ships in the Fleet - 24
- Rewards Program - VIPF Club

Ports of Call

Red Sea, Caribbean, Bahamas, Mexico, Alaska, Hawaii, Canada, New England and Panama Canal.

800-327-5782

www.carnival.com

Facebook: [Carnival](#)

Twitter: [@CarnivalCruise](#)



27 MAJOR PLAYERS IN THE CRUISE INDUSTRY



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: Contemporary



With its tagline and marketing theme "Cruising Italian Style...That's Amore," Costa Cruises has long been known for its Italian ties and tends to appeal to both the international as well as U.S. cruise markets.

Costa offers a wide variety of itineraries throughout Europe in spring and summer months and is known as "Europe's # 1 Cruise Line."

The successful launch of their Samsara Spa in 2006 and exclusive Spa accommodations provide options for guests and groups.

Their ships offer a European flair and Italian-style themes, seen with the use of extensive marble in their designs.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 65
- Ships in the Fleet - 15
- Rewards Program - CostaClub

Ports of Call

Caribbean, Red Sea, Eastern/Western Mediterranean, Far East, Dubai, Norwegian Fjords, South America and Transatlantic.

800-462-6782

www.costacruises.com

Facebook: [CostaCruises](https://www.facebook.com/CostaCruises)

Twitter: [@CostaCruises](https://twitter.com/CostaCruises)



27 MAJOR PLAYERS IN THE CRUISE INDUSTRY



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: Contemporary



Disney Cruise Line's ships offer the elegance and décor of superliners of yesteryear, coupled with modern facilities designed with the entire family in mind.

Expansive, dedicated children's areas and extensive youth programs are the line's strength, but they have also successfully created entertainment and areas specifically for adults.

Entertainment is particularly strong, with full Broadway-style shows included. Even the dining offers an entertainment twist, with themed dining rooms, as well as a reservations-only restaurant for adults.

And Disney's private Bahamian island, Castaway Cay, continues with the theme of offering beach facilities geared towards all of its passengers.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 19
- Ships in the Fleet - 4
- Rewards Program - Castaway Club

Ports of Call

Caribbean, Europe, Alaska and Bahamas.

888-325-2500

www.disnycruise.disney.go.com

Facebook: [DisneyCruiseLine](https://www.facebook.com/DisneyCruiseLine)

Twitter: [@DisneyCruise](https://twitter.com/DisneyCruise)



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: Contemporary



Founded in 1990, MSC Cruises is part of the Mediterranean Shipping Company family, a privately-owned shipping group that includes the second largest freight container company in the world.

MSC Cruises' fleet has gone through an aggressive expansion program - 640 percent growth in just a 10-year span, with 12 modern ships and four new ships scheduled.

MSC Cruises provides Mediterranean hospitality and international cuisine. They also offer a variety of theme cruises.

In 2008, MSC Cruises introduced a cruise industry first on their MSC Fantasia. Called the MSC Yacht Club, this "ship within the ship" area features a special luxury suite area, butler service for guests, private pool, lounge, restaurant and a dedicated concierge.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 25
- Ships in the Fleet - 12
- Rewards Program - MSC Club

Ports of Call

Caribbean, Panama Canal and South America, as well as extensively in the Mediterranean.

877-665-4655

www.msccruises.com

Facebook: [MSCCruisesInternational](https://www.facebook.com/MSCCruisesInternational)

Twitter: [@MSCCruisesUSA](https://twitter.com/MSCCruisesUSA)



27 MAJOR PLAYERS IN THE CRUISE INDUSTRY

CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: Contemporary



Known for innovations, Norwegian Cruise Line was the first major cruise line to offer true flexibility for their guests when they introduced "Freestyle Cruising" in 2000.

Adding more dining options, and with no fixed dining times or pre-assigned dining, as well as expanding restaurants, Norwegian Cruise Line has elevated cruising to more personal choices.

Norwegian Cruise Line also lead the way with their innovative staterooms. These include the Studios for solo travelers, which includes their own Studio Lounge. Another is The Haven by Norwegian™, their exclusive enclave with spacious accommodations, The Haven Courtyard area with private pool, sundeck, hot tub and private fitness area, along with butler service and more.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 48
- Ships in the Fleet - 14
- Rewards Program - Latitudes

Ports of Call

Caribbean, Hawaii, Alaska, Bermuda, Canada/New England, Bahamas and Florida, Europe and Mexican Riviera.

