

wet & wild water adventures

Dive into our special water play section, drenched with great summer stories and ideas to keep you and your family cool in the Katy, Texas summer heat.



Enjoy It!

Your Own Tropical
Poolside Retreat



Build It!

Custom Pool Builders for Katy



Dive In!

Swim Lessons in Katy



See It!

Summer Swim Pictorial



Play In It!

Wet 'N Wild Texas Water Play



Cruise It!

Caribbean Cruises from Galveston

Your Own Tropical Poolside Retreat

SPLASH INTO
SUMMER FUN

Special Details and Careful Planning
Can Create a Pool to Fit Anyone's Taste

Amid the inevitable hot sunny days of summer, fun in the sun is on everyone's minds. Activities such as camping, hiking, recreational parks and even simple activities such as walking and bike-riding are a great method of enjoying the brightest, most uplifting time of the year. Out of so many options to choose from, almost everyone would agree that the most pleasurable way to enjoy this cheerful season is by the pool, even more so when the pool is in your own backyard oasis.

A Tropical Retreat Requires Planning

Dreaming up your own tropical retreat is great fun, but actually getting started is a more serious process, especially when it comes to choosing the pool builder. Considering all planning procedures, both the buyer and the builder will attest that this is most important. Homeowner Sean Easley spent more time researching pool companies than he did in selecting his home. He wanted to feel like he was on vacation the minute he stepped out the back door. At the first meeting, the pool company utilized software on their laptop to provide a 3-D visualization.



"I was able to look at a bird's eye view, or literally from underneath the water as if you were in the pool," Easley says. His extensive research paid off and six weeks later, despite inclement weather, the family had a stunning backyard pool custom made to suit their tastes.

Adam Traugott of Sunset Pools advises homeowners to select a pool builder who is "not only an APSP (Association of Pool and Spa Professionals) member, but also an APSP Certified Builder." In order to attain this distinctive credential, the builder must prove outstanding knowledge of the industry and submit other types of information, such as BBB and financial status, after which the certification exam must be passed. Traugott also recommends consulting friends and neighbors who have existing pools, and "to

look through design portfolios and web sites to determine the design capabilities of a company to ensure that you are working with a custom builder."

Build a Pool That Complements Your Family

After the pool builder has been selected, the next step is to determine the kind of pool that will fit



In Katy's tropical climate, many pool owners enjoy their pools year 'round.

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The Holt Family pool

every last detail and consider the size and shape of the yard, the family's lifestyle, and how it will all piece together. Jack Hopkins of Apes Pools says once he gets a good idea of the pool buyer's expectations, he ensures that they are fully informed about what the outcome will be. "Often times they might think they want something, but once they are educated on the pros and cons they may rethink and consider all different kinds of design ideas," Hopkins says.

Don't Overlook the Extras

At this stage, Traugott of Sunset Pools says an experienced designer will offer suggestions to complement the buyer's preferences, paying close attention to proportion, balance of focal points, landscaping, future plans, and safety issues." For Easley this pro-

your lifestyle. The Holt family, whose pool was completed recently, had explicit design ideas for their pool and landscaping. Their lavish backyard paradise contains carefully planned details, from beautiful terracing levels, to a spiral staircase that connects the extended balcony and ground level deck. In addition, a flagstone staircase leads to a lakeside dock, outdoor gas torches surround the perimeter of the pool, a sitting area encircles an outdoor gas fireplace, and a large sand beach surrounds an additional campfire style fireplace. Kimberly Holt, with an energetic excitement adds, "We have a summer kitchen designed by my husband, a Culinary Institute of America graduate, with all of the amenities of a commercial kitchen!"

In order to fulfill such distinct desires as the Holt family, pool builders and landscaping professionals should closely supervise



Kim Sheppard with daughter Briley



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cess was especially essential. With the implementation of their 13-ton rock waterfall, a system of holes and drainage was incorporated so that plants could be placed around the waterfall. The palm trees and birds of paradise surrounding the waterfall gave it a natural look and completed their tropical theme to a tee.

After all the design details have been mapped out, Julie Richard of Total Backyard Solutions advises homeowners to consider selecting energy efficient and ease-of-use equipment such as Pentair, to help keep energy and maintenance costs down. Many of the homeowners she works with want their family pools to be designed with efficiency in mind to help keep utility and maintenance costs low.

