CRUISER INFO

This info sheet will hopefully answer your questions about cruising. If you've not cruised in a while, this includes some changes that have occurred post-2001.

Contact our office if you have additional questions - 971-871-8339 - teri@far-away-places.com.

ADVANCE CHECK IN PROCESS

Major cruise lines require passengers to complete advance online passenger check-in.

- Complete as soon as possible after making final payment
- ❖ Allow approximately 15 minutes to complete check-in for one couple
- ❖ If you are uncomfortable navigating the cruise lines registration web pages, call me 972-871-8339
- **❖** Need reservation # (confirmation # on receipt), passport and credit card (for onboard purchases)
- The process may end with a "boarding pass" for you to print and bring to their pier.

Carnival www.carnival.com Cruise Control (green box bottom right) select Booked Guest Booked G

Holland America <u>www.hollandamerica.com</u> For Booked Guests tab, then <u>Online Check-in</u> Royal Caribbean <u>www.royalcaribbean.com</u> Before you Go tab, then Online check in

SHORE EXCURSION SIGN UP

Most cruise lines allow shore excursion viewing and enrollment via web until approx 10 days before sailing.

- ❖ Check your cruise lines' web site for shore excursions
- Accessible shore excursion lists are available upon request. Notify our office and we will obtain a list for you from the cruise line.
- Credit card payment is required by some cruise lines at time of excursion enrollment (Carnival, Disney, Royal Caribbean)
- * Excursions booked online are added to your shipboard purchase account by other lines
- ❖ Enrollment is also accepted aboard ship for excursions that have not yet sold out
- ❖ If an excursion you want is full, check back on the web site periodically or, once aboard ship, visit the shore excursion desk to be added to a cancellation wait list.

Call me if you are having difficulties with the web process – 972-871-8339

WHAT TO PACK

Sorry ladies, but gone are the days of needing a special shopping trip to buy just the right clothes for that cruise! > 7-night cruises have 2 "formal" nights (typically the 2nd night and a later date).

- ❖ MEN tie and jacket (mixed separates work well). You will see a few tuxedos. The cruise line takes advance rental requests or bring your own if desired.
- ❖ WOMEN pantsuit, "Sunday-best" dress, or cocktail dress. You will see a few long, glitter gowns.
- > Dining room on other nights
 - ❖ Business casual wear is generally acceptable in the dining rooms
 - No shorts are allowed in the dining room in the evening
 - No denim pants or tennis shoes in the dining room in the evening
- Dining rooms tend to be more casual at breakfast and lunch times including shorts and denim pants
 - **A** Bathing suits are never allowed in the main dining room at any time during the day.
 - * Casual attire, including shorts, is fine in the buffet café (usually near the pool)
- Theme parties are sometimes offered such as Country & Western, 70's or 80's, etc. Themes are <u>not</u> announced in advance of the cruise and theme attire is not required to attend such parties.
- ➤ Bring a jacket or sweater. When the ship is moving, there's often a cool night breeze, even in tropical climates. Public venues dining rooms, lounges, entertainment theatre tend to be on the chilly side.

Consider the climate of your destination when packing. Check temperature averages on www.weather.com

LUGGAGE

- ❖ Most major cruise lines do not have baggage restrictions for number or weight of bags!
- ❖ If flying to the cruise port, check your air carrier's web site for baggage restrictions typically 2 checkon bags per traveler, not to exceed 50 pounds each, plus one carry-on bag per passenger.
- ❖ When cruising, use a carry-on for medications and valuables
- ❖ Include an outfit for the first casual evening and some PJs in your carry-on in the event your checked luggage does not reach your room before bedtime.
- ❖ Tag your check-on luggage **before you leave home** with the cruise line luggage tags.
- ❖ Add personal luggage tags on all suitcases. Cruise line tags do not include personal contact information.
- ❖ Do <u>not</u> use cruise line luggage tags on your carry-on items.
- ❖ If flying, claim your luggage post-flight (except on Disney cruises; Disney reps claims your luggage), then check in with the airport to ship shuttle service. When you are boarding the shuttle, your check-on luggage will be loaded in the under carriage of the shuttle; keep your carry-on items with you.
- ❖ Checked luggage is often delivered to your stateroom by dinnertime, but baggage delivery can be delayed and on rare occasion, baggage goes missing even on a ship (this is quite rare in our experience).

