

Cruising in Suites:

Are Suites Worth It?



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ABOUT AUTHORS



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Aurora Cruises and Travel is a luxury cruise travel agency located in Port St. Lucie, Florida.

We are a store-front agency with specialization in luxury cruise lines, river cruising, and suites on cruise ships.

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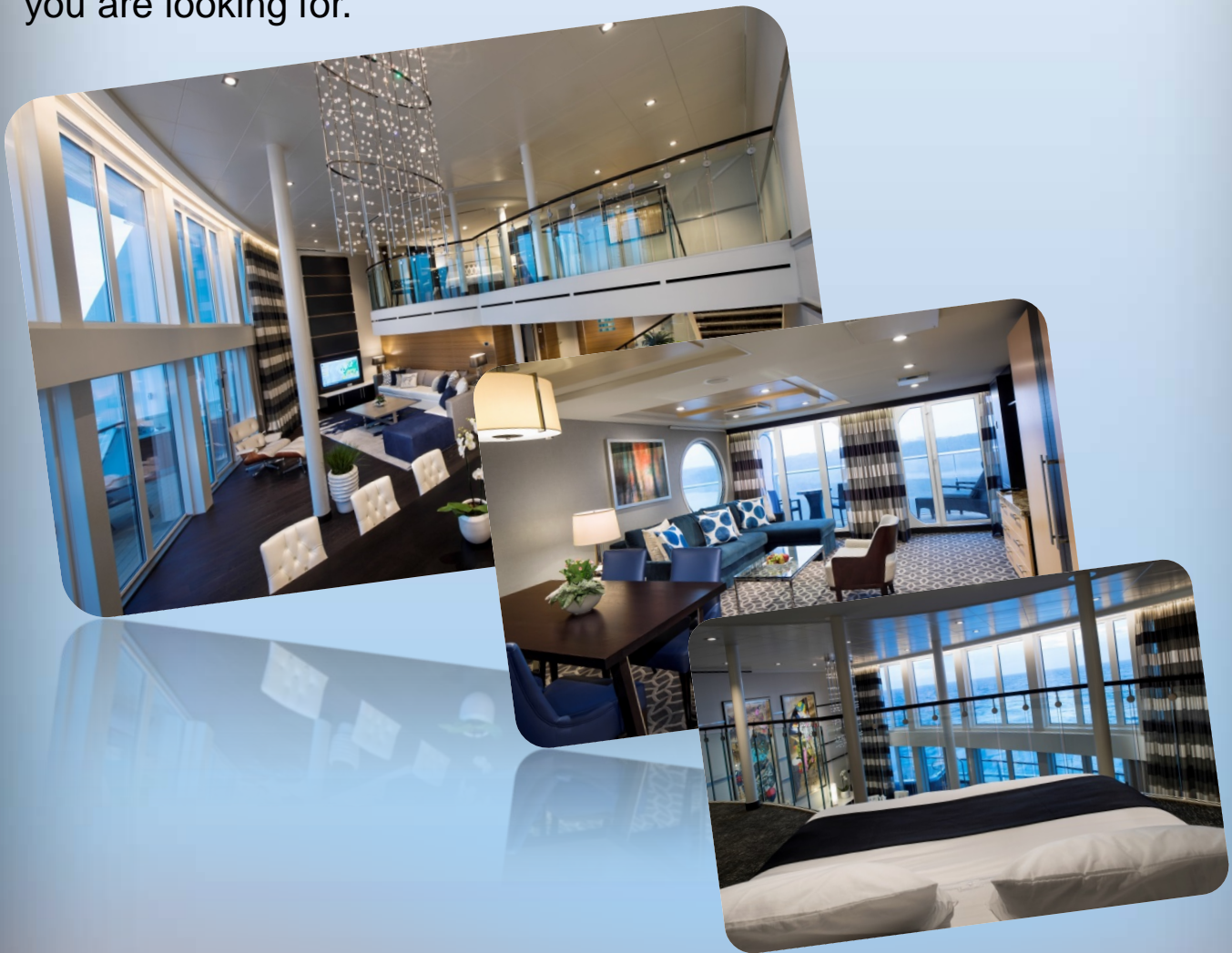
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It goes without saying that Suites offer the more luxurious accommodations when traveling, but what does that mean when you cruise?

