



FAMILY TRAVEL ASSOCIATION

Changing Lives Through Travel

2019 Ocean Cruise Guide

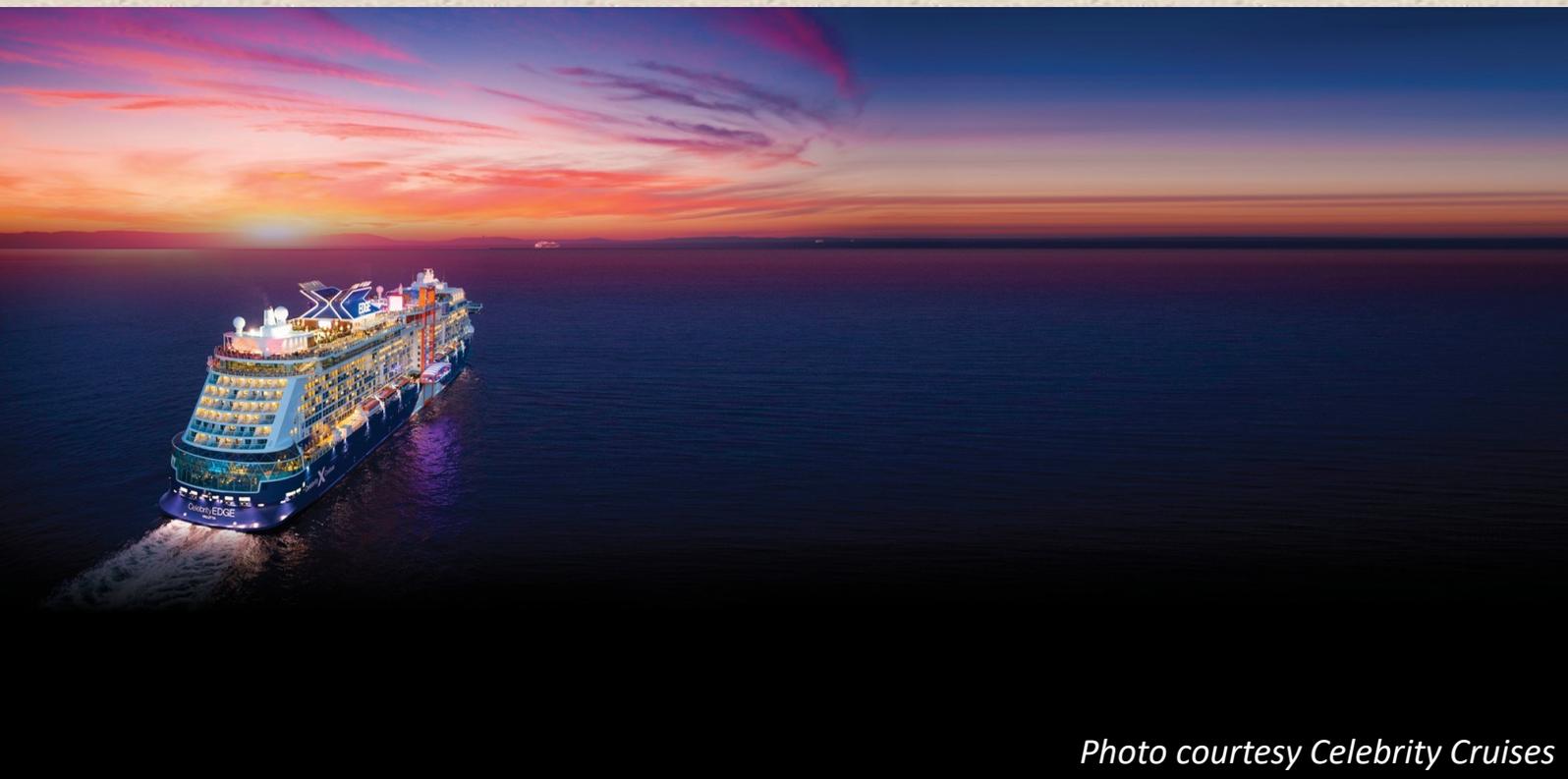


Photo courtesy Celebrity Cruises

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INTRODUCTION

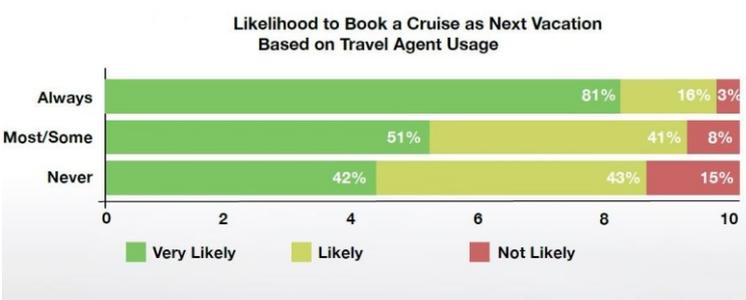
In 2018, 28 million people were expected to take a cruise¹, a 5 percent increase from 2017, according to the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA). In comparison, about 20 million travelers visit Walt Disney World in Orlando every year.

