

Issue Fourteen | September 2025

Cruise DESTINATIONS

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Whether it's reports of excessive heat, wildfires or protests against overcrowding by local residents, it seems nothing can dent British cruisers' love affair with the Mediterranean. No wonder. It's got everything, from great cities to ancient history and wonderful beaches to pretty much guaranteed summer sun. It's also on our doorstep, an easy hop, skip and flight away. As a result we make no apology for devoting this issue to the region, looking at why cruisers go there, lesser-known places to discover, key turnaround ports, new itineraries, new ships and more. Keep it as a handy reference for all those customers starting to plan their 2026 cruises now summer is over.

Keith Ellis Publisher,
 kmellis@btinternet.com

Your clients may explore the elegant French and Italian Riviieras, combining calls into tiny yacht harbours with Renaissance cities, gorgeous beaches with picturesque seaside towns. Or head to Greece & Turkey, to enjoy a unique classical concert at Ephesus or take immersive excursions to World Heritage Sites such as Crete's Palace of Knossos, or the archaeological sites of Olympia and Mystras. With our executive chef guests can authentically taste the Mediterranean as they accompany him to local markets where he selects and cooks regional cuisine. Hidden gems include Koper in Slovenia and Lecce in southern Italy, tiny islands such as Spetses and Symi, usually accessed only by private yacht.

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 Fly/cruise Please Ask

VISITS: Gibraltar; Motril (Spain, Granada); Cartagena; Mahon (Menorca); St Tropez (France); Portofino (Italy).

7-Day Ephesus & Greek Island Gems

19 Jul*, 30 Sep 2026 | SEABOURN QUEST
 Roundtrip Piraeus (Athens)

Cruise from £3,399pp
 Fly/cruise Please Ask

VISITS: Mykonos; Agios Nikolaos (Crete); Symi; Kos; Kusadasi (Ephesus); Piraeus (Athens).

• Seabourn's Classical Concert at Ephesus
 *Lead fare based on 19/7/26

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11 Jun 2026 | SEABOURN VENTURE
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VISITS: Malaga (Spain); Seville (2 nights); Gijon; St Malo (Le Mont St Michel, France); Poole; Dunkirk.

• Two nights in Seville.

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EVENING AT EPHEUSUS*

When the ancient site of Ephesus closes to visitors for the day, Seabourn guests are treated to the extraordinary experience of classical music among the ruins.

This magical evening features a chamber orchestra's repertoire of classical music within the site that boasts some of the most famous ruins in the world.



NEWS & REVIEWS

4 IN FOCUS
 Port and cruise news in pictures.

15 THE ALLURE OF ALLURA
 It's all about choice, says Jane Archer, as she sets sail on Oceania Cruises' newest ship.

16 THE ITALIAN JOB
 Italy comes under the spotlight on Variety Cruises' new voyages between Naples and Valletta.

24 SECONDS OUT
 More flights and new ports feature in Fred Olsen Cruise Lines' 2026 Mediterranean fly-cruise programme.

25 ON TOUR
 Jane Archer joins an excursion to one of Tuscany's prettiest walled cities.



MEDITERRANEAN SPECIAL

12 INTRODUCING THE MED
 Your 29-page Mediterranean cruise special starts here.

20 WHY DON'T YOU STAY...?
 Make the most of your cruise holiday by adding a few nights on land at the start or end, says Jane Archer.

21 WINTER IN THE MEDITERRANEAN
 Why more cruise lines are testing demand for Mediterranean cruises in late autumn and winter.

28 HIDDEN GEMS
 Eight of the best Mediterranean ports you've never heard of but really should have.

31 MEDITERRANEAN CRUISE GUIDE
 32 Who goes where
 34 No-fly cruises to the Mediterranean
 35 Key turnaround ports

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SPONSORED CONTENT

10 COUNTDOWN TO ŠIBENIK
 MedCruise's 37th General Assembly opens in the city this month.

26 LEADING THE PACK
 Ports are not the sexiest thing when it comes to cruising, but they are vital to both cruise lines and passengers.

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Front cover: Mykonos windmill.
 Credit: Jane Archer.

Seven up for Seabourn

It's all about sevens in Seabourn's just-launched Mediterranean programme for 2027, which features 127 departures, 77 ports and 17 countries. The seven to 14-day cruises are on Seabourn Ovation and span the eastern and western sides of the sea, with maiden calls into Volos in Greece and Bari in Italy, from which excursions visit Alberobello to see the trulli houses (pictured). A two-week solar eclipse voyage from Monte Carlo to Dubrovnik on July 23-August 6 will be at sea on August 2, giving passengers a front-seat view of the moment the moon moves between the sun and Earth.



Credit: Seabourn



Unforgettable cruising in Croatia

Luxury lovers can indulge their passion on Unforgettable Croatia cruises along the Dalmatian coast on the stylish new 36-passenger Aretis. Purpose-built for cruising in Croatia, the vessel has 18 spacious cabins, a restaurant and bar, a sundeck and jacuzzi. There are 24 one-week cruises between Omis (16 miles southeast of Split) and Dubrovnik from May to October 2026 that visit Trogir, Hvar, Vis and Korčula, and include daily swim stops, when passengers can swim off the back of the vessel. Prices include breakfast and lunch, allowing passengers to enjoy dinner and local nightlife ashore.



Celebrity to Xcel in the Mediterranean

Celebrity Xcel is making its Mediterranean debut in summer 2026 with mainly seven-night cruises round-trip from Barcelona or between Barcelona and Piraeus (Athens) that visit port favourites such as La Spezia (for Florence), Naples, Marseille, Civitavecchia (for Rome), Valletta in Malta and Kuşadası in Turkey, the latter for excursions to the ancient Roman city of Ephesus. Xcel launches in November 2025 with features including a new restaurant Bora, a pool valet and a Bazaar that brings festivals and food from the places being visited on board. "Our guests are looking for relaxation and exploration. We're offering a balance of both," said president Laura Hodges Bethge.



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Where the Med Begins

GATEWAY TO THE MEDITERRANEAN

Gibraltar offers world-class cruise facilities and a broad spectrum of marine services, ensuring smooth operations for visiting liners. Its competitively priced bunkers, supplied by quality operators, make it a key refueling hub.

With excellent communication networks, cruise operators and crew benefit from seamless coordination. Passengers can enjoy a wide choice of offshore excursions, from historic sites to nature trails and VAT free shopping.

For crew members, Gibraltar's Maritime Academy provides top-tier training and support. Positioned at the gateway to the Mediterranean, Gibraltar combines efficiency, quality services, and exceptional visitor experiences, making it a premier cruise destination.



Now we are six

Norwegian Cruise Line is putting six ships in the Mediterranean in summer 2027. They include new ship Norwegian Viva, which will sail a selection of nine and 10-day cruises around the Western Mediterranean and Greek Isles that include calls into Santorini and Mykonos, and Norwegian Dawn, which is ticking off Palma, Valencia, Cadiz and Gibraltar on seven-day sailings between Barcelona and Lisbon. New seven-night port-intensive cruises on Norwegian Sun operate between Ravenna and Civitavecchia (Rome) and call into Split and Dubrovnik in Croatia (pictured top and left), Kotor in Montenegro, Corfu in Greece, and Messina and Salerno in Italy.



Explora adds some va va vroom

Clients seeking a luxurious base for the 2026 Monaco Grand Prix need look no further than Explora Journeys. The line's ship, Explora I, will be tied up in Monte Carlo, 150 metres from the racetrack, for six days, within 12, 13 or 19-night cruises between Barcelona and Civitavecchia, providing passengers with a glamorous base from which to enjoy the iconic race. As well as residing in suites and having the run of six restaurants and included drinks, they'll have access to exclusive F1 events, race tickets and VIP hospitality.



67th
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
MEDCRUISE
ŠIBENIK CROATIA
30 September - 03 October 2025



Credit: Unforgettable Croatia

Countdown to Šibenik

The future of cruising in the Mediterranean will come under the spotlight at the end of September as the 67th MedCruise General Assembly opens in the Croatian city of Šibenik.

Over four days, there'll be conference sessions and specialist working group meetings as well as time for networking during B2B meetings. On day four, delegates will have a chance to see some of Šibenik's tourist attractions.

Formed in 1996, MedCruise aims to promote the Mediterranean as a cruise destination by encouraging port members to work together in areas such as sustainability and marketing.

The General Assembly, one of two such events the association holds each year, brings together cruise lines and representatives from MedCruise's 78 port members.

