



Mardi Gras Major Ship Guide

Carnival Cruise Line | Cabins, deck-plan strategy, dining, entertainment, pools, kids, packages, and hidden gems



Mardi Gras

Carnival Cruise Line

KalviTravel Major Ship Guide

Cabins | Dining | Entertainment | Pools | Kids | Packages | Hidden Gems

Illustrative cruise photograph and custom KalviTravel cover artwork. Ship-specific facts and venue information are based on official cruise-line sources.

Carnival's first Excel Class ship, built around six themed zones, BOLT, broad dining variety, family activities, and a strong mix of live music and comedy. This guide contains approximately 2,972 words of practical planning information.

Information reviewed August 1, 2026. Menus, entertainment, deck assignments, package rules, pricing, and venue hours can change. Confirm details for the specific sailing.

Inside this guide

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Ship Overview

Carnival's first Excel Class ship, built around six themed zones, BOLT, broad dining variety, family activities, and a strong mix of live music and comedy.

Mardi Gras is best matched to families, groups, carnival fans, casual food lovers, and travelers who want a large ship with a festive personality. The ship should be treated as a collection of neighborhoods rather than a single hotel tower. A good plan identifies the three or four spaces your party will use most and chooses a cabin, dining strategy, and daily schedule around those priorities.

At a glance, Six-zone Excel Class ship and the first cruise ship to debut BOLT, an elevated roller coaster-style attraction. Numbers alone do not determine whether the ship feels crowded. Crowd flow depends on show times, port days, weather, elevator demand, dining reservations, and whether guests spread across the available venues.

Ship information changes after refurbishments, operational adjustments, and new package rules. This guide is a planning tool. The cruise line's app, final documents, official deck plan, and onboard announcements remain the source of truth for the actual sailing.

How to Read the Deck Plan

Mardi Gras: Custom Deck-Plan Strategy Map

Planning diagram - not a substitute for the cruise line's official numbered deck plan.

Decks 6-8: Grand Central and evening venues

Atrium productions, casino, dining, shopping, comedy, and nightlife.

French Quarter

Emeril's Bistro 1396, Brass Magnolia, Fortune Teller, and New Orleans-inspired atmosphere.

Summer Landing

Pig & Anchor, casual seating, and a relaxed indoor/outdoor social area.

Decks 16-19: Lido and Ultimate Playground

Pools, WaterWorks, sports, ropes course, mini golf, and BOLT.

Special cabin areas

Havana, Family Harbor, Cloud 9, and Excel suites serve different priorities.

Cabin rule: compare the deck above, the deck below, and the nearest elevator/stair lobby before choosing a room.

Custom KalviTravel deck-plan strategy map. Use the cruise line's official numbered plan to confirm the exact cabin and venues.

Before choosing a room, study the deck above, the deck below, and the nearest stair or elevator lobby. A cabin can look central on a single deck but sit beneath a pool, galley, buffet, theater, nightclub, sports court, or housekeeping work area. Public venues are convenient when you plan to use them and frustrating when their sound conflicts with your sleep schedule.

Think vertically as well as horizontally. On a very large ship, moving four decks by stairs can be faster than waiting for an elevator, while traveling from far forward to far aft can take several minutes. Families often benefit from being near the children's district or casual dining. Adults who prefer quiet evenings may choose a cabin farther from those same areas.

The custom diagram in this guide organizes the ship into planning zones. It is intentionally simplified and does not reproduce the cruise line's copyrighted deck plan. Use the official numbered plan to confirm cabin doors, lifeboats, obstructions, connecting rooms, accessible layouts, and venue boundaries.

Deck-by-Deck Planning Zones

- Decks 6-8: Grand Central and evening venues** - Atrium productions, casino, dining, shopping, comedy, and nightlife. This zone is convenient for guests who use it frequently, but cabins immediately beside or below it deserve a noise review.
- French Quarter** - Emeril's Bistro 1396, Brass Magnolia, Fortune Teller, and New Orleans-inspired atmosphere. Visit at different times of day because the atmosphere can change from quiet morning circulation to peak evening activity.
- Summer Landing** - Pig & Anchor, casual seating, and a relaxed indoor/outdoor social area. Families should consider stroller, elevator, restroom, and meal access rather than choosing only by distance on the printed plan.
- Decks 16-19: Lido and Ultimate Playground** - Pools, WaterWorks, sports, ropes course, mini golf, and BOLT. Motion-sensitive guests generally feel less movement lower and nearer the center of the ship, although sea conditions vary.
- Special cabin areas** - Havana, Family Harbor, Cloud 9, and Excel suites serve different priorities. A premium area is valuable only when the traveler will use its private dining, lounge, pool, or service benefits.

