



## ***TIPS FOR ENJOYING YOUR FIRST CRUISE***

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

### **What is included in the price of the 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 convert the 2 beds into 1. Your cabin steward will find you soon after you come onboard to introduce themselves.

**All of your meals**, including in-between snacks and room service. Typically you will have the following dining choices daily.

**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 dinnertime will be the same each night with your own personal waiter and bus person that you will have throughout the length of the cruise

**Snacks:** Items such as ice cream, pizza, hamburgers, hot dogs or high tea will be available throughout the day and evening.

**Late night dining:** Do not miss the Gala Midnight buffets. They can be truly spectacular.

***Note: Alcoholic beverages are not typically included. Ask your waiter what beverages are included at no extra cost.***

**Entertainment** of the highest quality from 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**

A **passport** is always a good idea to have. If you do not have one it usually takes about 12 weeks to process. I can assist you with information about obtaining a passport or you can call (202) 647-0518 the office of Passport Services for further information. If you do not have a

passport and are a US citizen then you will need the original or a notarized copy of your birth certificate or proof of citizenship (they need to see the raised seal) and a picture ID. For non-US citizens we will need to check the document requirements based on your country of citizenship. **Passport Requirements are constantly changing.**

## **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** wear 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** in the **dining room at dinner**. Remember, the evenings out on the decks you can experience the cool evening ocean breezes, 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 the **night prior** to leaving on the cruise, keep an **overnight bag** with enough **clothing and toiletries** for that one evening. The rest of your baggage will be taken to the ship either in the evening or early morning.

## **Here you go...**

**Approximately two 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. I 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 carryons. A lot of suitcase looks a like. 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**

You may be required to **fill out some forms** before you get in line. **Check with information**. There will 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 very **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**. After you locate your **cabin** I recommend to find out where the **purser's office** is. 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 when you first get on the ship. Ask the purser's office or staff where to make appointments. 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.

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** 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 to beverage service bill. **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 **really go over the daily agenda** that will be delivered to your cabin everyday. 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. 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. Do not forget....keep your medications and important documents with you.

#### **TIPPING:**

Unless you have pre-paid your gratuities, this is the night you will find the envelopes in your cabin to use to put the tips in to give to your cabin steward, waiter and busboy.

**Tipping is a matter of personal preference.** 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 and if more time is needed to 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:**

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

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

*Bon Voyage....*

*I wish you a wonderful cruise experience.*

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