Members manage more than 160 ports in 22 countries in the Mediterranean, Black Sea, Middle East and Canary Islands. Barcelona is by far the biggest in terms of passengers, handling more than 3.6m passengers in 2024, while Piraeus (Athens) tops the chart for cruise calls, clocking up 810 in 2024.

MedCruise also has 50 associate members that variously represent tourist boards, airlines and shipping companies.

Introducing Šibenik

Some 50 miles north of Split, Šibenik welcomed some 85 cruise calls and 33,000 passengers in 2024, with numbers expected to rise to 96 and 36,000 in 2025.

The city has a history that dates back 1,000 years and a charming medieval centre with cobbled streets and narrow alleys to explore.

Highlights include St James Cathedral, a masterpiece that dates back to the 15th and 16th centuries and has a dome made entirely out of stone, and St Nicholas Fortress, at the entrance of the St. Anthony Channel, which was built hundreds of years ago to protect the city from Turkish invaders. Both are Unesco-listed World Heritage Sites.

Away from the history, Banj Beach is a short walk from the city centre, while tours visit Krka National Park, famous for its spectacular waterfalls, or the city of Trogir, which has a Unesco listed historic centre and more than its fair share of medieval architecture.

On Šibenik's culinary scene, expect plenty of fresh seafood and traditional Dalmatian dishes as well as tasty local wines.



MedCruise ports in numbers 2024

78

MedCruise port members

35,976,601

Passenger movements at MedCruise ports

15,823

Cruise ship calls in MedCruise ports

3,655,981

Cruise passenger movements in Barcelona

810

Cruise calls into Piraeus



MedCruise

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Focus on the Mediterranean

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The Romans knew the Mediterranean as 'Mare Nostrum', Our Sea, because it was in the middle of their Empire.

Scenes from the Med: The walled town of Tuscania in Italy, the rooftops of Dubrovnik in Croatia and Chania Harbour in Crete.

Left: Picturesque Positano on the Amalfi Coast.



It's hard to imagine a more perfect place to cruise than the Mediterranean. Centuries of history, fascinating cultures, A-list cities, delicious food and wine, blue skies, gorgeous beaches. In short, it has something for everyone and all ages. No wonder British cruisers flock there in their thousands every summer.

The Romans called it Mare Nostrum, Our Sea, and indeed for hundreds of years they ruled the roost here, building magnificent cities such as Rome and Ephesus, and leaving grand amphitheatres scattered far and wide that live on these 2,000 or more years later.

Some 20 countries surround the Mediterranean. Add to them the two island nations, Malta and Cyprus, that sit in their waters, as well as Corsica, Sardinia and Sicily, the former part of France, the latter two Italian, plus Spain's Balearic Islands and you have a region that would take a lifetime to explore.

The great cities of Rome, Florence, Venice, Barcelona, Athens and Istanbul are here and can be visited on day trips during a cruise; so too can the likes of Dubrovnik, Naples, Monte Carlo, Nice, Malaga and Valletta, which are all worthy contenders for the bucket list.

And once they have been ticked off, there so much more to go. The cities of Pisa, Split, Ajaccio, Palermo and Cartagena, and attractions such as the spectacular Roman city of Ephesus, accessed via Kuşadası in Turkey.

How about cute Bonifacio in Corsica with its craggy cliffs and medieval cliff-top citadel, or gorgeous Porto Venere in Italy with its maze of alleyways and picturesque waterfront? Greece's Monemvasia, known as the Gibraltar of the East, is pure magic. And let's not forget Gibraltar itself, that little piece of Britain in the sun famous for its Rock and Barbary macaques.

All that yet the region is compact, allowing cruisers to tick off two, three or four countries in just seven days, all without the hassle of unpacking. Choose the Western Mediterranean and you'll find France, Spain, Italy, Malta and Tunisia on the itinerary. Head east and Greece, Turkey, Croatia and Montenegro await. Or put the two together in one spectacular two or even three-week voyage across the sea.

One-week cruises generally start with a day at sea so passengers have time to rest before a sightseeing marathon visiting five great ports. On smaller ships, there is often one port each day. For those who want to see more, 12 or 14-night itineraries dive into more places, uncover more wonders.

However long clients go for, a couple of hotel nights at the start or end of the cruise is always a good idea, especially for those embarking or disembarking in the must-see triumvirate of Barcelona, Venice and Rome. >

Monaco is smaller than New York's Central Park and home to one of the most expensive streets in the world for real estate.



Mediterranean favourites, from left, Oia in Santorini and Villefranche in France.

All three, and also Athens, are the key embarkation ports for Mediterranean cruises, and served by the likes of British Airways, easyJet and Ryanair. For those who prefer not to fly, a combination of Eurostar and fast national rail services makes the train a viable option to ports such as Marseilles and Barcelona, while an overnight journey from London to Venice on Belmond's Venice Simplon-Orient-Express at the start of a cruise is a lifetime's ambition for many and financially well worth agents selling.

And if neither plane nor train appeal, there are plenty of round-trip cruises from the UK to the Mediterranean with the likes of Saga, Celebrity Cruises, P&O Cruises and others. These trips are inevitably long because of the two or three days needed in each direction to get across the Bay of Biscay.

British favourite

With so much going for it – and we haven't even mentioned the reliably hot summers, with temperatures often topping 30 degrees Centigrade – it is no surprise to find that the Mediterranean is the number one destination for the Brits, attracting 845,000 UK cruise passengers in 2024, according to Clia UK & Ireland.

It's likewise no surprise that throughout the summer there is a vast choice of cruises and itineraries to choose from, ranging from just a few nights to two weeks or more on ships big and small.

Cruisers can take their pick from luxury vessels operated by the likes of Seabourn and Silversea that hold a few hundred passengers and Royal Caribbean International and Norwegian Cruise Line's floating playgrounds, which have room for several thousand and are manna from heaven for families. If clients fancy a boutique offering, look no further than Variety Cruises; for sailing ships cast your eyes over to Windstar Cruises.

As ever, matching clients to the right cruise is imperative. Not just the size of ship, although that's the first place to start, but the type of cruise. Do they want to strike off modern metropolises, go island-hopping in Greece or uncover ancient Roman cities such as Ephesus in Turkey and Pompeii in Italy? Maybe they fancy celebrity spotting along the French and Italian Rivièras. They can do that too.

For those back a second or third time, lesser-known ports such as Valetta in Malta, Palermo in Sicily and Ajaccio in Corsica might be just the ticket. Returnees might also appreciate the increasingly popular 'slow' itineraries that stay late or overnight in popular ports such as Barcelona, Dubrovnik and St Tropez so there is time to see more and party until late.

The Mediterranean season runs from April to October, but a handful of companies – the likes of MSC Cruises, Costa Cruises and Windstar – stay year-round. Winter means most tourists have gone home so sightseeing is easier, but the weather can be unpredictable, with some sunshine but also wind and rain. If avoiding the summer peak appeals, consider instead the off-season months of April, May, September and October, when the sun is not so toasty.



On tour

All cruise lines offer a multitude of guided excursions in each destination that cater for all interests and provide an easy way for passengers to see the top sights, learn about the history and get a taste of local life.

Tours of Pompeii from Naples or of Rome from Civitavecchia are always popular, but for something different there are trips to wineries in Tuscany or that follow in the footsteps of Emperor Napoleon on the islands of Elbe and Corsica.

Foodie tours that encourage participants to cook like a local and health-themed excursions – for instance to a yoga retreat – are popular with Oceania Cruises, while active sorts will find guided bike rides and walking with Marella Cruises.

'On your own' tours that provide a transfer to Rome or Florence and leave folk to explore alone are favourites with those feeling more adventurous, but wherever they are, everyone is free to wander off and do their own thing once their ship has docked – always making a note of the all-aboard time first, of course, so they don't get left behind. And yes, that really can happen.

The Mediterranean is connected to the Atlantic by the Strait of Gibraltar – a channel between Spain and Morocco that narrows to just eight miles at one point.



Take a head for heights when crossing the Windsor Bridge in Gibraltar.

The allure of Allura

Jane Archer discovers the luxury of choice on new ship Oceania Allura.

It used to be that you couldn't mention Oceania Cruises without talking about food. Now the buzzword is choice, be it the diverse sizes of ship it offers, the different accommodations, the variety of itineraries and, yes, all the places to eat, which is still important for a line that has never wavered from a mantra boasting 'the finest cuisine at sea'.

