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Things You Wish Someone Had Told You Before Your First Cruise

TRAVEL INSURANCE IS A MUST!

During your booking process we always state that travel insurance is a condition of booking. Ensure that your insurance includes cancellation for any reason, medical evacuations and covers all pre-existing medical conditions. Contact the insurance company personally to discuss rather than relying on their website which has generic rather than specific information related to you.



DIFFERENT TYPES OF CABINS

Different cabin categories attract different prices. If you look at the Deck plans you can see that generally the cabins are colour coded - that indicates the cabin category so it's possible to get the same cabin category on a different deck but a different location.

Prices quoted are usually the "lead in" price for a twin/double cabin and in the lowest category cabin unless otherwise stated. So if you want a twin share balcony cabin or a suite, it will be a different price depending on the category and location of the cabin.



ARE LARGE SHIPS BETTER THAN SMALLER SHIPS?

First of all - what are large ships?

Some may define a "large" ship by the number of passengers on board - eg say more than 2,500 ... there are some "mega" ships that take a lot more passengers than that too.

A smaller ship to some people may only take 600-700 people - usually less activities and much quieter.

It all depends on what you want ... some love the larger ships as they may have more activities on board especially during the sea days and particularly for younger people - eg rock climbing, zip lining, water slides etc.

YOUR CRUISE CARD

Cruise ships these days are cashless although some cruise lines take cash only in the casino.

At check in you will be given your Cruise Card which usually has a photograph of you. The Cruise Card opens the door to your cabin and pays for purchases on board such as drinks and purchases from the onboard boutiques. You must take this cruise card with you when you go ashore and come back to the ship from the port. If you lose it the front desk will issue a new one free of charge



SPECIAL DIETS, FOOD ALLERGIES

If you have food allergies or dietary requirements, see the Maitre D or Head Waiter soon after arrival on board and talk to them about your requirements and they will try to accommodate them. The Maitre D or Head waiter is usually in one of the dining rooms in the afternoon of boarding the ship - the Front desk should be able to tell you which dining room and what time he/she is available. If you cannot see him/her then, wait until dinner and see them at the door



YOUR CABIN STEWARD

Your Cabin Steward works hard to ensure your cabin is fresh and clean and that you are happy with his / her service they are providing. If you are not happy, say something to him or her first and give them a chance to correct the issue. The crew rely on good comments from passengers to ensure continuity of their tenure so complaints no matter how small or insignificant can impact on that.

Bottom line - treat all crew members as you would like to be treated by others.

DAILY PROGRAMME

Read the cruise line's daily newsletter which will arrive in your cabin each day. This will tell you about the entertainment and activities for the day and on port days it has the contact details for the port agent as well as the "all aboard" times ... important information to take note of.

Ensure you take note of the departure time and be back on board in plenty of time before departure.

DINING OPTIONS

Dining options - you can choose to eat in the dining room or casual eating in the buffet section - these are included in your fare. Many ships also have specialty restaurants on board too, however there is a cover charge for these restaurants which vary from ship to ship and what the restaurant is offering.

Some ships also offer room service - there may or may not be a charge for this.

Most ships have a complimentary afternoon tea in one of the dining rooms offering tea, coffee, sandwiches and cakes to eat in the afternoon.

DRINKS PACKAGE

Some cruise lines offer all inclusive drinks packages and others offer drinks packages at a charge. You can check out the drinks packages on the cruise line website to see what is included and whether it is right for you.



PHOTOGRAPHS

Photos are taken of you when you board, at various ports, dining rooms and around the ship especially when scenic cruising so you will have plenty to choose from.

These photos are available to purchase so you can take home your cruise memories with you

LAUNDRY

Some cruise lines have laundries - pay as you go - to use on board. You can buy soap powder in the laundry on some ships or take your own. Alternatively you can send your laundry to the ships laundry, there is a charge for this. In addition some cruise lines offer a dry cleaning or a pressing service, again there is a charge for this.

COMMUNICATIONS

Internet is available onboard most ships. Some ships offer this free of charge and others make a charge. Usually packages are available and these are the better value option than pay as you go if you intend to use the internet quite often. You can use the ship's computers or if you have your own device you can sign in on those. An alternative is to wait until you get to port and try to find free WIFI.

Mobile Phones - When you're in port, your mobile signal will typically switch to a carrier from the country or island you're visiting. Roaming charges in these areas vary; you'll want to check with your carrier for the pricing for each country you're visiting. At the moment, member countries of the EU benefit from no roaming charges in Europe. Always remember to put your phone in airplane mode or turn off data roaming before you head out to sea.

SHORE EXCURSIONS

For those new to cruising, we would recommend the ship's shore excursions as they guarantee to have you back on board and if the excursion is late the ship will wait for you. These shore excursions cost money and for some they offer peace of mind and would not go ashore without a ship's shore excursion.

More experienced cruisers are happy to do their own thing whether it's wandering around the port or arranging private transport to visit a place they particularly want to go to. If you do go down this path you need to hire someone who has a good reputation and is experienced in private shore excursions



DISEMBARKATION

A few days before your final port you will receive a survey about your time of departure. Complete it and give it back to the front desk and they will issue a "letter" with a few coloured and numbered luggage tags to put on your luggage. Keep note of the colour and number of your luggage tags

On the attached letter there will be a list of the luggage tag colours and number, departure time to walk off the ship as well as which lounge to meet in to wait for your disembarkation announcement.



Pack your luggage and place a luggage tag on the handles and put the luggage outside your cabin door by the recommended time. Keep back your hand luggage to pack any essentials you are unable to pack in your large luggage (including medication) and hand carry this off the ship.

On the other hand you may have packed light and can take it off yourself - that's generally not a problem unless you have a mobility issue as some ports require a free hand to hang on to the escalator or stairs while walking down.

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