



More Popular than Ever, Cruising's Biggest Fans Now Include Millennials

February 14, 2018

MIAMI, Feb. 14, 2018 -- Cruising no longer is just the fastest growing part of the vacation industry. It is now one of the hottest vacations for millennials, who represent a primary and often elusive target for marketers across industries.

In the *2018 Cruise Travel Report* prepared for Cruise Lines International Association, based on a survey by JD Power, cruising was the top vacation choice in every age range – and millennials are the group most likely to say they either "definitely will" or "probably will" book a cruise for their next vacation. Overall, an impressive 94 percent of millennials say they are likely to book a cruise for their next vacation.

Considering that millennials are the first generation to have gone on cruises with their parents, perhaps it should be no surprise that now, as young adults, sometimes on limited budgets, they are one of the reasons why cruising is rising in popularity among people of all ages.

In addition to contemporary brands such as Carnival Cruise Line and Costa Cruises, the younger set also is showing an interest in premium products such as Princess Cruises and Holland America Line. A growing number of millennials are even splurging on ultra-luxury cruises such as on the small ships of Seabourn, as they are discovering plenty of choices in terms of cruise products and travel experiences.

Why are people in their 20s and 30s keen on cruises as a vacation choice? Here's what some millennial cruisers say.

For Meghan Jaworski, 32, the big attraction of cruise vacations includes value and affordability.

"I am pretty cheap sometimes, so everything for one price, that all-inclusive feeling, and the fact that before you go on a vacation you know how much you've paid for your accommodations, food, activities and nightlife is a big selling point for me," says Jaworski, an auditor from Bridgewater, N.J.

"I love the casino. I also love the food, which is huge for me. And I love the shows because I am a big Broadway fan. I also like the entertainment throughout. You can go sit at different bars, go hear the piano player, go to another lounge and there's a comedian. It's just constant live entertainment."

Jaworski, who started cruising when she was a kid with her family, still likes to cruise with family and friends. These days that includes her husband, though she admits he and she have different styles of cruising. She likes rest and relaxation, while he likes exploring. "I like to lay by the pool all day," she laughs.

Like many other millennials, Jaworski also likes the fact that cruises provide an opportunity to visit a variety of destinations, some with late stays or overnights in port so guests can experience local nightlife.

Experiences drive Kara Yaquinta, 21, a content strategist at a Miami marketing firm, to choose cruises as her vacation favorite. She says discovering new things is exactly what she and her friends are seeking.

"You go on a weeklong cruise and they have good wine, all these drinks and craft cocktails, the spa, food, shows, you get to dress up," she says. "You then get to go to the ports of call where you can do really fun things like jet ski or zipline. That's the appealing part of it. It's all those things in one place."

On a recent cruise, Yaquinta visited Roatan, Honduras, where she enjoyed a particularly memorable shore excursion.

"Ziplining there was one of the most fun things I've ever gotten to do," she recalls. "It was so different. Honduras is a mountainous, tropical place and in one part on the zipline the trees opened up and it was a breathtaking scape, the tops of the trees, and you could feel the crisp wind and see clouds over the crystal clear, blue water. It was perfect. For 10 seconds the world just stopped."

Yaquinta quickly shared the experience with friends. "I was all over it," she laughs, noting how shipboard Wi-Fi is now both faster and affordable.

"Every time I go on a cruise I purchase a social internet package, and as soon as I was back on the ship I put the ziplining experience all on social media, Snapchat. It's really weird how it is. You want to put it online because it's like "Look what I'm doing, what are you doing?"

She says she tends to run into more people her age on shorter, three-, four- and five-day cruises, especially during spring break season in late February, March and April, though she also enjoys longer sailings.

Her preferred place to hang out shipboard is at the comedy club, such as the popular Punchliner on Carnival Cruise Line.

"It's my favorite thing to do," Yaquinta says. "I always laugh every time. That's where everybody flocks these days, to the comedy club not just the nightclub. It's like a new trend."

She's also a big fan of cruise ship spas, always booking a package that combines a massage and facial, and sometimes sampling other treatments.

"I recently did a three-day cruise with my mom and we tried out the pedicures on the ship," she says. "Let me just tell you, it was the best pedicure I have ever had in my life. They took so much time and the spa had floor-to-ceiling windows, so you looked out on the ocean while you were getting a pedicure. It was just so relaxing."