CLIA also estimates that total cruise passenger demand has grown more than 57 percent from 2009. A booming global economy, and billions invested in renovating existing ships and building new ones has blown favorable winds into the industry's sales. Cruise lines also have opened new itineraries, while enhancing onboard activities, expanding cabin classes, and diversifying restaurants, entertainment and shore excursions.

CLIA estimates that 32 percent of families with children under the age of 18 have taken a cruise vacation, while another 14 percent of families with children 18 years or older have².

According to the Family Travel Association's (FTA) 2018 Family Travel Survey³, 42 percent of families who have taken a cruise also have used a travel agent in the last three years, versus 20 percent of all families who travel.

With so many destinations and experiences to choose from, travel advisors are well positioned to help families match the right cruise line and ship with their vacation expectations. More than one out of three travel agents polled by CLIA in Spring 2018 projected their cruise sales volume would grow greater than 10 percent. (Another one out of four said their volume would grow 6-10 percent⁴.)



Additionally, CLIA's research shows that cruisers are happier when they work with a travel agent and are more likely to book a second cruise.

The Family Travel Association Ocean Cruise Guide is designed to help educate advisors on the fundamental aspects of the Ocean Cruise vacation experience, search for and market to prospective family clients, qualify families for a cruise vacation versus other types of trips, offer the right ship at the right time, and handle common objections.

Where they sail:

The majority of consumers choose a cruise primarily because of its itinerary, so it's important to understand the destination options cruises offer to your clients.



Photo courtesy Carnival Cruise Line

According to CLIA⁶, 60 percent of travel agents say Alaska itineraries are the number one growth market, followed by:

- Caribbean/Bermuda/Mexico markets -- 41 percent
- Mediterranean and Canada/New England markets -- 36 percent
- Hawaii -- 32 percent
- Panama -- 29 percent
- Northern Europe -- 29 percent, and
- Australia/New Zealand -- 28 percent

(Editor's Note: River & Expedition Cruises, popular with families, will be part of a separate guide.)

Diverse experiences:

Once a client decides where they want to sail to, they have an abundance of ships, experiences and classes of service to choose from. This is where a professional, knowledgeable travel advisor is of greatest value, helping plan the best vacation.

Families who have never cruised may be surprised – and overwhelmed -- by the variety of options available to children and adults of all ages (e.g. grandparents, aunts and uncles).

Imagine the challenge for first time cruisers, comparing different cruise lines, ships and ship classes, itineraries, entertainment offerings, cabin styles, etc. Now overlay that with the different expectations of different family members, and the amount of togetherness and/or independence family members may be seeking from their vacation, and you have a planning challenge only an experienced professional advisor can surmount.

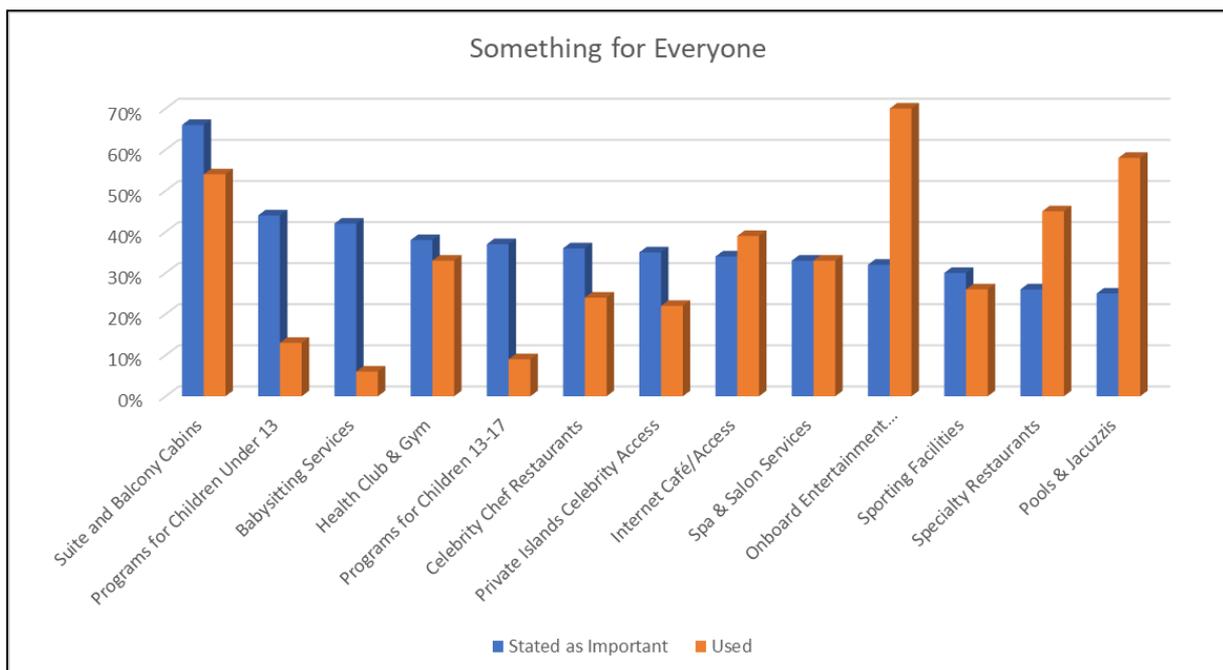
"One of the great benefits of cruise vacations today is that everyone can find something to do together or separately, from skip-generation families that include grandparents, aunts and uncles, to moms, dads and kids."

