



Freestyle cruising breaks with the tradition of formal sit-down meals and other at-sea formalities. On most cruises, passengers must follow specific reservation schedules and always dine at the same assigned tables.

A generation or so ago on every cruise, passengers were required to dress up for dinner: coat and tie for men and evening wear for women. In some of the more elegant ocean liners, tuxes for men and evening gowns for women were the norm for luxurious cruise dining. Freestyle cruising today allows passengers to dine in restaurant style, at any time they choose. There's also a more relaxed dress code in the dining rooms. Norwegian Cruise Lines created the informal system about a dozen years ago, and has registered the logo Freestyle Cruising.

For example, on the new NCL Epic, in addition to two primary dining rooms, there are at least a dozen other locations aboard where to have breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks and after-theater midnight buffet throughout the day.

Aboard the Epic, there's a steakhouse with both a European and South American menu. Additionally, in many dining locations aboard, passengers can enjoy Tex-Mex, French, Chinese, Japanese and Italian fare.

While the cost of most of the dining options are included in the cruise price, several of the upscale restaurants aboard charge an extra \$20 to \$50 a person per meal for the more intimate and posh settings.

Other freestyle dining options include poolside waiter service, meals served in cabins, on balconies and old-fashioned bar counter service for pizzas and other fast-food. Because of freestyle, and passengers no longer required to line up to eat on schedule, the ship's other facilities are less crowded at specific hours.

This is especially convenient for families with children. In special kids' programs, they can swim, climb, sing, bowl, play volleyball and do many other things at any time. Parents and grandparents can dine peacefully while the young ones are being fed and cared for by on-board babysitters.

NCL also offers Freestyle Disembarkation. Traditionally, getting off the ship after a cruise is a regimented, long wait system of allowing only small groups of people ashore at a time. NCL opens its gangway at about seven in the morning, and those who are ready can depart.

In some destinations, passengers can use NCL's Easy Walk-Off system. They may leave with their wheeled and carry-on bags as soon as the gangway is lowered in the home port.

NCL has found a way to attract people to sail with comfort and convenience. Freestyle Cruising makes the ocean journey more enjoyable and relaxing.