ARRIVING AT THE SHIP

- ❖ Plan to arrive NO LATER than 2 hours before the ship's scheduled departure.
- ❖ If flying, we will advise you the latest pre-cruise arrival and earliest post-cruise departure flight acceptable considering transfer time between airport and pier, and details on meeting transfer shuttles will be included in your documents if we've arranged transfers for you.
- ❖ Check in usually starts 3 to 4 hours before sailing. There are sometimes delays when customs randomly requires several hundred crewmembers to disembark and clear customs checks.
- ❖ If driving to the pier, drop your passengers and all luggage at your ship's terminal, then park and shuttle to the ship. Cruise lines do not own parking areas. Some require cash upon entry.
- ❖ At or near the passenger drop off area, there will be many cruise lines reps ready to take your check-on luggage <u>before</u> you enter the terminal building. The cruise line will load your check-on luggage into the ship much like the airlines do for flights.
- ❖ Your cruise companions can wait outside or just inside the terminal for you while you park the car.
- ❖ Enter the check in line with your cruise companion.

Galveston Departures

- * www.portofgalveston.com or 409-766-6100 for directions, online parking reservations and rates for the lots owned by Galveston port authority.
- Other nearby independently owned lots charge approximately \$10 daily with free shuttle to/from ship.
- ❖ Galveston's Lot 1 offers limited covered parking and allows you to bring luggage aboard the shuttle bus.
- ❖ Galveston's Lot A and B require that you drop luggage at the ship, then proceed to parking. The shuttles from Lots A & B do not have adequate room for your check on luggage.

A GREAT OPTION in Galveston is to have us make a pre-cruise hotel reservation for you at one of the hotels that allows you to leave your car at the hotel for no additional charge or a minor charge and will shuttle you to/from the ship. This allows you time to enjoy the sites of Galveston before your cruise! Call us; we'll schedule your hotel stay. 972-871-8339.

PIER CHECK IN

An hour plus line is not uncommon when boarding a ship. While some passengers allow this to start their trip off on the wrong foot, others take it in stride and enjoy talking and joking with other passengers while in line. Get in the spirit of vacation by enjoying time to chat with your traveling companions and by meeting other

cruisers. After all, everyone's in the same "boat" you are in while waiting your turn to board the ship and you are about to spend several days together.

The check in process involves verifying proper identification documents, establishing your onboard ship account, and satisfying safety requirements. Both the U.S. government (for your return) and the government for each country you may be visiting require proper identification. Most cruise ships hold in excess of 1,500 passengers so getting everyone checked in properly takes time.

- ❖ If you have special needs that prohibit standing for long periods, advise the nearest cruise line rep.
- Cruise check-in is like airport check-in, except the security (x-ray) is first, then the check-in counter.
- ❖ At the counter, present passport, signature document page for onboard account, credit card to use against those purchases (one card per person or per room as you prefer), and boarding pass (if offered online).
- ❖ Credit card-size room keys will be issued. This has 3 functions. 1) Unlocks your stateroom door 2) Security-scanned each time you leave and come back on the ship 3) Charges to your onboard account. Ships are mostly "cashless." Cash is not accepted at bars, but sometimes is at gift shops and for bingo.
- Next stop after the counter is the photographer. A security picture is taken and comes up on the computer each time you board the ship and present your cruise card to make sure it's really you trying to board. If there are two picture locations, the other is typically a momento picture, available later for purchase from the ship's photo gallery area if you desire.

DOCUMENTATION

A valid passport not expiring within 6 months from the end date of your trip is the easiest form of documentation to provide. Please leave a copy of your passport with a trusted family member, friend or with your travel agent so the copy can be accessed should you lose your passport during your trip.

<u>Beginning January 23, 2007</u> the United States will <u>require passports</u> for U.S. citizens departing or entering the U.S. via <u>airplane</u>. Passport requirement for cruise travel was slated to begin January 2008, but is still up in the air with most likely date being summer.