Suites provide more than just nicer cabins, and we have compiled a list of the top 9 reasons to book a Suite on your next cruise.

Just as all cruise lines are different and cater to a specific clients, Suites and their benefits vary from ship to ship. Some smaller, luxurious cruise lines, such as Seabourn offer all Suite categories, where many others only a fraction of the capacity.

The complied list features benefits that are mostly universal to all Suite amenities, though make sure to contact us for specific features you are looking for.



1.

Priority Boarding and Disembarkation

You may have heard of this benefit that Suite guests are entitled to, but may not realize the true significance of it.

This benefit is especially important if cruising in any contemporary or premium cruise line, from Norwegian to Celebrity. These are the ships that must board over 3,000 passengers on average in a very short amount of time through only a couple of gangways.

That's a lot of standing in line! While some are far more efficient than others, there is really nothing more frustrating than beginning a vacation with endless queues.

Many times the lines are backed up due to waiting for ships to be cleared, which at times can be delayed due to Coast Guard ship clearance.

So arriving at 11 AM does not necessarily mean you will be on the ship within the hour.

For Suite guests, cruise lines strive to roll out the red carpet to treat their best customers with their best hospitality.

There are normally separate lounges or sitting areas designated for those guests as well as a light breakfast and on some cruise lines wait staff



to accommodate.

What's even better is that Suite guests are the first to be invited on the ship, all the easier to get through the gangway without the long queues of general boarding.





Again, with an average of 3,000 passengers to board, you will have the ease of accessing the elevators and adore the ship with virtually no guests in your way upon embarkation. Many ships also offer private escorts from the pier to your Suite.

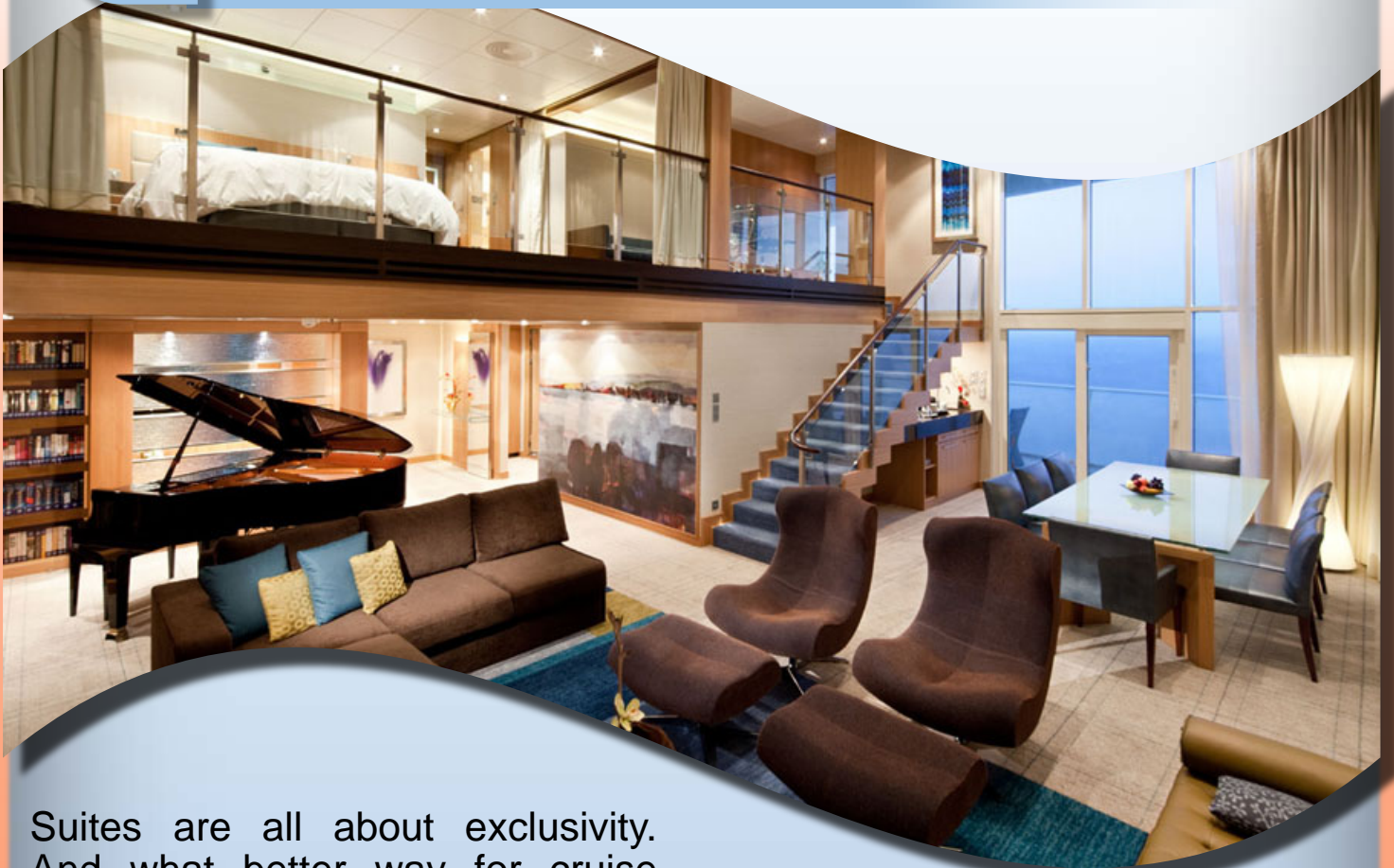
Just as important is an easy disembarkation. While the cruise lines can only control matters within the ship, Suite guests are always treated with greater priority.