The Perfect Backdrop for Family Memories

After the Holt's backyard pool was complete, they decided to put it to good use. Kimberly and Judson Holt held a special poolside celebration to commemorate their 10-year anniversary. The stunning new backyard made the perfect locale for renewing their wedding vows in the presence of their two children, family members, and friends.



The Easley family was recently baptized in their new pool

Recently, the Easley's also had a meaningful ceremony inside their family pool. "My wife Amanda and I were never baptized. We wanted to wait until we found a place that felt right," Easley says. Since they already knew that their 10-month old baby Sophia would be baptized in the pool, they decided that the whole family would be baptized at the same time. The Easleys have also enjoyed swimming and playing in the with baby Sophia in the pool. Their two loving chocolate Labrador Retrievers stay right alongside to help with the swimming lessons. "Charlie swims around just like a

dolphin with baby Sophia on his back," says Easley.

Among all the ways to enjoy their backyard retreats, both the Holts and the Easleys value the time spent around the pool with family. Having a backyard oasis is something to be enjoyed year-round. Simply looking out the window from indoors conveys a sense of calm, and stepping out the door brings a personal vacation paradise every day of the year.

Ruth Taylor is a freelance writer and foreign language translator. She lives in Katy with her husband, Robert, and their children.

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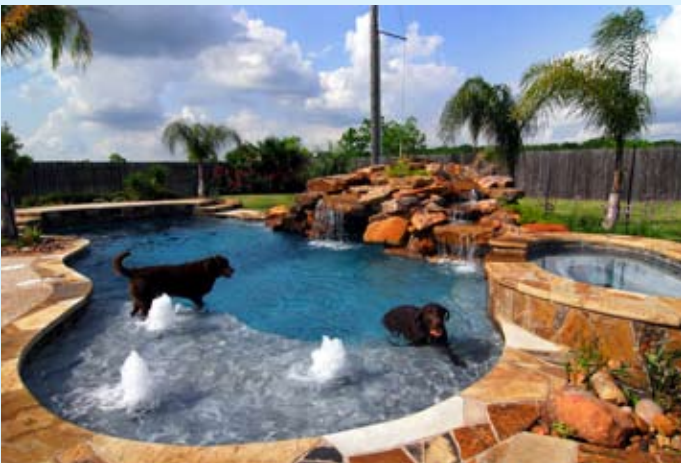
Hot Pool Trends in Katy



Infinity pools make your pool look like it goes on forever.



An aerial view of a Katy homeowner's private dock and entertaining area.



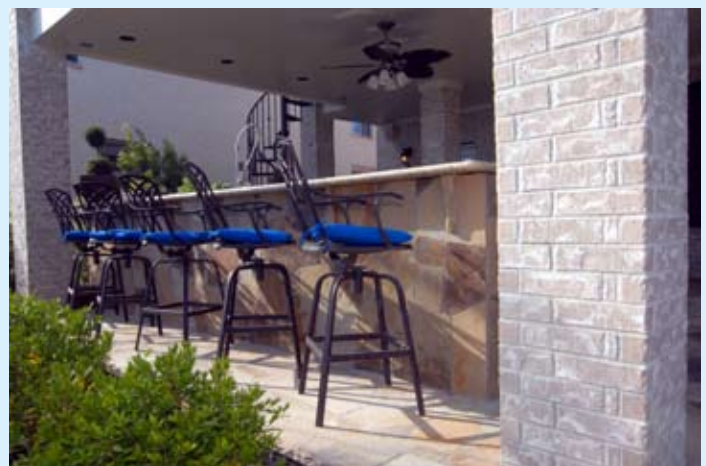
Shallow entries are great for cooling off without getting submerged.



Water features can help muffle traffic or street noise.



Homeowners are installing seating and decking to complement their pools.



Outdoor Kitchens are a popular item for Katy families.

Hot Pool Trends in Katy

Photo by Richard's Total Backyard Solutions



Homeowners are incorporating unique water features.

Photo by Richard's Total Backyard Solutions



Covered pools keep the pests and bad weather away.

Photo by Richard's Total Backyard Solutions



Rock waterfall features add to poolside ambiance both visually and audibly.

