

TIPS FOR ENJOYING YOUR CRUISE

Congratulations! You have joined millions of other vacationers who have discovered the all-inclusive pleasures of a cruise vacation. We hope the following suggestions will help you have the vacation of a lifetime.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF YOUR CRUISE?

Cabin accommodations with the service of a room steward to look after your every need while on board. The room steward will see that you have a clean cabin, fresh towels and ice, turn down service and help with anything else. Even if you forgot to pack an item such as a hair dryer or an iron, they will do everything they can to assist you. Most cabins have twinned bedding. If you prefer, ask your cabin steward to convert the 2 beds into 1. Your cabin steward will find you soon after you come onboard to introduce him or herself.

All meals, including in-between snacks and room service. Typically you will have the following choices:

- Breakfast and lunch: Either at your assigned dining table at your specified dining time or a buffet service. The buffets are usually served on a higher deck where you have the option to enjoy the food inside in a casual dining room or outside on the open-air deck. The times for the buffets will usually be posted on your daily activity schedule.
- Dinner: Fabulous theme dinners will be served nightly in your assigned dining room. Your dinner time will be the same each night with your personal wait staff that you will have throughout the length of the cruise. Dinner on board a ship is a great time to try something new. If you don't like what is served, simply ask your waiter to bring something different. Portions are smaller than what is typically served in US restaurants. You are allowed to order more than one appetizer, entrée, dessert, etc. Many times I will order an extra entrée to share with a table mate so we can both try a new dish.
- Snacks: Items such as ice cream, pizza, hamburgers, hot dogs or high tea will be available throughout the day and evening. Some ships offer sushi bars.
- Late night dining: Do not miss the Gala Midnight buffets. They can be truly spectacular. If you don't plan on eating, it is still worth it to see and take pictures of the extravagantly prepared food.
- Room service: Many ships provide 24-hour room service at no extra cost.

Note: Alcoholic beverages and sodas are not typically included. Ask your waiter what beverages are included at no extra cost. Most of the newer ships also have specialty restaurants that require reservations and charge a cover fee of \$15-40 per person. The specialty restaurants are more upscale and in many cases are well worth the extra cost. They are usually not crowded the first night of the cruise.

Entertainment of the highest quality: DJ's, live shows, TV monitors in cabins, musical reviews. Most onboard activities such as exercise classes, dance classes, various contests, children's programs, etc. There will also be swimming pools, saunas, spas, gym facilities, possibly a lecture or a foreign language class as well as ice carving demonstrations and the ship's bridge or kitchen tours.

BEFORE YOU GO

We recommend the use of passports. The US Government will soon require all cruise guests (including US citizens) to be in possession of a valid passport when traveling on any cruise. This requirement may become effective as early as January 1, 2008. We strongly recommend that all guests travel with a valid passport during their cruise. This will enable guests to fly from the US to meet their ship at the first port should they miss their scheduled embarkation; and allow guests that must disembark the ship before their cruise ends to fly back to the US without significant delays and complications. Additionally, it will greatly help to expedite the disembarkation process. Current passport processing times are 12+ weeks for routine service and 3+ weeks for expedited service. For the most up to date information visit <http://travel.state.gov/passport>. If you do not have a passport and are a US citizen then you will need the original or a notarized copy (state issued-not the hospital "heirloom") of your birth certificate or proof of citizenship (they need to see the raised seal) and a picture ID. Check the identification requirements specific for your cruise line. For non-US citizens you will need to check the document requirements based on your country of citizenship.

WHAT TO PACK

Depending on the length of the cruise and the destination this can vary somewhat, but typically you would bring clothes that you would normally wear at a resort. On shorter cruises there is usually at least one Captain's Gala where you will want to wear something more formal. This means a dark suit to a Tuxedo for men and cocktail dresses to gowns for women. During the day the ship is generally casual. The only restriction is no bathing suits in the dining room and no shorts or jeans in the dining room at dinner. In the evenings, you may experience cool ocean breezes out on the decks, so remember to pack a sweater or light jacket. Many of the ships have laundry facilities and if not, your cabin steward can have clothes laundered or dry-cleaned at a nominal charge.

Always keep prescription medicine and eyeglasses with you in case of lost luggage.

