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## Why Cruising Is A Perfect Fit For A Family Reunion

By Mary Hanna

Cruising is an ideal way to bring families together for that family reunion or to celebrate an event such as an anniversary or wedding reception.

Family reunions can be a pain in the butt. Who's going to host them? Who's going to make all the arrangements? Who's going to make all that potato salad? Getting out of those duties is one big plus of having your reunion on a cruise ship.

One family member will be designated as the Cruise Planner. This person will be the one to talk to the Travel Agent and gather up the information on what is available. You have one family meeting (by email, telephone or lunch) to decide on which cruise lines, which ship and the date for the family reunion. After you reach your decision everything else is done by the Travel Agent and the Cruise Lines. Of course, you will still have to pack.

Cruising offers something for everyone in the family - from supervised children's activities to exquisite dining. The grandparents can enjoy afternoon tea while the kids play games in the arcade and the parents watch a movie or pamper themselves in the Spa, while teens lounge by the pool. Yet the family also can spend plenty of time reconnecting while they're all together on a leisurely seven-day or longer cruise.

Whether it's a small family of 10 or a large group of 100, a cruise ship may be the best place for a reunion. Family reunion members seek accommodations they can use as a base for dining, sightseeing and socializing together. They want good children's programs, entertainment and activities. But they also want to make sure everyone in the group has personal time to pursue their own interests.

Most cruise lines will help plan family reunion cruises including special events, sightseeing arrangements and dining reservations. Following is a sampling of options.

While small ships offer intimacy and a private ship experience, large ships offer a wealth of amenities. Carnival Cruise Lines estimates it welcomed somewhere between 5,000 and 7,000 family reunion

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groups last year.

Royal Caribbean International launched its Royal Reunions program to cater to those interested in family travel. There are two package options for groups with eight cabins or more. For \$50 per person, a package will include at least two private rock-wall climbing sessions as well as personalized door decorations, cake, activities and more. For \$100 per person, clients get an additional deluxe photo package, a scavenger hunt, VIP in-room amenities and a reunion trivia challenge.

Holland America Line just launched its new family reunion program, which is available to families booking five or more staterooms on any cruise. Features include special group pricing, unlimited soft drinks throughout the cruise, a family photo per stateroom, a choice of dinner for the entire family in Pinnacle Grill, or free rentals of snorkel gear, swim mats and banana boat rides for all family members on Half Moon Cay, Holland America's private island in the Bahamas. For families booking 10 or more staterooms, the line offers a head-of-the-family reward – a complimentary upgrade from an outside

stateroom to a veranda.

Of course almost all of the cruise ships will make special arrangements for large groups. Have your travel agent contact the cruise lines and explain what you want to do. Cruise lines will bend over backwards to please you and your group. They love booking large groups and selling lots of cabins. A cruise tip on this subject is to start planning this reunion early so that you can block out the cabins that you want for this cruise vacation. For example, if you are traveling with your kids you may want to book an Ocean View cabin for yourselves and then book the inside cabin across the hall for the kids. The further out you book this the more options you will have.

In the many cruise reviews that I have read people who have held family reunions on a Cruise ship raved about their experience.

So what are you waiting for? Contact your family members and Set Sail!

Happy Cruising!

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## **You Can't See The Family Reunion For The Trees: Designs For Family Reunion T-Shirts**

### **By Mandar**

You've been given the job of getting t-shirts for your family reunion. The first thing that comes to mind for a design is a tree that incorporates various family members' names. Unfortunately, this is the first thing that comes to most people's minds and so you see that design everywhere. The following are some t-shirt design ideas that might get you out of the family reunion forest.

If you do opt for a tree, you have options to make the design distinctive. A summer or beach-themed family reunion could use a palm tree with coconuts representing names. On a more traditional tree, text can be incorporated in various places, not only the leaves but also branches and even underground in the roots.

A different motif for your shirts could be items that come in groups, especially if the item can be related to the family in some fashion. For example a pizza with names in the slices, a box of crayons for a particularly artistic family, or a carton of eggs (with at least one cracked). If music is prominent in your family, names set into various notes could be a theme.

Time is also a popular theme for reunion shirts. A clock face with names at the various numbers is a possibility, but don't forget other time keeping devices like wristwatches, sundials, even hourglasses.

Your family name itself could be an inspiration. Chef's hats for the Baker family, a waterwheel with names around it for the Miller's. An anvil with hammers or horseshoes for the Smith family. Of course if your last name is Johnson, you might want to forgo this option.

While a tree motif can make an excellent design, don't be afraid to expand your horizons and incorporate other ideas into the mix when coming up with your family reunion t-shirt design.

Mandar is a graphic artist and man-about-town with [ExpertShirt.com](http://www.ExpertShirt.com). Design your own custom t-shirt at

<http://www.expertshirt.com>



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