

# Secrets Cruise Lines Won't Tell You



## **Food**

1. You are not limited to one of each appetizer, entree and dessert in the main dining room. You can order two entrees or three desserts if you choose. You can also order appetizer-sized portions of entrees as starters or order a few appetizers for your main meal. It's a great way to try new foods you're not sure you'll like (escargot, anyone?).
2. Room service is free of charge, except for late-night hours on certain lines, such as Royal Caribbean. It's recommended you tip your delivery person, but in-room dining is not the splurge it is at a hotel.
3. Most people dine in the main dining room or buffet on the first night of the cruise, and many haven't discovered the specialty restaurants yet. If you book an alternative dining venue for the first night of the cruise, you may get a discount on select lines (like Celebrity Cruises) or have an easier time getting a reservation for a popular venue. Carnival Cruise Lines passengers who dine in the Steakhouse on the first night get a free bottle of wine.
4. Specialty coffee at the designated coffee shops on board comes with an extra fee, but the pastries, sandwiches and other food at these venues are often free. While some specialty items (like chocolate-covered strawberries) will have a charge, don't assume all the small bites do.
5. Like ice cream? Cruise lines will charge for branded licks like Ben & Jerry's and Celebrity's gelato. However, there's always a free version -- whether soft-serve machines on the Lido Deck or hard-serve stations at the buffet. And do your reconnaissance -- Cruise Critic members report that soft-serve machines on either side of the deck can have different flavours.
6. On embarkation day, most people head straight to the buffet to have lunch and wait for their cabins to open. It's a mob scene. But many cruise ships have alternative venues open -- the main dining room or a mini-buffet in the solarium or atrium area. Ask a crewmember or check your daily newsletter to find an alternative for a calmer first meal. For example, on Princess Cruises, the International Cafe, Pizzeria and Grill are open; on Royal Caribbean ships, Sorrento's, the Solarium and Park Cafes, Giovanni's Table and Starbucks are open on embark afternoon.
7. Don't know which night to make specialty dinner reservations? The main dining room menus are planned for the week, and the purser's desk often has access to those menus. Ask to see them so you can decide which nights are

less appealing and which you don't want to miss, and plan your cruise accordingly.

## **Drink**

1. There's no "open beverage" rule on board. You can bring drinks from a bar or buffet to your cabin or elsewhere on the ship and no one will bat an eye. (Same goes for food.)
2. It's often cheaper to buy a bottle of wine than a few glasses -- but what do you do if you don't finish the bottle? Cruise ship waiters can mark the bottle with your room number and save it for another night, even for dinner in another on board venue.
3. Groups of beer drinkers can save by ordering buckets of beer. You get four or five beers in a souvenir bucket at a per-beer cost slightly cheaper than ordering individual bottles.
4. On most lines, soda is not free -- but iced tea in the dining room usually is. Save on soda by buying a soda card, offering a set price for unlimited soft drinks.
5. Most lines let you bring a reasonable amount of non alcoholic drinks on board. Save on pricey shipboard sodas and bottled waters by bringing your own.
6. Some cruisers use their stateroom Bibles for more than spiritual counsel. Cruise Critic members report that they will leave unused drinks cards or coupons in their Bibles. So be sure to flip through yours to make sure a surprise isn't waiting.
7. Enticed by all those special drinks in a souvenir glass? You can refill those glasses at a discount -- or ask to have the drink of the day in a regular glass to save money. Also watch your daily program for drink specials or happy hours with reduced price beverages.

## **Cabins**

1. Most cabins are made of metal...and therefore they're magnetic. Bring along some magnets (or buy some as souvenirs) and you can keep all your cocktail party invites, alternative dining reservation notices and daily planners hung up on the walls and doors.
2. Inside cabins have no natural light. At all. Turn your TV to the bridge cam station, turn off the sound and -- voila! -- you've got an instant nightlight and a way to see if the sun is up.
3. With all of the electronics we tote around with us these days, most people find cruise ship outlets to be insufficient. You can bring your own charging station or power strip (check to see if these are legal on your cruise line), but



you may also want to ask your cabin steward. Sometimes there's an extra outlet hidden behind the TV or under the bed.

4. Picky about your bedding? Some lines will provide egg crate mattress toppers, top sheets and alternative pillow types by special request. Feel free to ask, before or during your cruise.
5. Cabin designers are pretty smart about creating as much storage space as possible. Do a little exploring or ask your cabin steward for a tour. You may be surprised to find extra storage under the bed or couch, inside an ottoman or behind a mirror.
6. If you're feeling queasy, don't run out to a pharmacy before making some calls. Room service can bring you green apples and bland crackers (crewmembers swear by the apple remedy), and often you can get seasickness meds from the purser's desk for free.

### **Entertainment**

1. **Casino frequenters can get a hole punched in their room card and a free** lanyard from the casino staff for easy play without forgetting your card in the slot machines.
2. Many lines offer free minutes if you sign up for an Internet package on the first day of the cruise.
3. Cruise ship spas often offer discounts for first-day and sea-day treatments. Stop by the spa, or check your daily newsletters to find out about deals.
4. If the port talk is at the same time as your massage, don't worry. Presentations and audience-participation shows are often re-broadcast on the ship's channel on your in-room TV. You can still catch the recording if you miss the live show.
5. Use of the showers, saunas and steam rooms not located in fancy thermal suites is free. Showering in the spa can often mean access to more clean towels, fancy toiletries and bigger shower stalls -- and prevents fights over who gets cabin bathroom access first. Using the free saunas is also a great remedy for that inevitable vacation head cold that stuffs you up.

### **Line-Specific Secrets**

1. Celebrity's buffet secrets include delicious ship-made hard-serve ice cream (for free) in the buffet and made-to-order waffles with a choice of toppings. You can also order a cup of candy toppings with no ice cream if that's your treat of choice.
2. On Holland America, many cruisers don't know that the Pinnacle Grill is half-price at lunchtime, and free chocolate truffles make an appearance in the Explorer's Lounge each evening.
3. Princess ships serve up cookies and milk at 3 p.m. on the pool deck and in the Piazza.

I hope these small tips help to make your cruise vacation a more memorable and happy sailing.



**Happy Sailing!**