



GRANDKIDS

on board



Think you're about to spend a relaxing couple of weeks at sea? Think again. Cruising with your grandkids, while a lovely family holiday, is a whole different kettle of fish.

BY JESSICA ABELSOHN

Family holidays are increasingly becoming a three-generation affair; and what a wonderful way to spend your time. While resorts, planes and car trips are a good way to travel, cruising seems to tick all the boxes when it comes to every family member, regardless of age. But don't be fooled, cruising with your grandkids can be tiring.

The fun stuff

Depending on the line you choose to go, there are plenty of things to do onboard.

For the grandparents and parents, there is trivia, fitness classes, seminars and activities. For the kids, as long as they're old enough for kid's club, they can spend the day with other children their age – much more fun than doing all the 'boring' stuff with you. If they're too young, there will generally be a 'toddler time' area, which will be a room filled to the brim with toys and games. You just



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have to stick around to supervise them. But it's the perfect place to take them on a rainy day or if they need to let off a little steam.

Plus, there are the pools – the adult's only one for you, and the family-friendly one for the kids – and the social areas where you can gather.

On some ships, there are fantastic outdoor areas that are completely family-friendly, including grass areas, cafes, rock climbing walls, waterslides and baby pools.

There are the port days too, which are a wonderful way to experience different parts of the world together.

And of course, there's the staff. Travel on any cruise ship belonging to any line and we can guarantee there will be staff on board missing their own children. The exceptionally-friendly staff will very quickly learn the kids' names, how old they are and some of them will even start to figure out their personalities. Every morning, you'll be greeted with a very large smile





and a cheerful hello if the kids are with you. If you're on your own, expect to be questioned about their whereabouts.

What's great about a cruise as well is that you never have to think about where your next meal is coming from. Regardless of whether you head to the café, the dining room or a specialty restaurant, there are options galore to suit any and every palette.

The not-so-fun stuff

Taking kids away, no matter how young or old they are, is tiring work. It can also be hard to find some 'me-time'. If you're a big group, there are multiple personalities and needs to cater to.

Additionally, port days can be exceptionally difficult, especially if you have babies in prams. Consider this: lugging down to the gangway with prams, kids hanging off your arm and multiple bags to ensure every child's need is taken care of. And then it's a tender ride. So not only do you have to heave the pram and the kids down (and then back up) a steep set of stairs, but then you also have to keep them entertained on what can be up to 20 extra minutes of a boat ride.

But, you'll be guaranteed to get priority wherever you go, so that's a bonus.



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Finally, unless you hire a babysitter every night or the kids are happy to go to kid's club after dinner, at least one person is going to miss out on the night-time activities. Of course, there are ways around this, for example, two people stay while the others go to the early show and then swap around, but the logistics can get quite confusing.

So, what's the verdict? Take or don't take? The positives seem to outweigh the negatives with this one. Regardless of how tough it may seem or how tiring it can be, nothing beats spending time with the whole family in tow. Right? ••



5 TOP TIPS TO SURVIVE CRUISING WITH THE GRANDKIDS

1. Find 'me time' – whether it's a walk around the ship or a drink at the bar, you also need time to yourself. Say sayonara to the kids and hide for a couple of hours.
2. Take walkie talkies – when you're on a ship in the middle of the ocean, chances are your phones won't work. And there's nothing worse than wandering around a ship for hours on end trying to find your family. These work a treat at keeping in touch.
3. Pack wisely – while this may be up to the parents, they may need a gentle reminder that most ships don't carry nappies, wipes or children's medication on board. If they do, they're going to cost an arm and a leg.
4. Choose shore excursions wisely – now of course, you don't need to do these all together but if you want to, you'll need to keep the kids in mind. Their attention span isn't as great as yours so find some kid-friendly things to do.
5. Pick your staterooms – if you can, get adjoining rooms or at least rooms that are next door to each other. That way, you can take baby monitors on board and it makes it much easier to watch kids while they're sleeping. It also makes logistics much simpler.