

# CRUISE VACATION EXPERIENCES RENAISSANCE IN ASIA



The popularity of a voyage onboard of a cruise ship has risen among Asian tourists. Big cruising companies are aware of this development and they promptly react to it. Last month, Miami-based Royal Caribbean, the world's largest cruise line, made Singapore a hub for its cruise ship Rhapsody of the Seas. In fact, Royal Caribbean expects Indians to be the third-largest group of cruise vacationers for the Rhapsody, after Singaporeans and Malaysians.

A growing number of cruise ships is nowadays visiting Indian ports such as Mumbai. Local authorities also react to this boom. Chennai (formerly known as Madras), the capital of an Indian state Tamil Nadu, is positioning itself as a major cruise port of call. The fact is that in the past year more than a dozen luxury cruise ships docked in Chennai. Officials at the highest government level take care of the related issues as well. India's Shipping Ministry, for instance, has formed a high-powered steering group to finalize a cruise-ship policy.

Some industry experts claim it was the Hollywood blockbuster **Titanic**, which has brought people to cruise ships. The opinions differ at this point. Nevertheless, traveling onboard of a cruiser can be much more comfortable than going through all the security measures at crowded airports. Anyway, cruise operators are benefiting as the providers of an off-beat vacation. Naturally, an important question is the price. Cruise lines have long been seen as a millionaire vacation. However, cruise rates range from budget to luxury and usually include cabin, meals, entertainment and all transportation to and from the ports on the itinerary. The price also depends on the length of a trip. A customer can buy a three-night weekend or undergo a 110-night, around-the-world voyage. There is plenty to do when on board. It depends on each ship but there could be a theatre as well as swimming pool aboard. The cruise ship Rhapsody on the Seas offers a rock-climbing wall, an open atrium with a shopping arcade, an outdoor pool and many more wonderful facilities.

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