Photo by Richard's Total Backyard Solutions



Homeowners are building entertaining areas around their pools.



Spas and hot tubs are no longer just round or square.

Photo by Richard's Total Backyard Solutions



Firepits and fountains are a growing trend in backyard pools.



Judson and Madison cooling off in their Katy pool

Katy Pools Resource Guide

POOL MAINTENANCE

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Katy Area Swim Lessons Offer a Way for Kids to Beat the Heat

DIVE IN

If you haven't heard the cries of your children to be out in the water yet, you soon will! Local pools, gyms, and swimming parties beckon, so if you have not done so, make sure your children are trained in water safety and protection. For those of you who have been struggling to find swimming lessons for your new swimmers, Katy offers a variety of choices, competitive pricing, and flexible schedules to accommodate the busiest parents, as well as the youngest swimmers! From fitness centers to swim clubs to private instructors we've found the most flexible and cost-friendly providers who will likely meet your schedule and budget while providing professional training in swimming and safety for your most valuable possession. The following guide will help you decide on the right instructor for your child.

Life Time Fitness

23211 Cinco Ranch Blvd.
281-644-5318

Life Time Fitness is centrally and conveniently located at Cinco Ranch Boulevard and the Grand Parkway. The fitness center offers lessons at several levels to accommodate the earliest of swimmers through adulthood. The cost for members ranges from \$67 to \$119 and \$84 to \$149 for non members. Classes cover water exploration, primary skills, stroke readiness, development, and refinement as well as skill proficiency and advanced skills. Registration has already begun. Sign up by contacting Member Activities.

Katy Family YMCA

22807 Westheimer Pkwy.
281-392-5055

With multiple locations in and around the Houston Area, the YMCA offers swimming lessons starting for children as young as 6 months. Members pay only \$48 for a class, while the cost for non-members is \$105. There are eight lessons per class, each session is 30 minutes long, and the one to five instructor/child ratio is ideal for the new swimmer.



Hailey takes a break from her lesson to smile for Katy Magazine

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Houston Swim Club

1711 N. Fry Road
281-579-SWIM (7946)

Uniquely designed, the Houston Swim Club focuses on daily lessons to familiarize your child with the water. The club offers a two week class with lessons Monday through Friday for \$125 in addition to a onetime \$25 annual enrollment fee. Each session lasts 30 minutes with four swimmers per instructor. Classes explore comfort, back floating, breath control, water safety, body positioning, and freestyle. Registration is year round with a new class beginning every two weeks. All ages are welcome.



The wonderful instructors at Houston Swim Club make lessons fun

Katy Aquatics

925 South Mason Road
281-578-5289

Katy Aquatics is a year round swim program offering a variety of levels that build from each class in order to help swimmers achieve their highest desired potential. Registration begins in May. Classes are held three days a week at Katy High School, Taylor High School, Seven Lakes High School, Cinco Ranch High School, and Morton Ranch High School. For the low cost of \$90 you or your child will receive 9 lessons.

Debbie Saurage

281-398-8243

Debbie Saurage is a Katy resident with 20 years experience as a swim instructor. She swam competitively for ten years and developed all levels for her swim school. Classes are \$120 with an additional \$20 registration fee. The class includes eight one hour sessions with six swimmers to a class. Sessions are held Monday through Thursday with Friday used as a rain out day.

Also, check with local neighborhood pools, country clubs, fitness centers and parks and recreation programs for even more swim lesson opportunities. Don't forget to tell them Katy Magazine sent you!

Crystal Swaim is currently attending Cy-Fair College pursuing a degree in education. She lives in Katy with her husband Michael and daughter Allison.

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Jasmine enjoys swim lessons

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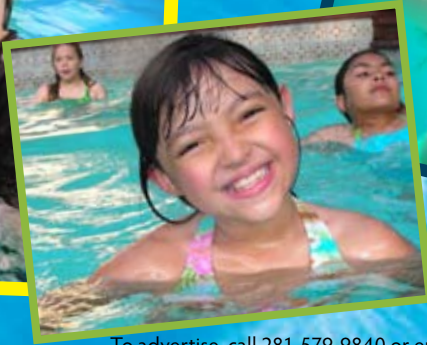
Ma Maw & Pa Paw



The Browns

SUMMER *Swim fun!*

Katy Kids Enjoying the Sunshine



by CRISTINA TRAN

Jake, Noah,
Mark and Thomas

Wet 'N Wild Texas

The State's Coolest Places to Beat the Heat

How Are Katy Families Keeping Cool?