800-327-7030

www.ncl.com

Facebook: [NorwegianCruiseLine](https://www.facebook.com/NorwegianCruiseLine)

Twitter: [@CruiseNorwegian](https://twitter.com/CruiseNorwegian)



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: Contemporary



PRINCESS CRUISES

escape completely®

A cruise line not content to sit back on its success and name recognition, Princess Cruises has led the way when it comes to more innovation in its cruise ship designs and is one of the best known names in the cruise industry.

Princess Cruises made the balcony stateroom affordable and launched the first 24-hour casual dining restaurant in the industry, as well as its "Anytime Dining" option and specialty restaurants.

Always well known for excellent entertainment, Princess Cruises introduced "Movies under the Stars," offering outdoor movies for cruise guests to enjoy. And they've continued to offer more industry firsts on their ships, including the Skywalk, new dining options, and private pool areas.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 50
- Ships in the Fleet - 18
- Rewards Program - Captain's Circle

Ports of Call

Europe, Alaska, Caribbean, Mexico, Canada and New England, Asia, Panama Canal, Australia and New Zealand, India, Africa, South America, Hawaii, Japan, Tahiti and the South Pacific.

800-774-6237

www.princess.com

Facebook: [PrincessCruises](https://www.facebook.com/PrincessCruises)

Twitter: [@PrincessCruises](https://twitter.com/PrincessCruises)



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: Contemporary



Royal Caribbean International has long been a leader in the contemporary cruise line category. They continue to build new ships, yet continually update all their ships to make sure their guest-favorite experiences are onboard.

In 1988 Royal Caribbean's *Sovereign of the Seas* was the first ship to offer a multi-level lobby. Then came other features on their next ships --dome-covered pool areas, in addition to the regular outdoor pools, and two-level dining rooms.

The debut of *Quantum of the Seas* in November 2014 included even more firsts. "Dynamic Dining" has completely changed the dining experience. Main dining restaurants have been replaced with five different complimentary dining experiences, each handling a maximum of just 435 guests or less.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 47
- Ships in the Fleet - 21
- Rewards Program - MyCruise Rewards

Ports of Call

Caribbean, Alaska, Bermuda, Bahamas, Asia, Australia, Europe, New Zealand, Hawaii, Mexico, Panama Canal, Canada/New England and South America.

800-465-3595

www.rccl.com

Facebook: [RoyalCaribbean](https://www.facebook.com/RoyalCaribbean)

Twitter: [@RoyalCaribbean](https://twitter.com/RoyalCaribbean)



2 MAJOR PLAYERS IN THE CRUISE INDUSTRY



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: Premium



Holland America Line

A Signature of Excellence

Holland America Line lets guests enjoy the pleasure of sailing on mid-size ships that are elegant and uncrowded with unique onboard experiences.

The ships have long been characterized by attentive dining room service and understated elegance. The first "Signature of Excellence" initiative launched in 2003 included enhancements - accommodation features like the Mariner Dream Bed, flat-screen TVs and special dining enhancements like the Pinnacle Grill.

The Exploration Café, powered by The New York Times and the groundbreaking Culinary Arts Center, was also added. The Culinary Arts Center includes an innovative show kitchen where guests enjoy cooking demonstrations. And the exclusive Greenhouse Spa & Salon was added. The "Signature of Excellence" initiatives continue.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 140
- Ships in the Fleet - 15
- Rewards Program - Mariner Society

Ports of Call

Alaska, Caribbean, Panama Canal, Trans-Atlantic, Europe, Far East, Hawaii, Mexico, South America, Antarctica, Canada/New England, Asia and Pacific, Australia and Pacific Northwest.

800 -425-9477

www.hollandamerica.com

Facebook: [HALCruises](https://www.facebook.com/HALCruises)

Twitter: [@HALCruises](https://twitter.com/HALCruises)



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: Premium



Since its inception in 1989, Celebrity has held true to its original commitment of taking the very best aspects of classic, elegant cruising and updating them to reflect current lifestyles. In 1997, they merged with Royal Caribbean International to form Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd.

