



GOING ON A CRUISE?

ADVICES AND PACKING LIST

Canadian Club Canadien Gulf Coast Florida
March 2024

PART ONE - ADVICE

Do business with a reputable travel agency.

If it's too good to be true, it's not true! You might get a lower price, but it might not include the plane trip, the cabin might be inside (no window), taxes and gratuities won't be included, and you will be on your own if there is a problem. If you want peace of mind, forget the online travel agency, and stick with safe choices like the Canadian Automotive Association travel agency or a well-known reputable travel agency.

Research the right cruise line for you.

Conde Nash (the reference in a travel magazine) conducted a satisfaction survey for large ships. None of these cruise lines is terrible; some are just better.

- Virgin Voyages. Score 94.07
- Disney Cruise Line. Score 92.21
- Cunard. Score 89.55
- Princess Cruises. Score 89.42
- Celebrity Cruises. Score 88.57
- Costa Cruises. Score 87.95
- Holland America Line. Score 87.79
- Norwegian Cruise Line. Score 86.41
- Royal Caribbean International. Score 84.31
- MSC Cruises. Score 83.77

The ranking would be different if you were looking for expedition, family, entertainment, value for money, etc.

Budget the right amount

As a rule of thumb, about \$5,000-\$7,000 per week for two. Some cruises are more expensive. Private tours are an add-on – on average \$200 per tour for two. Short cruises are more expensive, in a way, as they include airline tickets. In addition to the basic cost, you need money for private tours – about \$1,000 for two. There is no free lunch!

Research Key cruise destinations – time of the year.

While there are cruises worldwide, the most common cruises go to the Caribbean (winter), Mediterranean (summer), European river cruises, and Alaska. The same cruise ship might do both the Caribbean and Alaska. When transitioning from one itinerary (re-positioning) to another, they often offer unique cruises, such as crossing the Cape Horn.

Get travel Insurance.

Don't leave home without it! Being sick or injured abroad can cost you dearly. Be fully insured. Don't trust credit cards' travel insurance. If you don't have employer-sponsored travel insurance like Medoc for federal government employees, get bona fides travel insurance like Blue Cross.

Research itinerary ports in advance.

Ports of call are at the heart of most cruises. You want to know what is interesting about these places so that you can choose shore tours that will fully meet your expectations.

Sign up for shore excursions in advance.

Booking shore excursions directly through your cruise line is easy and safe. Reserve yours as soon as you sign up for your cruise. The best value-for-money tours will quickly disappear. You can also book through independent tour operators in ports that might go to the same sites for less money. Be aware that the cruise ship will not wait for private operators if they are late; they will wait for tours booked with the cruise ship.

Relax - you do not have to take tours every day.

You want maximum value for your money but will quickly get exhausted if you take long tours daily. Pace yourself. Either skip a day or take something more relaxing on certain days. After all, you are on vacation to relax.

Choose the right luggage.

We only have one basic recommendation. Travel as lightly as you can. Lightly because you don't want to tot around hefty suitcases. Also, airlines have maximum size and weight. For your carry-on, you might use transparent bags for your medication, jewelry, and electronics - border agents like that, and it might speed up the verification process when they ask you to open your carry-on.

Choose the right clothes.

We only have one recommendation: travel as light as you can. Light because you do not want to tot around hefty suitcases. Choose light, wrinkle-resistant, UV-protected, breathable, and stretchable fabric. Golf clothing met all these criteria. Regardless of what you are told about the weather, bring one set of warm and one set of lighter clothes. Remember that you must look good, but you do not have to look like a prince and princess daily!

Choose the right shoes.

The one thing that stands between you and a painful trip is your shoes. You need a pair of “formal” nice shoes for dinners and functions. You also need a pair of excellent walking shoes (I love Sketcher). Do not hesitate to buy new ones – light as opposed to heavy shoes. You might need a third pair of shoes for those nights you have tired and swollen feet – I recommend ½ point larger than you everyday shoes. Let us not forget socks! They need to be comfortable, breathe, stretch, and made with a mix of cotton and other materials; to avoid blisters. Scandals and crocs are to be avoided during private tours.

Lease expensive jewelry at home.

Everybody wants to look their best. Wearing that tick gold neckless, that ring with a big stone, or displaying your Rolex is tempting. What if they get stolen or lost? During cruises, less is best. Keep your valuables at home and bring nice but inexpensive jewelries.

Learn about your ship.

Modern cruise ships are huge. Most have at least fifteen floors, a few pools, numerous food courts and restaurants, etc. Go to your cruise line website and print your ship's map. You should memorize where the health care (doctor) office is located. Carry the ship’s map in your pocket for a few days.

Get travel cash in Canada.

The US dollar or Euro exchange rate will be better at home than abroad. Bring the equivalent of \$200 in small denominations.