"It's the luxury of choice," says Jason Montague, the line's chief luxury officer. He's on board new ship Oceania Allura's inaugural sailing, a short jaunt from Genoa to Trieste, and struggling to contain his enthusiasm. "It's luxury from top to bottom," he beams.

He is biased of course, but it's hard to argue. It's not just that the ship looks gorgeous, which it does, but the quality of the build and the way nothing has been overlooked.

There's are niches with eye-catching artworks and staircases adorned with beautiful cut glass. In the atrium, a spectacular two-deck-high floor-to-ceiling glass sculpture leads your eye up a sweeping staircase to the next deck. In Red Ginger, an Asian restaurant, there's a wall of 'floating' glass lanterns (pictured left).

Those who have cruised on Allura's sister, Oceania Vista, will feel right at home on this ship. There's the familiar culinary centre where you can learn to cook, Horizons' observation lounge and the classy Martini Bar. There are also all the much-loved places to eat – almost a dozen, which is amazing for a vessel that holds just 1,200 passengers.

The Polo Grill, Toscana, Aquamar Kitchen, the Grand Dining Room (pictured right); they're all having another outing, while - happy days - Jacques is back. A favourite on Oceania's ships, Marina and Riviera, it was replaced on Vista by Ember to the dismay of Jacques fans. So kudos to Oceania for listening to its customers and switching back.

The restaurant looks like Ember – I suspect the decision to change came too late to add any French flair to the décor – but no matter. The food is unmistakably French with lobster, onion soup and bouillabaisse alongside Jacques classics such as goat cheese soufflé, filet mignon with seared foie gras and crêpes suzette.

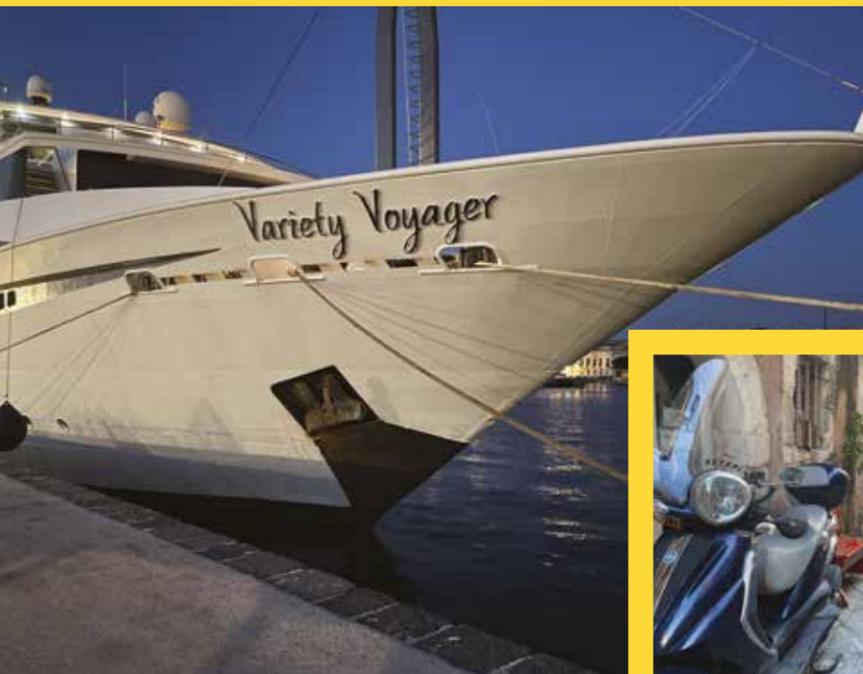
There's also an all-new crêperie that serves French crêpes, waffles and Italian ice cream. It's next to Baristas, a favourite haunt for coffee lovers, so you can move seamlessly from getting your mid-morning caffeine fix to a chocoholic indulgence.

It's hard not to be fixated on food on Allura (did I mention the new Japanese-Peruvian cuisine in Red Ginger and the 270 new dishes in the Grand Dining Room?), but it's worth tearing yourself away from eating to take a peek at the accommodation.

Oceania has done away with inside cabins and instead has a great selection of rooms with either French balconies or verandas that suit all budgets (there's that choice again). Aim towards the top and you get a butler, free laundry and unlimited access to the Spa Terrace. If space matters, Owner's Suites span the width of the ship. Book quick though as there are only three and they sell out fast.

Allura returns to the Mediterranean from May to November 2026, offering a selection of one to two-week cruises between Istanbul, Trieste, Civitavecchia, Barcelona and Valetta. Prices from £2,409pp for one-week include specialty dining, tips and Wi-Fi.





From left, Variety Voyager docked in Catania; Ortigia in Syracuse is a maze of narrow backstreets; balcony in Victoria, the capital of Gozo.

THE ITALIAN JOB



Variety Voyager at anchor off Lipari.

Italy comes under the spotlight on Variety Cruises' new La Dolce Vita itinerary. Jane Archer hops on board one of the first sailings to find out more.

Never mind the basilica, we were told as we set out to explore Catania, you have to visit the fish market. So here we are. It's big, noisy and as authentic as they come, with everything from mussels and squid to great slabs of tuna waiting to be snapped up (pun intended). You can even dine on it in the surrounding restaurants, feasting on the freshest seafood you'll ever taste.

That's not for us. Apart from the fact we've just had a slap-up breakfast on our ship, Variety Voyager, we're keen to get on and explore the rest of the city, a vision of faded elegance that sits at the foot of volcanic Mount Etna in Sicily.

There are once-grand palaces, wide streets bustling with people, cars and buses and the aforementioned cathedral, the Duomo, a baroque masterpiece of columns, arches and statues dating from the early 1700s. There's also a Roman theatre right in the middle of town that dates back to the 1st century AD and once held 7,000 spectators. It was buried by an earthquake in 1693 and not rediscovered for another 200 years, hence people who came later built houses all around it, unaware of what lay beneath them.

We're here with Variety Cruises, a Greek line sold by Seafarer Cruises in the UK, on day five of a seven-night sailing from Naples to Valletta in Malta via bijou ports where only smaller ships can go. And they don't get much smaller than Voyager.

It holds just 72 passengers, has a restaurant with indoor and outdoor seating, an inside lounge and al-fresco bar and a small spa and gym. Cabins are comfortable but small (if space matters, bag one of the more spacious Cat P rooms), none has a balcony and there's a reason why Variety advises guests not to pack much. Apart from limited storage in the cabins, you don't need it.

Even better, there were only 36 of us on our cruise (mostly Americans, but a couple from Australia, us two Brits and four Spanish) so it felt like an exclusive house party. >



Variety Cruises

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Credit: Variety Cruises



Top: All roads in Ortigia lead to Cathedral Square. Above: The balconies in Taormina are a riot of colour.

Below: Octopus in Catania fish market.



But not one where Armani suits rule; life on Voyager is as casual as you like. Shorts and t-shirts at dinner? No problem.

"Is it as good as it looks," an admirer asked as we waited for the tender back to Voyager in Giardini Naxos, the gateway to the hilltop town of Taormina. I assured him it was.

Taormina is an exception on this itinerary as it was packed with tourists strolling the beautiful main street adorned with colourful balconies, exploring the narrow side alleys and admiring the views over the bay below where our ship was anchored.

I'm guessing Capri, which should have been the first stop after Naples, would have been as busy, but as it was too windy to tender, the captain changed plans. We were not complaining. We had a blissful couple of hours sailing the beautiful Amalfi coast instead, followed by a day in Salerno, a city away from the crowds with a long waterfront, beaches and cute restaurants that won't break the bank tucked away in the backstreets.

The cruise was half-board, with breakfasts and dinners included (and enough food provided at both to feed a small army), but lunches were on our own, which we loved. It's a great way to try local specialities (it's seventh heaven for octopus and pizza lovers) without feeling you're paying twice for food, and also meant we were giving back to the communities we were visiting.

From Salerno we cruised to Lipari, a charming island dominated by a fortress built by the Spanish in the 1500s after an attack by the pirate Barbarossa. We took a bus to the Quattrocchi viewpoint and saw Mount Etna steaming way in the distance and the neighbouring volcanic island of Vulcan.

Stromboli was also nearby – so close that back at the harbour we had lunch watching sightseeing boats set off on late excursions to see the volcano kicking off after dark and wishing we had time to join one instead of having to get back to Voyager for the evening departure.

So what a brilliant surprise to get back on board and discover that rather than heading straight to Giardini Naxos, our next stop, Captain Orpheas was diverting north to Stromboli. There, in the shadow of the active volcano, he gave us a lesson in astronomy as we watched the fiery red explosions.



