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### [MEDITERRANEAN CRUISE](#)



The beauty of a Mediterranean cruise, or any cruise, is that you check in to your room once. You then get to visit various port cities without the inconvenience and hassle of packing, unpacking, checking in & out, and doing it all over again between each city. No hassles with dinner reservations and evening entertainment.

On your Mediterranean cruise you can choose to do as much or as little as you choose. If you are there to relax and unwind you can do plenty of that. If you are there to see and get as much in as possible, most of the major cruise lines offer a large number of popular shore excursions at each port.

Here is a short article submitted by one of our readers who has chosen to do and see as much as possible and get the most out of her recent 7-day Mediterranean cruise. Irene O. of Long Beach California writes:

"I really enjoyed my Mediterranean cruise. My husband and I celebrated our 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and had a great time. There was a large selection of shore excursion activities. Be prepared for exhaustion when this cruise is over! With only ONE day at sea, at the END of the week, there is no rest, and little time to spend enjoying the ship. This cruise is focused on sightseeing and squeezing in as many cities as you can. Most tours departed at 7:30 am, returning around 6 pm, in time for dinner (6:45 seating) and shows.



A FLOATING RESORT

The ship was very nicely appointed, excellent food, service, and entertainment.

[Mexico](#)[Punta Cana](#)[Scottsdale Arizona](#)[Tahiti](#)

We sat with two couples also celebrating a 25th anniversary and a honeymoon. Seating for two is available. Elegant dining room, great service but not enough waiter entertainment or flambés. Due to intermittent rain in September, most activities (farewell party, etc) were done indoors in the promenade, not at the pool. With only one day at sea, we did not take advantage of the ship's many amenities. The week seemed rushed. Here are the ports we visited:

### Port 1 - Barcelona, Spain



VIEW FROM HOTEL  
MONTECARLO



HOTEL MONTECARLO



LA RAMBLA,  
BARCELONA

This was a highlight of the trip! We booked a fabulous hotel, Hotel Montecarlo, which was smack in the center of La Rambla, Barcelona's main street, with cafes and kiosks in the center island. The hotel was old, but very upscale (200 euros per night), and our room had a balcony overlooking La Rambla. Noise level was very low, even with fiesta week outside our window. Beware that the breakfast offered downstairs is not included (15 euros). Everyone was very nice, and there was a computer in the lobby for email access.

To see the city, we opted for the double-decker bus tour (Bus Turistic), which offered a RED tour and BLUE tour of different ends of the city. We did the red, which was a 2-hour tour of the main and coastal sites, but not the famed Sacred Family gothic cathedral (on the blue tour). Tickets can be purchased the same day at the ticket booths near the Aquarium, near the famed Columbus statue. Wish we had more time to see more. One night was not enough. Stay two nights, and bring your umbrella in September.

### Port 2 - Marseilles, France



AIX en PROVENCE,  
SUNDAY FRUIT  
MARKET

In planning our land excursion, we had assumed that the ship docked near the heart of Marseilles (which it didn't), so we opted for the 4-hour Aix en Provence tour, assuming we could stroll Marseilles on our own in the afternoon. Wrong. It was raining so hard, we went back to the ship at lunch, and never ventured (by cab) into Marseilles. The morning in Aix en Provence was lovely. It's a college town, though on Sunday, we saw few signs of this. A bus took us up thru the Provence countryside to the old town, where the tour guide walked us through the old cobblestone streets (complete with Sephora and Mac stores), cathedrals, squares, and fountains. The highlight was the Sunday fruit/flower market with such varieties of fruits/veggies (20 different mushrooms!) and also finding the BEST slice of pizza on the planet at a sidewalk counter called Pizza Capri (behind Les Deux Garçons).

A slice of anchovy heaven on pastry crust! Tres bon.

### Port 3 - Villefranche (Nice), France

A very WET memory of this port. We opted for the Nice, Eze, Monaco 8-hour tour. Nice was seen completely through the window of a bus, as the rain was coming down so hard, nobody got off the bus. The main marketplace square was under construction, but the coastal promenade looked very picturesque, under drier conditions. Eze was a village up the mountain, which included lunch at a small restaurant (french fries are a staple), and a tour of a perfume factory.

The sun came out after lunch, and our afternoon in Monte Carlo was well worth the rain. We saw the Royal Palace, the cathedral where Grace Kelly was married and buried (tomb is there), and the famed Casino (from outside only). Dress code, limited time, and steep admission deterred us from entering. We sat at the outdoor cafe of the Hotel Monaco and enjoyed the great view with a beer and some "the".



CATHEDRAL, TOMB OF GRACE KELLY



MONTE CARLO, CASINO



MONACO, VIEW OF MONTE CARLO

### Port 4 - Livorno (Florence/Pisa), Italy



PONTE VECCHIO BRIDGE



PIAZZA DEL DUOMO

Here we opted for the 10-hour Florence/Pisa tour (departing ship at 7:30 am). Florence was a walking tour of many squares and cathedrals. Piazza del Duomo is the famed red marble dome in the skyline postcards; Piazza Santa Croce has the tombs of Michelangelo and Galileo. The tour included lunch in a small restaurant, a bit nicer than the previous.

The afternoon was spent in Pisa, which has nothing more to see than the Field of Miracles (and shady street vendors), which is home to the leaning tower. Three marble buildings all together, tickets can be purchased to climb the tower on site, our simply browse the souvenir shops and take a photo "holding up" the tower. Be sure and have cameras ready on your trip back to the



LEANING TOWER,  
PISA

ship -- you'll pass the Livorno military base with prostitutes on the tree-lined roadside flashing all the tour busses.

### Port 5 - Civitavecchia (Rome), Italy

There were many, many tours to choose from, and we opted for Imperial Rome (10 hours, \$166 pp) since the Colosseum and Trevi Fountain were a MUST on our list. In hindsight, we should have booked the "Rome On Your Own" tour and found a double-decker tour bus. Our wacky tour guide was an archeologist, so the tour was deeply focused on the ruins (which my husband enjoyed).

We never had free time to see the Spanish Steps, nor Piazza Navona, nor to sample any pizza. Nor to see the Pope, who had addressed the crowd at the Vatican earlier that day (every Wednesday). One value in this tour was admission and shortcut lines to St. Peter's Basilica and the Colosseum, which folks on the "on your own" tour had to stand in the public lines.

### Port 6 - Naples, Italy

Many, many tours at this port also, and we opted for a great one -- Capri, Sorrento, Pompeii (10 hours, \$188 pp). After jetfoiling to the island of Capri, we took the red "funicular" up the mountain to Capri Town at the top. We strolled, shopped, and saw amazing vistas below of the clear blue water (the Blue Grotto tour came highly recommended, but no time on this multi-city tour).

Next we jetfoiled to Sorrento, famous for lemons, love, and more shopping.

After lunch in Sorrento (included), we motor coached along the Sorrento coast to Pompeii. Pompeii was an amazing MUST see. Buried by volcanic ash in 79 AD, the city is frozen in



INSIDE THE  
COLOSSEUM, ROME



VATICAN, ST. PETER'S  
SQUARE



ARCH OF  
CONSTANTINE



ISLE OF CAPRI



BURIED CITY OF  
POMPEII

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Here U, Long Beach, California

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