Suite guests normally have the Suite lounge to use as their waiting area to disembark with a light breakfast and wait staff. The concierge can also arrange for complimentary luggage valet to be sent straight to the airport so there is no need to fuss with your suitcases when leaving the port. With your concierge, you can also request times you wish to disembark to make your transfers. Speaking of transfers, most concierge desks can help in online check ins and printing any boarding documents you may need for your travels ahead.



2.

Private Access



Suites are all about exclusivity. And what better way for cruise lines to exemplify that than Suite Lounges?

Though a standard practice among all cruise lines, some specialize in providing exclusive areas more than most. Disney, Norwegian and MSC are especially gracious to their Suite guests with beautiful indoor and outdoor areas. The concept is a ship within a ship feel, where you can escape the throngs of guests with your own little hideaway.

Norwegian's Haven for example is truly wonderful with their concept.

They have collected the majority of their Suites in one section of the ship, and enclosed the area to accommodate an outdoor courtyard with an indoor lounge, bar and concierge as well as a private restaurant.

The courtyard features a pool with loungers and some tables with food service as well as a private sauna on most of their ships.

In addition to the courtyard, there is yet another closed off deck lounging area with a full bar.



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Almost every ship offers Suite Lounges where the concierge is normally located along with a bar and some food refreshments. These lounges are fairly quiet areas with some families getting together, and are accessed solely with the guest's Suite cards. Many cruise lines also offer complimentary cocktail hours throughout the day.

In addition to Suite Lounges, most cruise ships also offer outdoor pool deck areas closed off for Suite guests only. Those areas usually boast more spacious lounging areas as well as more plush furniture with shaded areas and a private bar. While this may seem like a standard of any pool deck, the guest to service ratio is much higher, allowing for a much more attentive experience.

One of the greatest advantages of Suite exclusive venues on ships are the restaurants. While not all ships and fleets have these, those that do are spectacular! On Royal Caribbean's Quantum of the Seas, there is the Coastal Kitchen that features a Farm to Table concept restaurant with perfectly paired wines and a healthy California-meets-Mediterranean cuisine.



What Suite experience wouldn't be complete without a Concierge?

Just about every cruise line features a Concierge, and for a good reason. Cruise lines value their Suite guests and want to make sure there is personal attention paid to keep those guests satisfied. The role of a Concierge on a ship far exceeds making dinner reservations on board. As a Suite guest, utilizing your Concierge can make all the difference in enhancing your vacation. On the ship itself, the Concierge is your best source for any questions and requests you may have. What you normally would stay in line for up to an hour at Guest Services, your Concierge is there to take care of for you.

They can make recommendations for activities and dining as well as organize private sessions, such as those on the FlowRider on Royal Caribbean. Tables sold out for your preferred dining time? Let them make a call for you. They are your ally in making things happen.

