



Thoughts on Cruises

Description

We've now done five cruises since 2004 and I'm sure we will do more over the coming decades (but will probably wait a couple years (at least) since we did cruises in back-to-back years: 2023 and 2024). Our next cruise will very likely be a Western Caribbean Cruise, a destination where we've enjoyed two good cruises in the past. I also think that we'd enjoy a Panama Canal cruise, Alaska cruise, and Scandinavia cruises. And several different river cruise options.

But I felt like discussing our experiences and thoughts since we also felt the last two cruises (Eastern Caribbean on Carnival and Mediterranean Cruise on Norwegian) left some aspects to be desired:

- Port stops with enough time to actually visit a place without feeling crazily rushed
- Better quality for the cost, especially with the food
- Less crowded conditions and less pushiness in regards to everything

I think it's sad that we no longer even tried to use the pools because we got tired of trying to enjoy them amid people hogging the pool areas and treating them like their own. And what happened to mini golf?

With that in mind I thought I'd enumerate the plusses and minuses of cruising that we've experienced versus other traveling that we've done.

The Plusses and Minuses of Cruising

Based on our experiences I think the following pretty much covers what we've come to know of the plusses and minuses of cruising.

Plusses:

- Ability to visit multiple destinations in one trip
- Relatively safe visits to various countries that otherwise might be complicated to visit
- No need to transport luggage to multiple hotels

- Plethora of available activities in most cases (except NCL)
- Availability of youth activities and daycare
- Basic meal costs built into the cost of the cruise

Minuses:

- Lack of control over itinerary
- Lack of time at ports or disinteresting ports
- Not enough ports (our Mexican Riviera cruise)
- Crowds and pushy people both on the ship and at the ports
- Relative cost (depending on hotels, etc)
- Crowded pools and public spaces
- Quality of food and other amenities that don't require paying for extras
- Degraded cruising quality post-COVID

I think we will avoid Norwegian (unfriendly and cheap) and Carnival (nicer staff but the crowds on board can be unsavory) going forward.

For cruise lines that leaves Celebrity, Holland America, Princess, and Royal Caribbean as the lines we will consider. As well as Viking River Cruises (which tend to be pretty expensive). We enjoyed our last cruise on RCL but they seem to now be focused on mega ships that have fewer port stops, so the first three are more likely to receive our business.

Places that Are Better Visited From a Cruise

There are places that are better visited from a cruise ship for various reasons:

- Staying on land is generally unsafe
- The tourist infrastructure is lacking (lack of nice hotels, difficulty traversing the location)
- The primary attraction is in a place that is easily visited on a cruise ship itinerary
- A lack of attractions beyond one or two primary attractions (not enough to do to make a long visit worthwhile)
- Unreasonably expensive or complicated to fly to directly

For instance I don't think I'd make plans to visit Easter Island as a stand-alone trip. Sure the Maori heads are cool, but Easter Island does not have much else to see and do. The weather is even surprisingly cold. But if it was on a cruise ship itinerary I'd be happy and excited to get off the ship and see the Maori. And then I'd feel done with Easter Island.

So with that in mind, here are a list of places that come to mind. In some cases I think you COULD visit and enjoy them on land, but a cruise ship stop works well:

- Most all of the Caribbean Islands, with the possible exceptions of the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico
- Most of the Mideast and North Africa
 - Egypt and Jordan are best seen on a river cruise itinerary
- Numerous Pacific Islands except Hawaii, and possibly Fiji and Tahiti

- Norway, Finland, and Russia (St Petersburg)
- Colombia and Chile
- Parts of Mexico, Honduras (Roatan), Nicaragua (I've never seen it on an itinerary) and probably Panama as of now (although it's very close to going to the next category)
- The Canary Islands, Azores, and other Atlantic Islands
- Parts of Indonesia, many of the Indian Ocean islands, and even India and Sri Lanka
- New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Labrador, and Newfoundland, Canada
- Vietnam
- West Coast of Africa (Senegal, Ghana, Ivory Coast)

Places that Are Good For Both Cruises and Non-Cruise Visits

Some places have attractions that can be seen from a cruise stop but also enough to see any do as a stand-alone destination. In some cases it's just a matter of interest.

- Yucatan Mexico
- Belize
- Ireland, Scotland, Iceland, Sweden, and Denmark
- Portugal
- Greek Islands and Turkey
- Alaska (the Panhandle must be done as a cruise, but the rest of the state is better done on a non-cruise visit)
- Australia (some reef stops and Northern Territory areas are easier from a cruise, but other areas are better done from land)
- New Zealand
- Indonesia
- Phillipines
- River cruise destinations in Europe, SE Asia, and Brazil
- Vancouver and Vancouver, Island
- Galapagos Islands

Places that Are Not Good Cruise Destinations

The following are places that you could stop at on a cruise but for various reasons they are better visited by staying and visiting for several nights. Cruise stops don't provide enough time to see the sites, the sites are far from the cruise ports, etc.

- Continental USA
- Canada with the exceptions above
- Most of Europe with the exceptions above
- Japan
- China
- Most of Africa
- Peru, Ecuador, and Argentina (with the exception of the Galapagos Islands)
- Costa Rica
- Hawaii

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