

limited space, expect to pay a price that is two to three times more than what you might pay at other times of the year. You also will compete for limited space, especially if you are seeking premium and high-occupancy cabins. The farther in advance that you plan, the more likely that you will achieve what you want. Having said that, 2009 and 2010 were unusual years in that Holiday sailings were cheaper than they have ever been. Whether or not that will continue for 2011 is unknown at this time.

During the Christmas sailings, you will find decorations fitting the season, additional events and entertainment and sumptuous meals. Enjoy turkey or ham dinners with all of the fixings, eggnog, and maybe even some milk and cookies that are meant for Santa, but find their way to your tummy instead. Of course, no Christmas would be complete without a visit from Santa.

For those who celebrate Hanukkah, most cruise lines offer special foods and events for this holiday, as well.

Some cruise lines have their own snow-making machine, while others offer festive gifts for all young cruisers. By far, the most elaborate (and expensive) Holiday sailings are on Disney Cruise Line. New Year's cruises are popular with families who have older kids, while Thanksgiving draws families with younger kids. Regardless of which you choose, there always will be plenty of other families to help you celebrate!

When you are researching a Holiday cruise, be aware that many cruise lines modify the sailing length, departure dates, and itinerary, especially at Christmas and New Year. This is a once-in-a-lifetime family experience, so make it memorable.

Ports of Call

In this section, we cover the principal ports of call that you are likely to encounter while trying to select the ideal itinerary for your family. For some families, ports of call will not be a significant factor in the selection process, but for others, it may be the most crucial factor. If you are a land lover and have hesitations about taking a cruise, you may want to maximize the number of ports on your itinerary. On the other hand, if you love spending time at sea, you may want to add as many sea days as you can to your voyage.

You can accomplish your research and selection in one of two ways. You

can choose your favorite ports, then try to find an itinerary that matches most closely, or you can narrow down your selections using your other criteria, then figure out which of those itineraries contain your favorite ports. The method that you choose will depend upon whether the itinerary is more important than your other criteria. Either way, you will find some excellent resources listed in the *Appendix* to help you accomplish this task.

Personally, we prefer to choose our itinerary toward the end of the process; we like to believe that if we try hard enough, we can find something fun for our family in almost any port. Selecting a region or regions, as well as the time of the year, prior to embarking on the process of selecting an itinerary, will likely save you some time. We provide a list of ships by cruising region in the *Appendix* to help you narrow down your search.

In this section, we utilize the symbols contained in *About Cruising With Kids*. The following cost categories are applicable to this section (in U.S. Dollars) \$1-\$50 (\$), \$51-\$100 (\$\$), \$101-\$200 (\$\$\$), \$201-\$300 (\$\$\$\$), \$301+ (\$\$\$\$\$). Where specific prices are noted for attractions, the price listed is the price of adult admission stated in U.S. Dollars.

Below are the answers to a few questions you may have about the information that we provide in *Need to Know*.

Why do we provide peak port visitation information? The number of ships and passengers visiting a port on a given day can impact transportation, as well as the availability of activities and excursions. The number of ships may also impact whether you anchor or dock. We recommend that you check the port schedule in advance of sailing so that you may plan your port time accordingly (see *Appendix - Resources*).

What do you mean by “Stroller Friendly”? A stroller-friendly port means that you will be able to make your way around the immediate area surrounding the port, as well as the port city, without much difficulty. Note that when tendering, using a stroller can be challenging. We indicate “Challenging” when using a stroller is possible, but not easy.

What types of sundries are typically available? The stores that we list typically sell items such as beverages, snacks, diapers, medicines, and other supplies that you may need when traveling

with kids. All locations we list are close to the cruise terminal.

For each port, we provide a list of excursions that are popular with families cruising with children in various age groups. We have selected the best excursions in each port, as well as convenient outings near the cruise terminal, that will help to make the most of your cruise vacation. Although we identify appropriate age groups for each excursion, *you* will need to determine if a particular activity suits your child's interests. For example, your teen might not be interested in a nature hike or city tour.

Minimum age requirements vary by tour operator. Although we note a minimum age, where available, your cruise line or tour operator may adhere to a different standard. You should always confirm age guidelines with the tour operator prior to reserving your tour.

You will not find many listings for touring excursions because they typically do not hold the interest of children. However, if you are traveling with a toddler or infant, touring may be where you focus your research. To that end, nearly every port will offer several low-impact options that will suit your family. By focusing on the sights, rather than the actual excursions, you will be able to make a decision based upon what is most interesting to you. ***Tip: Nature sightseeing and beach excursions work best for families with young children.***

You should utilize the following guidelines when evaluating the activity level for each excursion or activity, so that you may set expectations and avoid disappointment

Stroller Friendly - This activity allows you to utilize a small umbrella stroller for most of the duration of the tour. However, there may be areas where you will need to park or store the stroller for limited portions of this activity.

Easy - Appropriate for children of all ages and capabilities in most circumstances. If walking is involved, it will be limited and over a mostly flat surface.

Moderate - This activity typically involves extended periods of walking/standing or mental or physical exertion. There may be climbing or other activities that require coordination and balance. This activity is typically not appropriate for all age groups.

Active - This activity requires some level of agility and may involve extended periods of moderately strenuous activity or involve activities where the ability to react quickly is required for safety. Families engaging in these activities should be familiar with the activity or engage in exercise or similar activities on a regular basis. You should also be willing to accept all of the safety risks involved before proceeding.

Advanced - In order to participate in advanced activities, you should be in excellent physical condition and able to act independently should the need arise. These activities typically put an additional strain on the body (mentally or physically) that is beyond what the average person wishes to endure. These activities should be undertaken by only the most active families.

The following ports are arranged in alphabetical order by region.

Alaska

Alaska's ports of call are concentrated in Southeast Alaska with select cruises ending (or beginning) in Seward or Whittier, both within driving distance of Anchorage, Alaska's largest city. In addition to cruise ports, Alaska also offers a significant number of cruisetour destinations, which we do not cover in this guide. If you are interested in learning more about other land destinations within Alaska, refer to your cruise line's extensive Alaskan Cruisetour brochure.

Icy Strait Point (Hoonah)

This is one of the last places that you would expect to find a cruise port; however, with over 300 visits over the last five years, it is officially on the map. Icy Strait Point is an example of cruise lines joining with the local community to construct a new port for the exclusive use of cruise passengers. Finding activities outside of the cruise line's control will be a challenge, but not impossible. A shuttle is available to Hoonah (\$4 one-way) where several independent operators now offer optional excursions.

Need to Know

Peak Daily Visitation - Ship calling times cannot overlap

Terminal Location - Tender to dock - walk to shops/attractions

Language - English *Currency* - U.S. Dollar *Stroller Friendly?* Yes