

Cruise Vacations Are Getting Faster and More Exciting

Cruises used to be a popular vacation option for newlyweds and golden agers, with most people in-between choosing to indulge in other types of recreation during their leisure time. Taking a cruise in the past usually entailed hours of shuffleboard, constant buffets and the company of thousands of other older and overweight individuals while tooling around somewhere close to the Bahamas. However, modern cruises appeal to adventurous passengers by offering better dining options and opportunities for activities other than eating, drinking and playing passive games.

Cruise ship companies have had to take into consideration the tastes and preferences of a new kind of passengers and plan their meal options and activities lists accordingly. Gourmet cruises exist to cater to the desires of those who love fine food, and wine tasting cruises have become popular among grape aficionados. Themed cruises help passengers select the one that they will get the most enjoyment out of.



Although bonus offers and low prices are regularly used to tempt potential passengers, cruise lines are being more proactive about enticing new cruisers. The addition of trendy elements such as flat screen televisions and state of the art dining venues provide the type of on-board experience that younger travelers appreciate the most.

Carnival is replacing its old style "booze cruises" with other types of offerings. The cruise line's \$500 million dollar "FunShip" initiative involves partnering with leading brands and well-known celebrities such as a chef Guy Fieri, DJ Erie and comedian George Lopez. These celebrities have all worked closely with Carnival to lure a new kind of passenger by lending their own unique styles to various aspects of the cruise experience.

Celebrity chef Guy Fieri is working with Carnival to create an on-board dining option called Guy's Burger Joint which will feature culinary concoctions such as amazing hand crafted burgers and special recipes developed by Fieri specifically for Carnival. On-board entertainment options will also receive a facelift thanks to the cruise line's new "creative director for comedy," George Lopez. Lopez will be acting as consultant for the line's on-board comedy clubs as well as play an active role in securing the best

possible talent.



Carnival's CEO, Gerry Cahill, believes that Lopez will take Carnival's comedy offerings to an entirely new level and provide passengers with world class entertainment. A comedy brunch will be offered on "sea days," and Lopez has worked with Carnival to develop an on-board consumer comedy contest. Lopez also plans to bring entertainers from popular media venues such as television and films as well as occasionally performing on the ships himself.

Carnival has also hired Miami Heat's official DJ, DJ Erie, to train the fleet's on-board DJs to properly read the tempo and mood of the crowd and to select the music accordingly. He will also work with other DJs helping them to develop their own personalities and use them for maximum effect.

Even though these are vast improvements over on-board entertainment options of the past, they have not resulted in an escalation of cruise prices. All entertainment and dining choices are included in the cost of the cruise. Big-name celebrities are also performing on board on a regular basis. Martina McBride, for instance, put on a show on Royal Caribbean's Voyager of the Seas, and artists such as Kid Rock host themed cruises.

Because today's cruiser is younger, more adventurous and more active than their counterparts in the past were, physical activities are abundant when in port. Hiking, surfing, scuba diving, kayak trips and even dog-sledding at certain destinations are available options. Those interested in tasting local culture can visit art galleries and museums when in port as well as attend exhibits put on by local historical societies and community organizations. For instance, cruisers to Alaska can often watch authentic totem poles being carved and view traditional Native dancing.



Many cruisers return at a later date to favored destinations for longer, land based vacations in order to more fully experience the area. One of the benefits of taking a cruise is that it allows passengers to sample various locations before making a commitment to spending substantial time and money visiting

them.

The evolution of cruises has come a long way from the one-dimensional travel experience of your parents and grandparents time. With the wide variety of available options, anyone can find a cruise that matches their individual desires and tastes.

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