



Guidelines for Cruising in Western Australia

Background

Small cruise ships with a maximum of 350 persons (inclusive of passengers and crew) are permitted to enter, leave and travel within Western Australia (WA). Pending health advice, larger cruise ships will be permitted from 1 October 2022.

Purpose

To outline the requirements for cruise ships to commence cruising. These guidelines are closely aligned, but not identical, with the Eastern Seaboard Cruise Protocols. Requirements in these guidelines apply to all cruise vessels in WA with at least 50 persons onboard (including passengers and crew), where the voyage includes at least one overnight stay. They pertain to intrastate, interstate or international voyages.

Each vessel is required to have a COVID Management Plan for each planned itinerary, which outlines how the vessel will comply with the requirements set out below including specific plans for each shore excursion. Plans do not require approval from WA Health, but must be available if requested. For further advice or information contact SHICC.PHAB@health.wa.gov.au.

Requirements

1. Pre-embarkation traveller communication

- All passengers must sign a statement provided by the cruise line at the time of booking acknowledging the health, travel and financial risks associated with cruising. The statement should include information regarding obligations on passengers to comply with the Australian and WA Government's entry requirements.
- Health information should include how a COVID-19 outbreak will be managed (including how a case and close contact will be managed i.e. requirement to isolate for seven days, or longer), the impact of COVID-19 diagnosis while onboard, approach to communication of COVID-19 positive cases detected onboard, health care available onboard and how to access it, how retrieval will be managed if health needs cannot be supported onboard and implications for non-citizens.
- Travel and financial information should include the cost of healthcare onboard, the cost of medical retrieval (if required), the potential for cancellation of activities due to COVID-19 outbreaks, how COVID-19 outbreaks will be communicated to passengers, the potential impact for onward travel and accommodation post-cruise and post-disembarkation arrangements.
- Cruise lines should provide up to date and tailored information (specific to the cruise type and duration) to their passengers in the lead up to the cruise, noting that passengers are likely to book the cruise some time in advance of boarding.
- An individual arriving as an international passenger must ensure they meet Australia's international border entry requirements, including visa requirements. Arrivals into WA must meet any requirements in place for this state at the time which may differ from other jurisdictions.

2. Vaccination

- All crew must be fully vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine (i.e. have completed a primary course of a Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) approved or recognised vaccine) and a booster vaccination (if eligible). Medical exemptions will not apply to crew.
- Cruise lines will maintain a threshold of a minimum 95% of all passengers (5 years and older) on any cruise who are fully vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine (i.e. have completed a primary course of a

TGA approved or recognised vaccine). This requirement will need to be clearly communicated to customers prior to booking.

- The 5% unvaccinated threshold must include all children under five years old and people with a medical exemption (due to a medical contraindication) to the vaccination.
- All passengers should be strongly encouraged to have a COVID-19 booster vaccination (if eligible) and all passengers and crew should be strongly encouraged to have the influenza vaccination.
- Cruise lines will be responsible for verifying the vaccination status of passengers during booking and at time of boarding.

3. Health screening and temperature checks

- Passengers and crew must complete a health screen prior to boarding, including verification that individuals do not have symptoms of COVID-19 or other respiratory illness, and they have not knowingly been in close contact with a case during the past seven days.
- Passengers or crew who are symptomatic on day of embarkation must be referred for further medical assessment prior to boarding. Symptomatic passengers and crew must have a negative rapid-PCR on the day of embarkation. Those who do not return a negative test will be denied boarding.
- While onboard, routine symptom and temperature checks of passengers and crew is not required.

4. Testing protocols

- All asymptomatic passengers and crew must have a negative PCR within 72 hours of boarding or a negative Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) within 24 hours of boarding. Pre-embarkation PCR testing, if performed, must be done at NATA-accredited private laboratories and not at public COVID clinics. RAT kits must be TGA-approved.
- Passengers or crew who become symptomatic while onboard should be tested for COVID-19 by RAT or PCR.
- There will be no requirement for routine asymptomatic testing of passengers onboard cruise ships, unless recommended by the public health authorities in WA (such as in response to an outbreak).
- Passengers will only be tested prior to a shore excursion in the following circumstances:
 - where the passenger is symptomatic (noting that people with COVID-19 symptoms should isolate until asymptomatic),
 - where there have been one or more cases of COVID-19 onboard, and/or
 - where passengers are visiting remote or vulnerable communities.
- Passengers will only be tested prior to final disembarkation in the following circumstance:
 - where the passenger is symptomatic.

