

# Cruise passengers should know their options

**Morgan Hines**  
USA TODAY

Travelers may be weighing whether they want to proceed with their cruise plans or postpone them, as COVID-19 cases surge with the highly transmissible omicron variant.

If you go, there could be changes to your itinerary, including port stops and more onboard restrictions.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises people who are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to avoid cruise travel and advises travelers to get a booster shot if eligible, spokesperson Dave Daigle said.

Options for canceling cruises vary by line, and canceling doesn't always mean a full refund. It may mean a cruise credit. Some lines are stricter than others, while some have flexible options because of the pandemic.

Royal Caribbean Group's "Cruise with Confidence" program has been in place since March 2020 and applies to flagship line Royal Caribbean International, Silversea Cruises and Celebrity Cruises, Lyan Sierra-Caro, spokesperson for the cruise line, said.

"It allows guests to cancel up to 48 hours before their departure – for any reason at all – and get 100% of the value back in a future cruise credit that they can use towards any sailing," Sierra-Caro said.

If passengers test positive for the coronavirus before the cruise departs, they can get a 100% fare refund.

Carnival Cruise Line warned passengers scheduled to cruise through Jan. 14 in an email obtained by USA TODAY that itinerary changes may happen as a result of omicron's spread and said no refunds would be issued for missed port stops beyond pre-purchased excursions.

"We recognize that given the circumstances, some of our guests



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may want to consider sailing at a different time," the cruise line said, noting that passengers should contact the company, their travel agent or planner to rebook or cancel for a full refund.

The line has had options for passengers affected by COVID-19 who need to cancel.

Holland America Line, a Carnival cruise line, has a "flexible" cancellation policy in place for cruises booked by Feb. 28 for ships departing through April 30.

"You can cancel for any reason up to 30 days before departure and automatically receive a Future Cruise Credit with our Flexible Cancellation," the cruise line said on its website. "Additionally, you may cancel up to your sailing date if you test positive for COVID-19 and will also receive a Future Cruise Credit."

Princess Cruises, another Carnival line, has its own "Book with Confidence" policy.

"We don't think finances should affect decisions about your health, so if you feel ill and need to change your plans, we'll protect your cruise investment," the line said on its website.

Passengers can cancel up to 30 days before sailing and receive cancellation fees as a cruise credit on voyages departing through April 30 and bookings made through Feb. 28.

Within 30 days of sailing, the cruise line has options under its "COVID-19 Protection Program" for passengers.

Norwegian Cruise Line has a "Peace of Mind" policy. For cruises departing through March, passengers can cancel up to 61 days before sailing for a full refund, including fees.

For bookings made through March 31 for MSC cruises through March 31, 2023, passengers can change their cruise up to 48 hours before departure.

"They can move their money to another cruise that sails on or before March 31, 2023 (any ship, any sail date without penalty)," Stephen Schuler, vice president of communications for MSC, said. "The only exception to this is guests booked on MSC World Cruise or World Cruise segments." Through Sept. 30, Disney Cruise Line has relaxed its cancellation fee schedule.

"The cancellation fee schedule has been temporarily relaxed from beginning as early as 119 days prior to sailing to beginning 59 days prior to sailing for Guests booked in non-Suite and non-Concierge categories," Disney said.

If want to cancel or postpone your trip, check your cruise line's website or call customer service or your agent.

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## BLUE ZONES PROJECT - SOUTHWEST FLORIDA



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## Youth Haven is helping children heal through gardening while instituting healthier practices for staff

By Megan Greer

On a hot, sunny morning in early November 2021, a handful of Blue Zones Project volunteers gathered with Youth Haven staff to get briefed on the campus beautification project they were about to take on. Soon the children, all survivors of abuse and neglect, would join them from their resident cottages and, together, they would take on weeds, stumps, sugar cane roots, and relentless lemon grass that had taken over the raised garden beds that sprinkle the campus.

Fingers in the dirt, the kids found worms, centipedes, frogs, snails, spiders and a way to connect with each other and the volunteers that had come to help them. They pointed out different fruit trees and even harvested a few starfruit amid stories and conversation about the upcoming holidays.

Though they are not siblings, the kids have formed a deep, familial bond. They were protective and looked out for one another, and they extended their caring nature to the volunteers.

"Wait! Don't touch that!" said one of the boys pointing to the lemon grass. "It's sharp and it will cut you. You need gloves." He quickly disappeared to the golf cart and returned with sets of gloves for the crew that would tackle the lemon grass. The older boys asserted themselves to the harder job of digging out the sugarcane roots with shovels, sweating and grunting but enjoying the strength inside them that allowed them to do the job all the same.

Across the campus, where screams and laughter were coming from the girls who

were finding all sorts of insects to chase each other with, are six garden beds that had been previously constructed by generous donors. The girls had weeded them and were working together to haul and dump heavy bags of fresh soil into them. After spreading it evenly across the beds, they poked tomato, jalapeno, cilantro and onion seeds into the soil and covered them up whilst saying, "Good luck little buddies!" Hopeful that they will soon be making salsa with their yield.

There is no better word to describe this campus than a "haven." It is a sanctuary surrounded by cypress trees and vegetation seemingly designed to create a protective shield from the outside world. While the children are there to heal, the parallels between themselves and the seedlings they are cultivating are evident even to them. With care and attention, they will sprout, grow and flourish together.

Revitalizing the gardens is just the beginning of the transformational work being done by the leadership and staff at Youth Haven. They are in the process of building a gardening and cooking curriculum with UF/IFAS Extension that will keep the kids engaged in the process of growing and preparing healthy food in a farm to table fashion. The campus chef is also creating healthier menu items for their daily meals.

Under the guidance of Jodi Bisogno, Director of Training and Strategic Initiatives, Youth Haven has also become a Blues Zones Project Approved Worksite focusing on

healthier practices and stress relief for the dedicated staff who diligently support the children in their greatest time of need. They are currently participating in the Maintain, Don't Gain Challenge and are looking forward to the upcoming free community challenges Blue Zones Project will facilitate through the Sharecare app in 2022.

This weekend, Youth Haven staff and volunteers will join the children once again in the soil to plant the rest of the gardens before they celebrate their new Approved Worksite status with supporters, partners, and friends.

Join us in celebrating Youth Haven's wonderful accomplishments at their Blue Zones Project Approved Worksite ribbon cutting on Saturday, January 8th. Attendees and volunteers can join in on the planting at 9:00 a.m. and the ribbon cutting ceremony will be held at 10:00 a.m. with light refreshments to follow. Youth Haven is located at 5867 Whittaker Road, Naples, FL 34112. R.S.V.P. to [tinyurl.com/YouthHaven](http://tinyurl.com/YouthHaven).

Brought to Southwest Florida by NCH Healthcare System, in collaboration with Sharecare, Inc., Blue Zones Project is part of Southwest Florida's well-being improvement initiative that encourages changes in the community that lead to healthier options. For more information, visit [southwestflorida.bluezonesproject.com](http://southwestflorida.bluezonesproject.com).