

Parlay Your Expertise Into a Free Cruise

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Want to go on a free luxury-ship cruise? If you have some area of expertise, you could follow the course take by John Hall, 72, of [Shreveport, La.](#), who is a retired Louisiana State University professor of anthropology and geology. He provides passengers with lectures on the characteristics of the destination. In return, he gets a vacation at no cost.

Hall and one guest, usually his wife, Carol Ann, who operated the PowerPoint presentation, receive a free cabin, meals and most shipboard amenities. Since 2002, Hall figures that he's taken one or two cruises a year, including trips to [the Caribbean](#), the Panama Canal and [Alaska](#). During the [Alaska](#) cruise, he spoke about the Klondike gold rush and glaciers "I talk once a day when the ship's at sea," he says.

Unlike Hall, who specializes in destination talks, Cynthia Barnett provides self-help advice. Barnett became a cruise regular soon after she retired in 2003 at age 60 as a public-school teacher in [Norwalk, Conn.](#) During a typical one-week cruise, Barnett gives four talks, each a variation of what she calls "refire, don't retire." Barnett describes these presentations as "a great way to get a free vacation. On some cruises, I've taken family members as my guests."

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Shipboard talks and activities are part of the at-sea ambiance that makes each hour of every day akin to summer camp. Retirees like Hall and Barnett keep passengers busy with lectures to attend, games to play and new skills to learn. If you are proficient at bridge, crafts, computers, crossword puzzles or zoology, there could be a place for you on board.

Jeff Davidson, a management consultant who lives in Chapel Hill, N.C., conducts two to seven lecturers on a typical one-to two-week cruise. Davidson says that applicants must convince the cruise ships of their knowledge and presentation skills. He advises hopefuls to assemble a sales kit consisting of a CD or DVD, letters of recommendation on speaking skills and a résumé that shows they have expertise that a cruise ship would need.