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Cruising Through A Hurricane

By Kirsten Hawkins

Planning on a Caribbean destination in the late summer or autumn months? You are in luck! Cruise prices are at its lowest that time of the year. However, there is just one little problem: hurricane season!

Cruising all year long is becoming more popular in the Caribbean, so those brave souls who book during the height of hurricane season should be prepared for last minute changes or diversions in their cruise travel plans. Hurricane season is officially from June 1st to November 30th. However, Mother Nature's fury is often erratic depending on where you are traveling. For instance, mid to late August on through late September tend to be top times for storms on the East Coast of the United States as well as the Eastern Caribbean territories. Other areas of the Caribbean are more storm active in the latter part of the autumn season.

Theoretically, your chances of encountering a hurricane on your cruise are small. But, the likelihood is there, so a traveler must keep that in mind when booking a cruise. Be advised that certain destination ports in your cruise may be skipped because of storm risks. So, if you have your heart set on a certain Caribbean stop, perhaps the best recourse is for you to plan your cruise for a different time of year.

Safety is of utmost importance to cruise lines. After all, they want your repeat business! Their policy is to steer clear of any storms. Because of years of experience sailing in all types of weather, all cruise lines have emergency plans of action in place in the probability of encountering a storm. They also have sophisticated equipment to continually monitor the weather for any possible changes in the forecast.

Since cruise lines make it a point to steer clear of storms, sometimes the cruise ships have to divert to alternate ports of call. This usually happens when their regularly scheduled stops are threatened or bombarded by storms or hurricanes. One problem cruise ships can encounter is that the calmer ports of call may be full with not only the regularly scheduled ships but also other cruises also looking for a temporary safe haven from the storm. In this instance, your cruise ship will just continue to sail, diverting to calmer seas, sometimes adding a few days to your journey.

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Unfortunately no refunds are given for any deviations to the cruise itinerary. Cruise lines have the discretion to switch ports of call. Be sure to read the microscopic print in your cruise agreement and paperwork. If you feel that you don't want anything left to chance, you can always buy an insurance policy for your travels that covers interruptions due to weather conditions. Find out what all the fine print means on that policy before you set sail though!

So what happens if a hurricane shifts suddenly? Your cruise ship can often elude the storm simply because of its speed. However, that does not mean you won't experience any turbulent seas. You can bet that the ship's infirmary will be bombarded with travelers seeking seasickness medications! Basically, when traveling during hurricane season, you have to be flexible. Plan a few extra days of being gone, just in case. Keep track of the weather starting a week or two before you set sail. Pack your Dramamine or whatever seasickness remedies you prefer. Most of all have fun and go with the flow.

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.

Taking A Cruise: Hurricane Season In The Atlantic

By Kirsten Hawkins

Hurricane season can be a rather tricky time for summer travelers. Kids are home from college, the younger kids are out of school, mom and dad are taking time off of work and the family want to take a vacation. Wait...what about hurricanes? The official hurricane season in the Atlantic begins June 1 and extends until November 30, encompassing the entire summer season in the Caribbean.

In 1998 the Phantom, a ship on the Windjammer cruise line lost its ship and all of the crew members after it sailed off into sea to avoid a hurricane. In trying to avoid the hurricane, they ran straight into the storm. Thankfully, the passengers had all been dropped off safely on the shore, but the captain and crew of the ship were not so lucky. This is a wake up call to all of those out there who think that cruise liners are unsinkable—obviously, they are not. A year later a Carnival cruise liner experienced some problems during a hurricane, but fortunately the ship, crew, and all the passengers made it out of the storm in one piece.

Situations such as this can cause a lot of travelers to second guess their travel plans, thinking that cruises and hurricanes do not mix. Of course, hurricane season and cruise liners do not go together well at all, but somehow the cruising industry has managed to stay above the hurricane season at least most of the time, making the summer one of the best times ever to take a cruise to the Caribbean. From August to December, the prices of cruises and everything that goes along with it (dining, ship

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lodging, activities and such) are at an all time low.

Hurricane season can be a real bummer, and those of you who have had your summer vacation displaced by a pesky hurricane or have had your long-awaited and oh so well-deserved cruise vacation cancelled due to inclement weather know exactly why that is. The good thing in all this is that as technology has advanced, so has the capabilities of the cruise liners and the liner companies themselves. No, this does not mean that a cruise ship can take on a hurricane. What this does mean is that shipping companies and weather services go to extra measures to insure that mishaps such as those that occurred with the Phantom never occur again.

Of course, this means that nothing is promised. Do not take any cruise reservations to be final ones, because any slight inkling or joke of a storm will cause the shipping company to yank their ship (their biggest investment) and their passengers (those who fund their biggest investment) off of the ocean in heart beat.

A strong piece of advice is not to finalize anything! Don't pay any hefty deposits for anything having to do with your cruise during the summer months, the peak of the hurricane season.

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