5. Shore excursions

- COVID management plans must include specific plans for each shore excursion. Plans should outline risk mitigation measures that will be put in place during a shore excursion, which may include additional testing.
- COVID safe plans for shore excursions must consider the specific needs of local communities including rural, remote and Aboriginal communities, and include the following considerations:
 - Physical distancing, hand hygiene and mask use should be practised on all shore excursions.
 - Face masks must be worn in keeping with any current WA face covering Directions as a minimum requirement.
 - Entry into remote Aboriginal communities must comply with any restrictions that the community has in place.
- Asymptomatic testing is not routinely required prior to shore excursions but may be considered prior to a shore excursion as outlined in the section Testing protocols.

6. Reporting COVID-19 cases

- It is strongly recommended that industry have robust systems in place to capture positive COVID-19 results of passengers and crew while onboard the vessel.

- If a case is diagnosed onboard the vessel by PCR or RAT, this should be notified to WA Health by emailing ncovcontact@health.wa.gov.au.
- In addition, passengers and crew must register any positive RAT with [WA Health online](#).
- Cruise lines will notify passengers of COVID-19 cases onboard where there is a potential risk of ongoing transmission.
- Cruise lines will report COVID-19 cases to port authorities 12-24 hours prior to arrival, or as required by the specific port and jurisdiction. Cruise lines will work with relevant ports to understand their individual requirements. This applies to international cruises as well as domestic cruises.

7. Onboard public health and social measures

Face mask use and hygiene recommendations while in WA:

- Passengers and crew should use face masks in a way that is consistent with the WA face covering Directions in place at the time of the cruise, as a minimum.
- Irrespective of current mandates in place at the time, face masks are recommended to be used by passengers and crew:
 - On embarkation, disembarkation, and at any time on board when physical distancing cannot be practised.
 - While indoors and when in a vehicle.
- Passengers must be provided with free access to face masks and alcohol-based hand rub.

Physical distancing and capacity limits:

- The use of outdoor spaces must be maximised where possible.
- Crew and guests should maintain a physical distance of at least 1.5m between each other, where possible.
- Capacity and density limits should be applied consistent with any Public Health and Social Measure Direction restrictions in place in WA at the time of the cruise, as a minimum requirement. It will be at the discretion of the cruise line to determine if further restrictions are needed.

Cleaning and disinfection:

- Cruise vessels must follow enhanced cleaning practices. See resources section for further guidance.
- Disinfectants for use against COVID-19 are listed by the TGA. Cruise lines are advised to check that a disinfectant is suitable for use against COVID-19 and for use on vessel surfaces, as it may degrade the finish.

Other:

- Cruise lines should make efforts to improve ventilation systems (e.g. upgrade air filters) wherever possible.

8. On-board healthcare

- Passengers and crew will be provided with free medical assessments for respiratory symptoms, including free access to COVID-19 tests (PCR and/or RAT).
- Medical staff will receive training in how to manage COVID-19, including administration of anti-viral medication onboard (pending available supply).
- Cruise lines will ensure access to medical care for COVID-19.

9. Escalation of health issues

- Cruise lines will arrange medical care for COVID-19 cases, including evacuation to an appropriate healthcare facility where required.
- Cruise lines will refer and transfer COVID-19 cases to hospital where they cannot be safely managed onboard and if medically required, in line with processes required by local health authorities.
- Cruise lines will work with local authorities to develop a notification and referral process for each port. This will outline the containment arrangements for transferring cases to hospital.

10. Close contacts

- Close contacts include anyone, who:
 - has shared a cabin on a cruise vessel with a diagnosed person; or
 - has had contact with a diagnosed person during their infectious period of a total period of greater than four hours in any 24-hour period, where neither person was wearing a face covering.
- People who have recovered from COVID-19 will not be considered a close contact and are not required to be tested for COVID-19 or quarantine within four (4) weeks of completing their required isolation.
- Contact tracing will be conducted by the cruise operator's medical team, with support from WA Health Public Health Operations (ncovcontact@health.wa.gov.au) where required.