What sets Celebrity apart from other vacation choices today is the cruise line's passionate dedication to providing guests with a cruise experience that embodies modern luxury. This has become the definition of Celebrity Cruises, and has set the worldwide standard for today's expression of what first made cruising famous -- high quality, superior design, spacious accommodations, grand style, attentive service and exceptional cuisine.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 25
- Ships in the Fleet - 11
- Rewards Program - Captain's Club

Ports of Call

Alaska, Caribbean, Europe, Hawaii and Pacific Islands, Mexico, Panama Canal, Asia, Australia and New Zealand, Canada and New England and South America. The Celebrity Xpedition cruises to the Galapagos.

800-963-0311

www.celebritycruises.com

Facebook: [celebritycruises](https://www.facebook.com/celebritycruises)

Twitter: [@CelebrityCruise](https://twitter.com/CelebrityCruise)



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: Deluxe



Formed in 2002, Oceania Cruises was designed to offer an onboard experience to emulate the casual elegance of a country club and offer outstanding cuisine, with destination-oriented itineraries.

Renowned chef Jacques Pepin has created their gourmet culinary program.

Oceania has the acclaimed Canyon Ranch SpaClub® onboard, and their mid-size ships feature large-ship amenities.

The Prestige Tranquility Bed is an Oceania Cruises exclusive, and they have gourmet restaurants on their ships. Their Bon Appétit Culinary Center is the first complete hands-on cooking school at sea.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 13
- Ships in the Fleet - 6
- Rewards Program - Oceania Club

Ports of Call

Europe, Asia, South Pacific, Caribbean and Panama Canal, Australia, Alaska, Africa, and New England and Canada.

800-531-5658

www.oceaniacruises.com

Facebook: [OceaniaCruises](https://www.facebook.com/OceaniaCruises)

Twitter: [@OceaniaCruises](https://twitter.com/OceaniaCruises)



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: **Deluxe**



AZAMARA
CLUB CRUISES®

Launched in 2007 by Celebrity Cruises, Azamara Cruises was developed to appeal to the upscale, small-ship traveler who enjoys sailing to exclusive destinations.

The Azamara *Journey* and the Azamara *Quest* are elegantly designed, intimate and feature butler service as well as concierge-type amenities.

In addition, Azamara Club Cruises' ships each offer two specialty restaurants at no charge to their guests in addition to a main dining room with open seating and other dining options.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 8
- Ships in the Fleet - 2
- Rewards Program - Le Club Voyage

Ports of Call

Known for their "Destination Immersion," Azamara Club Cruises has numerous overnight stays, offering itineraries throughout the world.

800-556-8208

www.azamaracruises.com

Facebook: [AzamaraClubCruises](https://www.facebook.com/AzamaraClubCruises)

Twitter: [@AzamaraVoyages](https://twitter.com/AzamaraVoyages)



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: Deluxe



What makes Crystal Cruises' fleet unique is their size when compared to other luxury brands.

Crystal's ships tend to be more mid-sized and offer high standards as far as personal service, appeal to more sophisticated passengers, have advanced technology and offer more unique itineraries.

In 2014 Crystal Cruises launched a menu concept that includes a new nightly dining experience in their main dining rooms with more than 100 new dishes. The Crystal Dining Room includes two menus, "Modern" and "Classic."

The addition of their new Outdoor Fitness Garden as well as other upgrades bring new options for guests. Gratuities and all liquors are included in the fare.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 25
- Ships in the Fleet - 2
- Rewards Program - Crystal Society

Ports of Call

Europe, Trans-Atlantic, Caribbean, New England/Canada, Alaska, Panama Canal, South America, Antarctica, South Pacific, Australia/New Zealand and Asia.

888-722-0021

www.crystalcruises.com

Facebook: [CrystalCruises](https://www.facebook.com/CrystalCruises)

Twitter: [@CrystalCruises](https://twitter.com/CrystalCruises)



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: **Deluxe**



Continuing with a tradition that began back in 1840, Cunard Line is one of the more recognized brand names in the cruise industry, and proudly offers "The Most Famous Ocean Liners in the World."

When the *Queen Mary 2*, entered service in 2004, she was one of the most expensive ships ever built, at a cost of over \$800 million.