Says Yaquinta, "My Instagram consists of my vacations."

In Europe, Lorna-Marie Abend, 23, of Hamm, Germany, enjoyed cruising so much she went to work as a travel consultant onboard the AIDAprima, one of the latest ships of German line AIDA Cruises, one of the 10 brands of Carnival Corporation, the world's largest cruise company.

Abend says the selling points for millennials include the fact that cruises are affordable, casual and active, during the day and well into the night.

"In addition to theme parties and nightlife are trendy brands such as Moet Chandon champagne," she says. "Cocktail and sushi-making workshops provide a learning experience. And shore excursions are exactly what adventure-seeking millennials are looking for. For example, you can go biking, canyoning or on a tour in an open-air ATV."

Travel agent, Matthew Wahlgren, 36, of Ticket to Travel in San Jose, Calif., says he steers millennial clients to cruises for both the food and nightlife.

"A lot of these cruises nowadays have great food options, including the opportunity to upgrade to specialty dining and sample the cuisine of a celebrity chef, that's a main selling point," Wahlgren says. "I also tell my clients that the cool part about ocean cruising is you get to visit some really cool destinations, but the ship itself is also a fun experience. In some land destinations there is nothing to do at night. On a ship there is always something to do at night."

For Scott Bagwill, 26, a special education teacher and football coach in Woodstock, Ga., the best thing about cruising is the social aspect.

He has done 10 Carnival Cruise Line cruises, sailing with family and friends, and recently did his first solo cruise, a weeklong New Year's cruise on the Carnival Ecstasy out of Charleston.

"I was nervous at first," he says, "but I joined a Facebook group and met a bunch of awesome people and when we did a meet-and-greet people invited me to have dinner with them, go play in the casino, go see the shows. Even though I was technically cruising by myself, I wasn't cruising by myself."

This month, Bagwill will cruise with a friend he met on a ship in June. "Now his family and me and my family are best friends," he says. "I called and said I am going on a cruise for eight days, do you want to come along, and he said, 'How much do I owe you?'"

Bagwill says he was in nursery school when he did his first cruise, and what he remembers most about that sailing is the free 24-hour ice cream and pizza.

Times have changed, somewhat.

"I'm a big guy and I try to watch what I eat, but on my cruise over New Year's this year every night at 1 a.m. or 1:30 we were always getting pizza before we went to bed," he says. "It became a ritual. Late night after having lots of fun at the comedy club, the dance club, the pizza had to be had."

Another thing that draws him back to cruising as his vacation choice is the crew. "They are awesome," Bagwill says. "They work hard and at the end of the day everyone has a smile on their face."

He also enjoys arriving in a port city a day ahead of time to discover the place – which is what he did on his sailing from Charleston.

And then there is the fact there's a cruise for every taste and pocket book.

"Last year was my year of 'yes,' and I did two cruises," he says. "I tell people that even though you are 26 years old or a millennial, if you work hard and save your money right you can go off and travel. Cruising is my type of vacation and it will always be my type of vacation. It's inclusive. You don't have to worry about cooking, you don't have to worry about cleaning, you don't have to worry about laundry, I mean, come on. It's the best vacation ever."

Here are seven reasons millennials choose to cruise:

Accommodations, meals, activities and entertainment included in the cruise fare.

Shorter cruises appeal to young travelers seeking affordability, while longer cruises provide an easy way to see the world – including exotic places as Cuba, Europe and the South Pacific.

Convenient homeports mean many people can get to the ship, and to places such as the Caribbean, Mexican Riviera, or Alaska without having to deal with the cost and hassle of flying.

Cruise ship cuisine appeals to those seeking new tastes, including everything from sushi to gourmet burgers to elaborate multi-course menus in dining rooms and specialty restaurants.

Fast internet access makes it easy to post real-time photos and videos showing that you are doing exciting things and visiting exciting places, and also stream TV shows, movies and music.

Wellness and self-discovery are part of the cruise ship equation, including at state-of-the-art spas and fitness centers with ocean views.

Cruises are a unique way to sample and discover new destinations in an easy, convenient way while only unpacking once, including the city where your ship embarks.

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