

How Much Do Cruise Ships Cost? And Why Are They So Expensive?

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Cruise ships are getting **bigger** (and **uglier**, depending on whom you ask). Cruise lines want attention-grabbing amenities and activities on their vessels. And they continually cram more and more restaurants, pools, performance venues, and other attractions onto each ship. It's





Young couple vacations on a cruise ship. | Steve Mason/ Photodisc/ Getty Images

Wonder what it would take to design and build a world-class cruise ship? You'd need more than a billion dollars to pull that off. The Harmony of the Seas, the largest cruise ship in the world, cost an **estimated \$1.35 billion** for Royal Caribbean to build (including 2,747 cabins, robot bartenders, a Starbucks cafe, and a hand-crafted carousel). Allure of the Seas — the second-largest cruise ship in the world — reportedly cost even more, at a **\$1.5 billion** cost to Royal Caribbean. And Oasis of the Seas, another Royal Caribbean ship, cost \$1.4 billion.

Of course, those Royal Caribbean ships are huge and lavish. What does a more typical cruise ship cost to build? The Muster Station gathered data on **more than 200** cruise ship purchases and crunched the numbers. The publication reports that a ship that can accommodate up to 500 passengers costs an average of \$260 million. A vessel that has space for 500 to 1,000 passengers costs the cruise line about \$394 million. Next, a ship that can accommodate 1,000 to 2,000 passengers costs \$442 million.

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Ships get even more expensive as they get bigger. A ship with space for 2,000 to 3,000 passengers costs an average of \$555 million. If the cruise ship wants to accommodate 3,000 to 4,000 passengers, it's looking at a cost of about \$734 million. A ship with a capacity of 4,000 to 5,000 passengers will cost the cruise line \$937 million. And if the cruise ship needs to accommodate more than 5,000 passengers, that's when the price jumps to \$1.31 billion. So how much do cruise ships cost? That depends on the size — and on a few other factors.

How are cruise ships priced?

Oz Cruising reports that officially, [the number of berths](#) (or beds) determines how much a cruise ship costs. But as the publication reports, “For all cruise ships, the cost comes down to a variety of factors: the size of the vessel, onboard features and amenities, the building shipyard, and the state of the economy at the time it's built.” Materials are also notoriously expensive, and the price of steel — especially for [an ocean liner](#) as opposed to a boxier cruise ship — can become a major factor.

The publication notes that many cruise lines choose to renovate an existing ship, rather than build a new one, whenever they can. But as Oz Cruising points out, “Even renovations can quickly hit the half-billion dollar mark. Let's face it — waterslides, circus arenas, and ice skating rinks don't come cheap.” The publication advises, “next time you're onboard a cruise ship, remember to simply lie back and bask in the sheer extravagance of it all.”

How do cruise ships get built?

Young cruise passengers take a photo. | DisobeyArt/ iStock/ Getty Images Plus

Cruise 1st reports that none of the major cruise lines **have their own**, in-house shipbuilders, largely due to the cost of the equipment involved. Instead, they go to specialty shipbuilders when they need a new cruise ship. “Meyer Werft from Germany, STX Europe, and Fincantieri from Italy are three of the major shipbuilders — responsible for the majority of the world’s biggest cruise ships,” the publication explains. Mitsubishi Heavy Industries operates the final of the four shipyards that can build cruise ships.

These shipbuilders operate expansive shipyards in coastal or riverside locations, and they can construct a cruise ship in 12 to 18 months. (Designing the ship, however, usually requires another year before construction can begin.) The heaviest components of the ship — engines, propellers, and fuel tanks — go in the lower parts of the ship. Engineers distribute all of the weight evenly. And the cabins are built separately from the rest of the vessel, transported to the shipyard, and slotted into the ship.

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