Is a cruise drink package worth it?

It is arithmetic, not a vibe. Here are the published prices, the gratuity nobody adds in, and a calculator that settles it.

THE SHORT ANSWER

A cruise drink package pays only above a break-even of roughly five and a half drinks a day, every day, once the 18 to 20 percent service charge is added. Carnival publishes CHEERS! at $69.95 per person per day pre-purchased or $74.95 onboard, plus 20%. Royal Caribbean and Celebrity publish no public per-day price. Most lines require every adult in the stateroom to buy it.

Facts checked against official sources on 24 September 2026

Everyone argues about this and almost nobody does the sum, mostly because the price is only half of it. The gratuity gets added on top, it is charged for every day of the cruise whether you drink or not, and on most lines every adult in the cabin has to buy it if one of you does.

So: the published numbers first, then a calculator.

What the lines actually publish

Two of the five publish no price at all. Royal Caribbean and Celebrity do not put a per-day beverage package price on any public page — you see it when you log in to your booking. That is not us failing to find it; it is a published absence, and it means anyone quoting you a firm Royal Caribbean figure is quoting last year's.

Check before you sail

The official rules behind this guide, one scan away.

Point your phone camera at a code. Your phone opens the official page. The full web addresses are in the sources list at the back of this guide.

Check the official source

Cruise lines change these rules. What the official page says on the day you sail is what counts. These are not paid links.

CHEERS! package
Carnival

Drink package rules
Royal Caribbean

Package gratuities
Royal Caribbean

Beverage packages
Princess

Full guide online: photos, live prices and the latest updates at **aicruisegranny.com/drink-package-worth-it**

Official sources only: no paid links on this page.

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Line	Published price per person per day	Service charge on top
Carnival CHEERS!	**$69.95** pre-purchased, **$74.95** bought onboard	**20%**
Princess Plus	**$64.99** (Princess's own disclaimer shows this totalling **$76.70** with the charge)	18% on the disclaimer pages, 20% on the beverages page — *two Princess pages, two numbers*
Princess Premier	$84.99 on one Princess page, **$79.99** on another (totalling $94.39)	as above
Princess Zero-Alcohol	**$29.99**	18%
Princess Classic Soda	**$14.99** (totalling $17.69)	18%
Norwegian soda	**$12.50**	20%
Norwegian Starbucks	**$16.50**	20%
Royal Caribbean	**Not published**	18%
Celebrity	**Not published.** Only the Classic-to-Premium upgrade, at $20 per person per day	20%

The calculator

Put in what you were quoted and roughly what a drink costs on your ship. It will tell you how many drinks a day you need for the package to break even.

Four things that break the arithmetic

1. Every adult in the cabin has to buy it

Royal Caribbean: "all guests wishing to purchase the Deluxe Beverage Package to do so for ALL guests of legal drinking age in the same stateroom." Celebrity publishes the same rule, with exceptions for pregnancy and for medical or recovery restrictions. Carnival: "Each adult assigned to the same stateroom must purchase the program." Princess has the softest wording of the five — participation "may be dependent on the other guest(s) in his/her stateroom's participation, as determined by booking method."

So if one of you drinks and one of you does not, you are buying two packages. That is the single most common way this goes wrong.

2. There is a price ceiling on each drink

Royal Caribbean Deluxe	"any single beverage item with a value up to **$14**"
Carnival CHEERS!	**$20** per serving; above that you get 25% off
Princess Plus	**$15** and under
Princess Premier	$20 on one Princess page, **$18** on another
Celebrity Classic	"up to $12 per serving" on one Celebrity page, "under $10" on another
Celebrity Premium	"up to $19" on one page, "under $17" on another

3. Some lines cap the number of drinks

Carnival: "up to 15 alcoholic drinks, per 24-hour period." Princess publishes the same 15 on its Plus and Premier disclaimers — while the separate Plus & Premier terms say Premier has "no daily limit." Royal Caribbean, Celebrity and Norwegian publish no daily limit at all, though all three restrict how many you can order at once.

4. The private island may not be included — and this one surprises people

Royal Caribbean	**Covered** at Perfect Day at CocoCay and Labadee.
Princess	**Covered** at Princess Cays. The Classic Soda package also works at Half Moon Cay.
Norwegian	**Covered** at Great Stirrup Cay. **Not** at Harvest Caye.
Carnival	**Not covered.** CHEERS! is "not offered... at Celebration Key, Half Moon Cay and Princess Cays." A second Carnival page goes further and says it cannot be used "at any destinations we visit."

The oddity worth knowing. Half Moon Cay and Princess Cays are both Carnival Corporation islands. Princess's soda package works at the bars there; Carnival's CHEERS! does not. Same beach, same bar, two sister brands publishing opposite answers.

