



## Trans-Atlantic cruises

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On a transatlantic cruise, time slows and you feel like a traveller half a century ago before the introduction of jet travel made crossing the Atlantic a hurried, mundane experience. Besides the standard repositioning cruise, a transatlantic trip can be part of a world cruise, and these cruise trip itineraries offer a truly epic adventure.

For people who love to cruise, a transatlantic cruise brings to mind classic cruising at its heyday, with a leisurely pace of activity. Lounge on deck all day and spend the evening with fine dining and dancing.

Once the mainstay of travel across the Atlantic, the Trans-Atlantic crossing has evolved from a necessity to a luxury voyage, an opportunity to recapture the golden age of cruising from the early 20th century.

The model Trans-Atlantic crossing is characterized by four or five consecutive days at sea. However, newer, and longer versions of this basic itinerary will usually offer stops at places such as Bermuda, the Azores or the Canary Islands. Some Caribbean islands or European cities may also be included near the beginning or the end of the itinerary.

Longer routes can travel down the coast of Latin America before crossing over. Or else choose a northern route via Newfoundland and Iceland and see the unspoiled Scottish Isles and the Norwegian fjords. But the unique character of the traditional Trans-Atlantic cruise makes these ports short diversions from the main purpose of the voyage: the transit across the vast expanse of the Atlantic. Cunard Line, in keeping with its 165-year-old tradition, offers more regular Trans-Atlantic sailings than any other cruise line and is known for providing classic luxury cruises. These cruises leave one to two times per month and customarily take 6 nights to travel between New York City and Southampton, England.

When it was first launched by Cunard in 1969, the Queen Elizabeth 2 was the world's largest passenger ship. With the 2004 debut of the Queen Mary 2, which is twice the size of the QE2, Cunard once again holds this record. The QM2 is the longest, tallest,

largest and most expensive passenger ship built to date and she provides unprecedented luxury in amenities and accommodations. The QE2 continues to display the high standard of British elegance associated with these classic ships. In 2007, the Queen Victoria will join the fleet. Carnival Corporation acquired Cunard Line from the Norwegian Kvaerner group in 1998.

For most cruise lines, trans-Atlantic cruises are only offered as a seasonal repositioning between the Caribbean and Europe. Commonly at the end of April or in early May, ships finish the winter season in the Caribbean make an eastbound crossing to begin a series of European cruises during the summer. At the end of the European summer season, in September or October, the ships return westbound to the warm waters of the Caribbean for the winter. Most major cruise lines such as Celebrity, Holland America, Princess Cruises, and Royal Caribbean International have biannual 10-16 night trans-Atlantic itineraries.

Eastbound Trans-Atlantic crossings often sail from Boston, New York, Miami, Ft. Lauderdale and a few Caribbean ports. Westbound ships often depart from Dover or Southampton, Barcelona, Lisbon, Rome and other major European ports. The ship can then travel through different ports on its way to America.

There is plenty to keep travellers busy on the trans-Atlantic passage. In response to passengers desire for activity many cruise lines take advantage of the opportunity to offer special interest cruises such as Swing Dance, Big Band music, or wine and culinary themes. These events may be hosted by a well-known author, chef or celebrity for additional appeal. Educational programs such as art classes or computer learning may be provided, and dances and dinners on the ship will be organized to provide guests with plenty of opportunities for socializing.

The extra time to relax is can also be used to take full advantage of the shipboard spa. And of course, the trans-Atlantic crossing is always the perfect time to catch up on the latest novel.