

Top 10 Tips For Fabulous Cruises

Answers to the ten most commonly asked questions about cruising

As cruise professionals, we have assisted over 100,000 passengers with booking memorable cruises since 1993. We've gone on countless cruises to destinations all over the world ourselves. We know the ins and outs of cruising: what makes a trip better and what can all but ruin a cruise. From our years of experience, we've compiled this top 10 list to answer the most commonly asked questions about cruise vacations. We hope it helps to make your next cruise the best it can be!

If you have additional questions about cruising, or would like to book a cruise to virtually any destination worldwide, feel free to call us toll-free at 800.803.7245 or book online at www.CruiseVacationCenter.com.

Tip #1 - Choosing the Best Destination

Choosing the best cruise destination is something that requires a good deal of thought. For example, many people think they want to tour Europe and then realize these cruises consist of more sightseeing and less activities. Some vacations are designed to be family-friendly while others are for couples or retired individuals. Give some thought to what you want to do as well as what you want to see. If you will be traveling with children, an itinerary filled solely with sightseeing will likely not keep them entertained. You'll want to be sure your destination has kid-friendly activities. If you are a senior (or you are traveling with seniors), surfing, parasailing, horseback riding and jungle tours might not be your style. The wonderful thing about cruises is they offer something for everyone. Take the time to talk with your travel agent about whom you'll be traveling with, their ages and the likes and dislikes of the group before booking a cruise. This way, you'll be sure everyone has a fabulous time!

Tip #2 - Handling Special Dietary Concerns

Have dietary concerns? Worried you won't be able to eat what you need while on a cruise? Take heart! Virtually all major cruise lines can handle special dietary requests. Low-sodium, low-fat, low-sugar, low-carb, vegetarian, kosher and other types of meal services are available by request. You may want to make your special needs known when booking your cruise.

Tip #3 - How to Help Prevent Possible Seasickness

Is a fear of seasickness keeping you from booking your dream cruise? It shouldn't! The modern ships that have been built over the last several years feature many technologically advanced stabilizers that even out the pitch and roll of the ship - even in rough water. However, if you want to take every precaution, book your cabin near the center of the ship to alleviate as much motion as possible. Your location can have a dramatic effect on seasickness, too. It has been proven that you're least likely to get seasick when sailing in the Caribbean. The islands buffer the motion of the Atlantic Ocean, making the waters generally calm. If you have a tendency toward carsickness or other types of motion sickness, however, bring along some Dramamine or Bonine just to be safe.

Tip #4 - A Carry-on Can Carry You Through

From the time you check your baggage until the time it is delivered to your stateroom may be several hours. The cruise line normally promises to have your luggage to you by the end of the day. That's why smart travelers bring a small carry-on bag with a few necessities, so they can take advantage of all the ship has to offer. A toothbrush, running shoes, swimsuit, a change of clothes, makeup, hairbrush and more can be packed in a small tote, so you can enjoy the pool,

take a jog and shower before dinner, if you'd like. You may also want to carry on your camera, so you don't miss a minute of the memories!

Tip #5 - Obtaining a Passport for Overseas Cruises

Chances are, you will need a passport for your upcoming vacation. Many cruisers assume they can use a birth certificate because they have used one in the past. They find out differently once they arrive at port, however. A new travel initiative from the U.S. Department of State is requiring all "United States citizens traveling within the Western Hemisphere [to now] be required to carry a passport." This initiative requires passports for all travel (air/sea) to or from the Caribbean, Bermuda, and Central and South America. Eventually passports will be required for exiting and reentering the U.S. from all countries, so apply for yours today. Processing time normally takes six weeks. Details and applications can be found online at www.travel.state.gov or at your local post office.

Tip #6 - Choosing the Right Clothes for Every Event

Is trying to decide what to pack driving you crazy? With a little consideration and planning, you can be fully prepared for all the exciting activities on and off the ship. To start, learn about your ship. What dining options are there? If you plan to eat in the main dining room or a specialty restaurant onboard, find out if formal attire is required. Planning on partying? If you prefer to dress when you visit the shipboard clubs, you'll want to pack accordingly. Aside from those, most attire aboard is casual, so check the weather for the cities you'll be visiting and bring weather-appropriate clothes. Do you plan to work out while on the ship? Are you going to take excursions that require lots of walking? Are there particular sites you want to see that might dictate special dress requirements? Once you've reviewed the ship, as well as your activities, you should have a good idea of what to pack, so you have a fabulous (and comfortable!) time.

Tip #7 - Repeat Cruiser? Get Rewarded!

Are you a cruise-aholic? If you take repeat cruises on the same cruise line, you'll want to look into joining their repeat cruisers' club. Most cruise lines offer some nice incentives in the form of coupons for vacationers who book repeated cruises with the same line year after year. Discounts at the spa, the shops and other fee-based shipboard activities mean you can have more fun for less cash! Ask us for details about frequent cruisers' clubs.

Tip #8 - Setting Your Vacation Budget

Setting a cruise budget can seem like a no-brainer since the term "all-inclusive vacation" is associated with cruising. But there are some things that aren't included in the cost of the cruise. You'll want to be aware of these before you sail. For instance, spa treatments incur an additional cost. Likewise, excursions are an additional fee. Some drinks may cost extra (some cruise lines charge for alcoholic beverages; some charge for soft drinks; some don't charge). Other items that incur a cost over and above your fare include laundry services, the minibar in your cabin, ship-to-shore phone calls, Internet access and more. Don't assume that "everything" is included. It's always wise to ask your travel agent or your steward.

Tip #9 - Digital vs. Film Cameras

Everyone loves to take pictures while on vacation. When you're cruising, you'd be smart to bring your digital camera instead of a camera that requires film. When out on excursions, you'll have less to keep up with when using a digital camera. You won't have to struggle to insert new rolls of film into your camera, and you won't have to worry about keeping up with those silly, plastic containers. What's more, most cruise ships now offer digital photo kiosks onboard. You can

instantly print as many full-color prints as you'd like, plus create wonderful keepsakes from your digital photos like customized postcards, mouse pads, key rings and more.

Tip #10 - Departing From Port

Oftentimes, travelers think that, because their cruise departs in the late afternoon, they can drive or fly into the port city the day of their cruise. This has led to people literally missing the boat because their flight was delayed at some point or because of traffic tie-ups. To be on the safe side, plan to arrive at the port city the day before your cruise. Many travelers come several days early when departing from a tourist city such as New York or Los Angeles. This gives them time to sightsee and, at the same time, ensures they'll be on time for their cruise departure.

Happy Cruising!

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