



Safety at Sea Fact Sheet

Cruising is one of the safest forms of holiday available

The cruise industry is heavily regulated by a number of independent agencies which have safety as their prime objective – these include the United Nations' body the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) which is part of the UK Government's Department for Transport.

All ships are equally safe whatever their size. They are subject to stringent design safety parameters. For example, international regulations demand that any ship can be evacuated within 30 minutes. So on larger ships all evacuation routes, the number of lifeboats and other safety provisions are simply scaled up to match the size of the vessel.

While even one death is one too many, between 2005-2011 cruise lines carried more than 223 million passengers and crew. During that time there were 6 passengers and 22 crew deaths related to marine incidents.

The industry learns from any and every incident and, advances in technology, ship design, training and stricter regulations mean that cruising is an extremely safe form of transport.

After the Costa Concordia incident in 2012, the global cruise industry launched a comprehensive operational safety review and this will ensure we learn and implement anything we can to make our industry safer still. We have already put in place an international policy of pre-departure safety drills for all passengers.

Staff undergo constant training

Each ship has a detailed emergency plan and every member of staff is allocated and trained to undertake a safety role if there is a problem.

Staff continue to be trained and practice regularly even while they are at sea. Regular completion of practice safety drills is a requirement of maritime law.

During any cruise you will regularly observe a number of drills for the crew where they practice responding to a variety of emergency situations. Such training may be taking place when passengers are ashore at a port of call.

Lifeboats must be capable of being loaded, launched and manoeuvred away from the ship within 30 minutes of the Master's signal to abandon ship.

There are always more lifeboat/liferaft places than people on board. On a typical 2,000 passenger ship there will be lifeboats and liferafts capable of transporting a total of 2,500 people.

The industry is undergoing constant technical and legislative improvements

This is a very highly regulated industry which is constantly reviewing and improving safety standards, introducing new laws to improve navigation equipment, shipboard safety management systems, life saving equipment, safe return to port standards; revised training and certifications standards.

The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) which falls under the United Nations sets strict global standards for the operation of cruise ships. The most important of the IMO treaties is the International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS).

This is overlaid by additional regulations enforced by flag states (where the ship is registered) and port state control (countries and ports to which the ship sails).

Every ship is regularly inspected under the port state control agreements, and if it doesn't comply with regulations, can be kept in port.

The technology used on cruise ships is extremely advanced and the ships undergo a wide ranging and detailed inspection on an annual basis. This is required in order to obtain a renewal of the Passenger Ship Safety Certificate, which a vessel can't legally operate without. International rules dictate that cruise ships are required to regularly go into dry dock for a thorough inspection and overhaul.

The Passenger Shipping Association (PSA) in the UK works closely with the European Cruise Council (ECC) in Brussels and Cruise Line Industry Association (CLIA) in the USA to share best industry practice.

Safety drills for passengers

When a cruise passenger reaches their cabin they will see (on the daily news-sheet as well as possibly on the TV) details of a mandatory safety drill, which will take place prior to departure.

The safety drill involves gathering at a muster station - sometimes by a designated lifeboat or possibly in a lounge or theatre - when the emergency signal sounds.

There passengers listen - as they would on an aircraft - to safety-trained crew and staff explaining what will happen and what needs to be done in the event of a real emergency. Passengers will also be shown how to wear a life jacket (supplied both in cabins and around the ship); in most cases passengers will then be asked to put on their lifejackets by way of a practice.

Taking a cruise as a holiday

Cruising remains statistically one of the safest forms of holiday available.