-- Ron Gulaskey, AVP, National Account Sales & Trade Associations, Celebrity Cruises



Not only are travelers booking more cruises, 75 percent of agents report that clients are spending more on cruises, including adding more land-based excursions, as well as pre-and post-cruise stays in and around their port cities. CLIA reports that only 6.3 percent of agents are seeing a decline in spend. (CLIA Travel Agent Cruise Industry Outlook, Spring 2018)

A recent CLIA consumer survey (below) begins to illustrate the variety of cruise activities. In order to best match clients with the right experience, when qualifying clients, agents should ask about current lifestyle choices, not just what clients say they think they want.

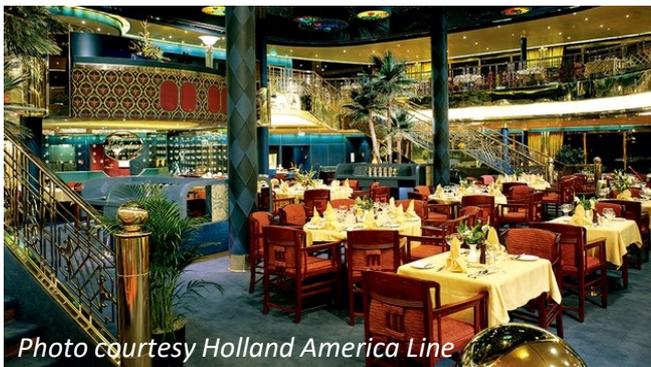


Ship classes:

Another dominant factor in qualifying clients for the right cruise vacation is helping them choose between principal ship classes. CLIA identifies the three largest classes as Contemporary, Premium and Luxury. Understanding how ship classes impact the consumer's options and your consultative selling skills will help you better match your customers to the right cruise.

Contemporary: Generally, these ships can accommodate 2,500-5,000 passengers, and offer some of the most affordable daily rates in the industry. With water slides, kids' clubs and a wide variety of live entertainment, Contemporary class ships tend to be the most family-friendly, including a wider range of cabin types, and more connecting cabin options.

Premium: The next size down, these ships have room for approximately 1,500-3,000 passengers, while still incorporating most of the family-friendly features of their Contemporary class siblings. However, due to size, the variety of cabins and onboard activities likely is smaller, and daily rates will range much higher.



Luxury: The smallest and most expensive of the three classes, these ships accommodate 500-1,000 passengers, and are best for families with older children. Seasonal activities and education programs are hallmarks of this class of ships, which are ideal for multi-generational family vacations.

As the ocean cruise lines diversify their product offerings on the larger, contemporary cruise ships, they have increased their popularity across all household income groups. For example, according to CLIA⁷, 93 percent of households with incomes of \$150,000-\$174,999 prefer contemporary ships, higher than even households with annual incomes of \$80,000-\$89,999 (88 percent).

What this demonstrates for travel advisors is the importance of ensuring your qualifying questions focus on the cabin style, onboard activities/entertainment, and land excursion experiences your clients are expressing an interest in.

Diverse accommodations:

Finally, one of the most exciting cruise industry developments for families is the growth in the types of accommodations being built on board. Unfortunately, one of the trickiest places for cruise families to navigate is planning for the right cabin accommodations for their particular needs and budget. For example, on one line's largest class of ship, there are as many as 28 stateroom categories, with inside cabins starting at around \$125 per person/night, to luxury family suites starting around \$3,500 per person/night.

Advisors also should remember that a family's wants and needs change over time. As children grow up, parents seek out new experiences and possibilities that match their children's interests. You'll want to "requalify" your customers over time. Some of their new preferences may be the result of experiences on previous cruises, or their desire to try something new, like an expedition or river cruise.

For families who have never cruised, you should monitor their vacation preferences to determine when they might be ready to take their first cruise. No matter what, you'll always know that there is a cruise vacation waiting to delight them.



Photo courtesy Norwegian Cruises



Photo courtesy Royal Caribbean

Affordability:

For many families, choosing to cruise may also be a part of a dialogue about other vacation options. Some might be comparing a cruise to putting together the separate elements of a vacation (e.g. transportation, accommodations, meals, entertainment/activities).

What many parents familiar with all-inclusive resorts might not be aware of is that cruises compare very favorably. For example, teenage family members will cost less on a cruise than many land-based resorts because cruise lines do not charge a premium for them, versus younger family members. Be certain that parents understand the pricing policy differences between cruises and all-inclusives.

