

Actually, I enjoyed the cruise and shore visits to Baja ports, including beautiful Cabo San Lucas. Since then, we've sailed on dozens of cruises throughout the world. And nobody took any shots at me. Aboard, almost all other passengers were seniors. Obviously, retirees have the most time and money to pay for the \$2,500 to \$5,000 it costs per couple for the average one-week sea journey.

At sea, we participate in activities, which start at 6 am (voluntarily) exercise classes, swim, spa and walk/jog around the upper deck track. Throughout the day and evening, there are organized sports, shuffleboard, card games, quiz shows, casino and bingo.

Of course, there's also just plain lazing in the sun and watching the ocean go by. Cruise ship staffs are very aware of physically-challenged passengers, and all activities are designed to allow their participation.

For lunch and dinner, during that first cruise, we sat at assigned tables with the same (too often boring) dining companions. Now, cruise ships offer more open seating, special upscale dining rooms, flexible hours and other amenities for those who don't want to be tied down to routine.

Cruises feature midnight buffets, which often follow dancing in the luxury ballroom and under the stars. I recalled decades back when I had the starlit midnight to 0400 watch on deck, but there was no dancing on Navy cruises.

Once ships clear US waters, the glitzy casinos open, and passengers can experience Las Vegas at sea with slot machines and table games. There are also decks full of upscale shops that feature duty-free goods.

While there's plenty to do aboard ship, shore excursions are always attractive, although they can be costly. In many ports, shopping is within walking or cab distance from the ship. And it's much cheaper than paying for excursions that cover the same areas.

On our many cruises, we visited ports in Europe, the Caribbean, Alaska, Central and South America and Hawaii.

So far, we haven't sailed to any of the Far East destinations I not-so-fondly remember: the Philippines, China, Korea and Japan.

When a good cruise to Asia deal comes up, and if the people there don't hold any grudges against this old Navy guy, I may just sail one some day.