Concierge desks are trained to be very diligent and pay attention to details, which are great for those specific requests that you are careful in entrusting. If you mention your favorite bottle of wine, many desks will notify restaurants ahead of time to keep it on hand. Also, as a Suite guest, many ships offer luggage valet complimentary to transfer to your airline, which they will be sure to handle.





The value in the Concierge is also what they can do for you off the ship. Many of the destinations you will be visiting have been frequented by the Concierge and can give you firsthand recommendations.

Aside from knowing general stores or restaurants, many will have relationships with local businesses that may be able to offer further personal attention or at times discounts.

They can make For those art lovers that enjoy collecting local flavors, speak to your Concierge about any galleries that they can recommend in your ports of call, and possibly contacts that can give you a personal tour.

Most Concierge services on ships will reach out to clients a few weeks ahead of their cruise for any dining or special service requests. Please be sure to communicate any of your requests you may have at that point with them.

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Far too often, people work all year to take that one week family vacation, only to cram everyone in a room they can barely turn around in. Sounds relaxing already.

Cruising is a very particular type of vacation as it is a destination in itself. I've many times heard guests say they don't spend all that much time in their cabins.

While it is highly unlikely that you will never leave your cabin during your trip, it is the beginning and end at the very least of your days.

So why would you want to begin your port or sea day pushing furniture out of your way or waiting in line for the bathroom? Or how about getting ready for dinners at night?



Cruise lines, whether small or large carry a certain amount of passengers, and a Suite offers some serenity of your own privacy.

Suites are ideal for guests that do treasure their quiet time, as they are normally located on prime decks and locations of the ship with minimal obstructions.

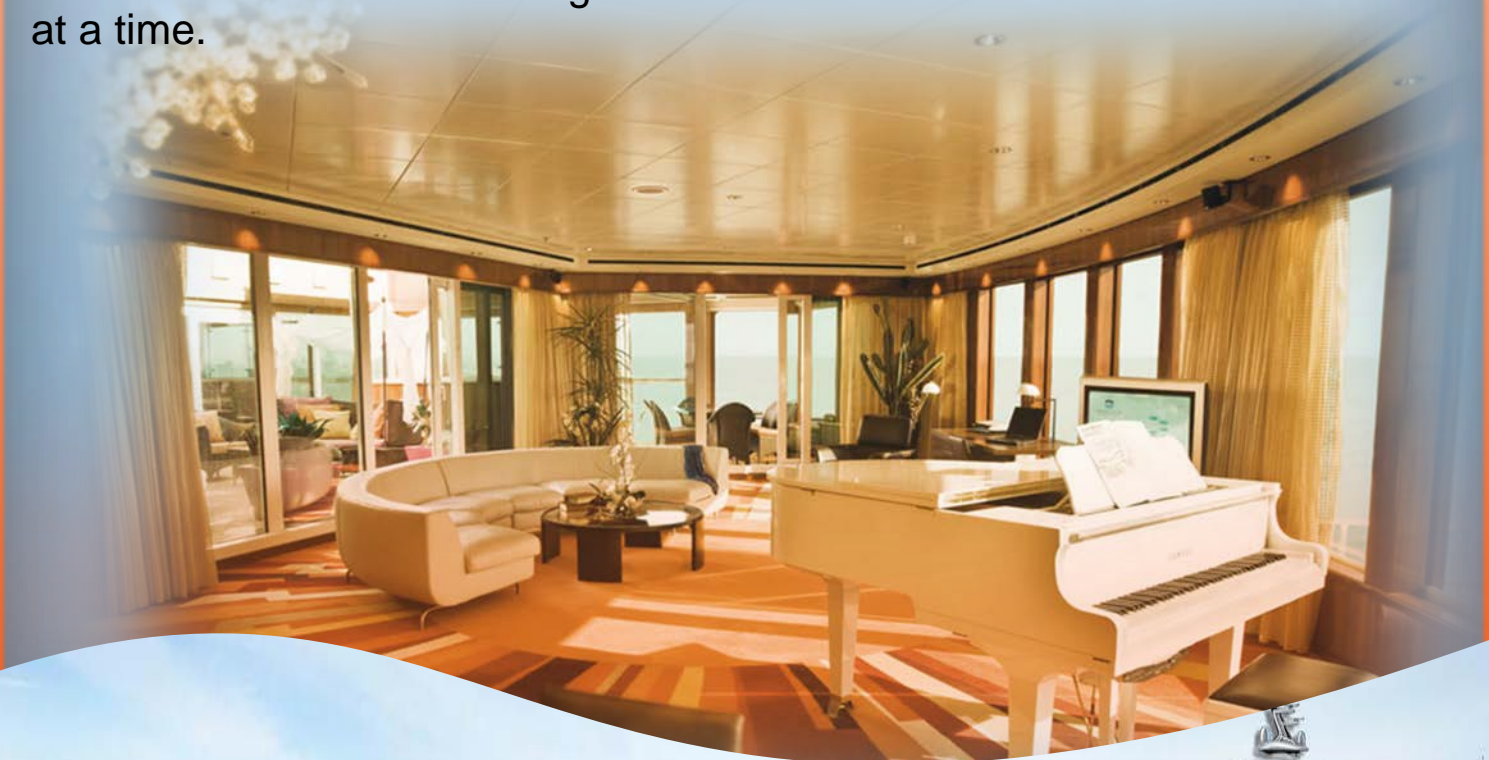
The best locations may include higher midship areas, or Lofts overlooking the aft of the ship. Suites offer the most square footage of any categories on board a cruise line. Junior Suites start at about 260 sq ft and larger Suites can run upwards of 2,000 square feet. While you may not need 2,000 sq ft, there are many Suites in between to fit your party comfortably.