Main image: The fortress on Lipari Island. Inset: Umbrella street in Catania.

It was the highlight of the cruise – well almost. That honour went to Syracuse, a city in Sicily that was once the largest ancient Greek city in the world, was taken by the Romans and had more than its fair share of invaders over the centuries. Vandals, Byzantines, Arabs and Normans; they all passed through until Sicily became part of a unified Italy in 1865.

We joined a tour with Pietro, first visiting Neapolis, a town founded by the Greeks in the 4th century BC that's now an archaeological site. We visit an ancient Greek theatre and Roman amphitheatre, and also a gigantic cave nicknamed the Ear of Dionysius because, so the story goes, it's where Dionysius, Sicily's then tyrannical ruler, locked up his opponents and listened to their conversations from a room above before killing them.

From there we move down to the island of Ortigia, the historical centre of Syracuse with its maze of streets and alleys you can explore for hours that all seem to lead eventually to a beautiful square ("the most beautiful in the world", said Pietro) and magnificent baroque cathedral that in an early example of recycling started life as a Greek temple.

Our last call is the tiny island of Gozo in the Maltese archipelago, where there's a morning to scoot around the capital, Victoria (named after the British queen), and an afternoon swim stop. There's no pool on Voyager, but who needs one when we could jump off the back of the boat into the Mediterranean. How cool is that!



BOOK IT

Variety Cruises offers a seven-night La Dolce Vita cruise from Naples to Valetta in Malta visiting Capri, Lipari Island, Giardini Naxos (Taormina), Catania, Syracuse and Gozo from £3,469pp half-board in 2026 including port charges.



Why don't you stay...?

Make the most of your cruise holiday by adding a few nights on land at the start or end, says Jane Archer.



NCL's Explore Athens tour visits the Temple of Poseidon on Cape Sounion.

Left: Celestyal's Heavenly Med Escape holiday pairs a week in Rhodes with a seven-night cruise in Greece. Inset: Windstar has added overnight stays in Venice this winter.

Have you ever wondered how many thousands of cruise passengers fly into Rome, Barcelona or wherever they are sailing from, get on their ship and at the end fly straight home without so much as a backward glance at the city they are leaving behind?

We all know cruises are fab, but adding a few nights on land to the start or end of the holiday is such an easy way to make the best even better – and make more efficient use of the cost of the flight.

It might also be just the tipping point agents need to persuade travellers contemplating a holiday at sea to take the plunge and finally make that booking.

It could be a couple of days in Istanbul to explore the city's exotic markets or a few nights' touring Italy before a cruise from Civitavecchia. Or how about pairing a cruise with a train journey from London on the Venice-Simplon-Orient-Express (most ships are banned from Venice but several sail from nearby Fusina, Ravenna or Trieste).

The combinations are limited only by an agent's imagination and a client's budget. To make things easier, several cruise lines have hotel or tour packages cruisers can tap into.

Marella Cruises has by far the biggest choice, with a massive 146 hotels available to package with flights and cruises from Limassol, Palma, Dubrovnik and Corfu. Stays can be three, four or seven nights depending on the hotel and destination.

Managing director Chris Hackney said around 20% of Marella's passengers opt for a cruise-and-stay holiday, with Palma and Corfu the most popular summer destinations.

Celestyal is also getting in on the cruise-and-stay act. It has just launched Celestyal Travel, a new operator arm offering what managing director Janet Parton calls 'fly, sail, stay and explore' packages. She said the launch comes on the back of feedback from agents "who wanted to be able to sell flight-inclusive Celestyal packages to their UK guests".

Among launch options are a seven-night Iconic Greek Explorer holiday that pairs three nights in Athens with a four-night Greek Islands cruise and a 14-night Heavenly Med Escape that packages a week in Rhodes with a one-way flight to Athens and a seven-night cruise around Greece, Italy and Croatia.

Packages include return flights from the UK, transfers, bed-and-breakfast in the hotels and full-board on the cruise. On board, prices include soft drinks with meals, Wi-Fi and tips, plus a €50pp food and beverage credit spend.

Three land tours to book now

Norwegian Cruise Line: History, culture, myths and legends come together on NCL's 2026 Explore Athens tour, which bolts on to its voyages from Piraeus. It includes a walking tour of the ancient Acropolis and an excursion along the Athenian Riviera to the Temple of Poseidon, a Greek lunch and transfers to the port. From €618pp for two nights in 2026 with breakfast.

Regent Seven Seas Cruises: The spectacular Vatican Museums, Trevi Fountain, Colosseum and more await on on Regent's Rome & Tivoli Treasures tour available in 2026 ahead of selected cruises from Civitavecchia (for Rome). There's also a day trip to Tivoli to see the town's magnificent Villa D'Este gardens. From £2,071pp for three hotel nights, with breakfast, guided tours and transfers.

Silversea: Discover the joys of Florence on this Enchanted Italy tour, available with 2026 cruises from Civitavecchia. There are two nights in the city with a visit inside the Accademia, home of Michelangelo's statue of David, and two nights in Rome with an included tour of the city's highlights. From £3,280pp for four hotel nights, two breakfasts, two lunches, transfers and sightseeing.

Winter in the Med

As reports of extreme heat and overcrowding increase, more lines are testing demand for Mediterranean cruises in late autumn and the winter.

MSC Cruises has always had at least one ship in the region year-round and Norwegian Cruise Lines and Princess Cruises are among several companies pushing the season into November as more people seek to avoid the summer heat and crowds.

Windstar is also extolling the benefits of off-season cruising in the Med after testing the waters in 2023-24. Demand was so strong that it expanded the programme the following year and it's larger again in 2025-26. New this winter, the line is visiting Genoa and staying overnight in Dubrovnik, Venice, Nice, Barcelona, Malaga and Livorno (Florence).

Cruises are on the 312-passenger yacht Star Legend but in 2026-27 new ship Star Explorer, launching in December 2026, takes over the winter slot.

"Since their launch in 2023, we've seen growing interest in our year-round Mediterranean cruises, particularly as during this time we can go to classic cruise destinations we may usually avoid as our guests will see them without throngs of tourists," said Windstar head of sales UK & Ireland Augustus Lonsdale, noting lower off-season air fares and cooler weather are additional attractions in winter.

Silversea is also getting in on the winter in the Med act with new 10 and 20-day cruises on Silver Muse in January and February 2026 between Lisbon, Barcelona, Civitavecchia and Fusina (Venice).



Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines

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Seconds out

More flights and new ports feature in Fred Olsen Cruise Lines' 2026 Mediterranean flycruise programme.

Fred Olsen Cruise Lines has expanded its second-year Mediterranean flycruise programme with new flights from Gatwick alongside its existing Manchester departures as bookings for the sailings outstrip those for its other voyages.

The cruise line returned to the Med for the first time in 17 years in 2025, offering six flycruise departures on Balmoral between September and November in partnership with Jet 2 flying from Manchester and Stansted. Its partner airline for 2026 had not been confirmed as Cruise Destinations went to press.

The new flycruise season will also be on Balmoral and feature 21 itineraries of between 10 and 63 nights. It starts on October 8, visits 12 countries including Malta, Croatia, Turkey and Morocco, and leaves the Mediterranean in November but adds a 10-night island-hopping voyage around the Canary Islands before returning to Southampton.

There are also visits to eight Greek islands including Kalamata and Corfu. Both are back on Fred Olsen's cruise radar after a gap of 14 years, while Bastia in Corsica, and the Greek Islands of Lesbos and Samos are all new for the line.

There are also overnight stays in Alicante in Spain, Heraklion in Crete, Kavala and Athens in Greece, Salerno in Italy, Limassol in Cyprus and Istanbul in Turkey.

Those with time who don't fancy flying can book the entire 71-night voyage and sail round-trip from Southampton from September 30 to December 10.

Fred Olsen's guest experience director Doug Glenwright said this year's fly-cruise programme has performed "exceptionally well, with bookings currently around 30% higher than our other cruises departing in the final quarter of the year".

He added: "What's especially exciting is the number of new guests choosing to sail with us. Nearly half of those booked on our flycruises are sailing with Fred Olsen for the first time, compared to around 40% across our other cruises in the same period.

"It's a real pleasure to welcome so many first-time guests who are discovering the Fred Olsen experience through these journeys."

Glenwright attributes the flycruise programme's success to the 'perfect' blend of convenience and discovery and 'exceptional' value it offers.

"With flights that take guests straight into the heart of their destination and longer stays in port, guests can truly experience each destination to the full," he said.

