

# About

## Cruising With Kids

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Our goal is to provide straight-forward, no-nonsense information coupled with candid reviews based upon our direct experiences and the experiences of other families whom we have interviewed and trust. Our guide is most applicable to families and those traveling with children under the age of 18. This may include parents with children, grandparents with grandchildren, aunts and uncles with nieces and nephews or just about anyone who is cruising with children.

We strive to address the specific concerns and needs of families who are searching for the best possible cruise experience. As such, the opinions of the author are provided with those specific goals in mind. Although readers who are cruising without kids will undoubtedly find many aspects of this book helpful, criteria with which ports, cruise lines, and ships are evaluated may differ from the goals and priorities that they have established for selecting a cruise.

### How To Use This Book

We have designed this guide with the first-time family cruiser in mind, although, even seasoned cruisers will benefit from this guide. We walk you through the logical process of choosing, reserving and then sailing on your cruise. Beginning with general information, we build your knowledge of the cruise industry, discuss various options that are available, and provide tips for making your selections before launching into a detailed discussion of ports of call, cruise lines, and a ship by ship analysis to help you make your final decisions. If you are a veteran cruiser and feel like you are ready to dive directly into the details, you can skip to *Chapter 3*, although, we highly recommend reading the entire guide to produce the best experience.

Once we walk you through the selection process, we discuss pre-cruise planning, take you on board with tips and tricks for making the most of your cruise, and wrap up with some post-cruise issues. Honestly, we do not feel that any part of this guide should be skipped, even by a veteran cruiser. However, we understand that time may require you to get right to the point, so we have laid out this book in such a way that you only need to read what *you* feel applies to *you*.

In this edition, we focus on major cruise lines serving North American passengers. As a result, other family cruise options, albeit limited, may be available, which we do not cover.

## **Ratings & Reviews**

A great deal of research, time, and effort have been waged to compile fair and comprehensive reviews of ports, cruise lines, and ships. Our reviews rely heavily upon factual information. With few exceptions, we (or the publisher) have paid for all expenses associated with our research, so we have no motivation other than providing open and honest reviews for the benefit of our readers. At the conclusion of each review, we assign a rating based upon the relative ranking of each cruise line to other subject cruise lines being reviewed. These ratings are based upon over twenty years of cruising experience. We always recommend that our readers read the entire review before drawing their own conclusions.

We utilize a letter-based scale as follows:

**A - Superior**

**B - Average**

**C - Below Average**

**D - Unacceptable**

**F - Not Recommended**

No category or cruise line was assigned a grade of “D” or “F” in this edition.

These ratings are based upon the expectations of an average family. Your family may have higher or lower expectations; however, these ratings are reliable relative to all other ratings *within* this guide.

In compiling these ratings and reviews, we have relied upon direct experiences, interviews with passengers and cruise staff, as well as factual information provided by the cruise lines. This edition contains reviews and ratings for seven cruise lines, accounting for approximately 96% of all North American cruise traffic.

## **Symbols We Use**

Throughout this guide, we utilize symbols to allow readers to evaluate the relative cost of their cruise or particular component of their cruise. Below are the price categories that we utilize. A specific dollar value is assigned in each of the sections that utilize this key.

**\$ - Value Priced**

**\$\$ - Inexpensive**

**\$\$\$ - Affordable**

**\$\$\$\$ - Expensive**

**\$\$\$\$\$ - Luxury**

We also utilize the following symbols in this guide to indicate age appropriateness of various activities:

**B - Appropriate for Infants (under 2)**

**P - Appropriate for Toddlers/Preschoolers (2-5)**

**S - Appropriate for School-Aged Kids (6-9)**

**T - Appropriate for Tweens/Pre-Teens (10-12)**

**X - Appropriate for Teens (13-17)**