Suites are also usually are one of the only options on ships that accommodate more than 4 guests at a time.

This may make sense if you are in the market for your family of 6 or 8, and considering an alternative to separate rooms. Since pricing structures on most cruise lines are such that the first two guests pay premiums and remaining guests much less, it may be economical to fit your party into one Suite.

For those with larger capacities, there are normally separate bedrooms and bathrooms for more privacy.

Yet another advantage is that most Suites offer more than one bathroom which means less time waiting and more time enjoying the ship. There are also double sinks in many Suites which any couple can appreciate when getting ready. Suite bathrooms also most times feature bathtubs which are ideal when traveling with toddlers that need baths.



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Larger spaces are great for families.

Not only for purposes of accommodations, but also for living areas and gathering space. It is common when booking multiple staterooms, for at least one set of guests to book a larger Suite so that it serves as their meeting ground.

Since many times cruise vacations are one of the few times a family may spend extensive time together, many guests take the advantage of a Suite to set up cocktail hours before dinner or In-Suite dining.



5.

Special Treatment on Board



Aside from the exclusive areas, beautiful Suites, and a personal Concierge, Suite guests enjoy special treatment while on board. While some are more pronounced than others, there is a sense of priority and elevated service when being acknowledged as a Suite guest.

One of the more noticeable features during your check in will be the stateroom cards you will be receiving. They tend to be a distinguished color to notify the staff on board of your status. For all your requests on the ship, such as preferable tables at dinner, your card allows the staff to expedite your party.

Most ships will also accommodate Suite guests at shows and productions without reservations or even priority seating. This is a wonderful perk for those nights you may have nothing planned but want to catch the Headliner on a whim. Instead of standing at that long queue, you can walk right to the doors and flash your key card for a swift entrance.





As a Suite guest, many ships will host a cocktail party for Suite guests to acknowledge your status and offer a warm welcome. Special services extend throughout the ships, such as reserved deck chairs, private decks accessible by your special key cards and private escorts to your Suite on embarkation.

At those private Suites-only venues, there is a far more attentive service with smaller ratios of staff per guest. Even at those Suite-only pool decks, most cruise lines will have a pool valet to bring all your beverages and food to you.





With previous points mentioning the beautiful Suites and their larger capacities, it is not hard to see why many would be willing to book a Suite to spend quality time with their families. Something to keep in mind is that most standard rooms are limited to a restricted in-room dining menu.

As a Suite guest, most lines provide the full menu from any venue on their ships. This feature provides the type of privacy that you can make your night into whatever you wish. It is great for those nights you do not wish to dress up and mingle with other guests on the ship. Or it could be a great occasion to set up a beautiful table on the balcony for that once in a lifetime proposal. With the ever changing view from your balcony, why wouldn't you take advantage of dining by the skyline?