Prices, from £1,599pp for an 11-night Discovering Greece, Italy and Morocco cruise, include flights, one piece of checked luggage and transfers.

Glenwright said: "We aim to make holidays as effortless as possible. From the moment guests arrive at the airport, we take care of every detail. There are Fred Olsen representatives at both UK and destination airports, transfers to and from our ships, and luggage delivered directly to guest cabins from our transfer buses."



WHAT'S NEW FOR 2026

Bastia, Corsica: A colourful city with plenty of alleyways and narrow streets, a citadel and charming old port to explore.

Lesbos, Greece: Balmoral is calling into Mytilene, which spreads from the harbour up into the hills to a huge castle dating from the 6th century AD.

Samos, Greece: Popular trips visit the village of Pythagoreio, named in honour of the Greek mathematician and philosopher Pythagoras.

Kalamata, Greece: Famous for the olives that take its name, Kalamata has a 13th-century castle and busy waterfront full of cafés, restaurants and shops.

Corfu, Greece: The historic old town (pictured) is a maze of small streets with wall-to-wall souvenir shops and a mix of renaissance, baroque and classical architecture



From left: Lucca's Basilica di San Frediano; trees were planted on top of the Torre Guinigi.

Roman and medieval Lucca

Jane Archer joins a four-hour Saga excursion to one of Tuscany's prettiest walled cities.

If I told you that the largest Comicon in the world is in San Diego, where do you reckon the second biggest is? London, maybe, or Paris? It's actually Lucca, a small city in Tuscany most cruise passengers drive past in their haste to get from the port of Livorno to Florence or Pisa.

That's a shame as Lucca is lovely, with cobbled streets and a historic centre that has survived almost intact from medieval times thanks to stout walls built around it in the 1500s to keep out invaders.

It's also a lot closer to Livorno than Florence – just 45 minutes away – and has nothing like the crowds, except during Comicon, when for four days some 320,000 comic book fans descend, most in fancy dress, almost quadrupling its population for the long weekend.

In the event, the only invader who came calling was Napoleon in 1805, and then the city gates were opened to him so the city wouldn't be destroyed. Smart move.

Irene, our guide, leads us through a labyrinth of streets, pointing out beautiful art-deco shop fronts and tall towers built by wealthy families to show their importance. There are even trees on the Torre Guinigi because, well why not? Climb the 230 steps to the top (€8pp) for great views over the city.

Irene also tells us about Italian composer Puccini, who was born in Lucca (his home is

now a museum) and more than a little fond of women. When he wasn't busy 'hunting' them, he was writing operas including Tosca and Madame Butterfly.

Our walk takes us into the former Roman amphitheatre which held around 8,000 people back in the day. Now it's the Piazza dell'Anfiteatro, a grand square where homes, shops and restaurants have replaced the ancient seating. It's literally a piece of living history.

Saga's Spirit of Discovery is visiting Livorno on a 17-night Vista of the Mediterranean cruise departing April 10 2026. The four-hour Roman and Medieval Lucca tour cost £57pp.

The former Roman amphitheatre is now a grand square ringed with houses, shops and restaurants.



Leading the pack

Ports are not the sexiest thing when it comes to cruising, but they are a vital part of the equation for both cruise lines and passengers.

Ever wondered who runs the ports around the world that enable cruise lines to function efficiently? Probably not. It's hard to get too excited about berths, terminals, refuelling, luggage handling and security machines.

But without all these services provided in a modern, professional wrapping, cruise lines wouldn't be able to operate, let alone embark the thousands of passengers a day some ports handle.

Cue Global Ports Holding, a company founded almost 20 years ago that you've probably never heard of but over those two decades has established itself as a vital part of the cruise industry.

Specifically it operates an A to Z of 33 ports in 21 countries, handles 7,800 cruise calls and provides services for more than 22 million passengers a year.

More than half of its ports are in the Mediterranean, stretching from Alicante in Spain to Zadar in Croatia. It also operates ports in the Canary Islands, in Asia, the Caribbean and Northern Europe, most notably Liverpool, which became GPH's first cruise port in the British Isles in April 2024.

The company is investing up to £25 million in Liverpool to develop a new floating dock that will increase capacity and allow for the port to berth two 300-metre ships simultaneously (roughly the size of Cunard's Queen Victoria) and handle more than 7,000 passengers a day. The multi-million-pound spend will also provide a new terminal building with shops and restaurants for cruise passengers as well as land-based visitors and local residents.

Continual growth and improvement have always been key to GPH's success. In the port of Tarragona, it opened a

new €5.5 million eco-efficient cruise terminal in summer 2024 that's built to a modular design so it can be expanded as demand increases. The port joined GPH's network in 2022 and is capable of handling up to four ships at once, including the world's biggest.

In the port of Catania, Sicily, a breakwater restoration project has allowed for the opening of a third berth capable of handling next-generation ships and a larger number of passengers. The berth joins the central pier - the future site of a new terminal - and the quay adjacent to the breakwater, where further work is set for completion by early 2026.

"With this expansion, Catania Cruise Port is well-positioned to serve as both a key gateway to Sicily and a growing hub for Eastern Mediterranean cruise itineraries," GPH said.

In Las Palmas in the Canary Islands, a new 'sustainable' cruise terminal that can handle 1.6 million passengers a year, is due to open in September 2025.

GPH has also unveiled an investment programme that will see several millions of pounds more spent across several ports in the Caribbean, including Nassau, San Juan and Antigua, where a new cruise terminal and shops are planned.

In St Lucia, which it added to its portfolio in 2023, a multi-million-dollar project due for completion in October 2026 is expanding an existing berth in Point Seraphine so it can handle the world's largest cruise ships. GPH is also upgrading the retail experience at the cruise port by developing a new Fishermen's Village at Bananes Bay where local vendors can sell their wares. The project will also see a new tender dock added at Soufriere.



The port of Valletta (pictured), operated by Global Ports Holding, has been named the most stunning cruise port in the world in a survey by travel insurance company AllClear. Another three GPH ports - Nassau in the Bahamas, and Lisbon and Ege Port Kuşadası in the Mediterranean - came in fifth, seventh and ninth respectively.

Credit: Variety Cruises

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HIDDEN GEMS

There's more to the Med than Rome, Florence and Barcelona. Here are eight of the best ports you've never heard of but really should have.



Above: The Church of the Resurrection dominates the skyline in Ermoupolis.
Below: Palamós is famous for beaches and prawns.



Best for staying hydrated – Çeşme, Turkey

The Turkish port of Çeşme (say it with a ch) is two hours north of busy Kuşadası, virtually unknown to outsiders and visited by few ships, which makes it spot on for cruisers looking to escape the crowds. Ashore there's a grand Ottoman castle, loads of fountains (Çeşme means fountain) – a legacy also of the Ottomans – and beaches and spas and restaurants with views over the pretty harbour.

Go with: Atlas Ocean Voyages, Azamara Cruises, Explora Journeys, Seabourn, SeaDream Yacht Club.

Best for temples – Porto Empedocle, Sicily

Anyone who saw Michael Portillo's train journey around Sicily some years ago will likely have put the archaeological site of Agrigento, just 12 minutes from the small port of Porto Empedocle, on their hit list. What an amazing place. The highlight is the Valley of the Temples – seven temples and an amphitheatre – dating back to the 5th century BC when this was a thriving Greek town. Agrigento town itself has a faded elegance to it and is the 2025 Italian Capital of Culture.

Go with: AE Expeditions, Atlas Ocean Voyages, Emerald Cruises, Ponant, Scenic, Variety Cruises, Windstar Cruises.

Best for art – Ancona, Italy

You can't go far in the Med without stumbling over Leonardo da Vinci. And so it is with Urbino, a lovely city 60 miles from the port of Ancona that's enclosed in towering walls built to his designs. Inside, there are narrow cobbled streets, the home, now a museum, of the painter Raphael and the beautiful 15th-century Ducal Palace, which houses the Galleria Nazionale delle Marche and a priceless collection of masterpieces by the likes of Titian, Piero della Francesca and Raphael. Guided tours highlight the must-see pieces.

Go with: MSC Cruises, Marella Cruises, Oceania Cruises, Ponant.



Butrint in Albania is Ephesus without the crowds. Below: It's an easy walk from the pier into Koper.

Best for ancient history – Sarande, Albania

The Albanian town of Sarande is not going to set any hearts a-flutter, but the ancient city of Butrint just 11 miles away? Now that's a different story. It dates back to the ancient Greeks and Romans (they called it Buthrotum) and has temples, an aqueduct and a mainly intact amphitheatre to explore, as well as basilicas and castles that were added later. And in case that's not alluring enough, there's the added bonus that you can see it all without tripping over other tourists.

