



HOW TO CHOOSE THE PERFECT STATEROOM ON A CRUISE SHIP

So you've booked your next cruise. You've found the perfect cruise line, ship, route, and itinerary for your next vacation. But now comes the challenging part – how to choose the perfect stateroom?

First thing's first: there's no such thing as the "perfect stateroom" – rather, there's a cabin to suit every preference. The first step is to decide what's important to you. Maybe you don't want to do too much walking, so a room close to the ship's elevators would be good for you? You'd really like a room with a view or a sunny balcony? Or perhaps you value peace and quiet above all? Once you've established what you want in a stateroom, you'll have a far better chance of choosing the one that's the right fit for you.

CATEGORIES OF STATEROOMS

Staterooms on cruise ships typically fall into one of four broad categories: interior, ocean view, balcony, and suite.

Budget-conscious passengers will be most inclined to book an **interior stateroom**, the most affordable option on the ship. These compact, windowless cabins are fine for sleeping and changing clothes, but not much else. Many passengers are willing to compromise on comfort in order to save money, thinking that they'll be able to enjoy the view from the public areas onboard – but then forget how many other passengers are on the ship who have the exact same idea. Only in the comfort of your own private balcony will you be guaranteed a sunny spot that no one can steal from you.

For passengers who enjoy natural light and picturesque views, an **ocean view** stateroom can be a great option. These staterooms offer a glimpse of the ocean through a porthole or picture window.

When searching for an Ocean View stateroom, watch out for the words "obstructed view." This term means that the beautiful vista just outside your window will most likely be blocked by a lifeboat or other obstruction hanging in the way. While this compromise typically results in a slightly less expensive cruise fare, it's often not worth it if you were looking forward to a vacation full of romantic sunsets and ocean vistas.

An even better option is the **balcony stateroom**, also known as a verandah or veranda stateroom. These cabins have a private balcony in addition to a large window or a sliding glass door. The exact size and shape of the balcony will vary from ship to ship, but most have a table and two chairs, so you can sit and sip cocktails before dinner or enjoy coffee and breakfast while enjoying the fresh ocean breeze.

Suites offer the most luxurious experience. These spacious staterooms may range from an extra-large balcony stateroom with a separate living room and bedroom, to luxurious apartment-sized accommodations with whirlpools and a private butler. Some suites also

offer direct access to the spa or exclusive parts of the ship, including private dining rooms. Suites provide the highest level of comfort and the most amenities to give you the ultimate vacation experience.

So which stateroom category is our personal favorite? Dreamlines recommends booking a **balcony cabin**. Once you've watched the ship pull into harbor at sunrise or witnessed wildlife from the privacy of your balcony as you sip your morning coffee, you'll never want to go back!

GUARANTEE STATEROOM: MONEY-SAVING TRICK OR NOT WORTH THE RISK?

One clever way to save money is by booking a guarantee stateroom. A guarantee stateroom means you pick the category of stateroom you'd like to stay in – interior, ocean view, balcony, or suite – but you leave the exact room selection and location up to the cruise line. The cruise line will then place you into an unsold cabin shortly before departure. If the category you selected sells out, you may be placed into a higher category – but you're guaranteed to wind up in the stateroom category you booked *or above*. This gamble can be an attractive choice for passengers who want to save money.

There is a downside, however, of not being able to select your individual stateroom. You might wind up in a high-traffic area, below the galley, or above the anchor – all noisy spots that might disturb your night's sleep.

For some passengers, the temptation of getting bumped into a higher category is worth the risk. But if you'd prefer to play it safe, it's better to spend a few extra dollars and select your own stateroom, to avoid any possible disappointment.

SENSITIVE STOMACH? HEAD TO THE MIDDLE!

The cabin category isn't the only criteria you should consider when selecting your perfect stateroom. You've also got to think about location. This is particularly important if you've got a sensitive stomach. Contemporary cruise ships are equipped with modern stabilization technology to minimize the motion of the sea, so it's extremely unlikely that you'll get seasick on a cruise. But if you're the kind of person who gets motion sick in a moving car, you may want to take this into consideration when choosing the location of your stateroom on your cruise.