Visit US Customs & Border Protection web site for updated info. Copy & paste link <a href="http://help.cbp.gov/cgibin/customs.cfg/php/enduser/std_adp.php?p_faqid=74&p_created=1043364936&p_sid=B*1*OEHh&p_lva=&p_sp=cF9zcmNoPSZwX3NvcnRfYnk9JnBfZ3JpZHNvcnQ9JnBfcm93X2NudD01NTYmcF9wcm9kcz0mcF9jYXRzPSZwX3B2PSZwX2N2PSZwX3BhZ2U9MQ**&p_li=&p_topview=1

Remember, if you cannot cruise back home due to illness or must return early via plane, you must have a passport to board any international flight.

No Passport? You will be required to carry two forms of ID. 1) a government-issued ID such as your driver's license; 2) A <u>raised-seal</u> birth certificate (hospital ink stamp does not meet requirements since 2001).

Married women without a passport – If your license has your married name and your birth certificate has your maiden name, you MUST carry a notarized copy of your marriage license or other government-issued documentation to justify the name discrepancy. A passport negates carrying these other documents.

Please note a military ID is no longer valid documentation for embarkation.

If you are not a U.S. citizen, it is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to confirm with the government of your country of citizenship what documents you need to carry to travel out of and back into the U.S. and what documents are required for you to visit the countries included on your itinerary. If your ship starts and/or ends at a U.S. port, you should also check with U.S. Customs & Borders for document requirements. OUR AGENCY DOES NOT ADVISE ON DOCUMENTS REQUIREMENTS FOR NON-U.S. CITIZENS OR FOR NON-U.S. RESIDENTS.

THE BOARDING PROCESS – After counter check-in and pictures

- ❖ At most ports a rising hallway leads to the ship. Elevators are available if needed; ask a cruise rep
- There may be a line on the main deck due as security scans cruise cards for entrance onto the ship
- Drinks are sometimes being served in this area (for a charge)

SECURITY WHILE IN PORT

All of this is for the safety of the ship and passengers and has been in place since 9/11

- ❖ Armed security may be in the public areas of the ship while at the embarkation port
- ❖ U.S. Coast Guard boats may be near the ship while in U.S. ports to keep other boaters away
- ❖ Entering and exiting U.S. shipping channels, U.S. Coast Guard air support may be flying nearby.

SECURITY OF YOUR DOCUMENTS

- ❖ Your cruise ID card is critical. If it become lost, report the loss immediately to the purser's desk.
- Some cruise lines recommend locking your passport (or birth certificate, etc.) in your in-room safe if one is provided. I, however, carry mine ashore. Should anything occur where you do not re-board the ship, your passport will be required to board any flights, etc., to continue your journey or to return home.

AFTER YOU'RE ON BOARD

- ➤ Visit your stateroom first, deposit carry-on luggage, lock valuables in the safe. Most staterooms have a safe. If not or if you carry high-level assets, the purser's desk has a limited number of safety deposit boxes for rental.
 - ❖ Your check on luggage will be delivered after the ship clears customs and sets sail.
 - ❖ Your room steward makes every attempt to come by and meet you at your stateroom before you set sail.
 - ❖ Your room steward likes to make sure the beds are in the configuration you prefer (set apart as twin beds or pulled together for one larger bed) and will answer general questions you may have.
 - ❖ Contact your steward if you have any concerns with plumbing, cleanliness, additional linen needs, etc.
 - ❖ Your room steward will visit your room a couple of times each day. They seem to have a knack for rarely being seen, but always knowing just when you've buzzed off for a meal or activity. When you slip away, they slip in and make your bed or, in the evening, provide turn down service, leave the next day's activity roster on your desk, and a chocolate on your pillow. For the room steward, it is truly all about you and making your cruise experience unforgettable.
 - Lach room has a phone and a list of extensions for housekeeping, purser's desk, room service, etc.
- You are essentially in a floating hotel, and the Purser's Desk is the hotel front desk, typically located on the Main desk or just above/below that deck. Call or go to the purser's desk if you have any questions about your onboard charge account, have mail to send, etc.
- ➤ Visit the shore excursion desk, typically located near the Purser's Desk, to sign up or inquire about excursions. The excursion desk usually opens soon after boarding is complete. The line is often long on this first sailing day.
- ➤ Visit/call the spa if you desire an appointment (charges for services). Appointments sell out quickly.
- > Explore the ship
- ➤ FOOD AND DRINKS The main dining room generally is not open until dinner, but usually food and drinks are served poolside or at the casual café near the pool during embarkation.

