

American Express Travel Reports Growth in Cruising Popularity due to Value and 'New Generation' of Cruise Offerings

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Exotic ports-of-call, luxury upgrades and customized excursions Help Broaden cruise Appeal

According to American Express Travel's Cruise Specialists, a group of travel agents almost exclusively dedicated to booking cruise travel, there is currently a growing popularity and interest in cruising. Responsible for this trend, they say, is the value cruising offers coupled with a "new generation" of cruise offerings that provide more variety and flexibility than ever before, including new and increasingly exotic ports-of-calls around the world, a jaw-dropping roster of onboard luxury upgrades and amenities, and customized excursions and private experiences.

Cruising's broadening appeal

The combination of these factors has resulted in a burgeoning group of travelers interested in cruising. Among the growing number of first-time cruisers, Cruise Specialists report an increase especially among multi-generational families, young couples/newlyweds, young families with children, and people looking to "test-drive" or sample destinations via a cruise before planning an entirely land-based vacation there. Cruise Specialists also report working with a large number of repeat cruise customers. While these repeaters enjoy the cruise experience enough to do it over and over again, Cruise Specialists say when it comes to the itineraries, they like to mix it up -- from destinations to ship experiences.

And Cruise Specialists agree that there is no better mix of things than what is available right now and they are seeing passengers take full advantage. Cruise Specialists are particularly seeing an interest in new far-flung cruise destinations, including Dubai, the South Pacific and Vietnam. They're also reporting an increased interest in different ship experiences, such as yacht and river/barge canal cruises.

Luxury cruising

Cruise Specialists report that interest in luxury cruising is similarly on an upswing, helped no doubt by the lavish onboard amenities and opportunities for private and customized experiences available on the luxury cruise lines. According to American Express Cruise Specialists:

Top 5 Luxury Amenities Requested

1. Suite upgrades
2. Private butler service
3. Gourmet chefs
4. Expert lecturers
5. Private pools and balconies

Top 5 Special Excursions Requested

1. Private cultural and historical tours
2. Cooking lessons and demonstrations
3. Vineyard tours and wine tastings
4. Golf excursions
5. Scuba diving and snorkeling

"No matter what a customer's cruising needs, our American Express Travel Cruise Specialists are on-hand to find options to fit a wide range of tastes and budgets," says Audrey Hendley, vice president of marketing, American Express Travel. "For new or returning cruisers, we provide expert guidance to help ensure a cruise that caters to their needs."

First-time cruisers well informed

Cruise Specialists also report that the overwhelming majority of their first-time cruise customers need no convincing in opting for a cruise vacation. They tend to come to Cruise Specialists very well informed, having done their research, but with additional detail-oriented questions about the cruise experience and what to expect.

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