

By JACOB PASSY

Anyone expecting a repeat of the ample elbow room on many cruises last summer should prepare. The crowds are back at sea.

Cruise lines are seeing occupancy levels above 100% on many ships, largely due to the discounts and promotions many cruise lines offered in late fall and winter. Passengers are encountering long lines for activities on board, sold-out excursions and stressed-out crew members, a year after all but having ships to themselves. In extreme cases, cruise lines are canceling some people's trips after overselling.

Royal Caribbean Group reported that the occupancy rate across its cruise lines averaged 102.1% during the first quarter of 2023, up from 57.4% in early 2022. Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings says the occupancy rate averaged 101.5% during the first quarter and projects it to average 103.5% for the full year.

Cruise occupancy rates can rise above 100% because they are based on the expectation that two people will stay in each cabin, and this was a common occurrence before the pandemic. When three or four passengers stay in one cabin, occupancy rates can exceed 100%.

The average starting cost of a five-night cruise on a major cruise



Summer Cruise Travelers Get Packed Like Sardines

Expect long lines for activities, sold-out excursions and stressed crews; in some cases, would-be passengers are bumped due to overbooking