The movement of the waves is more pronounced fore and aft of the ship, and the least noticeable in the middle or towards the aft elevators. So if you're worried about seasickness, you may want to avoid the very front and back of the ship. Also good to know: the lower down you are towards the bottom of the ship, the less you'll feel the rolling of the waves. If you know you've got a tendency to get motion sick, it's definitely safer to book a stateroom in the middle and down below. A balcony stateroom or suite also has advantages, because fresh air and a view of the horizon can keep you from feeling unwell.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

If you want to avoid spending your time walking up and down long hallways, make sure your stateroom is close to an elevator. Especially for newer and bigger ships, you can easily get your 10,000 steps in walking to and from the various restaurants, activities, and shows throughout the ship. Most cruise ships have elevators throughout the ship. If there's a member of your group with limited mobility, or if you're just not a fan of walking long distances, you'll be grateful if the elevators are located just around the corner.

On the other hand, don't forget that elevators and stairways are high-traffic areas – at all hours. If you choose a room next to the lifts, you might want to pack earplugs to make sure you aren't disturbed by the noise of your fellow passengers as they walk past your door. As a rule of advice, always check the ship's deck plan before you book your stateroom.

A LITTLE PEACE AND QUIET

Speaking of noise, don't just check the deck plan for what's located next to your stateroom on the ship – check the decks above and below as well. While at first it might seem like a good idea to bunk up below the buffet to ensure being first in line for break-

fast every day, you'll soon regret your decision if you had any notions of sleeping in. Hours before the restaurant actually opens, the crew is already hard at work setting up and preparing the food, which can lead to a rude awakening in the wee hours of the morning. If you're sleeping directly under the sun deck, you won't need to set an alarm either – the crew members clean the deck and carry away the lounge chairs every evening, and bring them back in the morning. Equally risky are staterooms located underneath the theater, the casino, a bar, or a dance club. There, you can expect loud music late into the night. If you're looking for some peace and quiet, the best location is a stateroom located between passenger decks, where you'll have other passenger staterooms above and below you.

CONNECTING STATEROOMS

Some staterooms have a door connecting them to the next room over – a great option for families or groups. But be aware: these connecting doors don't insulate sounds as well as normal walls, particularly on older ships. Sounds travel further through these doors – in both directions. So whether you're worried about noisy neighbors, or if you're planning on throwing a party in your room, it's best to avoid connecting rooms. You can find out which staterooms have connecting doors by checking the ship's deck plans, or by asking your cruise expert.

SUNNY SIDE UP

Wise cruisers don't just have a single stateroom that's their favorite – they pick their favorite based on the route. But why? Well, think about it. If you're going on a cruise to Alaska, for instance, you'll be traveling along the west coast of North America – either northbound or southbound. If you're on a northbound trip and you want to get a good look at the glaciers and coast lines you sail by, you'll want to be on the starboard (right) side of the ship. If, on the other hand, you'd prefer to have a romantic sunset dinner on your private balcony, you'll want to make sure you're on the west side – in this case, port side (left). For round-trip cruises, this difference is less pronounced: if you missed out on the coastline on the way there, you can always catch it again on the way back.

If you're traveling to a sunny destination, you'll need to take the sun and the heat into consideration. Do you want your balcony to be the optimal spot for the perfect tan? Or would you prefer to be protected from the harsh afternoon sun? Remember that the sun is stronger in the north and east in the morning, and south and west in the afternoon.

Staterooms at the very front or very back of the ship have the advantage of both – at least on northbound or southbound itineraries. You'll spend part of the day in sun and part of the day in shade. On an east/west itinerary, such as a transatlantic crossing, you might want to think about whether you'd prefer to watch the sunrise or sunset from the privacy of your and choose a stateroom either forward or aft. Additionally, staterooms located at the back of the ship tend to have larger balconies with wider vistas.

SUN AND SKY – OR NOT?

On many ships, the pool deck isn't aligned with the other decks of the ship – to maximize space, it often juts out over the side. While this makes for a particularly beautiful view from the pool, it has a different effect on the balcony staterooms beneath it: The staterooms below have an extended roof over the balcony, meaning they're particularly shady and the interiors somewhat darker. In our experience, this may not be a good thing – not even in the sun-drenched islands of the Caribbean or the Mediterranean. Even if you like a little bit of shade every now and again, you'd be better off choosing a stateroom that's higher up on the ship. The sun moves throughout the day, so you'll have plenty of time for both sun and shade in a stateroom on the upper decks.

Our cruise experts recommend: *“Look carefully at photos of the ship and the deck plans before you select your stateroom. Are there projecting roofs or other features that might impact your view? If so, try to pick a stateroom at least two decks below it. Then you'll be able to enjoy an uninterrupted view of the horizon and sky – and that's the best part of cruising, after all.”*

You're already thinking about your dream stateroom on your next cruise? Our cruise experts can help you find the perfect cabin on your dream cruise vacation. Call Dreamlines today!