Go with: AE Expeditions, Azamara Cruises, Hapag-Lloyd Cruises, Holland America Line, Oceania Cruises, Ponant, Princess Cruises, Regent Seven Seas Cruises, Royal Caribbean International, Seabourn, Silversea.

Best for prawns – Palamós, Spain

Palamós isn't famous for just any prawns, but a red variety known as gamba de Palamós that locals will tell you are the best in the world. Naturally you have to try some; you can also learn how they are caught at the Fishing Museum. The town has plenty of beaches, as well as narrow medieval streets to explore – and all just a stone's throw from where ships dock. Better still, unlike nearby ports (mentioning no names but Barcelona isn't far away), cruisers are welcome and there are no crowds.

Go with: Azamara Cruises, Emerald Cruises, Fred Olsen Cruise Lines, Hapag-Lloyd Cruises, Marella Cruises, Oceania Cruises, Regent Seven Seas Cruises, Silversea, Windstar Cruises.

Best for Easter – Trapani, Sicily

Pity the menfolk of Trapani. Every Easter, they have to muscle up and carry 20 carved wooden floats (so heavy they need 12-13 men to carry them) that depict the last days of Jesus Christ through the streets – a procession that can last 24 hours. If you can't get to Trapani, on Sicily's west coast, for the parade, never fear. You can see the floats in the Chiesa del Purgatorio (Church of Purgatory). Once that's ticked, take a cable car to the village of Erice high above Trapani and try a cannoli (dough stuffed with cream and ricotta cheese).

Go with: Ambassador Cruise Line, Atlas Ocean Voyages, Crystal, Emerald Cruises, Fred Olsen Cruise Lines, Hapag-Lloyd Cruises, Oceania Cruises, Ponant, Regent Seven Seas Cruises, Saga, Scenic, Silversea, Variety Cruises, Windstar Cruises.



Best for looks – Koper, Slovenia

Not to be confused with Kotor in Montenegro, Koper is in Slovenia, close to the Italian border. The Venetian old town is an easy walk from the port and a delightful jumble of narrow cobbled streets, piazzas and Venetian and Baroque architecture. Head to Tito Square to see the 15th-century Praetorian Palace and climb the 204 steps to the top of the bell tower of St Mary's of the Assumption Cathedral. Excursions visit Lake Bled and Slovenia's capital, Ljubljana.

Go with: Azamara Cruises, Fred Olsen Cruise Lines, Marella Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line, Oceania Cruises, Regent Seven Seas Cruises, Royal Caribbean International, Seabourn, Silversea.

Best for charm – Syros, Greece

The Greek island of Syros might be just a hop away from Mykonos, but it might as well be a million miles for the peace, quiet and prices that won't break the bank. Only small ships can dock here; from the pier it's a few steps to Ermoupolis, which has restaurants, cafés and charming streets lined with white-washed houses and dripping with bougainvillea. From the central square, climb up to Ano Syros, a town high above the harbour with narrow winding streets and the 13th-century Venetian Cathedral of Agios Georgios.

Go with: Atlas Ocean Voyages, Azamara Cruises, Emerald Cruises, Explora Journeys, Hapag-Lloyd Cruises, MSC Cruises, SeaDream Yacht Club, Variety Cruises, Windstar Cruises.

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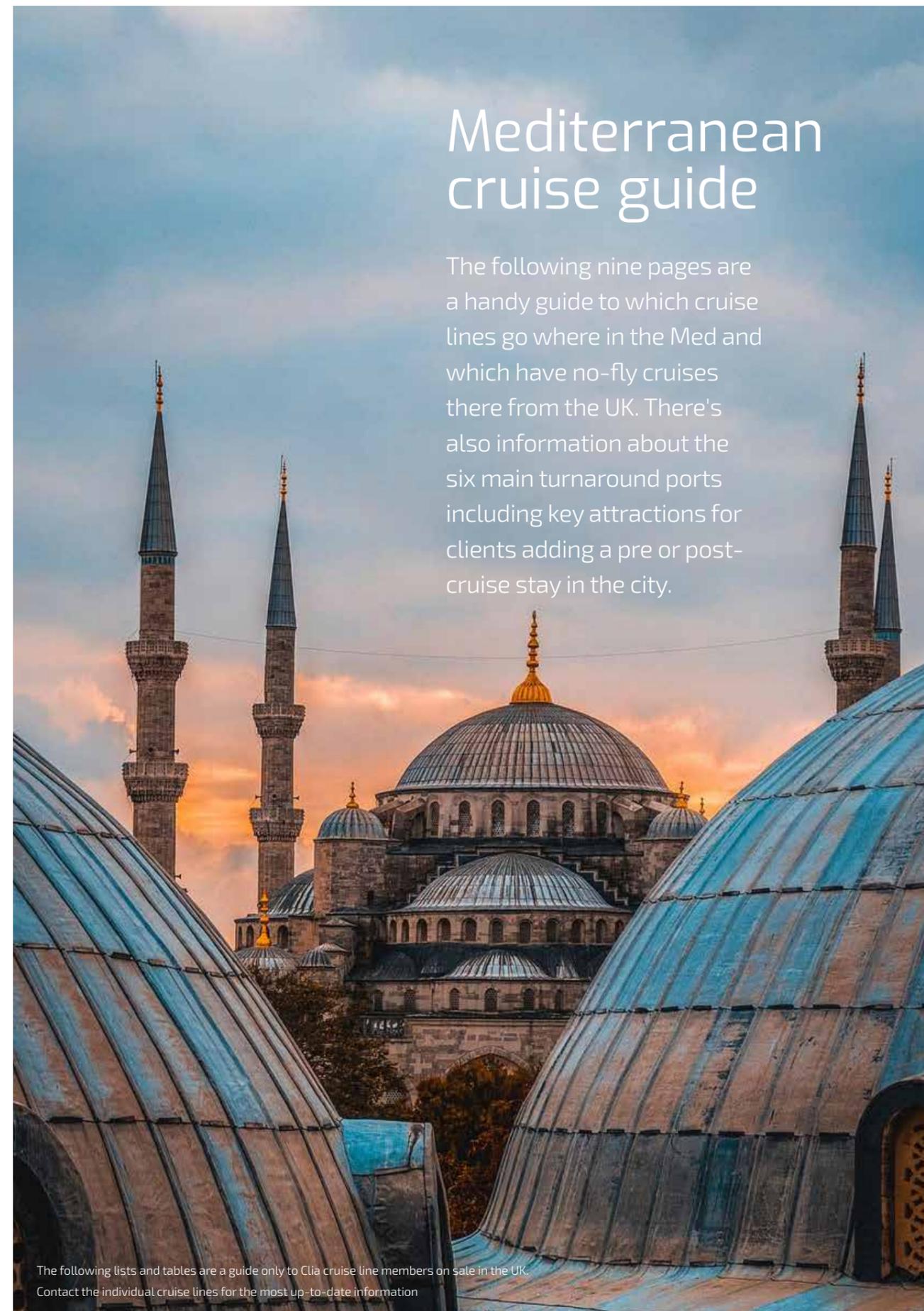
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Mediterranean cruise guide

The following nine pages are a handy guide to which cruise lines go where in the Med and which have no-fly cruises there from the UK. There's also information about the six main turnaround ports including key attractions for clients adding a pre or post-cruise stay in the city.