There's a lot of activity at the dock including supplies being loaded, your ship being refueled, etc. It can be fascinating to watch all the buzz below from a deck railing. When the ship departs port, it's not quite like the Love Boat with streamers flying and people clapping, but you will generally find a number of passengers on deck as you sail away. If there's inclement weather, there are usually some good indoor spots with a view. On Royal Caribbean ships, we like to kick back in the Viking Crown lounge with a drink as we sail away from

land. The Viking Crown lounge is the highest deck - located toward the back of the ship, just behind the main outdoor pool. This lounge generally has views from all sides.

DRINKS and SOFT DRINK CARDS

Many cruise lines now sell on board the ship a "soft drink card" which allows unlimited soft drinks. This can be a real savings over the \$1.50 or more plus automatic gratuity 15% gratuity charged per glass of soft drink.

- > Soft drinks and soft drink cards are available at most of the bars on ship.
- ➤ The dining rooms do not usually accept the soft drink card
- > Stop by the bar en route to dinner for your unlimited soft drinks
- ➤ When purchasing unlimited soft drinks, many cruise lines electronically add the feature to your Cruise ID card so that you may not have to carry a separate soft drink card.
- > Drink cards for alcoholic beverages are <u>not</u> sold on most cruise lines and charges are per drink with gratuity automatically added to your tab.
- Water from your stateroom sink is drinkable. Pitchers of water are available in the dining room.
- ➤ Bottled water carries a charge and 15% gratuity and is available in bars and lounges.

Note that all bars bills (even if just ordering a soft drink, soft drink card or bottled water) have an automatic gratuity, generally 15%. Water from the tap in your room and water in the dining rooms is potable. Bottled water is available for purchase in your room, in the dining venues and at the bars. Sometimes bottled water is also available for purchase near the ship's exit when visiting a port.

CAN I TAKE FOOD AND DRINK ABOARD SHIP?

Check the cruise line web site for current information. Most cruise lines have a corking fee for any bottles of wine, etc., brought on board the ship. Some cruise lines do not allow alcoholic beverages to be brought on board the ship. If alcoholic beverages are purchased at a port of call, many cruise lines require the bottles to be turned over to ship personnel for storage until you disembark at the end of your cruise. At the initial point of embarkation, bringing some bottled water, your favorite snacks, etc., is rarely a problem.

DINING OPTIONS

- Most cruise lines provide complimentary:
 - ❖ 24-hour room service (room service menu will be in your room)
 - ❖ Breakfast, lunch and dinner in the Main Dining room
 - Early continental breakfast, full buffet late breakfast, lunch and dinner in the casual café (near the pool)
 - ❖ Hot dogs, pizza, etc. at a pool-area food bar or at other venue aboard the ship various hours
 - ❖ High Tea in a lounge or casual café tea and desserts or sometimes includes deli meats and cheeses
- Many cruise lines are now adding specialty restaurants that accommodate a limited number of passengers, and therefore, require advance reservations and a non-refundable "reservation fee." If such restaurants are offered on your ship, make your reservation as soon as possible after you board the ship.
- The daily activity sheet lists any special events such as the staff firing up the grill poolside on days at sea or a theme nights in the dining room featuring food from a country or region and, perhaps, your waiters singing. Themes are <u>not</u> announced in advance of the cruise.

ENTERTAINMENT

Check your daily activity log for entertainment events and locations.

- ❖ Professional shows are held most nights in the main entertainment theatre
- ❖ Daytime entertainment may include splash and hairy leg contests, "Newlywed, not so newlywed" game, or the favorite "scavenger hunt" often held in a lounge. Ladies, pack those large purses with everything you can think of as there's no telling what will be requested as part of the "hunt."
- ❖ Live music is generally featured in one or more lounges in the evening
- ❖ Other lounges may have a DJ spinning tunes until the wee hours

- ❖ Family comedy shows and adult-only late-night comedy is sometimes offered
- ❖ Theme parties may be offered (i.e. Country Western, 70's or 80's); theme-attire <u>not</u> required.

PORT DAYS - DON'T LET THE SHIP SAIL WITHOUT YOU

Check your daily activity log for listings of port information sessions. These will cover excursions, recommended shopping venues, average taxi fare, etc., and held during an "at sea" day.