Cabin Categories and What They Mean

Cabin names can sound similar while layouts, views, included benefits, bed arrangements, and balcony construction differ. Never assume that every room in one category is identical. Compare the actual cabin number and occupancy diagram, especially for third and fourth guests.

Interior, ocean-view, balcony, and suite rooms. - Interior, ocean-view, balcony, and suite rooms. This category is most valuable when its defining feature matches how the traveler actually spends time in the room.

Havana rooms for eligible guests seeking neighborhood access. - Havana rooms for eligible guests seeking neighborhood access. Compare floor space, storage, bathroom design, window or balcony type, and included benefits instead of judging only by the category name.

Family Harbor rooms near a family lounge. - Family Harbor rooms near a family lounge. Families should confirm real beds versus pull-down or sofa beds, privacy curtains, and whether a stroller can be stored without blocking the walkway.

Cloud 9 Spa rooms with selected spa benefits. - Cloud 9 Spa rooms with selected spa benefits. Couples may prefer a smaller well-located room over a larger room that creates long walks or unwanted noise.

Excel suites with extra space and Loft 19 access benefits. - Excel suites with extra space and Loft 19 access benefits. This category is most valuable when its defining feature matches how the traveler actually spends time in the room.

Connecting and multi-guest rooms. - Connecting and multi-guest rooms. Compare floor space, storage, bathroom design, window or balcony type, and included benefits instead of judging only by the category name.

Accessible staterooms should be reserved for guests who need their features. Travelers with mobility equipment should confirm doorway width, turning space, shower design, charging access, emergency procedures, and the route to muster and dining venues with the cruise line or travel advisor.

Best Cabins to Book

Family Harbor for families who value the lounge and snacks. - Family Harbor for families who value the lounge and snacks. This is a broadly useful choice, but the exact deck and neighboring rooms still matter.

Cloud 9 Spa for adults who plan to use the spa benefits. - Cloud 9 Spa for adults who plan to use the spa benefits. The premium is worthwhile only when the location or benefits solve a real need for the traveler.

Havana for eligible guests who prefer a more defined neighborhood. - Havana for eligible guests who prefer a more defined neighborhood. Review walking distance, motion, and the schedule of nearby venues before making the final selection.

Midship balcony on a quiet deck for first-time Excel Class guests. - Midship balcony on a quiet deck for first-time Excel Class guests. Ask whether the room's view, balcony construction, and bed arrangement match the marketing description.

Excel suite for celebrations and guests who will use Loft 19. - Excel suite for celebrations and guests who will use Loft 19. This is a broadly useful choice, but the exact deck and neighboring rooms still matter.

Cabins to Review Carefully or Avoid

There is no universally bad cabin. A room that bothers one traveler may be ideal for another because it is inexpensive or close to a favorite venue. The following locations deserve extra review rather than an automatic rejection.

Rooms directly under Lido or Ultimate Playground. - Rooms directly under Lido or Ultimate Playground. Sound is most noticeable during setup, cleaning, late-night entertainment, or early-morning service rather than during the main operating hours.

Rooms over casino, Grand Central, comedy, or late-night music. - Rooms over casino, Grand Central, comedy, or late-night music. A small price difference may justify moving one or two decks when sleep or motion comfort is important.

Havana rooms when age restrictions or location do not fit the group. - Havana rooms when age restrictions or location do not fit the group. Check passenger videos and the official plan, but remember that individual sensitivity and sailing conditions vary.

Family Harbor rooms for travelers seeking an adults-oriented atmosphere. - Family Harbor rooms for travelers seeking an adults-oriented atmosphere. When a guarantee rate allows the cruise line to assign the room, the lower price comes with less control over these factors.

Very forward/high rooms for motion-sensitive guests. - Very forward/high rooms for motion-sensitive guests. Sound is most noticeable during setup, cleaning, late-night entertainment, or early-morning service rather than during the main operating hours.

Other warning signs include a blank white area on the deck plan, a crew door, a large service pantry, a narrow corridor end, or an unusual cabin shape. Blank space is not automatically a problem, but it is worth identifying before final payment.

Dining Guide

Dining is easier when the group distinguishes complimentary venues from specialty restaurants, snacks, bars, and package-included items. Reserve the highest-priority specialty meal early, then leave enough flexibility for port days, shows, and changing appetites. A large ship often has excellent included food outside the main buffet.

Emeril's Bistro 1396 - Emeril's Bistro 1396 Check whether the venue is complimentary, à la carte, fixed-price, or covered by a dining package, and confirm reservations in the app.