If you have an overnight hotel accommodation arranged by the cruise line the night prior to leaving on the cruise, keep an overnight bag with enough clothing and toiletries for that evening. The rest of your baggage will be taken to the ship either in the evening or early morning.

TIME TO GO

Approximately two to six weeks after final payment your cruise voucher and tickets will be given to you. If you booked late, you will pick up the cruise documents at the dock.

If a transfer service has been arranged to take you from the airport to the ship they will meet you in baggage claim, unless otherwise stated. We will have already given the transfer service your name(s) and flight information, so they will be looking for you. They will then shuttle you to the ship. The transfer service will be responsible for getting your luggage to your cabin. You will have received baggage tags from the cruise line in your documents. It is important to have these on your luggage with your cabin number.

Note: The process of loading and delivering a ship full of luggage can sometime take quite a while. Sometimes the luggage will be delivered piece by piece. Make sure you count the number of pieces before you get on the plane and have clear identification tags on everything, including carry-ons. Many suitcases look alike. I recommend tying a bright colored ribbon on each piece to help you locate your luggage in baggage claim.

EMBARKATION (Process of getting on the ship)

CHECK-IN AT THE PORT

Most ports have a security check point with metal detectors at the entrance. You are not allowed to use your camera or cell phones inside the port.

You may be required to fill out some forms before you get in line. Check with the Information Desk. **Your check-in will be easier and faster if you have completed your online registration ahead of time. Print your online form and present it at check-in.** There may be check-in windows usually with alphabet listings. Find the window with the letter of your last name. They will ask to see your documents and proof of citizenship at this time. You will then be given a boarding card and shown to the gangway.

PHOTOGRAPHS

The ship's photographer will probably take your picture getting on the ship. There is no obligation to buy any of the photographs taken during the cruise. However, they will be displayed in the photo shop, and generally they are reasonable and quite good. The evening of the Captain's dinner there will be an opportunity for a formal portrait. Check your daily notice for time and location.

GETTING FAMILIAR WITH THE SHIP

Staff of the ship will be there to greet you and give directions. Most of the time, your cabin will not be available until after 1 or 2pm. Typically lunch is served at the lido buffet starting from 11:30-12:30. You may also enjoy relaxing on deck. Packing a bathing suit in your carry-on bag is recommended because your luggage will not be delivered to your cabin until later in the day. After you locate your cabin, I recommend finding the purser's office. This is like the lobby of a hotel. You will come here if you have any questions or problems.

Next you should go to your dining room and check out your table location. You will be going to this same table for every meal you have in the dining room. (The only exception to this would be if they have an open seating meal, which means you would be seated at the first available open table. Your daily activity schedule will advise you on dining room seating exceptions.) This is also the time to make sure you have the correct dining times requested. If there are any problems see the headwaiter and he will try to accommodate you.

If you want to experience a wonderful spa or beauty treatment while at sea, make sure to book your appointments early since space is limited. I recommend making the appointments at the spa desk when you first get on the ship. All spa and beauty services such as massages, facials, manicures, pedicures and hair styling will be available. Take a look at your cruise itinerary and book your appointments during days at sea. Be aware that spa and beauty appointments book very quickly for formal nights. Sale prices are usually offered during times when your ship is in port. Spa tours and drawings for reduced prices are sometimes offered on the day of embarkation.

Usually the shore excursion desk, where you arrange optional land tours, is near by the purser's desk. As with any spa or beauty appointments, I recommend that you book your shore excursions as soon as you get on board. You don't want to be disappointed if the tour you want is sold out. Take time to wander around the ship to become familiar with the lay-out.

SHIPBOARD ACCOUNTS

Virtually all ships are now cashless. When getting on board the ship, you will need to find the credit desk. After giving them a form of payment, either credit card or up front cash, you will be given some form of a charge card (which typically doubles as your cabin key) that you can use for anything onboard, including shore excursions, gifts in the shops, drinks at the bar, wine at dinner, spa treatments, beauty salon, etc. A 15% gratuity will be automatically added when you purchase beverages. All accounts will be settled at the end of the cruise.

