

Cocktail / Intermissionist Piano Positions

We are seeking pianists who have several hours of solo music prepared for Cocktail Piano positions (another name is “Intermissionists”). These musicians generally work in the main lobby, or “atrium” of a ship. Cocktail pianists must know a wide variety of musical styles, and be excellent at catering each performance to their present audience.

The salaries for these positions can range anywhere from \$2000 - \$2600 per month plus travel/food/lodging/medical care/cruise benefits/retirement plan. Cocktail pianists must have a huge catalog of music consisting of at least 100 songs that are learned to a performable level. In the ship’s atrium, there is a constant flow of passengers who stroll through, and many will stop to listen. Cocktail pianists must have enough music in their repertoire to play for the same audience for several days in a row without having to repeat music. It is also vital that they are able to “read their crowd”, and make good judgments on which types of music they should play that will best please their current audience. In addition to taking requests from passengers and catering to their audience, the candidates for this position must strive to interact with the guests who stop to listen to them, as they are among the few entertainment staff members who work closely among the ship’s passengers. Most cruise ships are equipped with at least one cocktail pianist, sometimes several. Usually a cocktail pianist’s work day is broken up into a few 1-hour sets – one to four in most cases. There are also occasional days off.

The Audition

All cocktail pianist auditioners must provide a video of their playing, which is under 10 minutes in length, showing their versions of 5-10 songs. The video must be of a live performance, or at least clearly display their ability to put on a show and demonstrate energy and confidence on stage. While the quality of the music is important, a cruise ship musician’s appearance is equally of value to our clients – all entertainers must appear engaging, charismatic, and be able to get their audience involved. Our clients usually opt for cocktail pianists that have a clean-cut, classy, fun, and all-American look -- so be sure to dress as if you are performing for a wedding, or other corporate event as opposed to a bar or club. Videos are a must; audio recordings will not land you a gig. You may either mail in a DVD, email a video file, or upload the video on YouTube and email the link. Please also send any other applicable promotional materials, including past performances, reviews, biographies, and/or group photos.

Breakdown of Benefits:

Travel – The cruise line will fly you from your home airport to the port city where you’re joining your ship, as well as cover all ground transportation to the ship. They also cover your return ticket home at the end of your contract. In the event that you have to terminate your contract before completion, you may be responsible for your flight home.

Of course, you will also travel wherever the ship's itinerary takes you while you are living on board.

Food – As an Entertainment Staff member, you are provided 3 meals a day in a cafeteria which is usually for “Staff” employees only. You also may have the option of eating in the “Crew Mess” which is for the majority of the ship's employees – specifically the lower-in-rank “Crew”. Depending on the company for which you work, you will most likely have the option of eating in passenger areas as well. These options range from large buffets to specialty restaurants. Oftentimes, the cuisine on board is brought on from the ports being visited - so expect several delicious, fresh, and sometimes exotic menu options daily.

Lodging – You will be living in a cabin with a room mate who is usually either a member of your ensemble, or another staff member with a job description similar to yours. Single cabins are generally not an option unless you are a Production Singer, Headliner, or Piano Bar Entertainer. For more about cabins on board, refer to “Living on a Cruise Ship”.

Medical Care – Before joining your ship, you will be required to take a physical exam that is to your company's specifications. You must pass this exam in order to work. Starting the day you arrive on board, your cruise line takes full responsibility for your health care. Any physical or psychological conditions that present themselves after your contract start date will be treated of free of charge by the ship's medical staff. In the event that facilities on board are not adequate to treat your condition, you will be sent ashore to a local medical facility at the company's expense. If the ship's doctor deems you unfit for duty, they have the ability to sign you off for a period of hours, days, or even send you home altogether.

Cruise Benefits – As an employee of a major cruise line, you are entitled to a number of fantastic perks. This is including, but not limited to: free or discounted cruises for family members and friends (this usually comes into effect after you've worked for 6-12 months); free or discounted local tours while the ship is in port; a variety of activities exclusively for ship employees like crew tours, parties, games, etc.; even access to ship facilities after standard operating hours (gym, golf simulator, surf pools etc.). These benefits vary greatly depending on which company you end up working for.

Retirement Plan – Once you've worked a certain number of years on some cruise lines, you are entitled to either a lump-sum or a pension paid by the company. Again, the specifics vary greatly from company to company.