

Choosing A Stateroom Category For Your First Cruise

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Proper stateroom selection fundamentals are easily mastered by simply answering the following questions truthfully and to the best of your predictive ability. (*A simple yes or no to each question will suffice, thank you.*)



Above is an **Inside Cabin** - a "quad" made down for four passengers for the night. You can see that it is quite cozy. But be forewarned - claustrophobics & sleep walkers need not apply.



Bathrooms are fully equipped but **very small**. Showers are even smaller. *Pimp Tip* - instead of bruising your elbows trying to soap yourself down like you normally would, just soap down the shower curtain then spin around a couple of times - rinse & repeat.

1. Are you the party-all-night-every-night type and tend to get up at the crack of noon each day?
2. Are you allergic to sunlight?
3. Are you a vampire?
4. Is your idea of fun curling up with a good book or in-room movie and ordering room service?
5. Are you a shutter bug who just has to jump up and take a hundred pictures of every sunrise, sunset and seagull – even at 3am in a Norwegian Fjord?
6. Do you find it intoxicating to have fresh sea breezes blowing across your bed during the night – in concert with your spouse's snoring?
7. Do you enjoy sunlight and expansive vistas – but the very idea of fresh air makes you nauseous?
8. Do you want your own private escape route in case of flooding, fire or Somali pirates?

If you answered “Yes” to questions 1, 2 & 3 – then best to save your money on the more expensive cabins and go for the least expensive inside cabin (a cabin on the interior of the ship, having no window, porthole or balcony – but definitely a door – one door – you’ll want at least one door for coming and going from your cabin).

If you answered “Yes” to questions 4 & 7 – your best bet will be an Ocean View cabin – one with a window or porthole.

If you answered “Yes” to questions 5, 6 & 8 – you will want a Private Balcony Cabin – or sometimes referred to as a Veranda Cabin.

In spite of the fact that the cruise line will attempt to confuse you with 47 different room categories on any one ship – there are really only a total of five – Penthouses, Suites, Balcony (or Veranda) Cabins, Ocean View and Inside. The additional category distinctions are really just a function of location within the ship – not size or amenities.

Penthouses and top end Penthouses called “Owners Suites” – can be from 900 to 3,000 square feet in size. Almost always with a private balcony or two – they are located on the top most decks of the ship. There are usually only a handful of these on the ship – a half dozen, max.

Suites- a bathroom, bedroom area and separate sitting area usually offering 50 to 150 square feet more space than a Veranda cabin and with a larger than normal private balcony.

Veranda or Balcony Staterooms - pretty much the same as Ocean View staterooms only slightly larger and with a private balcony/veranda – one just big enough for a couple of small plastic chairs and a cocktail table.

Ocean View - Just what it says – a stateroom with a window or porthole – neither of which can be opened.

Inside Cabin - A cabin that, due to its location in the interior section of the ship, does not offer a window, porthole or balcony.

Photographic Evidence



The **Living Room of the Owner's Suite** - This category is the ultimate of luxury & spaciousness. Private butler service & a formal dining area makes it the ultimate indulgence.



Above you see the **Mother of All Balconies** - the private verandas of the Owner's & Penthouse Suites are larger than many cabins - and come with a private Jacuzzi.

Hot Tip #1 – When attempting to save money by stuffing four or five people in a stateroom – just remember, you will all be using the same bathroom. Thus, the money saved may not be worth the aggravation if you are traveling with teenagers and/or high maintenance women.

How to choose the best location -

“Location, location, location” is the mantra of real estate agents on shore. But to cruise passengers, it is not that big of a deal.

All cabins within any random category tend to be the same size with the same amenities regardless of placement within the ship. The perceived value among the cruise buying public is that the higher up in the ship the more desirable, hence the more valuable the cabin. The cruise lines take full advantage of this misconception via premium pricing for cabins on the upper decks. But here’s the skinny. If it is stability you want you should get a cabin as close to dead center of the ship as possible – not too high up, not too low down, not too close to the bow (the pointy end) or stern (the rounded end). Cabins in this Middle Kingdom area will experience less motion.

Additionally, take a close look at the schematic diagrams of each deck – found in brochures as well as online. Look for proximity to elevators, the dining room, the pool deck, the main lobby and late night venues such as the disco. Closeness to these facilities may or may not be desirable depending on your mobility, tolerance for noise, desire to be close to most frequented services and activities, etc.



This is the bathroom of a **Courtyard Villa** on Norwegian Cruise Lines. Particularly suited for group bathing & synchronized makeup application. However, as beautiful as the view may be - one must always lower the curtains prior to use - out of consideration for the sea birds & flying fish - many of whom are easily offended by nudity.



The private courtyard shared by the lucky occupants of the exclusive **Courtyard Villas** on Norwegian Cruise Lines - analogous to living in a gated community back home in Hackensack - helps keep out the riff raff.

Hot Tip #2 – If you go to bed at a reasonable hour, watch out for cabins next to elevators or late evening venues such as the disco – it can be very noisy late into the night.

How to get free upgrades –

Listen for these two magic words from your cruise agent – “Category Guarantee”. Just like airlines who over-book flights – cruise lines will frequently over book certain cabin categories. Therefore, they will often reward flexible passengers with a “category guarantee”. This simply means that – at time of reservation – if you are willing to forego immediate confirmation of a particular cabin – the cruise line will guarantee a cabin in the category that you have reserved or higher. Often this will lead to an upgrade to the next higher category at no additional cost. Unless you need a stateroom in close proximity to friends or family members; accepting a category guarantee is always worth the gamble – at least in our experience.

Being part of a group or availing one’s self of a special promotion can often get an upgrade of one or two categories. Today, cruise groups rarely get discounts off the base fare, but they do get some nice perks over those booking individually – such as free upgrades. And, you need only be a part of the group on paper, not in reality. Your travel agent should know how to work that magic.

Lastly, it is a rare occurrence – but never let any opportunity go unexploited. If the cruise line reservations department messes up some small detail of your booking for one reason or another; have your cruise agent to respond with something like “*the clients have nothing but kindness and sympathy in their hearts. They understand, forgive and hold no grudges...but how about a free upgrade as compensation, Fumble Fingers!*”



Toilets on cruise ships are different. So, please, please, please - whatever you do - **heed the last sentence on this sign** - otherwise you won't be getting up until someone rocks you back & forth to break the suction.