

Get paid to travel the world!

FabJob Guide to
**Become a
Cruise Ship
Worker**



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1. Introduction

1.1. This Is Cruising

Just as commercial passenger jets changed the face of travel, so have ocean liners altered the way we traverse the seas. Today, we can cross the oceans in a matter of days instead of weeks or months.



Glamorized by the hit TV show *The Love Boat*, cruising has evolved into a **booming industry**. Cruise ships offer all the essentials that traditional land-based destinations do, but with so much more variety. They are sleek ships with comfortable and spacious accommodations, luxurious bedding and baths, private verandahs for viewing pleasure, and glamorous décor throughout the vessel.

Traditional and ethnic restaurants, lounges, cafes, even traditional English pubs are springing up on cruise ships. Sports, fitness and entertainment are inherent to a cruise, but who would have imagined you could watch an ice skating show on a Caribbean cruise? Try rock climbing? Shoot a virtual round of golf?

The phrase “floating resorts” may be overused, but it’s hard to deny the attraction of a 5-star hotel at sea. With the introduction of the “**mega-ships**” (over 100,000 gross registered tons, or GRT) in the 1990s, they are literally destinations themselves. Smaller ships are increasingly popular, either powered by engines or sails, because they offer a much more intimate cruising experience.

Travelers can now choose to cruise anywhere from three days to three months, or even purchase a **suite at sea** to live in! The attraction is the mobility – the option to include a variety of international destinations all in one voyage. This zest for travel is also what

draws people from all over the world to staff and run the ships, making them tick from noon till night.

1.1.1 Cruising Is Growing

Cruising is tourism's fastest growing market. According to the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), 48 million North Americans have indicated an intent to cruise over the next three years.

There are currently 24 member cruise lines in CLIA (a cruise consortium of sorts), each with at least two vessels, some with more than a dozen in its fleet. Individual cruise ships can hold as few as thirty passengers and as many as 3,000. There are still other cruise lines that are not CLIA members, as equally reputable. There are more than 100 passenger cruise ships afloat, fourteen newly built ships to be inaugurated this year, and three will be re-launched under a new name.

What does this mean for you? **Jobs are always available.** These luxury vessels are your ticket to travel the world. **And you can get paid well for it.**

The fundamental requirement for getting a job onboard a cruise ship is based on a simple equation:

Ships + Passengers = Crew Members

There is a high turnover rate in the cruise industry, as crew members complete their contracts, get transferred from one ship to another, or move from cruise line to cruise line. With more "**homeports**" for cruise ships in North America, there are increasing demands on the cruise lines to select staff from North America. For example, Baltimore, Boston, Galveston, Gulfport, New Orleans, New York and Philadelphia are housing more ships every year.

As many as a **1,000** staff members and crew are needed regularly for ships to cater to today's discerning traveler. Cruisers today know what they want from their vacation; they are looking for pampering, entertainment, relaxation, and stimulation, all in one. They want someone else to do the planning and decision making for the duration of their cruise.

If you are a savvy people person with a knack for customer service you can have a very lucrative life onboard. **The FabJob Guide to Become a Cruise Ship Worker** gives you practical instructions on how to embark upon this new and exciting career.

1.1.2 Benefits of a Career At Sea

Life 'on ship' isn't exactly what Julie McCoy had you believing on the *Love Boat*, although schmoozing with guests en route to the Mexican Riviera may be part of your job. However, the benefits of taking a job at sea are compelling. Besides interacting with and befriending a multinational mix of people, there are undeniable attractions:

Free Travel

Because you are onboard the ship, naturally you go where it goes! There are hundreds of ports of call including Bermuda, the Caribbean islands, Scandinavia, Russia, Europe and the Mediterranean, Alaska, Hawaii, Panama Canal, Central and South America, Australia, Tahiti, Asia and Africa.

Additionally, the cruise line or employment agency will pay for your travel expenses, including airline tickets to the ship. Immediate family members can also travel with you at a reduced rate once you have worked a required amount of time for that cruise line.