In 2007 the *Queen Victoria* entered service and then came the *Queen Elizabeth* in 2010. She was christened by Her Majesty the Queen, Queen Elizabeth II.

Known for gourmet cuisine, as well as a reputation for personalized service, luxurious accommodations and attention to detail, the ocean liners in the Cunard fleet offer exotic and extensive cruise itineraries including transatlantic crossings and world cruises.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 175
- Ships in the Fleet - 3
- Rewards Program - World Club

Ports of Call

Africa, Atlantic Isles & Canaries, Australasia & Pacific Islands, Baltic, Scandinavia & Iceland, British Isles, North West Europe, Caribbean, Central America, Far East, Hawaii, Mediterranean, Middle East, USA and Canada

800-728-6273

www.cunard.com

Facebook: [Cunard](https://www.facebook.com/Cunard)

Twitter: [@Cunardline](https://twitter.com/Cunardline)



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: **Deluxe**

Regent

SEVEN SEAS CRUISES

Known for destinations and diverse itineraries, Regent Seven Seas Cruises prides itself on offering an unregimented luxury cruise experience to well-traveled guests on their four ships.

Regent Seven Seas Cruises' ships are also known for offer amenities normally found only on larger ocean liners and provide destination-intensive cruises.

Guests enjoy concierge amenities, with up to four gourmet restaurants, along with diverse entertainment and an elegant casual dress code.

Guests also enjoy free unlimited shore excursions, along with unique enrichment programs.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 24
- Ships in the Fleet - 4
- Rewards Program -Canyon Ranch SpaClub®

Ports of Call

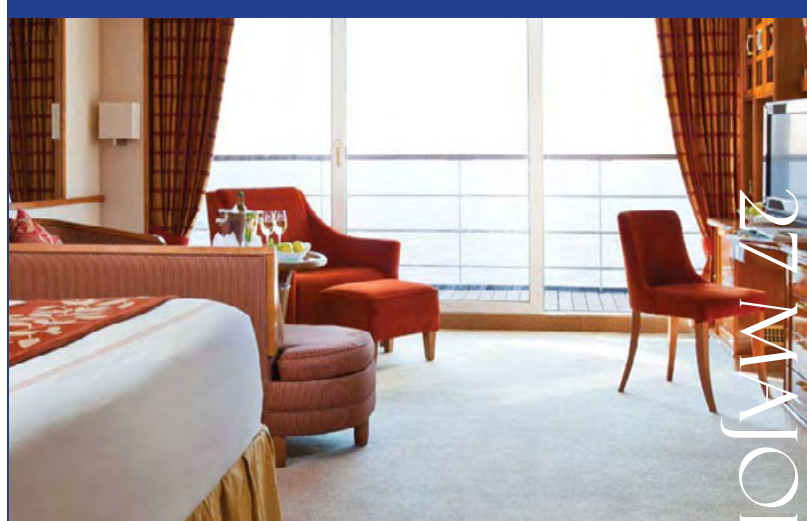
The ships sail to more than 250 ports throughout the world.

800-477-7500

www.rssc.com

Facebook: [RegentSevenSeasCruises](https://www.facebook.com/RegentSevenSeasCruises)

Twitter: [@RegentCruises](https://twitter.com/RegentCruises)



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: **Deluxe**



SEABOURN®

Seabourn's fleet of ships offers a smaller, more exclusive and elegant cruise experience, and it has successfully established itself as an "ultra luxury" cruise line, winning countless awards and receiving top ratings.

More than simply marketing its destinations, Seabourn emphasizes lifestyle.

Personalized service is the key, with cuisine created by celebrity chef Charlie Palmer. Open seating in the dining rooms and alternative casual dining are the norm, as are complimentary wines, with no gratuities expected.

Seabourn has new ships coming out in the next few years. Accommodating just 604 guests, the first will debut in 2016, and the next new ship will debut in 2018.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 27
- Ships in the Fleet - 6
- Rewards Program -Seabourn Club

Ports of Call

Caribbean, Canada/New England, Trans-Atlantic, Europe, Africa, Indian Ocean, Asia, Australia/New Zealand, South America and Antarctica.