A Suite sets a beautiful stage on the backdrop of a serene water scene that is yours to share with your guests alone. Let your Butler or Suite Attendant know of your plans in advance and they are most likely to accommodate your request.

Please note that not all cruise lines have the capacity of providing course by course room service. Since most Suites have indoor and outdoor dining tables, you will have the option of catching an outdoor sunset at dinner or reserve to the indoors for the chillier nights.

Something else to consider as a Suite guest, is that you will see a stark contrast in furniture from standard rooms to Suites. It will not be the plastic chairs and tables, rather more of the teak or treated wood frames that give a much more luxurious feel for your cruise.



7.

Luxurious Touches



Suites give you that added level of comfort by supplying you with top brands and exclusive partnerships with your favorite products.

Each cruise line is different and caters to their targeted clients. Most cruise lines will feature certain brand alliances to their Suite guests, such as toiletries and towels.

Oceania for example, has Bulgari soaps and lotions for their Suite guests, as well as Cashmere blankets to use during your stay.

Many lines will provide bath robes and slippers for their Suite guests, though many take it a step further.

Suites will also usually have much better beds and mattresses with more prestigious makers.

Higher thread counts of a 1,000 will have you all the more rested. Waking up, some Suites, such as those on Regent, offer Illy Espresso makers to get you going.



Suites tend to also have much more attention paid to the décor and furniture. While standard cabins are great for what they provide, they do tend to be somewhat ordinary, whereas Suites are more inviting.

Cruise lines hire Interior Decorators to work with each Suite to ensure colors, fabrics, and furniture is best designated for each space. This can make a large difference in your vacation plans, as it is a place you want to come back to each day.

Things like marbled bathrooms give a much more indulging experience or a whirlpool tub overlooking the ocean.

Those luxurious touches lend themselves to verandahs as well. Some Suites will feature hot tubs on the balconies or full service bars. On Royal Caribbean's Quantum of the Seas, there are hanging patio chairs and canopy outdoor daybeds. For those who need a bit more entertainment, select cruise lines also give out iPads during their stay.



Suite guests get more beyond their accommodation with complimentary services to enhance their cruising experience. Cruise lines understand the needs of their VIP guests and look for ways to make you feel as welcomed as possible.

Quite a few cruise lines offer Complimentary WiFi or discounts on internet Packages for Suite guests. Some Have Laptops or iPads in Suites handy so you won't need to travel with. For those beach or pool days, Oceania for example provides a tote bag – one less Thing to pack!

Beyond the ship, Regent offers Pre or Post Land programs, as well as Luxury Pre Cruise accommodations. For their select Suites, they also include Free Business Class Airfare. Certain cruise lines will give their Suite guests discounts for a variety of services from excursions to wine packages.

Many lines also provide services such as garments pressing or shoe shining for formal nights or even the entirety of the cruise.



The ultimate Suite experience is truly defined with a personal Butler.

While not a standard among all Suites, higher categories of Suites or luxury lines provide those services for their select guests.

While many luxury All-Suite brands such as Silversea have a Butler service for all of their categories, mass market ships such as Norwegian Cruise Line, offers this amenity to their top Suites.

Traditionally, Butlers are the overseeing task force of other services within a house or hotel, what some would consider a Chief of Staff.

On a cruise ship, your Butler performs all duties to effortlessly transition the roles of stateroom attendants and concierge.

Butlers are trained in a very specific way to which they anticipate your requests before you ever utter a word.

They are taught to identify your habits and preferences in such a way that you may have a drawn bath after your long land excursion just at the right temperature upon your return without ever asking.





Some cruise lines have their Butlers personally greet you at the terminal to not just lead you to your Suite, but also get the time to get to know you and your likings as well as help with any luggage along the way.

Butlers are also taught many other standard skills from cocktail mixtures, dining presentations course by course, to arranging small parties for your friends and family in your Suite. While Butlers may be trained in different regions or schools or may have worked their way up within the cruise lines, service is an underlying factor that is completely unparalleled. They are also your built in Concierge as far as recommendations and helping with any reservations you might want on and off the ship. They also usually help with unpacking, packing, pressing, and other laundry services to give you more time to enjoy your cruise.





Thinking about a suite on your next cruise?

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