

# How the *Titanic* Steerage Passengers Lived Onboard

By [Stephen J. Spignesi](#) from [The Titanic For Dummies](#)

The majority of the 700-plus steerage passengers on the *Titanic* were emigrants. Only 25 percent of the *Titanic*'s third-class passengers survived, and of that 25 percent, only a fraction were men. By contrast, about 97 percent of first-class women survived the sinking of the *Titanic*. The term *steerage* originally referred to the part of the ship below-decks where the steering apparatus was located. However, over time, the term came to refer to the part of a passenger ship below-decks where third-class passengers were housed.

On the *Titanic*, third-class passengers shared common bathrooms, ate in dining facilities with other third-class passengers, and slept in cabins four to a room. By the standards of the day, the accommodations on the *Titanic* for third-class passengers were excellent. In fact, the *Titanic* provided nicer living conditions than many of the steerage passengers were accustomed to at home. It was said that the *Titanic*'s third-class accommodations resembled other steamships' second-class accommodations:

- Third-class cabins on the *Titanic* had running water and electricity.
- Steerage passengers were provided with meals, which were a wonderful perk; most steamships that carried steerage passengers at the time required them to bring their own food.
- Passengers could clean up in their cabins in a washbasin. However, only two bathtubs served all 700-plus third-class men and women.
- Bunk beds in third class had mattresses, pillows, and blankets, but no sheets or pillowcases.
- This fact wasn't a problem because most third-class passengers, who were leaving their native lands forever to start over in America, had all their belongings with them, including their sheets and pillowcases. For these passengers, anything that the ship provided was a bonus that made the voyage more pleasant.

## ***Titanic*'s third-class dining facility**

Third-class passengers ate three meals a day in two common dining rooms called the dining saloons. These rooms were located on F Deck between the second and third funnels, exactly two decks below the first-class dining room.

Third-class passengers did not get individual tables; they ate on rows of tables lined up next to each other. Combined, the two third-class dining saloons could hold only around 475 people, so diners were served in two seatings.

## ***Titanic's* third-class entertainment options**

The *Titanic* provided the General Room, where steerage passengers could sit, read, play cards, and otherwise pass the time. Steerage passengers weren't allowed into the areas of the ship boasting other entertainments, like the gymnasium or the pool, but they could have their own parties and dances.

The party scene in James Cameron's 1997 movie *Titanic* offers a perfect example of the spontaneous gatherings in third class, complete with fiddle players and plenty of beer.

Interestingly, all the sitting surfaces in the General Room were made of wood. (Lice can't find a home on slatted benches the way they can in fabric and upholstered surfaces.) Third-class men also had access to a smoking room complete with spittoons.