800-929-9595

www.seabourn.com

Facebook: [Seabourn](#)

Twitter: [@SeabournCruise](#)



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: **Deluxe**



Silversea Cruises is one of the few cruise lines that offers a complete “all-inclusive” cruise product.

No tipping is required, and open seating dining options offer guests the opportunity to dine when, where, and with whom they desire.

They offer an interesting variety of onboard programming for guests that concentrate on art, cooking, architecture and culture.

The ships’ small size allow them to navigate and explore smaller harbors.

Built and designed for the “ultra-luxury” market, Silversea Cruises has won countless awards and is recognized as the “defining elite luxury experience.”

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 21
- Ships in the Fleet - 8
- Rewards Program -Venetian Society

Ports of Call

Arctic, Alaska, Canada/New England, Trans-Atlantic, Europe, Africa, Indian Ocean, Asia, Australia/New Zealand, South America, Galapagos and Antarctica.

800-722-9955

www.silversea.com

Facebook: [SilverseaCruises](https://www.facebook.com/SilverseaCruises)

Twitter: [@Silverseas](https://twitter.com/Silverseas)



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: Specialized



Pearl Seas Cruises has developed small-ship cruising to perfection. They have crafted brand-new ships that combine all of the latest guest conveniences with the most modern navigation and safety technology.

The brand new Pearl Mist features large, gracefully appointed staterooms with the comforts of home. Private balconies in every stateroom, open sun decks, and lounges make traveling between ports a delight.

Experience the intimate atmosphere of a small cruise ship featuring all modern amenities, activities and experiences with none of the disruption of large crowds.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 1
- Ships in the Fleet - 1
- Rewards Program - Oyster Society

Ports of Call

Canada, Great Lakes, New England, South America, Caribbean

800-983-7462

www.pearlseascruises.com

Facebook: [PearlSeasCruises](https://www.facebook.com/PearlSeasCruises)

Twitter: [@PearlSeas](https://twitter.com/PearlSeas)



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: Specialized



WINDSTAR® CRUISES
180° FROM ORDINARY

Windstar Cruises, well known for their sophisticated small-ship yachts, expanded in 2013 by purchasing three yacht-like ships from Seabourn. The newly renovated *Star Pride* entered service earlier in 2014; *Star Breeze* and *Star Legend* enter service in 2015 after undergoing renovations.

Windstar Cruises offers the best of both worlds – the elegance of yacht-like cruising combined with a casual but elegant atmosphere as well as being able to explore more secluded areas.

With 148 to 310 guests onboard, their ships are large enough to pamper their guests.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 31
- Ships in the Fleet - 6
- Rewards Program - Yacht Club

Ports of Call

Mediterranean, Black Sea, Northern Europe, Caribbean, Panama Canal, Costa Rica, Tahiti, Arabia, Asia

800-258-7245

www.windstarcruises.com

Facebook: [WindstarCruises](https://www.facebook.com/WindstarCruises)

Twitter: [@WindstarCruises](https://twitter.com/WindstarCruises)



OVERVIEW AND GROWTH OF RIVER CRUISING

The river cruise industry has gone through explosive growth, providing even more options for groups. It's expanding into more areas besides the core of the European river waterways, and brings some extra features that group leaders should consider.

First, river cruises take guests to unique ports and river towns not accessible by large cruise ships.

The smaller vessels can often dock right in the heart of these towns and provide an all-inclusive way to explore a destination.

Guests have a range of dining options at no additional charge, along with complimentary specialty coffees, wine, beer and soft drinks.

Shore excursions are usually included, as well as complimentary WiFi throughout the ship.

Besides Europe, the river cruise industry has expanded throughout the U.S. with American Cruise Lines and American Queen Steamboat Company.



27 MAJOR PLAYERS IN THE CRUISE INDUSTRY



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: River Cruising



Avalon Waterways began its first operating season in 2004 and is a part of the Globus family of brands, a worldwide leader in escorted tours.

Avalon Waterways' ships cruise throughout Europe's waterways in conjunction with Globus land packages.

In addition, Avalon Waterways has an English-speaking crew, and the line was designed more specifically for the North American market.