Splash Parks, River Trips, and Day Trips to Water Zones

Katy summers bring along a scorching sun that just seems to never let up. Luckily, there are water-splashing fun places to help Katyites stay cool. Heidi Barin knows that hitting the local pools with her friends and boyfriend is one of the quickest, and most fun ways, to beat the heat. After a long day she likes to visit her local pool to relax and swim. She also enjoys heading to Galveston and Kemah on the weekends to help keep cool during the long and heat-driven summer.

With numerous water-splashing fun places in Texas, there are so many ways to beat the heat and stay cool. Take a dive into our guide to find your perfect place to stay cool throughout the summer.

Hawaiian Falls Firewheel

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Hawaiian Falls Firewheel offers fabulous rides, events, and food for anyone and everyone. With adventures such as tubing, pools, and slides, Hawaiian Falls Firewheel's goal is "bring families closer together." With so many wet pleasures, it's almost too easy to get soaked up and stay cool on hot summery days. About four hours from Katy.



Noah enjoys the waterslide

Jessica at Katy YMCA



Austin and Reagan with their Dad at a local pool

Lost Lagoon

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Seth having a blast



Staci zips down a waterslide

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Gabriella, Sophia and Manny

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www.splashwaywaterpark.com

A fun, affordable day trip for Katy area families who want to beat the heat. Featuring a lazy river attraction, kiddie cove, waterslides, and other wet attractions for kids of all ages. Splashway is a little over an hour's drive from Katy and also has a place for RV park with full hook-ups. Park admission ranges from \$3.99-14.99 depending on height/age. About 1 hour from Katy.



Nicholas dips his toes in first

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Mikayla and Lindsey

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sion choosing which to have an adventure on first. Numerous pools, waterslides and more than 200 shade trees are sure to make you almost forget about the scorching sun. Wet N' Wild is quite a drive so you may want to make a weekend out of it. About 10 hours from Katy.

Williams Water Wall

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Houston, TX 77056-6131
713-850-8841

If you're out and about near the Galleria, there is one stop that you will have to take. The Williams Water Wall is an amazing piece of architecture that is an amazing water feature to behold. With thousands of gallons of water spilling down every minute, get your camera ready for one of the best visual effects in Houston. Although you can't swim or play in it, it's a mesmerizing cascading water experience that's worth the short drive. About 30 minutes from Katy.

Christina Tran lives in Katy and is a recent journalism graduate of the University of Oklahoma.



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Seven Days at Sea

Caribbean Cruises from Galveston Ideal Summer Vacation for Families or Couples

Photos by Matt Katsarelis

When we entered the Galveston causeway on our way to board a cruise ship, it hit me— we were about to embark on seven fun-filled days in the Caribbean without the kids! Except for a few overnight trips, we had never been away from our two children so this was definitely uncharted territory. My wonderful, but exhausted, husband Matt forced the issue. He decided the two of us needed a getaway. Away from work, away from our Blackberries, and away from all our responsibilities. So Matt researched some Galveston cruise specials and planned our trip. Who was I to argue? With Grandma volunteering to stay home with the kids, all signs pointed to YES!!



