

days in length, are also proving to be very popular. However, seven day itineraries still remain the most in demand. The Caribbean continues to be the favorite cruising destination, and the Mediterranean and other European routes are the second most purchased cruising itineraries. Alaska and the coast of Mexico also remain popular with cruise passengers. River cruising has gained momentum, especially in Europe, Asia, and the United States and cruise lines are adding ships at a rapid pace to keep up with growing demand.

Cruise passengers sail on either one-way or round-trip itineraries. On a one-way itinerary they will begin and end their journey to and from different ports. One-way itineraries are very common on river cruises and Alaskan routes. For example, passengers begin their journey by flying to Paris where they transfer to a motorcoach traveling to Trier, board a river barge and cruise the Moselle, Rhine, and Main Rivers to Nuremberg then transfer to another motorcoach finishing their journey in Prague. Alaskan cruise passengers begin their inside passage journey by boarding their cruise at ports in either Vancouver, B. C., or Seward, Alaska. Seward is just a short train or bus ride away from Anchorage. On a round-trip itinerary, passengers begin and end their journey from the same port.

Expanded fleets of ships combined with new amenities and effective marketing efforts have helped to reposition the cruise experience in consumers' minds as destination resorts rather than as transportation. Growth in the number of cruises has led to other changes as cruise line operators continue their efforts to improve service and expand their marketing reach.

The number of ports and the quality of facilities where passengers may **embark** and **disembark** have grown and improved. Cruise-line companies have also expanded the number of available cruising options and targeted specific market segments. Because of the flexibility provided in cruise-line operations, each cruise can be designed to meet the tastes and needs of a specific cruising audience, with focused activities such as fitness, big band or rock music, and mystery parties.

Cruise ships come in a variety of types and offer different experiences. Cruising was originally available on classic ocean liners, such as the *Queen Mary* and the *Queen Elizabeth* (1 and 2). But most cruising now takes place on vessels that fit one of the following categories:²⁵

1. **Megaships** Most of the ships are extremely large, weighing up to 250,000 **gross registered tons (GRT)**, carrying up to 7,000 passengers or more, and having 12 or more **decks**. These ships are virtually floating resorts, usually offering an array of entertainment and dining options onboard.
2. **Midsized ships** Luxury ships, older cruise ships, and ships that primarily sail select regions, for example, Europe and the Mediterranean, accommodate 950 to 2,000 passengers. These ships offer amenities but on a smaller scale than those featured on the megaships.
3. **Small ships** Carrying fewer than 950 passengers, these ships offer a more intimate, less frenzied cruise experience. Most are used for niche markets, such as education-based, ultraluxury, or adventure cruises.
4. **Sailing ships** Serving a distinct market segment, masted ships provide passengers with the opportunity to cruise in the original style—using wind power! Frequently, passengers act as part of the crew and aid in the sailing of the vessel.
5. **Riverboats and barges** An additional style of nostalgia cruising is provided by the riverboat. In the United States, riverboats designed to look like Mark Twain paddle wheelers ply the Mississippi, the Missouri, and the Columbia rivers. In Europe, modern riverboats, built low to the water to glide under bridges, travel on rivers such as the Danube and the Rhine.
6. **Multipurpose ships** Some ships, like those that transit the Scandinavian fjords, carry leisure travelers along with cargo and/or local commuters.