

# HOW HARMFUL ARE CRUISE LINES TO THE ENVIRONMENT?



Cruises are a popular choice for many travelers. However, travel and climate experts warn that cruises are not environmentally friendly due to the massive ships that house luxury hotels, pools, restaurants, and thousands of people. Despite this, around 20 million people opt for a cruise every year. The harmful effects of cruise lines on climate change remain to be seen.

Due to the Corona pandemic, cruise shipping remained almost idle in 2020 and 2021, and there is no data for 2022 yet. Therefore, it is best to look at the year 2019 to understand the impact of global cruise shipping on the environment.

That year, **cruise shipping generated around 23 megatons of CO2 worldwide.** The three largest cruise lines, Carnival, Norwegian, and Royal Caribbean, were responsible for 70 percent of the total emissions from cruise traffic. It doesn't account for emissions from other sources, such as personnel flown worldwide. If these emissions are added, the total emissions of CO2 in 2019 are estimated to be around 45 megatons.

It is also important to note that guests' journey to the port, often by plane, is not included in this estimate. To put this into perspective, Portugal emitted less than 40 megatons of CO2 in 2019.

## Emissions per Cruise Passenger

The average cruise tourist produces roughly 1.7 tons of CO2 emissions throughout a one-week trip. This amount equals a third of the average person's annual CO2 emissions, about 4.6 tons. It is worth noting that only 0.4 percent of the world's population took a cruise in 2019. However, it is essential to add that the 1.7 tons per person only includes the emissions generated during the cruise, not the journey to and from the port. Combining a cruise with a flight can significantly increase the carbon footprint, making it highly problematic from a climate standpoint.

## Big Plans for a Climate-neutral Perspective

Many cruise lines, such as Carnival, have set ambitious targets of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. Tui Cruises is even more ambitious, aiming to offer climate-neutral cruises as early as 2030. However, there are currently no realistic approaches to making these cruises completely climate-neutral and justifiable.

For instance, Tui Cruises is planning to use methanol, which is technically feasible and commendable. However, this alone cannot address the emissions from air travel by passengers and staff and the entire value chain.

**Current cruise travel and aviation models indicate that if tourism continues to grow, any positive change toward sustainability may be just an illusion.** In addition to ensuring sustainability in the tourism sector, large amounts of renewable energy are also needed for other areas such as automobility and home heat generation. However, the production of fuel competes with the production of renewable energy. Furthermore, a halfway sustainable flight costs at least twice as much as a regular flight.

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