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## Cruise Ship Dining - Explained

By Mary Hanna

There are many cruise ships now that have Freestyle Dining (Norwegian Cruises) or Choice Dining (Prince Cruise line) available. Or on Disney Cruise Lines they have what is called "Rotational Dining". They have you and your tablemates rotate through the three restaurants each evening.

TIP: There is usually open seating for breakfast and lunch in the main dining room. Be adventurous with the menu because if you don't like something you can send it back for a replacement. And if they have two things on the menu that you like ask for both of them. My husband, John, always orders the Filet Mignon and the Lobster Tail when they are served on the same night. Many times he tells the waiter to bring what the waiter recommends for that evening.

This means you don't have to choose first or second seating. (First seating is 6:00 to 6:30 and Second seating is usually 8:00–8:30). There can be more than one restaurant where you just walk in when you are ready to dine. Every ship will ask for your dining preference when you book your cruise. You can indicate first, second or flexible dining, whichever will make you more comfortable. The newer ships have a 24 hour dining spot which is always casual so if you don't want to do the formal nights you don't have to, although I find dressing up to be quite fun.

You will have many options for each meal. You may have any meal delivered to your room, taken in the buffet restaurant or in the dining room. There is usually outdoor dining around the pool with hot dogs and hamburgers, pizza, salads, even Tacos.

There are also alternative dining rooms available on some ships that require an additional fee but the service and food are generally 4 to 5 star and worth it if you want to splurge.

In my experience families with young children and people who go to bed early usually dine in first seating. But if you don't want to be on a schedule or want to meet new people every night, go for the alternative dining option. Of course you can always ask for a table for two, but be aware that there are only a few of them.

If you make a special request one night, John always asks for blue cheese, your waiter will bring it

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every night. They pride themselves on remembering your tastes. (This only happens when you choose traditional dining). On one cruise we asked for Melba toast, and you bet, every night we had Melba toast. There is one thing I always make clear to the waiter. I am not a big eater but I like to taste everything. I tell this to them the first night so they don't think I am unhappy with the food. It is their job to keep you happy and they take it very seriously.

If you don't want to eat in the main dining room almost all ships have a Lido café where it is casual but you order from a menu and are served by a waiter. It's one of the many choices if you don't want to participate in a formal night or if you just want to eat by yourselves. On Carnivals single cruises they encourage this style of dining so the singles can meet more people. There are exceptions to this but not many. On some of the newer ships the Lido is open 24 hours a day.

On most of the cruise lines they offer the food of the region that you are visiting. While on Hawaiian cruises expect to be served Hawaiian food. When on an Alaskan cruise you will be given the choices

of salmon and Alaskan king crab legs. It makes more fun to dine on the local cuisine.

All of the cruise lines offer healthy alternative menus or what they call spa menus. So if you want low-fat, low-salt, low cholesterol, vegetarian or any other type of diet, they are available. It is best however to inform your travel agent of any special needs so they can notify the cruise line ahead of time. If you have special dietary needs make sure the cruise lines knows before hand. For example, Royal Caribbean cruises cater to food allergy, Kosher, Indian, Vegetarian and Gluten Free Diets. To be really safe read all of the cruise reviews and cruise critics sites for each ships food and service ratings.

Happy Cruising, enjoy it, we do!

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## **Amenities On Common Cruise Ships**

**By Burt Cotton**

Are you interested in taking a cruise? If so, you are not alone. Each year a large number of individuals consider vacationing aboard a cruise ship. If you have never been on a cruise ship before, you may be wondering what activities, facilities, and services can be found onboard. The activities found onboard a cruise ship will vary from ship to ship, but many cruise ships have a number of activities and services in common.

Some of the most well-known facilities found on cruise ships are dining halls, restaurants, and cafeterias. Large cruise ships may offer a number of onboard dining facilities. It is important to note that many of these dining facilities are considered upscale restaurants. In addition to a sit-down restaurant, there area usually a number of small eateries located onboard. Elegant dining restaurants are popular among cruisers. To ensure that you are able to enjoy an elegant meal, you are encouraged to schedule a reservation as soon as you board the ship.

Aside from dining facilities, bars and dancehalls are also found on most cruise ships. As with most of the bars and dancehalls found on land, there may be age restrictions in place. If you are traveling with your family, they may have to complete other activities while you enjoy the nightlight over the seas. If this should occur, you are in luck because most cruise ships have daycare centers and other activities geared towards children of all ages.

When it comes to placing your child in the care of a ship's daycare center, you are urged to quickly familiarize yourself with the staff. This familiarization may help to calm your nerves. It is also important to note that cruise ship employees are often closely monitored, highly educated, and properly trained. While it may be difficult at first, you should feel comfortable leaving your child in the care of a cruise ship childcare worker.

Childcare is ideal for smaller children; however, if you are traveling with a teenager, daycare may not be an option. Swimming pools, libraries, video arcades, and movie theaters can often be found on cruise ships. Adult supervision is a policy that prevents children under a certain age from roaming freely around the ship.

Teenagers may be able to visit these facilities without adult supervision. Each cruise ship is likely to have different adult supervision policies. You are encouraged to review these policies before purchasing your tickets.

In addition to the above mentioned bars and dancehalls, gaming halls or casinos can be found on most cruise ships. As with gambling on land, there are age limits on those that can gamble aboard a cruise ship. Popular gambling activities include slots, blackjack, poker, and much more. Many onboard

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casinos are open for business twenty–four hours a day. Gambling is a popular cruise ship pastime. If you are booking a cruise just to gamble, you may want to further explore the gambling options aboard each ship.

Cruise ship operators know that many travelers take a cruise to escape their daily routines. Unfortunately for some, one routine that cannot be left behind is exercise. That is why almost all cruise ships have onsite fitness centers and fully equipped gyms. These gyms are often similar, and

sometimes even better, than the gyms found in your hometown. In addition to a fitness center, a large number of cruise ships have jogging tracks.

If a particular activity or event is the only reason why you are interested in booking a cruise, you are urged to physically check for that event or activity before making your reservation. The above mentioned services, facilities, and activities are found on a number of popular cruise lines. These cruise lines are likely to include, but are not limited to, Carnival Cruise Lines, Paradise Cruises, Royal Caribbean, and Celebrity Cruises. With the click of a mouse or a toll free phone call, you can easily determine if your favorite activities can be found aboard the cruise ship of your choice.

Burt Cotton

<http://www.last-minute-cruises.net>



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