One of the Carnival Cruise Ships that sails out of Galveston

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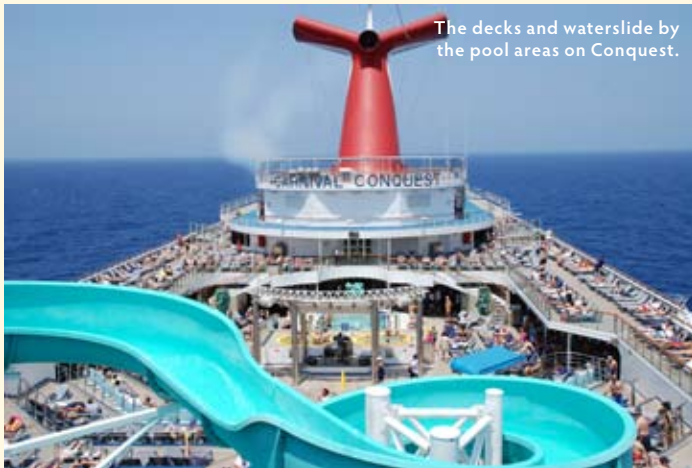
Arriving at the Port of Galveston, the first thing I noticed was a long line of passengers waiting to board the ship. I'm sure most people agree that embarking and debarking are by far the worst parts of a cruise. But since we were avoiding airline travel of any kind and we were still getting a faraway vacation, we decided it was a small price to pay. We hunkered down and waited in line. Then we waited in another line. Then another. Then another, until suddenly, someone threw leis around our necks, snapped a photo and welcomed us on board. We had made it!

Food, People and Fun

Having never 'cruised' before, I had only two preconceived notions about being on a cruise ship.

1. There is a lot of food
2. There are a lot of people

Both of my preconceived notions were true. From the minute you step on the boat, food beckons you 24 hours a day. You say to yourself, "get a plate...it's free....you're on vacation after all..." Or if you're in the mood to snuggle up in your cabin, you can order free room service at any time.



And there were people—lots of them. Old people, middle-aged people, young people, kids, teens, ship employees, family reunions, you name it. When we first stepped out onto the sun-drenched Lido Deck, reggae music filled the air as someone handed me a super-sized tropical concoction. It was like stepping into an enormous pool party where you don't know anyone. Like any good cruisers, the first thing we did was hit the buffet line. Let's see... did we feel like hamburgers, hot dogs, pasta, pizza, deli sandwiches, or just a big salad? How 'bout a little taste of everything? Then a mere two hours later, we were eating a fancy 5-course meal in the dining room.



Photo by Carnival Cruise Ships

Before the Cruise

Do Your Homework

Research internet specials online, compare prices for the same cruise and room style, and you can locate some great deals. Once you book your cruise, download the ship's floor plan, restaurant menus, excursions, and amenities for the week of your stay so you can plan ahead.

Ask About VIP Boarding

Some ships will let you can pay a little extra and get through the line quicker. I definitely would have chosen this option had I known about it beforehand.

Book Shore Excursions in Advance

If you do advance planning and buy these well before the trip, they won't be sold out when you get there. Most of the popular excursions will sell out so think ahead. Note: Booking excursions directly on the islands (not sanctioned by the cruise ship) may be risky.

Beautiful Caribbean Ports

We sailed on the Carnival Conquest destined for Montego Bay, Jamaica, Grand Cayman Islands and Cozumel, Mexico. The ports were wonderful, although a bit touristy with 2000+ cruisers getting off the ship at the same time. Snorkeling in Jamaica was unforgettable and I will always remember having lunch at a very festive Margaritaville overlooking the breathtaking turquoise ocean. When we arrived in the Grand Cayman Islands, we caught a van to

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Seven Days at Sea

Photo by Matt Katsarelis



Grand Cayman Islands is one of the ports of call for many of the Galveston-based cruise ships



Cruising Tips– Packing for Your Trip

Don't Overpack

Focus on a couple of colors and bring a few key things in those colors. Then you can mix and match the items with a few accessories in those colors as well. You will spend most of your days in shorts, bathing suits, tanks and tees anyway so don't bring too much.

Bring Bottled Waters and Limited Sodas

Many ships will let you bring a limited amount of sodas and waters. Bring an empty suitcase

with a few drinks in it. (Too many and they will get confiscated). Drinks can get costly and you will wish you had some water bottles for those excursions. When you return you will have an empty suitcase to fill with the items you purchased at the ports.

Wear one Style of Swim Suit

I made the mistake of bringing a large variety of swimsuits and discovered what this gave me was a large variety of tan lines. A better suggestion is to bring one or two suits of the same style.

What to Bring

The most commonly forgotten items are binoculars, backpacks (for excursions) and water bottles. You will also need dress up clothes for 1-2 nights of formal dinners. Don't forget your birth certificate or passport or you will not be able to board the ship.

