

Cruise Ship Worker

A cruise ship is in many ways like a floating city. Passengers are on board for many days or weeks and need a wide range of services. The ship usually has several different departments, which support a wide range of jobs. Ship's officers and crew look after the general running of the ship. The captain is in overall command of the ship.

The Work

Ship's Officers and Crew

As a **deck officer** or **engineering officer**, you would be responsible for:

- navigating and sailing the ship
- the operation, maintenance and repair of engines and technical equipment
- the safety of the ship
- you may take part in social events with passengers.

As a **ship's rating (deck, engine room or catering)**, you would:

- carry out skilled and unskilled maintenance work
- do cleaning and repair work both above and below deck
- provide certain food, drink and accommodation services on board.

As a **ship's telephone operator**, you would:

- operate the ship's switchboard
- receive and place ship to shore telephone calls.

Purser's Office (or administration)

As a **purser**, you would be responsible for:

- management and administration on board ship
- accounts and finance
- personnel matters
- passenger services
- information services.

As a **purser's assistant**, you would:

- carry out general office and administrative duties
- deal with enquiries and complaints from passengers
- work on the front desk organising passenger requests, such as excursion bookings.

Hotel, Catering and Bar Staff

On a cruise ship, hotel staff takes care of the cleaning and upkeep of the areas used by passengers, such as cabins, dining rooms, recreation areas and bars. Members of the catering department work shifts to provide food and drink for the passengers and some crew.

You could work as a:

- hotel services manager or supervisor
- cabin steward or stewardess
- cleaner
- chef
- kitchen porter
- baker
- waiter or waitress
- restaurant manager
- bar person.

Most of these jobs are the same as they are on shore – see the [Hospitality, Leisure and Tourism](#) section for more specific details.

Cruise Activities and Entertainment

Many different jobs are available in this department of a cruise ship.

As a **cruise director** you would:

- be in charge of all onboard entertainment
- have overall responsibility for looking after the passengers
- make sure they enjoy the facilities and get the most out of their time aboard ship.

As a **cruise assistant** (or **assistant cruise director**) you would:

- meet and greet passengers on their arrival
- act as a host or hostess to make sure passengers enjoy their cruise
- organise and take part in daytime and evening activities and entertainments.

A wide range of people provide entertainment and activities. You could find work as a:

- singer
- dancer
- comedian
- musician
- children's entertainer
- sports instructor

- pool attendant.

Other Facilities

On most cruise ships there are services provided by outside companies (concessionaires). They include facilities such as:

- hair salons
- photographers
- health and beauty salons
- fitness clubs
- florists
- retail shops
- casinos.

The jobs in these areas are the same as they are on shore.

Health

Most cruise ships employ health professionals to look after passengers and crew. There are opportunities if you are a:

- nurse
- doctor
- physiotherapist
- podiatrist
- osteopath.

Most of these jobs are the same as they are on shore – see the [Health and Medicine](#) section for more specific details.

Pay

Pay rates vary depending on:

- the type of work you do
- the size of the company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

Some cruise ship jobs are well paid, but others have a low basic salary, which you are expected to top up with tips. Your salary may also be tax free. You will have your accommodation and food provided.

For details of merchant navy salaries, see the job profiles on [Merchant Navy Deck Officer](#), [Merchant Navy Engineering Officer](#) and [Merchant Navy Rating](#).

For details of salaries for other jobs, for example **Hairdresser**, see the relevant job profile.

Conditions

- On board a cruise ship you might have basic and shared accommodation, which is small.
- You might have to go up and down narrow stairways or ladders to go from deck to deck.
- You would have to cope with the movement of the ship, especially in bad weather.
- You might work longer hours than on land, often 10 or 12 hour shifts.
- Sometimes you might have only one day off each week.
- You could be away from home for long periods.
- You would wear a uniform.
- Work may be seasonal and contracts can be an average of 6 months long.

Depending on the terms of your employment, you may not be allowed to use the facilities provided for passengers and may not be given time off at every port.