You can earn a free cruise for yourself and family!

TIP: Although most cruise ship employees are single, young, and do not have many attachments (making it easier to work away from home for months at a time), there are husband and wife teams who work onboard as dance instructors, social hosts/hostesses, and entertainers.

Free Room and Board

Accommodations are provided for you, often with one roommate. All meals are served in crew areas, although a number of staff positions onboard allow dining in some passenger areas of the ship.

No Expenses

No rent, utility bills, car payments to worry about! You are able to **save** virtually **all** the money you earn. This is what makes a career at sea so financially alluring. There are often two to four weeks' vacation or personal time between contracts.

Medical Coverage

Most cruise lines offer full health coverage onboard, including ashore in the U.S. (for U.S. citizens). This will be detailed in the terms of your contract. Dental coverage and treatments are typically your responsibility as a crew member.

Competitive Salaries

Income level depends upon which cruise line you work for, your job description, past experience and your ability to negotiate a contract. Typical salaries start at \$1,500-\$2,500 a month. With experience, salaries range **up to \$8,000 a month**, depending upon the position. Some cruise lines offer additional benefits like 401K plans, stock options and profit sharing.

Growth Potential

Cruise travel is on the rise, requiring thousands of jobs be filled to meet the demand. The number will vary with the size of the vessel, but all types of work are available such as cruise staff, youth counselors, entertainers (dancers, vocalists, instrumentalists, solo acts), computer technicians, photographers, salon/spa personnel, casino dealers, as well as food, beverage, and hotel departments. As long as the cruise lines are in business, they need staff and crew to serve and entertain the passengers. **They need you!**

On-the-job training is inherent, and cruise lines prefer to promote from within. For nearly all entry-level positions, **no prior cruise ship experience is necessary!** In order to be successful and persevere you simply need self-motivation, enthusiasm and a thirst for adventure. You will move up the ladder quickly if you exude all these qualities.

1.2 Inside This Guide

Getting the job is easy when you know how. The **FabJob Guide to Get a Job on a Cruise Ship** will help navigate your search for a career at sea.

The first step is learning what positions are available, so you will know how to prepare yourself to apply for the job you want. **Chapter 2, Job Titles and Descriptions**, describes onboard jobs and offers insight to salary ranges for each.

Are you great with children? Can you sing and dance? Are you computer savvy? Do you want to manage an Internet café? Are you a “snap shot” with a camera? Maybe you could try your hand as production assistant for a Las Vegas-style show, or teach scuba diving in the Caribbean. No matter what your interests, chances are there is at least one cruise ship that is ideal for you. This chapter also includes information about unpaid positions which offer the opportunity for a free cruise.

Once you know what job you'd like to have, **Chapter 3 (Getting Ready)** discusses what documentation you will need to get hired for a job on a cruise ship or luxury yacht. This chapter also gives information about how to educate yourself and hone the skills that will give you an advantage over other applicants. You'll learn how to focus on your existing talents and make them work for you in landing a dream job onboard.

Once you are ready to start looking for a job, **Chapter 4 (Getting Hired)** will give you the tools to get started. There are literally dozens of cruise lines to choose from. In this chapter you will learn about different types of employers and how to make initial contact with them. This chapter also gives you information about employment agencies that hire for cruise ships, how to prepare a resume package, interview dos and don'ts, and what companies look for in shipboard candidates.

This guide also includes advice to help you succeed even after you've landed your first cruise ship job. In **Chapter 5 (Life Onboard)**, you will discover what crew life entails and what will be expected of you on a daily basis. This chapter offers insider tips from past and present crew members on how to get asked back for consecutive contracts, and make the best of your time at sea.

Finally, the **Appendix** gives you a glossary of terms so you can talk like a cruise ship pro, plus live links to more than 35 top cruise lines.

This guide includes valuable resources from the cruise industry. You'll learn where to find current job openings and how to match your search with a cruise line that is best suited for you. This guide is written to arm you with the information necessary to take a job at a moment's notice. The rest is up to you!