- As your ship nears port, head to deck and watch for the local pilot boat. The local pilot jumps from a tiny boat onto your big ship to guide the Captain through the local channel into port.
- ❖ Local customs officials must clear the ship before any passengers can disembark
- A Passengers with morning shore excursions will be taken, as a group, off the ship first
- Think of debarkation at any port as the opposite of loading an airplane. The airlines calls rows of seats for orderly boarding. The cruise line has a similar method for orderly debarkation. Most cruise lines allow passengers not on excursions to get a debarkation number. After excursion passengers are offloaded, those with debarkation numbers are called in groups to disembark. Thereafter, the "all clear" is given for passengers to come and go from the ship at will.
- ❖ Be back on board the ship with time to spare when you visit ports.
- ❖ The ship will be held only for delays of shore excursion groups that were booked through the cruise line.
- ❖ If you go off on your own and your taxi has a flat, the ship WILL sail without you. It will then be at your own expense to catch up with the ship. This happens more often than you can imagine.

TIPPING GUIDELINES

All major cruise lines presently recommend tipping \$10 per traveler per cruise night -- \$70 per traveler for a 7-night cruise, \$50 for a 5-night cruise, and so forth. This equates to approximately \$3.50 per day to the room steward, \$3.50 to the head waiter of your table, and the remainder to assistant waiter. The Dining Room Maitre'd gratuity is at your discretion.

- Gratuities are paid on the final cruise night.
- A Payment may be made with cash, prepaid at final payment, or added to your shipboard account if you make that arrangement with the Purser's Desk once aboard. NOTE some cruise lines are now requiring gratuity payment at final, and we advise at final payment if that is the case with your line.
- ❖ If you are on a group cruise: Royal Caribbean - your gratuities are <u>not</u> prepaid. The line requires all or none to prepay. Other cruise lines – allow a per stateroom decision; we establish your preference at final payment.
- ❖ Your room steward leaves tipping envelopes in your room the last day or next to last day, each marked as room attendant, head waiter, assistant waiter, Maitre'd.
- ❖ If you arranged prepaid gratuities at final or gratuities added to your shipboard account, you will receive with your tipping envelopes a note for each stating that you prepaid tips. Giving the envelope with enclosed note to those that served you lets them know you did not forget their services, and you may include additional cash in the envelope if you so choose.
- Gratuities prepaid or added to the onboard account will be distributed to the service staff members.
- ❖ The Matre'd is not covered in disbursement of prearranged tips, so you may tip cash at your discretion.
- ❖ The Maitre'd is responsible for wait staff service throughout the ship, not just the dining room. Received good service in the many dining venues is thanks to the Maitre'd.

U.S. CUSTOMS

The final day at sea, the Cruise Director will hold a debarkation talk. DO NOT MISS THIS!

- ❖ Most cruise lines REQUIRE one person per family to attend.
- ❖ The talk includes updates in U.S. Customs laws regarding the limits on duty-free items (including liquor) you can bring back, how to complete U.S. Customs Claim Forms, etc.
- ❖ The cruise line provides customs claim forms on the last night or two of your cruise (your steward will generally leave these on the desk in your stateroom).

❖ Complete these IN FULL before the morning you ship returns to home port. Failure to do so just slows down the line in customs when you disembark.

Know the laws of your state regarding bringing back alcoholic beverages. Texas residents, for example, face a more restrictive policy on the amount of alcohol you can bring back. Check the web site for the U.S. Customs and Borders for info. As of my last cruise Dec 2006, it was 1 liter for TX residents; as many as desired for residents of other states though subject to taxes if more than 1 liter.

RETURNING HOME

It's sad, but even vacations come to an end. You know how long it takes to get off a plane, right? Imagine getting 1500 or more travelers off one vessel, making sure they can all find their luggage, then having all go through customs. Yep, that's the happy end to your cruise!

