

ASTA Offers Tips for Those Taking to High Seas

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Alexandria, Va., Feb. 11, 2010 - With many cruise lines offering fantastic specials, there's no time like the present to discover why taking to the high seas was a favorite of more than 13.4 million people in 2009. Some of the most travel-wise people in the world, ASTA members know that booking a vacation should be as relaxing as the vacation itself.

"With literally hundreds of ships and itineraries from which to choose, there truly is a cruise for everyone," said ASTA President and Chair Chris Russo. "But selecting the right cruise involves more than just picking your cabin; there are numerous factors to consider. It's not a one-size-fits-all vacation. Working with a travel consultant who specializes in cruises can make all the difference, ensuring that your first time on the high seas won't be your last."

To book the perfect cruise, simply follow these [helpful guidelines](#) compiled by ASTA.

- **Chart your course!** Your first task is to decide where you want to go and for how long. Cruises offer everything from one- or two-night excursions to journeys that take you around the world in 100 days. Three-day weekend, four-day midweek, week and two-week cruises are the most popular. Your ASTA travel consultant will work with you to find an itinerary and ship to meet your desires and budget.
- **Cabin with a view.** If you plan to spend significant time in your cabin, choose the biggest room you can afford. Standard cabins have twin beds, which can usually be converted into a queen-sized bed, while bunk beds in other rooms cannot be converted. If you are booking a cabin with windows, check with a travel consultant to ensure your view is not obstructed by equipment such as a lifeboat.
- **Cruise specialists - your new best friend.** For the most thorough advice and the best deals, find a cruise specialist. Travel consultants are often certified cruise specialists, and they know which low Internet offers to avoid and which ports of call can make a great cruise unforgettable. To find a cruise specialist near you, visit the [Find a Travel Agent](#) directory on [TravelSense.org](#).
- **Travel insurance - better safe than sorry.** Travel insurance is a small price to pay for peace of mind. A policy is not only for trip cancellations but also can cover missed connections, lost or delayed baggage, emergency medical and dental expenses and emergency legal assistance. Trip cancellation and interruption insurance will cover you from the time that you purchase your cruise until you return from the trip. A travel consultant can provide you with information to help you select the right travel insurance provider to meet your needs.
- **What's free and what costs?** The price of your ticket will include your cabin, on-board entertainment and food. Other items to consider when budgeting your trip include: departure taxes and port charges; alcoholic beverages, bottled water and occasionally soft drinks; on-board extras, such as gambling, spas, massages and ship-to-shore calls; and tips for the ship's crew.
- **Land, ho!** Whenever your ship stops at a port of call, you have three options: stay on board, explore by yourself or take a ship excursion. Talk to your travel agent about what you want to see and experience while in port-she can work with you to find the perfect activity, be it a ship-sponsored shore excursion, a private tour or a shopping trip complete with suggestions and maps.
- **Safety first.** Overall, cruising is a very safe way to travel, as ships must follow an extraordinary number of rules and regulations and are subject to rigorous quarterly inspection. Safety drills are practiced within the first 24 hours of sailing, where you'll learn how to put on your life jacket and locate your assigned lifeboat. When in port, don't draw attention to yourself with flashy jewelry and large amounts of cash. Use common sense just as you would on any other vacation.
- **Get your sea legs.** Seasickness is less common nowadays as the ship's immense size and state-of-the-art motion stabilizers control gentle rocking. Once on board, spend some time on deck and focus on a fixed point of the horizon to help you adjust and get your sea legs quickly. Be sure to pack a your complete health information with you on your trip, with your medical history, your insurance information, contact person in case of emergency, blood type and list of allergies, medications and immunizations.

Find a professional travel consultant who can help make your cruise vacation an unforgettable experience at [TravelSense.org's 'Find a Travel Agent'](#) search directory, or request a [free trip quote](#) online.

ABOUT ASTA

ASTA's (American Society of Travel Agents) mission is to facilitate the business of selling travel through effective representation, shared knowledge and the enhancement of professionalism. ASTA seeks a retail travel marketplace that is profitable, growing and a rewarding place to work, invest and do business.