Print all travel papers.

These days, you can have all your travel information on your iPhone, but if you lose it, you will be struck! As a precaution, always print all travel documents and carry them with you.

Be cautious when on planes.

You mostly know the dos and don'ts but limit your drinking and don't direct the air vent to your face as planes recirculate air (and viruses).

Arrive at your departure port a day ahead of schedule.

The only way to ensure you will not miss your ship is to be at the port the day before. You might think it is okay to fly or drive to a port on the morning of departure, but all it takes is a moderate flight delay or a pile-up on the highway to upset your plans. If you arrive late at the port, the ship will not wait for you.

Arrive at the port at least three hours before embark time.

Be aware. There will be long line-ups if you board a ship with 5,000 passengers or more. Have your documents ready and be patient.

Wear a mask when in line.

A 5,000-person line-up is the best place to catch a virus. Wear a mask and use hand sanitizer. Catching something as you embark on your cruise could ruin the experience.

Skip the buffet on your first day on board.

There is nothing more jammed than a cruise ship buffet on embarkation day. Everybody boarding heads straight up to it. To avoid the first-day buffet crowds, head to whatever secondary dining option is available. Sometimes, a ship will open one of its table-served eateries for lunch on embarkation day. It will be much less crowded than the buffet.

Choose the right clothes for each private tour.

The number one principle: look like the locals and not like princes and princesses out of a Hollywood movie. This does not mean wearing yoga pants, tank tops, or miniskirts. Stay clear of t-shirts with political and social messages, as they can get you in trouble – a pro-Poutine t-shirt is not popular these days! It means to look like the average local. Not being identified as a tourist has its advantages. Another piece of advice: for women traveling to Muslim countries, do not wear revealing clothes, arrange your hair, and wear a hat. Finally, when choosing your clothes, think about rain, excessive heat, rough terrain, super bugs, and any condition unique to your tour.

Leave your big camera home.

Your ten-pound Nikon camera with a huge lens can take excellent pictures, but please leave it at home. It's a nuisance to carry, making you a pickpocket magnet. Instead, bring a pocket camera or a recent iPhone with a wide angle and zoom lens.

Bring your iPhone.

Almost everybody has one, and those who don't have one want one. If both of you have one, bring the one with the least personal info and apps. In fact, you should remove a maximum number of apps on the iPhone that will take on private tours. Be ready to lose it or get it stolen. On the other hand, your iPhone is your camera and can also be a lifesaver. Make sure that you have a security lock code on your iPhone. High end iPhone often worth \$1,500 are prime target for pickpockets. Do not keep them in your back pocket. Keep them in a deep zippered pocket.

Leave your laptop at home.

Unless you are a critically important person for your organization, a laptop is dead weight. Remember, you are on vacation to relax. The same holds true for heavy iPads. You might want to read world news but believe me you do not need to do so. Worst case scenario, a modern iPhone with a light portable Bluetooth keyboard will do just fine.

Watch for pickpockets.

Pickpockets (and peddlers) are a nuisance that can make your cruise a nightmare. Most pickpockets are kids and teens. Be worried about children's bands. They will circle you, and, first thing you know, your wallet or purse is gone. They are incredibly skillful. Do not be a pickpocket magnet – wear what the locals are wearing. Do not travel with jewelry, an expensive watch (Apple iWatch), a wallet, or a passport to protect yourself. Bring a bit of cash, a \$200 (or equivalent in Euros) prepaid credit card, a photocopy of your passport, your ship boarding pass, and details regarding the port at which your ship is docked. You might still get picked, but it will not ruin your cruise. The following are some of the worst European cities: Athens, Florence, Amsterdam, Rome, Prague, Madrid, Paris, Barcelona, and Vatican City.

Use the safe in your cabin.

All cabins have a safe. It's not Fort Knox, but it is where your passport, jewelry, and important documents should be – not on your night table.

Use dry cleaning services on board.

It may cost a few dollars, but it's fast and worthwhile. Don't carry extra clothes; get them dry-cleaned onboard.

Stay clear of trouble.

Whenever five thousand people are confined in a small place (a cruise ship, however large it is, is a small place), there will always be trouble – drunk, jealous, stupid, or aggressive people. Don't get into any argument; walk away. When you think about it, on a 5,000 passengers ship there might be a few criminals – they too like cruises!

Gamble on Board with moderation.

Every cruise ship has a gambling area, sometimes as beautiful as in Vegas. You can have fun, but you can also lose your shirt. Use with moderation.

Realize that a cruise ship is a giant money-making machine.

While Cruise Lime makes some money with private tours, this is only the tip of the iceberg. Everything is money-driven. A demonstration by a podiatrist, for example, will end up by selling you insoles for your shoes. A free meal sells you a high-price restaurant/wine for two. A galley sale is about selling you diamonds or tanzanite. Many people realized that their deal on the ship was not such a deal and that there were better deals at home. By The Way, the same holds for shopping at ports of call.

