

Driving To The Ship Adds Value, Convenience To Cruise Vacations

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CLIA Cruise Lines Sail to All Parts of the World from More than 30 Ports in U.S.

For the member companies of Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), cruising is all about choice, flexibility and value. While spectacular new ships tend to grab the headlines and symbolize the remarkable growth and diversity of the industry, a quieter and very timely trend is the growth of domestic ports of embarkation to more than 30, from Anchorage to St. Augustine, Boston to New Orleans. In fact, virtually the entire population of the United States is within driving distance of a cruise.

This not only adds significantly to the convenience factor of a cruise vacation - driving to the ship and leaving the car a short walking distance away - but can also represent significant savings during times of economic uncertainty, even allowing for the high price of gasoline.

'No other type of vacation offers the variety of experiences - worldwide destinations, diverse itineraries, varying cruise lengths, types of ships, different onboard experiences, and shore side activities - that the CLIA fleet provides,' said Terry Dale, president and CEO of CLIA. 'The aim is to enable every vacationer to choose the cruise that is exactly right for individual tastes, interests and budget. A big part of that for millions of travelers is having a departure port close to home.'

When the modern cruise industry began in the 1960's, the vast majority of voyages departed from a handful of big city ports, notably New York, Miami and Los Angeles. Today, cruisers can choose an itinerary from such East Coast embarkation points as Bangor, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Norfolk, Charleston, Jacksonville, St. Augustine, Port Canaveral, Fort Lauderdale, and Miami. Passengers embarking in the New York metropolitan area have three ports to choose from: Manhattan, Brooklyn and across the Hudson River in New Jersey. On the West Coast the choices include four ports in Alaska, Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego. On the Gulf Coast, cruisers can opt for such cities as Galveston, New Orleans, Mobile and Tampa.

Equally significant, the cruises offered from these domestic ports represent the entire spectrum of the cruise experience: Large ships and small, the newest vessels, itineraries in Alaska, Mexico, Canada/New England, the Bahamas and the Caribbean, the Panama Canal, even transatlantic and world cruises and adventure voyages. In short, consumers can find a convenient domestic port of embarkation for virtually any kind of cruise they want.

Among the some of the most popular are America's coastal and river cruises. While some of the largest CLIA member ships offer cruises along the New England coast to Canada and along the coast of Alaska, most coastal and river voyages are made with small ships that can venture well inland to places inaccessible to other vessels. Vacationers can find these cruises leaving from ports throughout the country, including virtually the entire length of the Mississippi River, on rivers along the Pacific Northwest Coast, the Intra-Coastal Waterway on the East Coast and the rivers and coastlines of New England and maritime Canada. For American vacationers the result is the opportunity to cruise the tropical islands of the Caribbean, transit the Panama Canal or explore Mark Twain's mighty Mississippi, all from a port of embarkation only a convenient and comfortable drive away.

About CLIA

The nonprofit Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) is North America's largest cruise industry organization. CLIA represents the interests of 24 member lines and participates in the regulatory and policy development process while supporting measures that foster a safe, secure and healthy cruise ship environment. CLIA is also engaged in travel agent training, research and marketing communications to promote the value and desirability of cruise vacations and counts as members 16,000 travel agencies. For more information on CLIA, the cruise industry, and CLIA-member cruise lines and travel agencies, visit www.cruising.org.

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