They also have special themed cruises.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 10
- Ships in the Fleet - 23
- Rewards Program - MyAvalon

Ports of Call

Europe, China, Southeast Asia, United States, South America and Galápagos Islands

800-221-0090

www.avalonwaterways.com

Facebook: [AvalonWaterways](https://www.facebook.com/AvalonWaterways)

Twitter: [@AvalonWaterways](https://twitter.com/AvalonWaterways)



27 MAJOR PLAYERS IN THE CRUISE INDUSTRY

CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: River Cruising



AmaWaterways operates the finest fleet and provides all-inclusive river cruise vacations on the great waterways of Europe, Russia, Vietnam and Cambodia. With an innovative product and rapidly-growing fleet of custom-designed ships, the line enjoys a reputation as the leader in river cruising.

AmaWaterways was created in 2002 by cruise industry veteran Rudi Schreiner and Jim Murphy, the former owner and CEO of Brendan Worldwide Vacations.

On cruises designed for the English-speaking market, guests can enjoy complimentary wine, beer and soda with dinner as well as complimentary cappuccinos and espressos with every meal.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 13
- Ships in the Fleet - 21
- Rewards Program - Privilege Rewards

Ports of Call

Europe, Vietnam & Cambodia (Mekong River), Africa and Myanmar (Burma.)

800-626-0126

www.amawaterways.com

Facebook: [AmaWaterways](https://www.facebook.com/AmaWaterways)

Twitter: [@AmaWaterways](https://twitter.com/AmaWaterways)



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: River Cruising



Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection provides intimate, boutique-style river cruise ships that feature beautifully appointed riverview staterooms and have professionally trained, all English-speaking staff.

They also include custom-blended shore excursions hosted by English-speaking guides.

Some additional features – complimentary transfers are included on the day of arrival and departure for all of their cruises and tours.

In addition, guests enjoy complimentary wine with dinner, 24-hour specialty coffees including cappuccinos and lattes as well as bottled water in each stateroom.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 39
- Ships in the Fleet - 13
- Rewards Program - River Heritage Club

Ports of Call

Europe, Russia, Egypt, China and India, as well as Vietnam & Cambodia.

800-425-0043

www.uniworld.com

Facebook: [UniworldCruises](https://www.facebook.com/UniworldCruises)

Twitter: [@UniworldCruises](https://twitter.com/UniworldCruises)



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: River Cruising



Established in 1997 by Torstein Hagen, Viking Cruises (formerly known as Viking River Cruises) has deluxe vessels sailing the river waterways of Europe, Russia and Egypt as well as China and Southeast Asia.

With rapid expansion, they've become the world's largest river cruise line.

Their vessels are floating hotels, surrounded by the highest form of traditional European hospitality.

Itineraries are exclusively designed to provide travelers with comprehensive sightseeing opportunities, late evenings and overnight stays.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 28
- Ships in the Fleet - 64
- Rewards Program - Viking Explorer Society

Ports of Call

Europe, Russia, China, Southeast Asia and Egypt

888-505-7984

www.vikingrivercruises.com

Facebook: [VikingRiverCruises](https://www.facebook.com/VikingRiverCruises)

Twitter: [@VikingRiver](https://twitter.com/VikingRiver)



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: River Cruising



Scenic Cruises provides a true luxury river cruise experience .

Intimate and all-inclusive, the "Space-ships" include up to six different dining venues, all drinks, prepaid gratuities and free WiFi throughout the ships.

All shore excursions are included at no additional charge. Scenic Cruises has been expanding their efforts to reach out to the U.S. market.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 29
- Ships in the Fleet - 12
- Rewards Program - Scenic Club

Ports of Call

Europe, Russia and Southeast Asia

800-517-1200

www.scenictours.com

Facebook: [ScenicCruisesUS](https://www.facebook.com/ScenicCruisesUS)

Twitter: [@ScenicCruisesUS](https://twitter.com/ScenicCruisesUS)



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: River Cruising



Although well known for their tour offerings, Tauck also has its own branded line of river cruise ships in Europe.

Their cruises sail on the Rhine, Main, Danube, Rhone and Moselle rivers. Tauck also includes dining ashore and provides exclusive cultural experiences.