The first draft of the FTA Ocean Cruise Guide includes contributions from a number of knowledgeable experts. We look forward to receiving your feedback and to continuously updating this guide to enhance your Ocean Cruise vacation sales. Feel free to share your input at the FTA Links – Agents Only closed Facebook group, or email us at info@familytravel.org

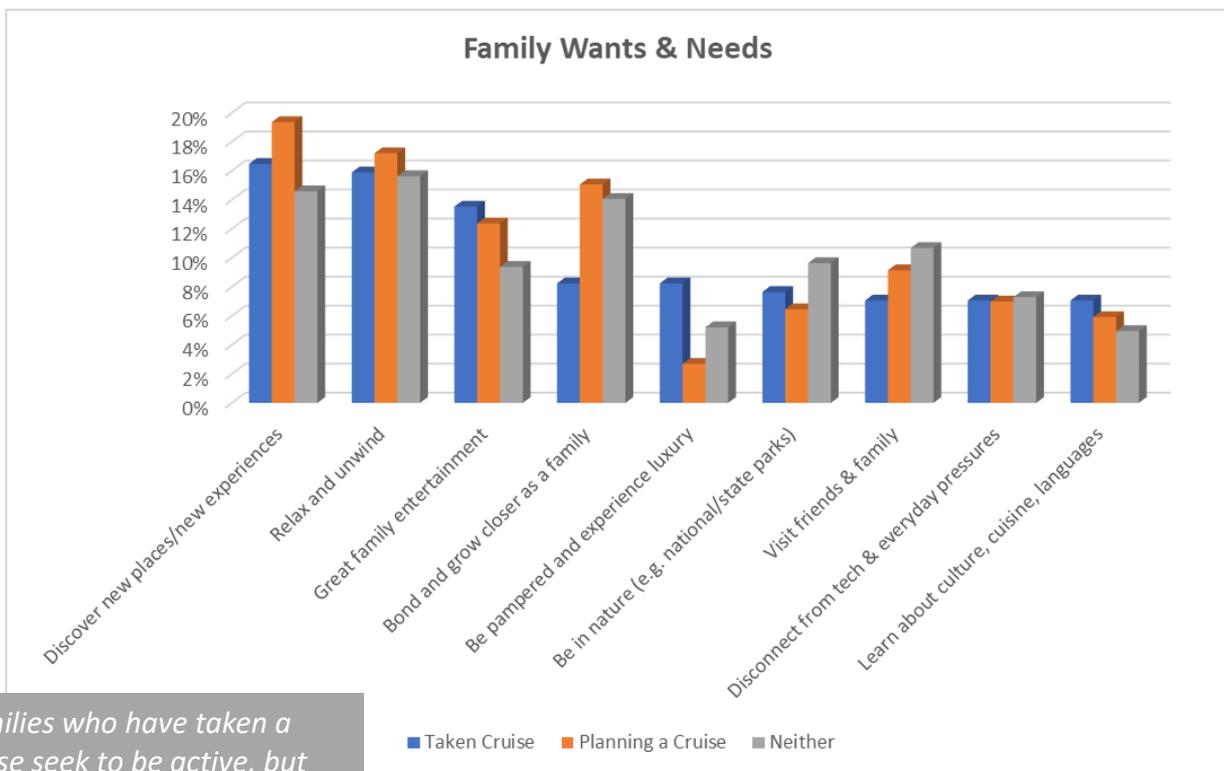
INSPIRING YOUR CLIENTS

So who among your clients are most interested in taking an Ocean Cruise vacation? By understanding family vacation interests, travel patterns and future desires, you can develop a long-term marketing and sales strategy.

The FTA every year surveys American consumers to better understand their family travel wants and needs. And every year, parents/adult family members say they want to:

- bond and grow closer as a family
- discover new places and experiences
- visit family and friends

But when we break out responses by families who have taken a cruise, those who haven't but are planning one, and those families who indicate no current interest in cruises, we see some differences. Below are results from the 2018 FTA Family Travel Survey:



Families who have taken a cruise seek to be active, but also see cruises as a way to satisfy their diverse interests in dining and entertainment.

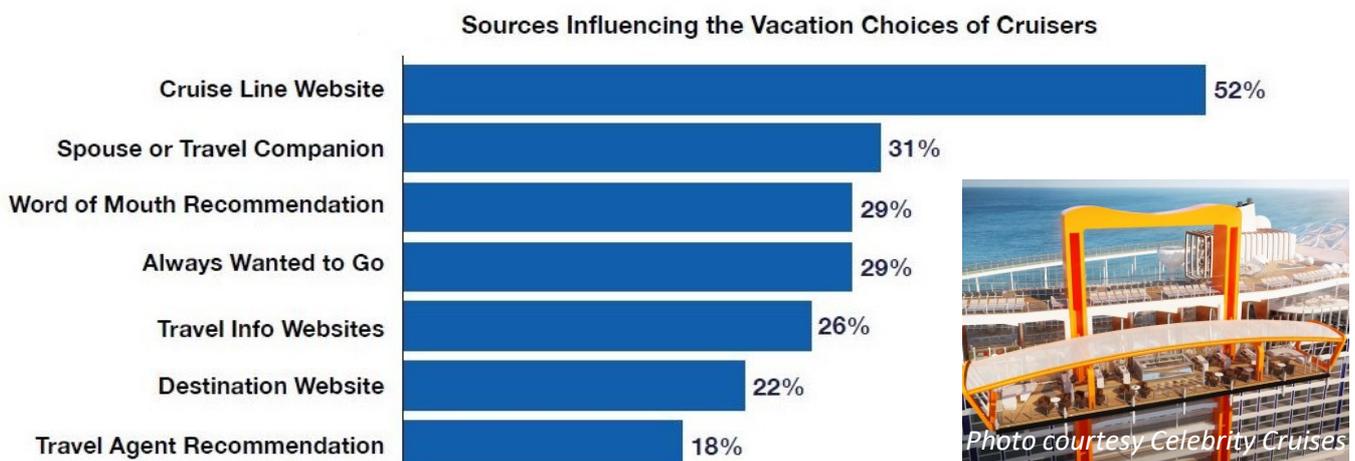
What inspires cruisers:

