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CRUISE

Spend the Holidays on a Cruise This Year—Trust Us

A Christmas or holiday cruise could be the solution to all your problems.

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Let's face it: the **holidays are a juggernaut** when it comes to planning time with the family. Whether you live far away from each other, are a blended unit, celebrate different faiths, or just have specific needs based on your kids' ages, it's a complicated time. (For those families who celebrate more than one holiday, it's even trickier this year, since Christmas and Hanukah fall on the same week.)

May we propose an easy solution? We looked at some common holiday-related scenarios and discovered that taking a cruise could be the way to go, no matter your family's situation.

When no one wants to host

Many families cruise at this time of year for one very specific reason: **a much-needed break**. They may want the festive feel of the holidays—but they don't want to decorate, bake, or plan a meal for a large group in order to experience it. A cruise relieves your family from any grocery shopping, cooking, or entertaining, and eliminates the labor of decorating (and later—taking it all down). Some cruise lines, like **Carnival**, lean into the holiday fun during the season on sailings to places like the Bahamas from **Miami, Orlando, Fort Lauderdale**, or Jacksonville; to the Western Caribbean from Miami, Mobile, Alabama, and **New Orleans**; or to Baja, Mexico, from **Los Angeles**. The fleet's ships feature more than 568 Christmas trees, 56,000 feet of garlands, 150,000 feet of ribbon, and 6,000 hand-tied bows. Inside, diversions like roaming carolers, “snowfalls” in the atrium, and gingerbread villages ensure plenty of holiday fun without the hassle of having to coordinate any of it yourself.

When your family celebrates more than one winter holiday

My husband is Jewish and I was raised Catholic, so we often split the holidays between both sets of families (my extended family lives in **Chicago** and my husband's is in **New York**). But when Christmas and Hanukah happen at the same time—like this year—it's difficult to pick which side of the family to spend time with. A cruise takes the stress out of the equation. Many blended-faith families **book one** for the holidays and invite both sides to partake. That way, no one is excluded or left feeling like their holiday season has been cut short.

When your family is small

For single parents, small families, or those spending the holidays **on your own**, this time of year can be a lonely, especially when others around you seem to be part of a big cohort. Certain cruise lines—like **Uncruise**—are all about interacting with your fellow passengers, which creates a family-feel on the ship. Meals are eaten together as a group and excursions (all of which are included) are also divided into small groups. Travelers end up feeling so close to their fellow cruisers that they start to feel like family (and often keep in touch post-cruise).

I've traveled with my son extensively on Uncruise. We've hit Alaska, Costa Rica, and **Mexico**, and I've never felt weird or uncomfortable as a one-parent, one-child team. (I have a husband and a second child, but due to crazy schedules and different interests, I often travel with just one child, even at the holidays). The cruise line—which is often thought of as the anti-cruise because its philosophy is that the trip is about the destination, not the ship—is a good choice for blended or non-traditional families. Not only are more mash-ups of siblings and friends traveling together around the holidays, but this

cruise line says it's seeing an increased number of grandparents traveling with grandkids, too (without the parents).

