

# CRUISING



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# YOUR FAMILY'S SHIP HAS COME IN

By Lockie Hunter  
WNC Parent contributor

In the past few years, the concept of cruising with children has undergone a sea-change.

The newer ships of most major lines have added entire children's wings, on-board waterparks and ship "camps" featuring trained camp counselors, while the older ships are adding more child-friendly activities.

Menus are adjusting to cater to the palette of these younger cruisers, and some restaurants have children-only dining times.

Ship activities have changed as well: From surf lessons for the tween set to eco-adventures for your preschooler,



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Children can select from several dining options aboard the Carnival line including high tea.

cruising the high seas with children has never been so accessible and fun.

Here's a look at a sample of cruise line programs for families.

## Disney Cruise Lines

Cruises with Disney, a leader in children's entertainment for decades, offer deck parties, dining and live shows with your favorite Disney characters.

The four ships (the Magic, the Wonder, the Dream and the newest ship, the Fantasy) all offer character greetings throughout the day in both scheduled and surprise appearances. Award-win-

ning live shows vary by ship and include "Toy Story the Musical," "Villains Tonight!" and "The Golden Mickeys."

Families can get moving and grooving at legendary deck parties. The "Pirates in the Caribbean" deck party ends with a fireworks show.

All ships feature one adults-only pool (aptly named the Quiet Cove), one family pool and one children's pool with a small waterslide. The Dream and Magic include a thrilling water coaster and lazy river; the Dream and Fantasy boast a children's splash area with a "Finding Nemo" theme.

All staterooms are designed with families in mind and feature such design innovations as multiple sinks and a tub with a seat for bathing children. Some rooms have character murals. Splurge for a Concierge Suite and enjoy pre-arrival booking for activities, an onboard Concierge and access to private areas of the ship.

The Disney Fantasy, the newest ship, sets sail in spring 2012 and can accommodate 4,000 people.

Visit [disneycruise.disney.go.com](http://disneycruise.disney.go.com).

## Carnival Cruise Lines

Camp Carnival breaks campers into age groups, allowing counselors to create age-appropriate planned activi-

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ties, and parents can choose activities that will most appeal to their child.

A sample day may consist of Exerseas basketball, hip-hop dance lessons, water-color painting, parachute games, a behind-the-scenes tour of the ship and a kids-only Mardi Gras celebration dinner with formal attire.

Young teens attend Circle C club, while older teens hang in their very own lounge at Club O2. Both clubs offer video games and late night dance parties.

Many Carnival ships also boast on-board waterslides, mini golf and pools. Carnival boasts the closest port to WNC, with cruises to the Bahamas out of Charleston, S.C. And in the 2010 Readers' Choice Awards in Porthole Cruise magazine, the cruise line was voted Best Value-For-The-Money line.

Visit [carnival.com](http://carnival.com)



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Some of Royal Caribbean's ports include beach experiences.

## Royal Caribbean

Royal Caribbean has ramped up its family cruising through a partnership with Dreamworks studio.

The Dreamworks Experience, available on four ships (Allure of the Seas, Oasis of the Seas, Liberty of the Seas and

Freedom of the Seas), features characters from the movies "Shrek," "Madagascar" and more. Children can have their photo taken with Po from "Kung Fu Panda" or attend a screening of a favorite Dreamworks film.

The onboard camp club, Adventure Ocean, focuses on science activities.



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**COST OF CRUISING**

- ◆ To save money on a cruise vacation, consider traveling during the off-season.
- ◆ Most ships are inclusive of all meals and nonalcoholic drinks, while some lines also include top-shelf beer and wine.
- ◆ Last-minute trip deals abound on all lines, and interior rooms are quite reasonable compared to balcony rooms. Carnival

offers some of the best deals. ◆ MSC Cruises often offer a “kids sail free” program, and many lines offer discounted rates for children younger than 12. Luxury Lines such as Regent Seven Seas will sometimes extend “kids’ free sailing” programs, but they are often snatched up quickly, so watch the website for deals.

Many ships also offer onboard bowling alleys, waterslides and two-story Wii screens. A complimentary kids club allows parents to enjoy a little adult time while children make new friends onboard. Activities such as Family Pictionary are offered poolside.

Visit [ncl.com](http://ncl.com).

**Holland America**

With a Culinary Arts Center featuring guest chefs, an extensive onboard art collection and digital workshops on editing photos and blogging, Holland America’s reputation as a sophisticated adult cruise line is well-earned.

While the youth program onboard is not as extensive as on other cruise lines, there are still some offerings for cruisers age 3-17 including a kids’ culinary workshop. These hands-on classes allow children to experiment with food and are limited to 15 students. Other activities include storytelling and ice cream sundae parties.

Visit [hollandamerica.com](http://hollandamerica.com).

Preschool “Aquanauts” enjoy programs such as Sea Creature Treasures, while elementary-age children go on fossil hunts or play with “sea mud.” Teens can learn to surf on the Flowrider Wave Simulator or scale the onboard rock wall. There’s even a teen casino.

Unlike many ship clubs, Royal Caribbean also offers camp activities at the port of calls. Family sandcastle building, anyone?

Visit [royalcaribbean.com](http://royalcaribbean.com)

**Norwegian**

Ready to get slimed on the high seas? Norwegian Cruise Line and Nickelodeon have teamed up to offer families an experience that combines interesting ports of call with some of your children’s favorite characters. While many family cruise destinations include the Caribbean or other tropical itineraries, Norwegian offers the luxury and history of European ports married with the fun of SpongeBob and iCarly.

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