You will be more successful in marketing and selling cruises to your clients and prospects if you are always thinking about how you raise awareness for your agency and for the cruise experiences you like to sell. Your website, your YouTube channel and other digital properties (e.g. email newsletter, Facebook page, etc.) all should seek to inspire prospective cruisers to come to you to best match them with their vacation aspirations.

This means creating targeted content and messaging that can be accessed by your clients and prospects as they move through the sales funnel to purchase, and ultimately to advocacy for you and your expertise. Keep in mind the following basic content concepts that attract cruise clients on their path to purchase from you.



In addition, it will be helpful to you if you are mindful of the sources cruisers go to become inspired and educated about their options. CLIA consumer survey research⁸ shows:



Factors influencing choice:

The initial decision to cruise is very often based on the destination, according to CLIA⁹. If a client wants to go to the Caribbean, they could fly to a resort and visit one or two islands. A cruise, on the other hand, is a fantastic option for clients looking to sample a region.

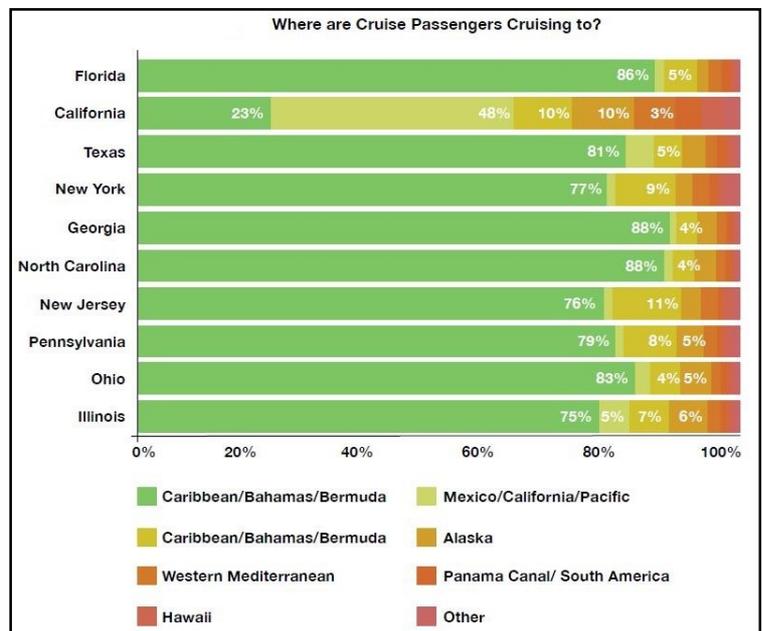
The next key decision-making factors are cost and the overall experience the family is looking for. Here, travel advisors need to use insightful qualifying questions to narrow down their customer's options. Tune your ear to hear deeper into what your clients are saying.

Proximity to port:

Some of your cruise vacation recommendations may rise from consultative selling. However, you should also be aware of some of your clients' and prospects' natural inclination to choose from options closer to home.

Residents in ten U.S. states make up the bulk of U.S. cruise passengers, partly due to the size of the state's population, and partly due to living in close proximity to ports of embarkation.

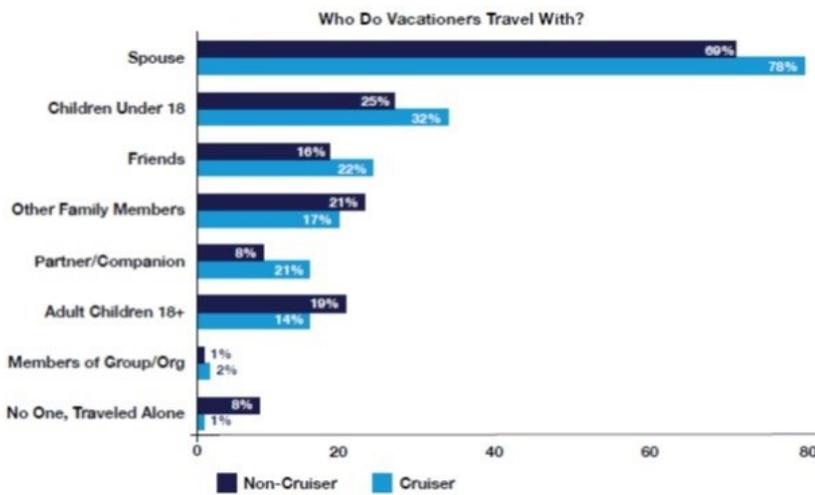
As you develop your website, email marketing and social media newsfeed, your content should reflect where your clients are most inclined to cruise to.