Refunds, and the deadline you will miss

Royal Caribbean: "refund requests must be submitted within **48 hours of purchase**. No cancellation after 48 hours from purchase." Carnival: refundable up to **10pm ET the evening before** departure, then not at all. Celebrity: cancel through Cruise Planner up to **2 days** before sailing, 100% refundable. Princess: non-refundable within 3 days of sailing, 4 days for Zero-Alcohol.

And buying early is cheaper where a line publishes both figures: Carnival is **$5 a day less** pre-purchased, and Princess charges $5 more per day if you buy within 96 hours of departure or onboard.

WHAT I DO

I work out my number with the calculator above, then I knock a drink a day off it, because port days are real. If it still pays, I buy it.

The thing that tips it for me is not the alcohol. It is that the packages on most lines include bottled water, specialty coffee and fresh juice — and I will genuinely have three or four of those a day without thinking about it. Count those in and the sum changes.

What I never do is buy it onboard on day one because everyone else is. That is the most expensive moment to decide.

MY VERDICT

On Carnival's published numbers — $69.95 a day plus 20%, against a $13 drink with its own 18% gratuity — **the break-even is about five and a half drinks a day, every day.** Run your own figures above, but that is the shape of it, and it is more than most people over fifty actually drink on a port-heavy itinerary.

Buy it if you want the mental holiday of not signing for anything. That is a real thing and worth money. Just do not tell yourself it is saving you money unless the calculator says so.

Drink package questions

How much is a drink package on a cruise?

It depends on the line and two do not publish a price at all. Carnival's CHEERS! is $69.95 per person per day pre-purchased or $74.95 onboard, plus 20%. Princess publishes Plus at $64.99 and Classic Soda at $14.99, plus a service charge. Royal Caribbean and Celebrity publish no public per-day price.

Is a cruise drink package worth it?

It depends how many drinks a day you would otherwise buy. Take the published price, add the service charge of 18 to 20 percent, and divide by the cost of a drink including its own gratuity. On Carnival's published $69.95 a day plus 20%, against a $13 drink, the break-even is about five and a half drinks a day, every day, including port days when you may be ashore.

Does everyone in the cabin have to buy the drink package?

On most lines, yes. Royal Caribbean requires all guests of legal drinking age in the same stateroom to buy it. Celebrity has the same rule with exceptions for pregnancy and medical restrictions. Carnival requires each adult in the stateroom to purchase. Princess's wording is softer and depends on booking method.

Does the drink package work on the private island?

Royal Caribbean's works at Perfect Day at CocoCay and Labadee, Princess's at Princess Cays, and Norwegian's at Great Stirrup Cay but not Harvest Caye. Carnival's CHEERS! is published as not offered at Celebration Key, Half Moon Cay or Princess Cays.

Is there a limit on drinks with a cruise package?

Carnival limits CHEERS! to 15 alcoholic drinks per 24-hour period. Princess publishes the same 15 on its package disclaimers, though its Plus and Premier terms say Premier has no daily limit. Royal Caribbean, Celebrity and Norwegian publish no daily cap but restrict how many drinks you can order at once.

Where these facts come from

- Royal Caribbean, beverage package gratuities policy (https://www.royalcaribbean.com/faq/questions/beverage-package-gratuities-policy)
- Royal Caribbean, what is the Deluxe Beverage Package (https://www.royalcaribbean.com/faq/questions/what-is-the-deluxe-beverage-package)
- Royal Caribbean, Deluxe Beverage Package terms (PDF) (https://www.royalcaribbean.com/content/dam/royal/resources/pdf/beverage-packages/deluxe-beverage-packages-cruises.pdf)
- Celebrity Cruises, beverage packages FAQ (https://www.celebritycruises.com/faqs/beverage-packages)
- Celebrity Cruises, All Included FAQ (https://www.celebritycruises.com/faqs/all-included)
- Princess Cruises, beverages (https://www.princess.com/cruise-dining/beverages)
- Princess Cruises, Plus and Premier terms and conditions (https://www.princess.com/cruise-deals-promotions/plus-premier-cruise-packages/terms-and-conditions)
- Princess Cruises, Classic Soda Package terms (https://www.princess.com/cruise-dining/beverages/classic-soda-package-terms-and-conditions)
- Carnival, CHEERS! package terms (https://www.carnival.com/drink-packages/cheers-package/)
- Carnival, CHEERS! onboard (https://www.carnival.com/onboard/cheers)
- Norwegian Cruise Line, beverage packages (https://www.ncl.com/uk/en/onboard-packages/beverage-packages)
- Norwegian Cruise Line, Premium Plus beverage package terms (https://www.ncl.com/in/en/terms/premium-plus-beverage-package-full)

Ports change their rules and their prices. Check the official pages above before you sail.

About the "I" on this page. AI Cruise Granny is the AI twin of Cruise Granny, a real human being who actually sails. Every experience written here in the first person is hers. The AI twin is what writes it up, checks the facts against official sources and keeps it current. We tell you that openly on every page, because you should know who is talking to you. More about how this works.