MANDATORY LIFEBOAT DRILL

Sometime after embarkation, everyone on board the ship will be required to attend a mandatory lifeboat drill. You need to do so and listen carefully. You will have life vests in your cabin with instructions and location and directions to your station. When they make the announcement to go to your station you must put on your life vest and go to your designated station. Pay attention to the weather and dress accordingly since your station may be outside on one of the decks. Once at your station, emergency procedures will be explained and your name will be called to make sure you are in attendance. If you have any questions or need directions ask any available staff.

ON WITH THE FUN

This is your cruise and hard-earned vacation. Make sure everything is to your satisfaction. Try to enjoy all of the activities that are offered to you. Some of the most entertaining times are watching some of the other passengers participating in different games like the newlywed and not-so-newlywed game. There is as much to do as you like or just enjoy the cruise and relax. The whole key to taking full advantage of everything the cruise line has put together for you is to review the daily agenda that will be delivered to your cabin everyday. You may want to pack a highlighter pen to highlight your favorite activities. Extra daily agendas are usually available near the purser's desk. All activities including TV schedules, bingo times, casino hours, shop hours, photo studio hours and dining times will be listed. Some of the best live entertainment I have ever seen has been aboard a cruise ship. There will be lounges, discos, libraries and so much more for you to enjoy.

ALL ASHORE:

The ship will have a Shore Excursion Desk where you can pre-arrange shore excursions, tours and port activities for each destination stop. Usually the Shore Excursion Desk is close by the Purser's Desk (hotel lobby). If you are not sure about what activities to choose, I would suggest going to the Shore Excursion talk. The ship staff will talk about each destination and give details about what is available to you. The talk normally takes place the day or evening prior to reaching the next port (destination/stop). Again, check your daily agenda for times and location of the Shore Excursion Talk.

IMPORTANT: PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO THE DEPARTURE TIME OF THE SHIP FROM EACH PORT. MOST SHIPS DO NOT TAKE ROLL OF PASSENGERS COMING AND GOING FROM THE PORTS. WHEN THE SHIP SAYS IT IS LEAVING AT (example) 4:30PM... IT WILL LEAVE AT 4:30PM. BE ON BOARD A MINIMUM OF 30 MINUTES PRIOR TO THE SHIP'S DEPARTURE TIME. I HAVE SEEN PASSENGERS RUNNING TO GET ON THE SHIP AND THE SHIP KEEPS ON SAILING...THE SHIP WILL NOT WAIT FOR PASSENGERS. IF YOU SHOULD MISS THE SHIP'S DEPARTURE IT WILL BE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO GET TO THE NEXT PORT.

THE LAST NIGHT:

The last night of the cruise is full of business. You will be asked to pack everything, except what you will need for the next day, and put your luggage outside of your cabin door before you go to sleep (usually by midnight). Do not forget....keep your medications and important documents with you.

TIPPING:

On the last night of the cruise you may find envelopes in your cabin to use to put the tips in to give to your cabin steward, waiter and assistant waiter (unless you have pre-paid your gratuities). Some cruise lines will automatically add the tips to your onboard account. A general rule of thumb is to plan for about \$2.50 to \$3.00 per person per day for your room steward and dining room waiter and about half that amount for your bus boy. Other shipboard personnel can be tipped for special services at your discretion.

DISEMBARKATION (Getting off the ship)

The next morning you will be asked to go to breakfast and not return to your cabin (they need to get ready for the next passengers). I suggest having a leisurely breakfast. Then, take a book or deck of cards to a nice lounge area and wait till they clear you. Your luggage will have been delivered to the dock and will be colored coded according to the color of your ship baggage tags.

A FEW HELPFUL NAUTICAL TERMS:

BOW	The front of the ship
AFT	The rear of the ship
PORT	The left side of the ship when facing toward the bow
STARBOARD	The right side of the ship when facing toward the bow
BERTH	Can mean either the dock, pier or beds within a cabin
TENDER	A small vessel sometimes used to move passengers to port when ship is anchored
GANGWAY	The open ramp by which passengers embark and disembark
EMBARK	The process of getting on the ship
DISEMBARK	The process of getting off the ship

FROM THE TRAVEL TIPSTER: An easy way to remember whether Aft and Port are right or left. PORT and LEFT both have 4 letters.