"Roughly half of the U.S. population is within a day's drive of a Carnival homeport, making it extremely convenient and affordable for everyone to get to and from their cruise."

-- Adolfo Perez, Senior Vice President of Sales & Trade Marketing





Age of children:

As families plan and compare their vacation options, many first consider whether to have a more conventional land-based trip (e.g. resort, all-inclusive, etc.), or take to the seas.

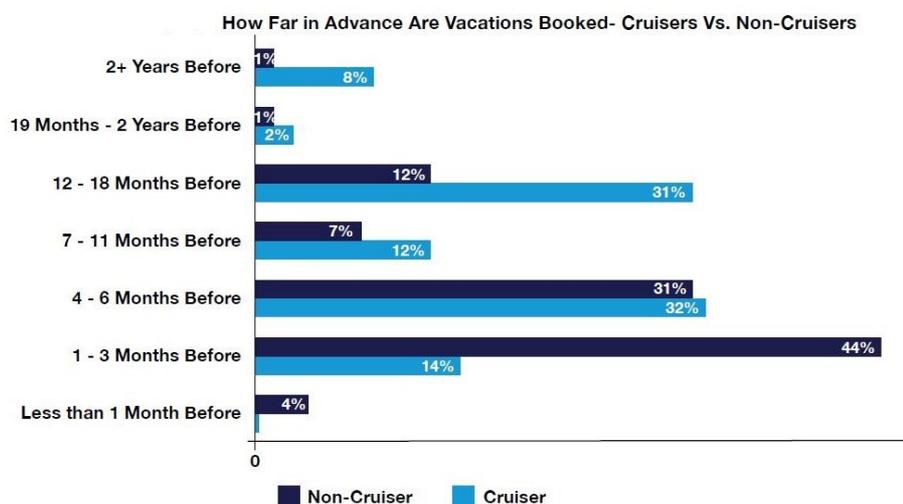
CLIA research¹⁰ shows that families with children under 18 years are inclined to book a cruise vacation over land alternatives. However, for families with children 19 years of age and older, the percentage of taking cruises drops by half.

“For families traveling with infants and toddlers, agents should check the minimum age requirement for each cruise line they are considering for their clients., as they vary. There also may be minimum age requirements for supervised child care.”

-- Lauren Goldenberg, The Family Traveler

Booking windows:

Another important factor for agents to consider is the lead time between a client booking a cruise, and when they actually travel. In general (as can be seen in the CLIA¹¹ research below), cruise bookings are made much further in advance than a traditional land-based vacation. Understanding booking patterns and tracking the behaviors of your sales leads and existing clients is important for marketing (as well as cash flow planning for your agency).



“Encourage your clients looking to save by planning ahead, with programs like Carnival’s Early Saver. Clients can get not only the best price, but also free price protection.”

-- Adolfo Perez, Carnival Senior Vice President of Sales & Trade Marketing

VISUALLY INSPIRING CLIENTS

The photos you use on your website and in your social media should inspire families by placing them in their vacation long before you book them. Take advantage of best practices, like the photos and guidance from some of our FTA Media Center and Cruise Line members (links are embedded where possible):

Help them be “there”:

While images of glorious sunsets, private islands and ships at sea should be part of your social media marketing plan, also ensure that you are including more “intimate” photos that help a family feel like they are already on their vacation, enjoying the food, fun and entertainment.

Compositions that bring an experience close in to the viewer create higher engagement with family travelers, and will help you sustain their attention.

“This water slide picture was taken in December 2018 on a Carnival Glory Western Caribbean cruise. I think the ‘ready to slide’ action perspective helped people to envision themselves in the shot and the centered funnel composition was a plus too.”

-- Nancy Schretter,
Managing Editor,
[Family Travel Network](#)



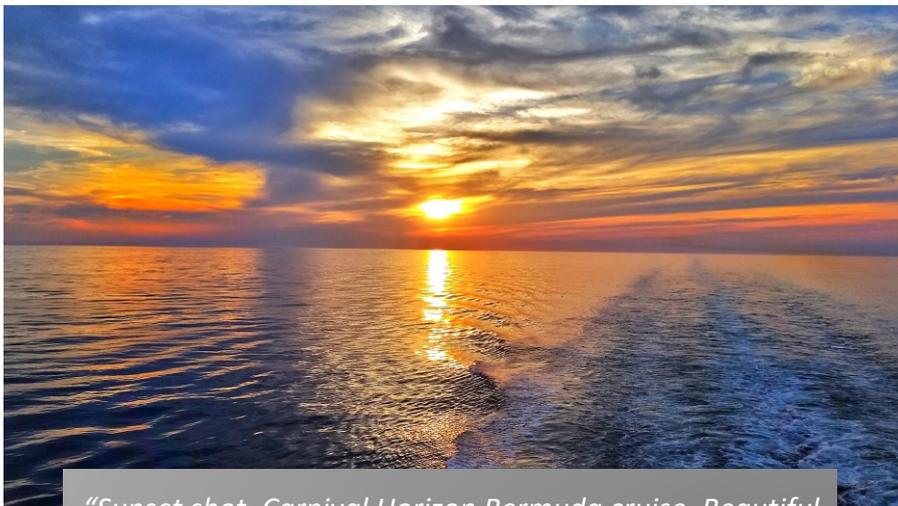
While the photos and video on the outside columns of this NCL Instagram feed (left) received more likes, the three photos in the center column received more comments (i.e. Engagement). The photo of the latte in the hand (middle, bottom) and the lazy hammock (middle, top) are great examples of how to place a follower directly in a scene.