Cucina del Capitano - Cucina del Capitano This venue can be less crowded at off-peak times, especially on embarkation day or while a headline show is running.

Big Chicken - Big Chicken Menus and opening hours can vary by sailing, so use this as a planning target rather than a promise of a specific dish.

Rudi's Seagrill - Rudi's Seagrill Travelers with allergies should communicate with the cruise line before sailing and again with the dining team onboard.

Bonsai Sushi and Teppanyaki - Bonsai Sushi and Teppanyaki Check whether the venue is complimentary, à la carte, fixed-price, or covered by a dining package, and confirm reservations in the app.

Guy's Pig & Anchor Smokehouse | Brewhouse - Guy's Pig & Anchor Smokehouse | Brewhouse This venue can be less crowded at off-peak times, especially on embarkation day or while a headline show is running.

Guy's Burger Joint and Street Eats - Guy's Burger Joint and Street Eats Menus and opening hours can vary by sailing, so use this as a planning target rather than a promise of a specific dish.

Fahrenheit 555 and main dining - Fahrenheit 555 and main dining Travelers with allergies should communicate with the cruise line before sailing and again with the dining team onboard.

A practical dining plan uses one or two special meals and treats the rest of the ship as part of the discovery. Breakfast near the cabin, lunch near the day's activities, and dinner near the evening show reduce backtracking. Families should not schedule a long specialty meal on the same evening as the children's favorite club event unless everyone agrees.

Entertainment and Nightlife

BOLT - BOLT Reserve when the app allows it and arrive early enough to choose appropriate seating.

Family Feud Live - Family Feud Live Show schedules can change by sailing, cast, maintenance, or sea conditions.

Grand Central stage productions - Grand Central stage productions This experience may create hallway and elevator demand before and after the event, which matters when planning dinner.

Punchliner Comedy Club - Punchliner Comedy Club Guests who prefer a quieter evening can use the same time to enjoy pools, promenades, or restaurants with smaller crowds.

Brass Magnolia and Fortune Teller nightlife - Brass Magnolia and Fortune Teller nightlife Reserve when the app allows it and arrive early enough to choose appropriate seating.

WaterWorks, ropes course, sports, and casino - WaterWorks, ropes course, sports, and casino Show schedules can change by sailing, cast, maintenance, or sea conditions.

Do not assume the headline production is the only worthwhile entertainment. Live musicians, comedy, trivia, demonstrations, game shows, and small lounges often become the most memorable parts of the cruise. Read the daily app each morning and save favorites rather than attempting to attend everything.

Pools, Recreation, Spa, and Amenities



Illustrative pool and resort photography used to support the amenities discussion.

Lido pools - Lido pools Arrive early on sea days, but do not leave belongings on loungers for long periods when the venue has chair-use rules.

Serenity - Serenity Weather, wind, maintenance, and crowd levels can affect operation.

WaterWorks - WaterWorks Families should confirm height, weight, age, swim, footwear, and waiver requirements before promising an activity to a child.

Ultimate Playground - Ultimate Playground A port morning or dinner hour can be the best time to enjoy this space with fewer people.

Cloud 9 Spa and fitness - Cloud 9 Spa and fitness Arrive early on sea days, but do not leave belongings on loungers for long periods when the venue has chair-use rules.

Loft 19 access for eligible guests - Loft 19 access for eligible guests Weather, wind, maintenance, and crowd levels can affect operation.

The spa, thermal area, fitness classes, private cabanas, and premium retreats can add cost quickly. Compare day passes, full-cruise passes, port-day specials, and included suite benefits. A premium amenity has the greatest value when it is used repeatedly rather than purchased for one brief visit.

Kids Clubs and Family Planning



Illustrative family travel photography. Youth program ages, hours, and registration rules are controlled by the cruise line.

Camp Ocean, Circle C, and Club O2 organize activities by age. The ship's size means families should choose a meeting point and discuss whether children may sign themselves out. Family Harbor is valuable only when the household will use the lounge and nearby location.

Register children as soon as the program opens, learn the sign-in and sign-out rules, and save the club's contact or pickup procedure. Age groups are normally based on the child's age at sailing and may not allow siblings to move into another group. Capacity, hours, late-night charges, and nursery reservations vary.

Create a family meeting point that is not an elevator lobby. Discuss whether older children may move independently, how they will communicate, and what time everyone must reconnect. Even on a family ship, schedule quiet time and sleep; an exhausted child rarely enjoys the next day's excursion.

Internet Packages

Carnival tiered Wi-Fi plans range from social access to streaming-capable service. Download essential documents and entertainment before sailing because no ship connection is guaranteed to perform like home broadband.