11. Isolation and quarantine requirements

- The following isolation and quarantine requirements will apply:
 - **Cases** must isolate for seven (7) complete days from the date they took the positive test. Cases can be released from isolation 7 days after their first positive test if they meet the following criteria:
 - Substantial resolution of their acute respiratory symptoms
 - No fever for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medicationsCases who do not meet the above criteria after 7 days should remain isolated until these criteria are met.
 - A negative COVID-19 test is not required to leave isolation.
 - **Close contacts** must quarantine for seven (7) complete days from the date of the case's positive test if the close contact shares a cabin with the case, or from the date of the last close contact with the case. Close contacts must be tested by PCR or RAT on Day 1 and again on Day 7.
- Close contacts who share a cabin with a case and are unable to isolate separately to the case do not need to start their quarantine period again if another person within the cabin becomes a case (e.g. if a family is isolating in their cabin together) within the 7-day quarantine period.
- Should there be any changes to the WA requirements for close contacts, the requirements for cruise passengers will be re-assessed by WA Health to determine if changes should also apply to cruises.
- Isolation and quarantine requirements apply equally to passengers and crew and apply irrespective of vaccination status.
- Cruise lines must provide isolation accommodation for passengers and crew who are identified as a case or close contact. This may be in their own cabin (preferably with access to own bathroom), isolation-specific accommodation onboard or in appropriate onshore accommodation.

12. Disembarkation – COVID-19 positive cases and close contacts

- Cruise lines must agree (by completing and submitting the Cruise Vessel Declaration) that they will be responsible for providing (as needed) transportation and accommodation of passengers and crew who disembark a vessel as a COVID-19 case or close contact and are required to isolate, but are unable to travel and/or source suitable accommodation.
- Cases and close contacts may travel to a place of isolation or quarantine, within any limitation or restrictions that apply in WA at the time, and if they are well enough to travel.
- If cases or close contacts cannot travel, they must be transported to locations where suitable isolation accommodation and health services that can support COVID-19 cases are available.
- The cruise operator must agree to take responsibility for providing this transport and accommodation, as needed, if a close contact or case is unable to travel to their own accommodation.
- Disembarkation of cases and/or close contacts from a vessel should be performed in accordance with guidance from WA Health (see Resources section).
- Transport to appropriate isolation accommodation must be arranged in keeping with guidance from WA Health (see Resources section).

13. Disembarkation – general

- Passengers will adhere to mask wearing when disembarking or in the terminal.
- Disembarkation of passengers should be staggered to maintain physical distancing.

- Cruise lines will maintain passenger contact information for up to four weeks following a cruise and information must be provided to WA Health if requested.
- Passengers will only be tested prior to final disembarkation in the following circumstances:
 - Where the passenger is symptomatic.

14. Onboard traveller communication

- Cruise lines will maintain regular communication to passengers about COVID-safe practices. This will be implemented differently by each cruise line, however, may include regular voice announcements, videos, posters, and daily Captain's announcements.
- Onboard traveller communication must include regular reminders of the importance of mask wearing where physical distancing is not possible, and reminders on accessing free healthcare onboard and to isolate and get tested when symptomatic.

Resources

- Remote Aboriginal communities travel: [COVID-19: Remote Aboriginal communities travel](#)
- Cleaning and disinfection guidance: [Infection prevention and control advice on cleaning and disinfection in the workplace](#)
- TGA listed disinfectants: [Disinfectants for use against COVID-19](#)
- COVID-19 isolation guidance: [COVID-19 isolation \(HealthyWA\)](#)
- Guidance for disembarkation of cases and/or close contacts from a vessel: [Infection prevention and control guidance for disembarking or embarking vessels with COVID-19 onboard](#)
- Guidance for transporting COVID-19 cases: [Infection prevention and control information for public & private transport drivers/operators – transporting COVID-19 cases](#)
- WA RAT register: [RAT register \(HealthyWA\)](#)
- Cruise Vessels Directions (No 3): [Cruise Vessels Directions \(No 3\) \(www.wa.gov.au\)](#) (includes Cruise Vessel Declaration)

Last updated 15 July 2022

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