Help them be “there” (cont’d):

“You have to start with a stunning, well-composed photo. Notice this one wasn’t posted as a square, as it would have ruined the composition. The text is selling this moment between mother and son, not the cruise itself.

The first few lines tell a complete story, even if the viewers don’t click the photo and only read from their feed. For those who do click, go into more detail. The photo also works because it shows what you can do off the cruise ship. In other words, ‘What new experiences will this cruise expose me to?’.” – Shellie Bailey-Shah, Editor, [KidTripster](#)

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BsgPUgMFkDz/>



“Sunset shot. Carnival Horizon Bermuda cruise. Beautiful ocean cruising sunset shots always perform well on social media, but this one did exceptionally well. The combination of the ship’s wake, the horizon and the sunset’s mesmerizing colors allows viewers to imagine themselves there in that moment, relaxing and enjoying a memorable sunset with those they love.”
– Nancy Schretter, Managing Editor, Family Travel Network.

Feel free to filter:

Photography purists may frown on altering a photo, but it is a very common practice to use filtering tools embedded in a phone, or apps like [VSCO](#) and [Snapseed](#), to enhance the feel you are looking for and make the photo pop.

Says Nancy Schretter, Managing Editor, Family Travel Network, *“There are tools out there that can make your photos pop more. To stand out from the vast array of social posts, learn some of the tools and experiment with them. The key is to get noticed.”*

Contrast and compare:

Part of the art of engagement is providing juxtaposing images and colors that cause someone to stop and linger.

"I think this photo worked because of the high saturation of blue water, combined with the visual interest of a ship in the background and a kid on lots of pool noodles. It isn't an ordinary cruise scene. The saturated blue also draws attention. The inclusion of a mix of well used, as well as less used hashtags is always our go-to strategy."

– LiLing Pang Co-founder and CEO, [Trekaroo](https://www.trekaroo.com)



<https://www.instagram.com/p/BvKYLfvGj9j/?igshid=1gwliri29446x>



"I love these images because they personify the Caribbean in every way - the landscape, food and the colorful personalities of the Caribbean people and culture. The bright colors are uplifting and I think draw people in."

– Lucee Santini, Blogger/Author, [MomJunkie.com](https://www.momjunkie.com)

Cruise destinations with bright, contrasting buildings are exceptional scenes for getting a follower to click and engage.

As you're attending FAM trips, or strolling through a port of call, make sure your camera/phone is handy for that fortuitous streetscape that helps you elicit the joy and lightness that contrasting colors can create with your followers.



<https://www.instagram.com/p/BeL14cfg23l/?igshid=15tpccuvdhfmc>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BuwEOT0gNu5/?igshid=1wdzidjgnseav>

Food, food, food:

Advertisers know that reaching a consumer emotionally is the key to getting them to engage and purchase. That's why so many of the most popular social media posts include food – images known to trigger strong and often unconscious emotional responses.



This NCL Instagram post photo was also featured in a blog on the cruise line's website about the celebrity chef food venues on the company's ships.



"I always get more likes on food, - especially in tropical destinations."

– Lucee Santini,
Blogger/Author, MomJunky.com



QUALIFYING YOUR CLIENTS

What are the best initial questions to qualify a family for a cruise vacation versus a land-based trip? We've compiled the following from our experts to add to your list.

- Where do you live?
- Where are you thinking of traveling to and when?
- Are you flexible with your dates? If not, why not?
- What are you looking to spend?
- Do you and your family have a preference of driving or flying on vacation?
- What are mom and dad looking to do outside of spending time with the kids?
- How do you and your children typically spend free time and weekends together? How about separate?
- What do your children do as part of a larger group of children?
- What kind of hotel accommodations do you typically book?
- How many children are traveling and what are their ages? Are there any other adults traveling and who are they?
- Do any family members have special needs?
- What did you like (like most) about your last vacation?
- What kind of style do you like to travel in (luxury, budget, etc.)?

