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Been There, Done That - Cruising Tips From Seasoned Travelers

By Kirsten Hawkins

If you are cruising for the first time - congratulations! You are in for a unique, worthwhile

experience. As a newbie, though, you probably have questions about some of the do's and don'ts of traveling aboard a cruise ship. Luckily, there are many die-hard cruisers who are happy to share some tips to make your first time more rewarding.

Before You Leave Home:

Have a friend or neighbour take in your mail daily. Accumulating mail is a big sign to thieves and other troublemakers that no one is home. You could also have your mail held at the post office until you return.

Set your lights on timers so that it appears someone is home to deter troublemakers. Tell your neighborhood community patrol to make a few extra passes by your home while you are away.

Preprint labels and stamps if you plan to mail postcards out while you are on your cruise. This saves some time and you won't have to lug around an awkward address book.

Money Matters:

Stock up on traveler's checks since they are replaceable if lost or stolen. To expedite the replacements should your traveler's checks be lost or stolen, write down the serial numbers and put them in a safe and separate place. That way, it makes the bank's job a little easier and speed up the process for your replacements.

Keep a handy supply of small denominational bills, usually one's and five's. Tipping is appreciated for porters and stewards at both the airport and docking pier of the ship. This is especially important in foreign countries. Horror stories abound about stolen or "lost" bags that never make it to the ship. Sometimes, you have got to grease their palms with cash. It's a small price to pay for having your clothing and toiletries aboard for your cruise.

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To avoid long lines at the end of your cruise, check out your ending invoice on your account. Check for any errors and resolve them as soon as possible. There is no sense adding the stress of standing in line to pay your final tab after you just had a relaxing vacation.

Take a few rubber bands with you to wrap around your wallet. The rubber will "grab" onto your clothing. This makes it very difficult for a pickpocket to part with your wallet without you feeling it.

Kid Stuff:

If you are traveling with babies or toddlers, paper throwaway bibs are perfect for protecting your child from stains and messes at meal times, thus prolonging the wear of their clothing.

Bring a collapsible stroller for your young child. The cruise ship is a happening place and before long you will hear the strains of "I'm tired! Carry me!" This is exhausting to parents. With a stroller, you can

just pop your kid inside and roll on.

Pack a few portable, self contained snacks for your child like peanut butter or cheese crackers. These will come in handy and are much cheaper than buying some once you are cruising or at port.

Odds and Ends:

Throw inside your suitcase a few of those annoying plastic shopping bags that you usually get from the grocery store. These are handy for storing dirty clothing.

If you have an inside cabin, take a nightlight with you. Darkness is not fun when you are in a strange room. No sense running into walls or stubbing your toe if you can avoid it. Little maglight keychain flash lights are handy too.

Bring a little first aid kits for those minor emergencies. Wet wipes are handy too for those instance were a sink isn't handy.

There are literally hundreds of cruise tips that can save the sanity of newbie travelers. Think of those little shortcuts or ideas that you use at home. Decide if they are adaptable to the cruise ship. The less you have to worry about, the more relaxed you will be after your cruise.

Kirsten Hawkins is a cruise and travel expert specializing in discount cruises and travel. Visit

<http://www.luxury-cruise-deals.com/>

for more information on how to cruise the world for little or no money.

Single Cruise

By Martha Vasquez

When it comes to cruising, you can't blame the single traveler for feeling a bit neglected. Solo cruisers must pay "single supplements" if they wish to have their own cabins, which can as much as double one's cruise fare.

And once aboard, singles find themselves in the minority, as their fellow passengers are largely comprised of families and couples. The fact is, cruise lines haven't made much of an effort to attract singles.

"Single travelers are a growing, important part of the market that can't be ignored," says Kari Lee, coordinator of Vacations To Go's singles cruises.

"There are more and more organizations that bring singles together; why not do that on a cruise ship?" says Lee. An energetic host or hostess is always on board to organize singles-only activities. These include poolside sail-away parties, private cocktail mixers with complimentary drinks, games and "single-mingle" dining. On some itineraries, singles shore excursions are available for an additional fee. They may include swimming with stingrays in the Bahamas and Cayman Islands and a beach party in Mexico.

Single cruises have proved to be popular. More than 2,000 travelers sailed the same year. Vacationers who reserve a cruise gain access to a private chat room where they can meet fellow singles traveling on the same itinerary. The chat rooms can get very active. Two ladies who signed up separately for the same cruise found out through the chat room that they live in the same town. They've already gotten together a few times before their cruise.

Solo cruisers can avoid the single supplement by bringing a friend, which pairs same-sex singles in one stateroom. But for those who prefer more privacy, single-occupancy cabins are available at the single-supplement rate.

Of course, some singles don't really want to meet someone else special while cruising and that's alright too. There is plenty on board to keep a single person busy and involved without having to mingle socially including the beautiful swimming pools, spas, jacuzzis, elegant dining and more.

So if you always thought that you couldn't go on a vacation cruise because you were single that is just not true anymore. There is plenty that modern cruise lines have to offer both singles who want to meet other singles, and those who are just want to stay single but still have a great time.

Martha has written many articles about luxury travel, you can find her website at

Luxury Travel



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