Debarking Tip

If you are eager to get off the ship fairly soon after it docks, you can choose to carry off your own luggage. Otherwise, be prepared to wait up to several hours for your floor to be called.

a popular beach and rented floats. Hand in hand, we drifted slowly out to sea as we basked in the warm island sunshine. A lot of cruisers couldn't wait to hit the shops, but that didn't interest us very much. We wanted as much fresh air, nature and sunshine as we could soak up. It was glorious.

Excursions for All Ages

Two days later, I discovered one of my favorite places on earth during one of the ship's excursions. It's called Passion Island in Cozumel, Mexico. We boarded a van and then a ferry to a tiny island with white sandy beaches, hammocks, palapas, island breezes, and all the food and drinks we could consume. We were surrounded by sparkling blue water in all directions as far as the eye could see.

The ship offered numerous excursions in every port (for added fees). Every-



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Cruising Tips– Onboard the Ship

Make Use of Your Personal Steward

He or she can tell you where things are, help with any room issues, or find the right person to help with whatever you need.

Explore the Ship

Take a quick self-tour on day one so you don't miss any of the cool places or fun activities, tucked away swimming pools, or eateries.

Be Ready to Tip

The ship will automatically add tips on your account at the end of the cruise. (Approximately \$10 per person, per day). Let the purser know immediately if you received bad service on a certain day/time.

Take the Stairs

A great way to work off some of that cruise food is to avoid elevators and walk whenever possible. The stairs on cruise ships are luxurious and carpeted so it's a great form of exercise. With up to 12 floors, on a cruise ship, you can work off a lot of food.

Don't Use Your Cell Phone

Many cruisers come home to a cell phone bill of several hundred dollars after a cruise. Save your cell phone or instant messaging for emergencies only.

thing from swimming with dolphins, to swimming with Stingrays, to mountain waterfall hikes, to beach trips, to kayaking through Jamaican rivers. There is an excursion for every interest, age group, and activity level.

The seven days flew by and soon we were pulling up to the Port of Galveston and stepping back into reality. Cruising definitely offers fun tropical adventures and a chance to visit exotic locales,

but to me the best part was the down time. With beautiful Caribbean sunsets as the backdrop, there is no better place to recharge or reconnect with your spouse or family than a cruise.

Katrina Katsarelis is the editor-in-chief and publisher of Katy Magazine, Sugar Land Magazine and Cy-Fair Magazine. She lives in Katy with her husband Matt and their two children.

Summer Caribbean Cruises from Galveston



A beach in Montego Bay, Jamaica

7 DAY CRUISES

Royal Caribbean Rhapsody of the Seas

Ports of Call: Cozumel, Mexico; Roatan, Honduras; Costa Maya, Mexico; Yucatan (Progreso), Mexico;

Summer Sail Dates:

July 1, 15, 29,
Aug. 12, 26

Cost: \$709-1199

Royal Caribbean Rhapsody of the Seas

Ports of Call: Montego Bay, Jamaica; George Town, Grand Cayman; Cozumel, Mexico

Summer Sail Dates: July 8, 22, Aug. 5, 19

Cost \$809-1599

Carnival, Conquest

Ports of Call: Jamaica, Grand Cayman, Cozumel Mexico

Summer Sail Dates: All Summer (sails every 7 days)

Cost: \$549-1299

5 DAY CRUISES

Carnival, Ecstasy

Port of Call: Progreso, Yucatan, Mexico Cozumel, Mexico

Sale Dates: June 11, 16, 25, 30; July 9, 14, 23, 28; Aug. 6, 11, 20, 25; Sept. 3, 8, 17, 22

Cost: \$289-749

4 DAY CRUISES

Carnival, Ecstasy

Port of Call: Cozumel, Mexico

Sale Dates: June 6, 21; July 5, 19; Aug. 2, 16, 30; Sept. 11, 27

Cost: \$289-679

For more information on these and other Galveston cruises, call Carnival Cruise Ships at 1-888-Carnival or Royal Caribbean Cruises at 1-866-562-7625

Note: Prices were accurate at the time of print. Cruise prices are subject to change without notice. Please verify pricing and sail dates with cruise lines. Also, check cruise specials via online discount sites.

Your trip cost does not include items of a personal nature, such as shore excursions, specialty restaurant fees, alcohol and sodas, photographs, gratuities/service fees, medical services, etc.