Photo courtesy Royal Caribbean

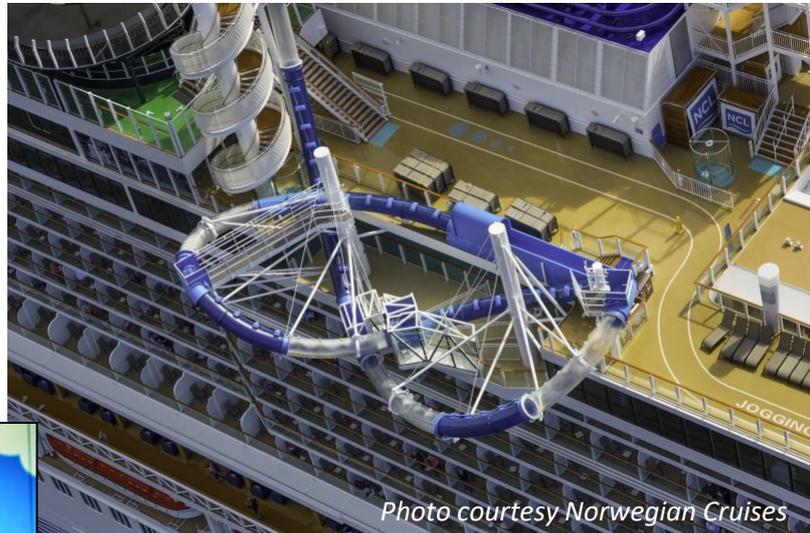


Photo courtesy Norwegian Cruises

When comparing the cost of a cruise vacation to a resort, theme park or even a road trip, customers often fail to calculate and compare total vacation package costs, including meals, event/park admission, etc.

OVERCOMING OBJECTIONS

Inevitably, some clients will raise objections. Our experts told us the categories of some of the biggest issues that might be raised, and offered some suggestions on how to talk about them.

What if we don't like being at sea?

- Most recently built ships have high tech stabilization systems.
- A doctor can prescribe something for you, like a Scopalamine patch, that you wear behind your ear.
- Onboard doctors can prescribe seasickness aids as well.
- There also are holistic treatments .
- Suggest a shorter sailing of 3-4 nights to sample the experience.

Aren't cruises expensive?

- Many cruise lines offer added amenities like drink packages, WiFi and shipboard credits that can lower your overall vacation's cost.
- When you consider everything that is included, starting around \$59 per person per day, a cruise is very competitive with most other options.
- Payment schedules can allow you to save up and pay in increments.
- Won't a land-based trip be less expensive?

What's the food like?

- Today's ships offer a full complement of cuisine styles and a variety of healthy menus too, many created by celebrity chefs.
- Cruise lines are some of the best in dealing with special dietary needs.
- Cruise lines are especially good at seating large families and extended families.
- Main dining rooms generally serve breakfast and lunch a la carte.

What about storms?

- Ships can sail out of harm's way.
- You can protect your vacation with travel insurance.

It sounds like large crowds:

- I can find you quiet cabin locations depending on what you are looking for.
- While there are many activities where families mingle, there are plenty of private spaces where you can get away.
- There are a variety of ship classes and I can find you a smaller ship if you would like.

What is there to do?

- Today's ships come with everything, from ziplines to water slides, surf simulators, go kart racing and rock climbing, spas and Broadway shows.

Research Citations & Agent Resources

- 1 – CLIA 2018 Cruise Industry Outlook, updated June 2018
- 2 – CLIA 2019 Cruise Trends and State of the Cruise Industry Outlook
- 3 – FTA 2018 Family Travel Survey, October 2018
(Conducted by the Jonathan M. Tisch Center of Hospitality, NYU School of Professional Studies, June - July 2018, the US Family Travel Survey reached 1,724 consumers, 18 years or older, with one or more children 17 years or younger.)
- 4 – CLIA Travel Agent Cruise Industry Outlook, Spring 2018
- 5 – CLIA 2018 Cruise Industry Outlook, updated June 2018
- 6 – CLIA Travel Agent Cruise Industry Outlook, Spring 2018
- 7-11 – CLIA 2018 Cruise Industry Outlook, updated June 2018

FTA Cruise Line Member travel agent portals:

- [Carnival](#)
- [Celebrity](#)
- [Holland America](#)
- [MSC](#)
- [Norwegian](#)
- [Princess](#)
- [Royal Caribbean](#)

(Clickable links)

Other resources:

- [CLIA Research](#)
- [FTA Research](#)

This guide was developed with the assistance of leading experts in the field. The FTA would like to thank the following for their contributions:

- Lauren Goldenberg, Owner, The Family Traveler travel agency
- Ron Gulaskey, AVP, National Account Sales & Trade Associations, Celebrity Cruises
- Anthony Meloro, Director, Business Development Support & Host Travel Partner, Royal Caribbean
- Alicia Steuart, Senior Sales Director, Key Accounts, Carnival Cruise Line

Additional contributors include:

- Sally Black, Vactionkids.com & FTA Director of Travel Advisor Initiatives
- Richard D'Ambrosio, FTA Communications Director

The Family Travel Association is:

a coalition of leading family travel suppliers, destinations, media, professional travel advisors and experts coming together to create a single, collective voice on behalf of the travel industry and those companies serving traveling families.

OUR MISSION

To inspire families to travel – and to travel more – while advocating for travel as an essential part of every child’s education.

Visit us at: www.familytravel.org