Choose the number of devices, not simply the number of people. A one-device plan may allow switching between devices, but only one can be connected at a time. Families who need simultaneous school, work, streaming, or messaging may require a multi-device option.

Download boarding documents, airline information, books, movies, music, maps, and authentication codes before leaving home. Enable airplane mode and connect to ship Wi-Fi to avoid roaming charges. Video calls and cloud backups should be treated as best-effort services rather than guaranteed office connectivity.

Drink Packages

CHEERS! combines many beverages under one package but includes purchase rules, price, gratuity, and a daily alcoholic-drink limit. Calculate the full cruise cost for every required adult rather than deciding from a single drink price.

Calculate the total for every required purchaser, including service charges, taxes where applicable, and the full number of cruise days. Then compare that cost with realistic purchases: specialty coffee, bottled water, soda, fresh juice, beer, wine, cocktails, and private-destination use.

Packages are convenient, but convenience is not the same as savings. Port-intensive itineraries, included lounge benefits, light drinking, medical restrictions, or a preference for water may make pay-as-you-go better. Package terms can change after

booking, so save the current rules and recheck before final payment.

Hidden Gems and Insider Tips

Brass Magnolia live music - Brass Magnolia live music Visit when a major show, dinner seating, or port departure pulls crowds elsewhere.

Fortune Teller atmosphere - Fortune Teller atmosphere This space rewards guests who explore without following the busiest passenger flow.

Summer Landing pool and seating - Summer Landing pool and seating Ask crew members about the current schedule because the best time can vary by sailing.

Emeril's for a different breakfast or lunch rhythm - Emeril's for a different breakfast or lunch rhythm Treat the experience as a pause in the day rather than another item to rush through.

Ship-history details around Grand Central - Ship-history details around Grand Central Visit when a major show, dinner seating, or port departure pulls crowds elsewhere.

Early-morning outdoor walk before BOLT and pool crowds build - Early-morning outdoor walk before BOLT and pool crowds build This space rewards guests who explore without following the busiest passenger flow.

Embarkation and Sea-Day Strategy

Complete online check-in, review terminal parking or transfers, attach luggage tags as directed, and carry identification, medications, valuables, chargers, swimwear, and a change of clothes in the carry-on. Checked luggage may not reach the room until later in the day.

On embarkation day, avoid joining the first buffet line automatically. Use the ship map to find an alternate included venue, complete the muster requirement, confirm dining and show reservations, and walk the route from the cabin to the main evening venues before elevators become busy.

On the first sea day, choose one major activity before lunch and one after. The ship has more entertainment than any guest can complete. Building the day around priorities reduces line fatigue and makes room for unplanned discoveries.

Use stairs for a few decks when physically appropriate, travel before show release times, and agree on a group meeting point. Elevator frustration often comes from moving at the same moment as thousands of other guests.

Who Should Choose This Ship - and Who May Prefer Another

Choose Mardi Gras when the ship itself is a major part of the vacation and the group will use its signature dining, entertainment, recreation, or family facilities. It is especially well matched to families, groups, carnival fans, casual food lovers, and travelers who want a large ship with a festive personality.

A smaller or more traditional ship may be better for travelers who dislike long walks, require simple navigation, prefer a quiet pool deck, or want the itinerary to matter more than onboard attractions. A premium line may be a better fit when included dining, beverages, and service are more important than water slides or large-scale entertainment.

Price should be compared as a complete vacation. Include cabin location, gratuities, beverage and internet choices, specialty dining, parking, flights, hotels, excursions, and travel protection. A slightly higher cruise fare can be the better value when it includes the room location or benefits the traveler actually wants.

Why Book With KalviTravel

KalviTravel helps clients compare the ship, itinerary, cabin, and total cost instead of choosing from a price list alone. On Mardi Gras, that means reviewing the exact deck plan, neighboring public spaces, balcony or view type, family layout, package rules, and the distance to the venues your party will use most.

Scott provides one personal point of contact for questions before the cruise, helps explain supplier information in plain language, and keeps important payment and preparation deadlines organized. The goal is honest advice and a vacation that fits the traveler - not simply the easiest cabin to sell.

Contact Scott Kalvinek at (508) 769-3808 or KalviTravel@outlook.com, or visit KalviTravel.com. Let's Discover the World... Together.

Official Planning Sources

Use these official pages to recheck current deck plans, venue lists, package rules, and operational updates for the actual sailing.

Mardi Gras official page

<https://www.carnival.com/cruise-ships/mardi-gras>

Carnival CHEERS program

<https://www.carnival.com/drink-packages/cheers-package/cheers-SUM>

Carnival internet plans

<https://www.carnival.com/help?topicid=1142>

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