

The Intimate Side of Cruising

With the current trend in ship building leaning toward bigger and bigger ships, it's important to remember that there are alternatives out there for those who aren't looking to meet two thousand or so new friends on their next cruise. Where large mega-ships are a destination unto themselves, smaller cruise ships can offer a higher level of service and often get into smaller ports that the big ships can't. Smaller ships tend to attract a more mature clientele that has tired of the typical seven-night Caribbean cruise and is looking for something a bit more exotic.

Let's take a look at just a few of the great options available to those looking to chart a different course from the masses:

- Windstar Sail Cruises – offers small luxury sail cruises with an elegantly casual and relaxed atmosphere. The largest of their three ships carries only 362 passengers when filled to capacity. Open-seating dining, no formal nights and five-star cuisine are hallmarks of the Windstar experience. Windstar appeals to those seeking a unique vacation experience.
- The Yachts of Seabourn – provide the ultimate in small-ship luxury cruise vacations to the most desirable destinations on earth. These intimate, all-suite ships each carry a maximum of 208 guests with nearly a one to one crew to passenger ratio. Celebrity chef Charlie Palmer creates the menus that are offered in the open-seating dining room. The Yachts of Seabourn are consistently rated among the top small cruise ships in the world.
- Radisson Seven Seas Cruises – offers luxury cruising on small and mid-sized ships that carry from 320 to 700 guests. The ambiance on board is personal, individual and upscale, but not stuffy. Cruise fares on Radisson Seven Seas Cruises include gratuities and wine with dinner each evening. They sail to over 300 ports on six continents, including Antarctica.
- Oceania Cruises – brings affordable luxury to cruising aboard their three mid-sized ships that carry 684 passengers each. You can cruise to exotic ports in a relaxed country-club-casual atmosphere while feasting on some of the finest cuisine at sea created by Master Chef Jacques Pipen. Their attentive European staff provides outstanding personal service.
- Viking River Cruises – brings the interior of Europe and China to you aboard their intimate river cruise vessels. Carrying between 124 and 212 passengers, the ships of Viking River Cruises allow you to go places that an ocean cruise can't. You not only visit the large cultural centers of each country, but also the small villages that give each country its distinct character. Viking's English-speaking guides lead shore excursions that are included in the cost of your cruise.

So, if you were among those who thought that cruising meant big ships, long lines, and thousands of people, perhaps it's time you looked into cruising on a small ship. There's a whole world out there just waiting for you!

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