- The night before you arrive home there are several required actions on your part
 - ❖ Your room steward leaves tipping envelopes in your room the last day or next to last day
 - ❖ If you arranged prepaid gratuities at final or gratuities added to your shipboard account, you will receive with your tipping envelopes a note for each stating that you prepaid tips. Giving the envelope with enclosed note to those that served you lets them know you did not forget their services, and you may include additional cash in the envelope if you so choose. The Matre'd is not covered in disbursement of prearranged tips, so you may tip cash at your discretion.
 - ❖ Your room steward leaves cruise line "color-coded" luggage tags for check on luggage.
 - ❖ Do <u>not</u> tag your carry-on luggage. DO <u>NOT</u> PUT YOUR CARRY-ON OUTSIDE THE DOOR or it will go to the cargo hold too!
 - The daily activity sheet lists the time to have your check on luggage ready to go to the ship's cargo hold. Remember, this is the night before we dock remember to keep PJ's, after dinner clothes so you can party the night away, medicines and your clothes for the next morning. Those you will put in your carry-on bag the next morning. It's been many the traveler that packed it all and didn't realize their error until after their belongings were in the cargo hold. Ooops!
 - **❖** Many ships have a "Carry Off Early Departure" option allowing a limited number of people to get advance passes at the Purser's Desk to disembark early IF you can carry all your luggage.

Your ship will likely dock in the wee hours of the morning or while you're at breakfast.

- ➤ Before travelers can get off the ship, the ship itself must clear customs.
 - This generally takes at least an hour and is often done while you are having breakfast
 - ❖ The cargo hold must be secured by customs and all that luggage taken to the hold the night before must be brought off the ship by dock workers and arranged by color-coded luggage tags in the ship terminal. Remember that "color" you were assigned via your luggage tag the last night?
- ➤ Debarkation....waiting for your "color" assignment or deck to be called...this is where playing cards and crossword puzzles come in handy.
 - Some cruise lines let you go just about anywhere on ship except the casino. Find a good deck chair and watch the excitement of your bags coming off and a fresh stock of food being loaded on the ship.
 - Some cruise lines want you out of your room so they can start cleaning (Royal Caribbean & Carnival). Remember, they have another 1,500 plus people coming aboard in about 4 hours, and your room steward really needs time to go ashore and stock up on personal essentials, visit the bank, etc., in addition to getting your room ready for the next cruiser.
 - Some cruise lines assign each deck or color code to a "meeting place" (lounge, etc.) to wait. Remember the start of your cruise you didn't let that long line at check in mar your vacation mood, so don't let the post-cruise wait ruin what's hopefully been a fun week.

Customs officials control the speed of debarkation. This is completely beyond your cruise line's control!

- ❖ It takes easily two or three hours to offload all passengers
- Customs advises the Cruise Director when and how many passengers may disembark at a time
- * "Carry your own baggage early departure" period usually leads to the main exit being packed with people. Those couple hundred or more passengers are in the main debarkation area, as they should be, but customs may not let the passengers disembark at the designated time. Find a comfortable area early on to wait it out if you are carrying all your bags and wait till the line starts moving.
- Locating luggage and clearing U.S. Customs all takes place in the cruise ship terminal
 - Luggage is grouped by color tags
 - ❖ If you think it's hard identifying your luggage at the airport with 200 passengers from your plane, try finding your luggage among that of 1,500 or more people! Use some identifying mark, ribbons, etc.
 - Some luggage claiming processes go very smoothly if customs tightly controls the number of people disembarking every few minutes. If too many are let off at one time, it can be a real zoo.
 - ❖ Keep your cool, grab a porter (tip them as you would at the airport), find your luggage (some porters will help with this if you describe your luggage to them)
 - ❖ Porters are great about determining which Customs lines are moving faster.
 - ❖ Get in line to check through customs. Remember that customs form you filled out last night or the night before? Have that and your passport, etc., handy. The customs process is sometimes really quick if everyone has their paperwork in order and if all cruisers are following the letter of the law in terms of what and how much of what they can bring into the country.
 - ❖ Driver, catch the shuttle to that parked car, then come back for your passengers and the luggage.
 - ❖ If returning to a hotel where your car is parked, use the shuttle instructions provided by your hotel
 - ❖ If using cruise line transfers, the cruise line will give you instructions before debarkation on catching their transfer to the airport.

Turn and wave bye, bye to your ship. There are 1500 plus excited passengers about to start their cruise. You probably won't see them as you disembark. The cruise line does not want you snarling at them just because your fun is ending and theirs is about to begin. ©

Now, as soon as you get home, think about where in the world you want to sail next. And call me! It's almost never too soon to book your next cruise; early bird discounts usually six months before sail date.

FAR AWAY PLACES TRAVEL 972-871-8339 teri@far-away-places.com HAVE A GREAT CRUISE!