Getting In

Because of the wide variety of jobs that exist on cruise ships, entrants come from many different backgrounds and train in many different ways.

- Ship's officers and ratings can enter through a training scheme run by a shipping company or training group. (See job profiles on [Merchant Navy Deck Officer](#), [Merchant Navy Engineering Officer](#) and [Merchant Navy Rating](#)).
- Some cruise lines take on cadets and provide training, practical experience and the chance to gain a qualification.
- Pursers often come from a background in hotel management.
- Experience in tour guide or holiday centre work is helpful for work as a cruise assistant.
- For specialist jobs, you need the same qualifications as you would for a job on land. You should have a few years' experience of your profession or trade before applying for a job at sea. You can apply directly to a cruise line or a concessionaire.
- It may help if you have some experience working on a passenger ferry. Ferries sail from UK ports to the Scottish islands, Ireland, Scandinavia, France, Spain, and the Netherlands.
- It is an advantage for some positions if you can speak at least one foreign language.

You can find jobs advertised on specialist recruitment websites such as [allcruisejobs.com](#), as well as individual cruise operator and general recruitment websites.

What Does It Take

You need to be:

- fit and healthy
- unlikely to be seasick
- friendly and approachable
- able to work and make decisions on your own
- a good team worker
- adaptable and positive

- able to get on with people from all walks of life
- prepared to live and work away from home
- able to work well under pressure.

Training

- You need to have completed the appropriate training for your trade or profession before applying for work on a cruise ship.
- Cruise ship companies do not offer training facilities on board ship, but you would complete an induction.

Getting On

- With experience, you may gain promotion within your trade or profession, either with the cruise line you are working for or by moving to other companies.
- After working at sea with a cruise line, you may decide to return to shore-based work in order to pursue your career.

Contacts

Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB)

Email: enquiry@careersatsea.org

Website: mntb.org.uk

Website (2): www.careersatsea.org

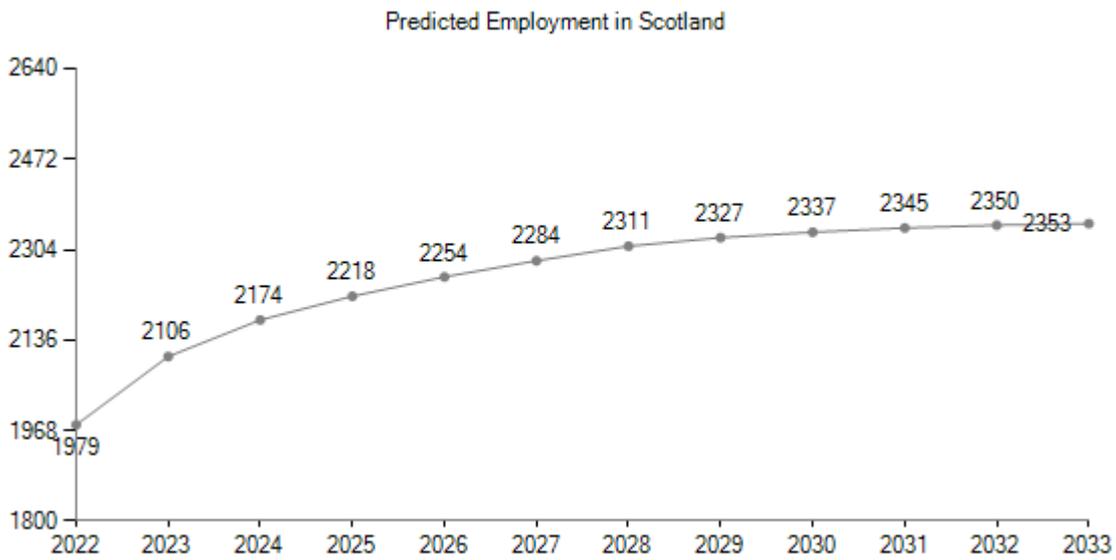
Facebook: www.facebook.com/careersatsea

Statistics

Employment Status : Not available this career.

Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.



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