The following lists and tables are a guide only to Clia cruise line members on sale in the UK. Contact the individual cruise lines for the most up-to-date information

Who goes where in the Mediterranean

Cruise line	Albania	Croatia	Cyprus	Egypt	France	Gibraltar	Greece	Italy	Malta	Monaco	Montenegro	Morocco	Slovenia	Spain	Tunisia	Turkey	Website
AE Expeditions	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	aexpeditions.co.uk
Atlas Ocean Voyages	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	atlasoceanvoyages.com
Azamara Cruises		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	azamara.com
Carnival Cruise Line		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓		✓	carnival.com
Celebrity Cruises		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓		✓	celebritycruises.co.uk
Celestyal		✓					✓	✓			✓					✓	celestyalcruises.com
Costa Cruises		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	costacruises.co.uk
Crystal		✓			✓		✓	✓		✓				✓		✓	crystalcruises.com
Cunard		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓		✓	cunard.com
Disney Cruise Line		✓			✓		✓	✓	✓					✓			disneycruiseline.com
Emerald Cruises	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	emeraldcrises.co.uk
Explora Journeys		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	explorajourneys.com
Fred Olsen Cruise Lines		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	fredolsencruises.com
Hapag-Lloyd Cruises		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	hl-cruises.com
Holland America Line	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	hollandamerica.com
MSC Cruises		✓			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	msccruises.co.uk
Marella Cruises		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓		✓	tui.co.uk
Norwegian Cruise Line		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓		✓	ncl.com
Oceania Cruises	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	oceaniacruises.com
Orient Express Sailing Yachts		✓			✓			✓	✓		✓			✓			sailing-yachts.orient-express.com
P&O Cruises		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	pocrises.com
Ponant	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	ponant.com
Princess Cruises	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓		✓	princess.com
Regent Seven Seas Cruises		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	rssc.com
Royal Caribbean International	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓		✓	royalcaribbean.co.uk
Saga					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	saga.co.uk
Scenic		✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	scenic.co.uk
Seabourn	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	seabourn.com
Sea Cloud Cruises		✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓				✓			seacloud.com
SeaDream Yacht Club		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			seadream.com
Silversea	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	silversea.com
Virgin Voyages		✓			✓		✓	✓			✓			✓		✓	virginvoyages.com
Windstar		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	windstarcruises.com

No-fly cruises to the Mediterranean



Cruise line	Ships	Departures from	Departure dates	Length	Website
Ambassador Cruise Line	Ambition Ambience	Tilbury	February & November	31 nights	ambassadorcruiseline.com
Celebrity Cruises	Celebrity Apex	Southampton	August, September	14 nights	celebritycruises.co.uk
Cunard	Queen Anne	Southampton	May, August, September, October	14-19 nights	cunard.com
Fred Olsen Cruise Lines	Bolette Borealis Balmoral	Liverpool Portsmouth Southampton	Eight departures between January and December	14-71 nights	fredolsencruises.com
P&O Cruises	Arvia Britannia Aurora Arcadia	Southampton	22 departures between April and October	14-24 nights	pocruises.com
Princess Cruises	Sky Princess	Southampton	April, July, August	14 nights	princess.com
Saga	Spirit of Adventure Spirit of Discovery	Dover Portsmouth	Nine departures between March and November	15-27 nights	saga.co.uk

Barcelona, Spain



On Spain's east coast, Barcelona is the busiest port in the Mediterranean, popular with cruise lines on account of the city's excellent global flight connections and deep berths, and with passengers for its many attractions and lively vibe.

FLY WITH: British Airways, easyJet, Vueling, Ryanair and Wizz Air (summer only) have non-stop flights from London to Barcelona El Prat Airport, which is about eight miles from the city. Train, bus and taxi transfers are available into the centre.

DOCK AT: Ships dock at Moll Adossat, 15 minutes by shuttle bus from the city. The port has seven terminals but these are being scaled back to five over the next five years in response to local concerns about overcrowding.

ARRIVE EARLY TO EXPLORE:

- 📍 La Rambla and La Boqueria market.
- 📍 The Gothic District (Barri Gotic).
- 📍 Gaudi's unfinished Sagrada Familia cathedral.
- 📍 Camp Nou football ground.



Cruise lines with turnarounds in Barcelona in 2026*

- | | | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Atlas Ocean Voyages | Crystal | Holland America Line | Princess Cruises | Silversea |
| Azamara Cruises | Cunard | MSC Cruises | Regent Seven Seas Cruises | Virgin Voyages |
| Carnival Cruise Line | Disney Cruise Line | Norwegian Cruise Line | Royal Caribbean International | Windstar Cruises |
| Celebrity Cruises | Emerald Cruises | Oceania Cruises | Seabourn | |
| Costa Cruises | Explora Journeys | Ponant | SeaDream Yacht Club | |

* Clia cruise lines on sale in the UK only.

Credit: Regent Seven Seas Cruises

Civitavecchia, Italy



On Italy's west coast, Civitavecchia is the port for Rome and one of the busiest turnaround ports in the Mediterranean on account of its deep water berths and proximity to the Eternal City, dubbed the world's largest open-air museum.

FLY WITH: British Airways, ITA Airways, easyJet and Whizz Air have flights from London to Rome's Fiumicino Airport which is about 40 miles from Civitavecchia. Ryanair flies to Rome Ciampino, which is 53 miles from the port. Train, bus and taxi transfers are available.

DOCK AT: Ships dock in the city of Civitavecchia, some 53 miles from Rome city centre. The cruise port has six terminals and no limit on the size of ship that can dock. The train from Civitavecchia to Rome takes 70-80 minutes. The drive is about 1½ hours.

ARRIVE EARLY TO EXPLORE:

- 🕒 The Colosseum and ancient Forum.
- 🕒 The Pantheon.
- 🕒 The Vatican Museums and Sistine Chapel.
- 🕒 The baroque Trevi Fountain.



Cruise lines with turnarounds in Civitavecchia in 2026*

Atlas Ocean Voyages	Cunard	MSC Cruises	Regent Seven Seas Cruises	Virgin Voyages
Azamara Cruises	Disney Cruise Line	Norwegian Cruise Line	Royal Caribbean International	Windstar Cruises
Carnival Cruise Line	Emerald Cruises	Oceania Cruises	Seabourn	
Celebrity Cruises	Explora Journeys	Orient Express Sailing Yachts	SeaDream Yacht Club	
Crystal	Hapag-Lloyd Cruises	Ponant	Scenic	
Costa Cruises	Holland America Line	Princess Cruises	Silversea	

* Cllia cruise lines on sale in the UK only.

Piraeus, Greece



The busiest turnaround port in the Eastern Mediterranean, Piraeus is the gateway for Athens and perfectly located for island-hopping cruises around the Greek Isles and as the start or end point for voyages to the Adriatic or Western Mediterranean.

FLY WITH: British Airways, Aegean Airlines, easyJet, Ryanair and Whizz Air have flights from London to Athens International Airport Eleftherios Venizelos. The airport is about 22 miles from Athens city centre and 29 miles from Piraeus. Train, bus and taxi transfers are available to the city and port.

DOCK AT: Ships dock in Piraeus, which is just 20 minutes outside Athens. The port has three terminals and can berth up to 11 cruise ships simultaneously depending on their size. Variety Cruises' small ships sail from nearby Marina Zea.

ARRIVE EARLY TO EXPLORE:

- 🕒 The Acropolis, Parthenon and Acropolis Museum.
- 🕒 The Plaka.
- 🕒 The Parliament in Syntagma Square, to see elite soldiers guarding the tomb of the unknown soldier.
- 🕒 The Temple of Poseidon on Cape Sounion.



Cruise lines with turnarounds in Piraeus in 2026*

Atlas Ocean Voyages	Emerald Cruises	Norwegian Cruise Line	Seabourn	Variety Cruises
Azamara Cruises	Explora Journeys	Oceania Cruises	Scenic	(from Marina Zea)
Celebrity Cruises	Fred Olsen Cruise Lines	Ponant	SeaDream Yacht Club	Virgin Voyages
Celestyal	Hapag-Lloyd Cruises	Princess Cruises	Sea Cloud Cruises	Windstar Cruises
Crystal	Holland America Line	Regent Seven Seas Cruises	Silversea	
Cunard	MSC Cruises	Royal Caribbean International		

* Cllia cruise lines on sale in the UK only.

Venice, Italy



Credit: Consorzio di Ravenna

Only cruise lines with ships under 25,000GRT and allowed into Venice. Other lines variously use the ports of Ravenna, Trieste and Fusina. Ravenna is 126 miles from Venice, Trieste is 90 miles and Fusina is 12 miles.

FLY WITH: British Airways, easyJet, Ryanair and Whizz Air fly non-stop from London to Venice Marco Polo Airport. The airport is about 130 miles from Ravenna and 92 miles from Trieste. Train, bus or taxi transfers are available from Ravenna and Trieste to Venice. Fusina is about 15 miles from the airport. The cruise lines' own transfers between the airport, city and port are the best option.

DOCK AT: In Ravenna, ships dock at Porto Corsini. The port is some 20 minutes from the city and has one berth. In Trieste, ships dock a few steps from the centre of town, opposite the grand Excelsior Palace Hotel. The port has two berths in the city and a Dolphin dock that can take ships up to 300 metres long. Fusina has two berths for small ships only and a new terminal that opened in September 2024. Small ships allowed into Venice dock on the Giudecca Canal, right in the heart of the city.