The river ships have no more than 130 guests, and Tauck provides an all-inclusive experience, from shore excursions, gratuities and dining to premium spirits, beer and wine.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 90
- Ships in the Fleet - 22

Ports of Call

Africa, Antarctica, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Cuba, Europe, Latin America, Middle East and United States

800-788-7885

www.tauck.com

Facebook: [TauckTravel](https://www.facebook.com/TauckTravel)

Twitter: [@Tauck](https://twitter.com/Tauck)



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: River Cruising



American Cruise Lines offers small ship cruising on the rivers in the U.S.

Their fleet includes four small ships as well as two paddlewheel boats, the Queen of the Mississippi and Queen of the West.

Carrying just 49 to 150 guests, their ships have been designed to navigate the rivers and waterways in the US.

Their U.S. flagged ships have open single seating, multiple spacious lounges and elevators, and visit America's historic ports and seaside towns.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 24
- Ships in the Fleet - 6
- Rewards Program - Eagle Society

Ports of Call

Pacific Northwest, Northeast U.S., Alaska, Southeast U.S. and Mississippi River

(800) 814-6880

www.americancruiselines.com

Facebook: [AmericanCruiseLines](https://www.facebook.com/AmericanCruiseLines)

Twitter: [@American_Cruise](https://twitter.com/American_Cruise)



CRUISE LINE PROFILE

Type: River Cruising



Relatively new to the river cruise industry is American Queen Steamboat Company, which started in 2012.

They operate two paddlewheel steamboats. The American Queen cruises on the Upper and Lower Mississippi River as well as the Ohio and Tennessee rivers. The American Empress, introduced in 2012, sails between Portland, Oregon and Clarkston, Washington.

There are multiple specialty dining venues at no additional charge, along with complimentary bottled water and soft drinks, as well as wine and beer with dinner.

They offer uniquely themed river cruise voyages featuring special entertainment, creating a river cruise experience unlike any other. From Civil War and Big Band Swing to Old-Fashioned Holidays and New Year's Celebration, the possibilities are endless.

Bow to Stern

- Years in Business - 3
- Ships in the Fleet - 2
- Rewards Program - Steamboat Society of America

Ports of Call

Mississippi River, Ohio & Tennessee Rivers and Columbia & Snake Rivers

(888) 749-5280

www.americanqueensteamboatcompany.com

Facebook:

[AmericanQueenSteamboatCompany](https://www.facebook.com/AmericanQueenSteamboatCompany)

Twitter: [@CruiseAQSC](https://twitter.com/CruiseAQSC)



Wrap Up & Next Steps

The tremendous growth the cruise industry has experienced in the last 15 years is due in no small part to the practicality of this vacation option with today's savvy consumers. The variety of ship options, onboard entertainment, specialty cuisine and spectacular ports of call have lifted the industry through an unprecedented growth spurt.

If you have organized group trips before, you know it's hard to form a consensus, but cruising satisfies a lot of "wants" of a vacation experience. Your travelers know what to expect in advance, satisfaction rates with cruising exceed most land-based vacations, and the nearly inclusive pricing helps people budget their vacation expenditures. Onboard there's plenty of time for individual exploration and group gathering spots. For all these reasons and more, group cruising makes a lot of sense.

This guide presents the modern day cruising landscape in order for you to obtain a better understanding of not just the cruise lines, ship and destination options, but what to plan for when organizing a group cruise vacation. Our attempt was to be upfront and truthful about the information presented. This publication was not paid for, endorsed or sponsored by any cruise line, entity or association, but based on our personal and professional experience with the subject matter.

Is cruising the perfect choice for your group? Maybe, maybe not. We hope this guide has shed new light on the cruise market, present a clear picture of how cruising works in the groups sector and set you on a path to planning your next a great group vacation.

We'd love your feedback. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please feel free to contact us via **phone at 630.794.0696**, email editorial@ptmgroups.com or mail Premier Travel Media
621 Plainfield Road, Suite 406
Willowbrook, Ill. 60527

Thank you for reading.
The Group University Team



PRO TIP

The After-Cruise Follow-Up

Follow-up is essential, not only to gauge everyone's satisfaction, but also as a promotional opportunity for your next group trip, whether it is on another cruise or a land-based vacation.

What better time to follow up with your travelers than after the "high" of returning from a cruise?

You also should consider a formal get-together. It gives your group members some time to share photographs and stories, and also is a prime time to discuss possibilities for your next trip.



