



The MLC came
into force on
20 August 2013

The Maritime Labour Convention 2006

What does it mean
for cruise crews?



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The Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) 2006 has the potential to make a real difference to the lives of all seafarers. And, for the first time ever, it lays out that all workers on cruise vessels engaged in international voyages are seafarers. Which means YOU are entitled to the protections the MLC guarantees.

What is the MLC?

The MLC, which came into force on 20 August 2013, is an international convention that exists to set out the minimum rights you should expect as a seafarer.

Also known as the seafarers' bill of rights, it is an advanced instrument for seafarers designed by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva. It is the result of years of negotiation between seafarers' representatives, governments and employers' organisations.

Why is it important for me?

For the first time, seafarers around the globe have access to fundamental rights that ensure fair employment.

Are there tangible benefits for seafarers?

Yes there are. The MLC outlines regulations that will result in:

- A safe and secure workplace;
- Fair terms of employment;
- Decent living and working conditions;
- Social protection: access to medical care, health protection and welfare;

- Freedom of association and freedom to join a trade union;
- The ability of unions to negotiate collective bargaining agreements on your behalf.

Why is the MLC important for seafarers employed on cruise ships?

Everyone on board a cruise ship is a seafarer. The MLC defines a seafarer as, 'any person who is employed, engaged or working on board a ship'. This means every worker. There is no distinction between the nautical crew, hotel crew, entertainers, shopkeepers, health and spa staff, photographers or casino staff. While some conditions, such as pay, will still be negotiated separately, the fundamental entitlements to decent standards of accommodation, food and recreational facilities must be consistent.

What about recruitment?

- Seafarers' crewing agents or hiring parties must not charge you for finding you work;
- Your employer should pay for your visa;
- You can only be required to pay the costs of your national statutory medical certificate, national seafarers' book, passport or similar personal travel documents.

What about my employment agreement?

Every seafarer is entitled to a fair employment agreement, also called a contract:

- It must set out safe and decent living and working conditions on board;
- It must be signed by you and your employer;
- It must be easy to understand and be legally enforceable.

Through collective bargaining agreements based on the application of MLC requirements, trade unions will normally negotiate conditions that are better than the minimum entitlements. You should join a union so it can pursue better conditions for you, and be represented like other workers.

What if the employer is different from the owner of the ship?

You may be offered work by an employer who is not the owner of the ship. However, the MLC specifies that the owner of the ship is responsible for all seafarers on board. Under the MLC, your contract should contain the same fundamental provisions irrespective of who your employer is.

What are my wage rights?

- You have the right to be paid in full with a statement setting out payments due and deductions made;
- You must be paid at least monthly;
- Overtime records should be kept by the crew office and endorsed at least monthly by you;
- Your employer must ensure that you are able to send all or part of your earnings home and you should not pay unreasonable charges for this;
- You must be paid in full any outstanding wages at the end of your contract;
- No deductions can be made from your pay unless permitted by national law, included in a collective agreement or agreed in the employment contract.

What about repatriation?

You have the right to be repatriated at no cost to yourself if you have served a maximum of 12 months on board, when you have completed the agreed employment period in your contract and if signed off for medical reasons.

What should I do if I'm not getting my rights?

- You can make a complaint on board to your supervisor, a senior officer, the captain, the shipowner or the flag state, depending on your problem. Your trade union will advise you.
- If the problem is with the shipowner, you can also raise this with the flag state or the port state in which the ship is docked.

What if I am not confident enough to make a complaint myself?

- You have the right to be accompanied by a representative or a fellow seafarer and not to be victimised for making a complaint;
- You can also make a complaint to a port state control officer/labour inspector;
- You do not have to make a complaint yourself. Someone else – a trade union representative or a welfare worker – can make it for you.

Empower yourself! Join a trade union and together we will make your ship a safer and fairer workplace.



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