ARRIVE EARLY TO EXPLORE:

Venice

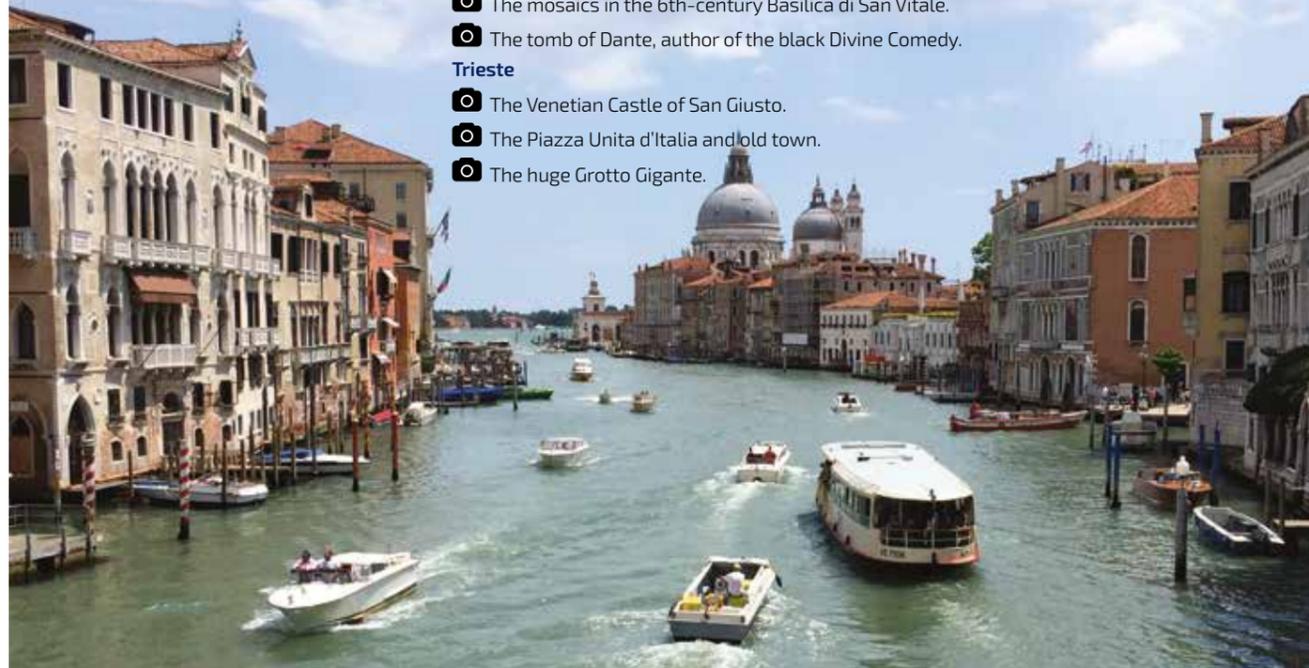
- 📍 St Mark's Basilica, St Mark's Square and the Doge's Palace.
- 📍 The Rialto Bridge.
- 📍 Gondola ride through the city's canals.
- 📍 Murano and Burano Islands.

Ravenna

- 📍 The mosaics in the 6th-century Basilica di San Vitale.
- 📍 The tomb of Dante, author of the black Divine Comedy.

Trieste

- 📍 The Venetian Castle of San Giusto.
- 📍 The Piazza Unita d'Italia and old town.
- 📍 The huge Grotto Gigante.



Cruise lines with turnarounds in Ravenna in 2026 *

- Celebrity Cruises
- Royal Caribbean International
- Norwegian Cruise Line

Cruise lines with turnarounds in Trieste in 2026*

- Cunard
- Holland America Line
- Norwegian Cruise Line
- Oceania Cruises
- Regent Seven Seas Cruises

Cruise lines with turnarounds in Fusina in 2026 *

- Azamara Cruises
- Crystal
- Explora Journeys
- Regent Seven Seas Cruises
- Seabourn
- Silversea

Cruise lines with turnarounds in Venice in 2026*

- Atlas Ocean Voyages
- Emerald Cruises
- Orient Express Sailing Yachts
- Ponant
- SeaDream Yacht Club
- Sea Cloud Cruises
- Windstar Cruises

* Clla cruise lines on sale in the UK only.

Istanbul, Turkey



Istanbul straddles the Bosphorus Strait, guarding the entrance to the Black Sea. It is exciting, busy and packed with sights that range from palaces and centuries-old churches to bustling markets selling everything from rugs and jewellery to spices.

FLY WITH: British Airways, Turkish Airlines and Whizz Air have non-stop flights from London to Istanbul Airport. The airport is 28 miles from the city. It takes 90 minutes to get into the city by metro or airport bus. Taxis take 45 minutes.

DOCK AT: Ships dock at an underground terminal in Galata. Walk or take a taxi over the Galata Bridge to get to the main attractions in the city. The port can berth up to three cruise ships at one time.

ARRIVE EARLY TO EXPLORE:

- 📍 The Blue Mosque and ornate Topkapi Palace.
- 📍 The Grand Bazaar and Spice Market.
- 📍 The Basilica Cistern beneath Istanbul that starred in the movie Inferno.
- 📍 Hagia Sophia, a church that became a mosque, a museum and is now a mosque once more.



Cruise lines with turnarounds in Istanbul in 2026*

- Azamara Cruises
- Cunard
- Emerald Cruises
- Hapag-Lloyd Cruises
- Holland America Line
- MSC Cruises
- Norwegian Cruise Line
- Oceania Cruises
- Ponant
- Regent Seven Seas Cruises
- Seabourn
- Sea Cloud Cruises
- Windstar Cruises

* Clla cruise lines on sale in the UK only.

Palma de Mallorca, Balearic Islands



Palma, the capital of Mallorca, is the Balearic Islands' biggest cruise port. It's a lively city with lots of restaurants and bars, an old town full of cobbled streets and quiet squares, and a lovely waterfront made for cycling and strolling. There are also several beaches a short walk from the city centre.

FLY WITH: British Airways, easyJet and Ryanair have flights from London to Palma de Mallorca Airport. There are buses and taxis from the airport to the city and buses from the city to the port. Taxis to the port take 20 minutes.

DOCK AT: Ships dock at the Estació Marítima, across the bay from the city's landmark cathedral. The port has six terminals and up to 10 berths, with no limits on size. It's a 40-minute walk from the port into the town. Most lines provide a shuttle bus.

ARRIVE EARLY TO EXPLORE:

- 🕒 La Seu Cathedral.
- 🕒 The Caves of Drach.
- 🕒 A vintage train ride from Palma to Soller.
- 🕒 A taste of authentic Spanish tapas.



Credits: Ports de Balears

Cruise lines with turnarounds in Palma in 2026 *

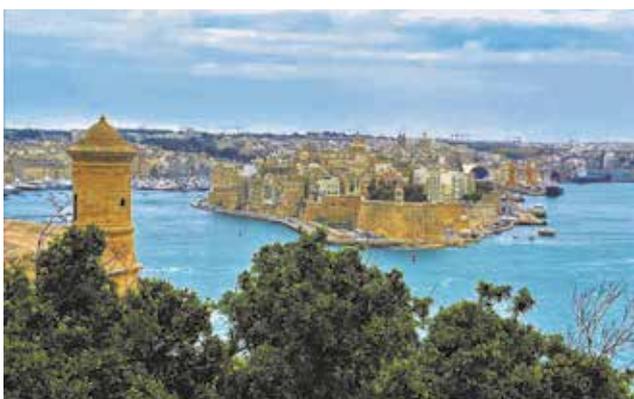
Azamara Cruises
Costa Cruises

Emerald Cruises
Hapag-Lloyd Cruises

Marella Cruises
Scenic

Sea Cloud Cruises
Silversea

* Clia cruise lines on sale in the UK only.



Other major Mediterranean turnaround ports

CORFU, GREECE: Used by Marella Cruises.

DUBROVNIK, CROATIA: Used by Emerald Cruises, Marella Cruises and Seabourn.

GENOA, ITALY: Used by MSC Cruises and Costa Cruises.

LIMASSOL, CYPRUS: Used by Marella Cruises and Fred Olsen Cruise Lines.

MALAGA, SPAIN: Used by Marella Cruises, MSC Cruises and SeaDream Yacht Club.

NICE, FRANCE: Used by Silversea and Emerald Cruises.

VALLETTA, MALTA: Used by Fred Olsen Cruise Lines, Orient Express Sailing Yachts and P&O Cruises.