Pay gratuities on board.

A couple traveling together can expect about \$30-\$40 per day per person in gratuities. Cruise gratuities are service charges that are not included in a standard cruise fare on most contemporary cruise lines, like a hotel resort fee. Guests are usually charged automatically for these additional fees. The gratuities are divided among stateroom attendants, dining staff, and other behind-the-scenes crew members in a proportion determined by the cruise line. This method is meant to be more equitable across all staff. You should pay the gratuities in advance – CAA-booked cruises often include gratuities. You can add an extra \$ if you are delighted with the service you received.

A cruise can be a weight-gaining experience.

Everything on board is tempting. You can double desserts, you can drink two extra glasses of wine, you can have the "all you can eat" breakfast every day, you can have the midnight chocolate buffet (we did), you can snack here and there and on private tours. These excesses all add up. Over a three-week cruise, you can quickly gain five pounds. Don't think that a thirty-minute treadmill session will erase everything. By the way, don't look for scales on a cruise ship – they don't want to know how much weight you can as it may not go to bars and restaurant as much.

If your health worries you... don't cruise

A cruise ship, like an airplane, is a virus-carrying vessel. Both recirculate air, which contains viruses. In addition, sanitation measures are not always the best on board, and many sick people (knowingly or not) are passengers. Common areas like buffets and pools are packed with people and viruses. We all heard the news about ships full of sick people and quarantined in faraway ports or at sea. These horror stories can still happen. If you have a weak immune system, don't cruise! If you do, have masks available and sanitize your hands as often as possible.

HAVE FUN – RÉJEAN & LOUISE GRAVEL

PART TWO – PACKING LIST

FOR PACKING & PLANNING

- Carry-on suitcases (2)
- Checked suitcases (2)
- Luggage trackers (2)
- Luggage tags (4)
- Travel insurance documents
- Cruise documents
- Cruise ship plan

FOR TRAVEL & EMBARKATION

- Passports
- Credit cards (2 max)
- Local currency
- Airline tickets
- Ship Boarding documents
- Hotel info (if applicable)
- RFID wallets
- Masks
- Hand sanitizer
- Medications
- Covid information
- Vaccination card
- iPhone

FOR CARRY-ON SUITCASES

- Cruise documents
- Photocopy of key documents
- Copies of prescription medications
- Travel insurance documents
- Medications
- Health therapy (e.g.: CPAP)
- Hairbrush

- Deodorant
- Toothbrush/toothpaste
- Dental floss
- Jewelry
- Underwear for 2-3 days
- Socks for 2-3 days
- Trouser/shirt – one pair

FOR THE CABIN

- Outlet adapter
- Duct tape (can fix many things)
- Diapers men & women
- Night light
- Tide-to-Go (for small stains)
- Pen and paper
- Phone charger

PERSONAL ITEMS

- Over-the-counter medicines
 - Cold & Flu OTC medicine
 - Pain/headaches OTC medicine
 - Motion sickness pills
 - Pain relieving cream
 - Sleeping aids/pills
 - Diarrhea OTC medication
 - Laxative OTC medication
- Earplugs
- Eye mask
- Electric razor
- Shaving cream/razor
- Cologne/perfume
- Nail clipper/file
- Nail polish

CANADIAN CLUB CANADIAN FLORIDA WEST COAST

- Band-Aids
- Bug spray
- Baby wipes
- Sunscreen lotion/aloes
- Sunglasses
- Reading glasses and contact lenses
- Ziploc bags
- Wet Wipes
- Feminine products
- After sun lotion
- Makeup & makeup remover
- Coton swabs
- Money belt
- Wrinkle-release spray
- Camera
- Beach bag
- Scarf
- Lip balm
- Umbrella
- Flashlight
- Keys (home)

CLOTHING PER PERSON

- T-shirt (2)
- Shorts (2)
- Long Pants (2 pairs of light ones)
- Evening dress pants (1 pair)
- Long sleeve sport shirt (2)
- Long sleeve formal shirt/blouse (1)
- Bras/undershirts (2 sets)
- Evening gown or cocktail dress
- Belts (2-3)
- Underwear (7)
- Socks short & long (7)
- Swimsuit (2)
- Swimsuit cover-up (1)

- Light jacket (1)
- Hat/caps (2)
- Sleep clothes (2)
- Walking shoes (2 pairs)
- Slip-on mesh water shoes (1 pair)
- Formal shoes (1 pair)
- Blazer or sport coat (1)
- Tie (1)
- Workout clothes (1 set)
- Sweater/polar (1)
- Sandals (1 pair)
- Purses (2 including a dress one)

YOUR PERSONAL ITEMS LIST

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