

### Cruise Travel Tips from Dream Destinations

1. Apply for your passport, if needed, at least 3 months prior to departure. Go to our web site, [www.dreamdestinations.com](http://www.dreamdestinations.com), look under the resources tab, to learn what is required. Some countries require a passport to be valid for 6 months after the end of the trip or they will deny you entry. Some cruise lines will keep your passport for a few days (don't worry its normal & they will give you a receipt)
2. Some countries require visas along with passports. Most cruise lines will handle visas for you if they are required for a visit (they get a group visa for the ship), but this is an ever changing area.
3. **Plan, Plan, Plan!** Here is a list of things that need to be done for a relaxed trip. Packing list. Call credit cards to tell them you are traveling. Pet care plan. Mail & newspaper plan. Grass cutting plan. Emergency access to your home while away plan. Trip insurance plan. Buying foreign money prior to leaving US plan. Transport to airport. Transportation to port of embarkation & return (home). Transportation while moving from one place to another. What to see & do plan. Hotel reservation plan. See my checklists to help make your planning easier.
4. In your carry-on bag pack all medications, eyeglasses, sunglasses, valuables (jewelry), a change of clothes and anything necessary to make your flight more comfortable. Carry an ample supply of any medications. IDs, credit cards, money, passports need to be with you at all times until you are in the ship. We always make 3 copies of our cards and the front page of our passport—Anne keeps one, I keep one and we leave one home with a relative. Keep track of your valuables carefully—it is easy to lose track of them if you are not careful. Do not take any extra credit cards that you will not need or use. Ladies consider carefully what jewelry you take. We always take a picture of valuables we take prior to leaving. Just remember—any checked suitcase could be lost—if it's that important **carry it with you!**
5. Try not to over pack. Anne & I try to take one suitcase and one carry-on each. The size of the suitcase depends on the length of the trip. We think a spinner suitcase is best (4 wheels) so that it will not fall over (I accidentally let Anne's 2 wheel case fall over on one trip & it cracked our net book screen). Most airlines will charge you steep fees for a bag that weights more than 50 pounds. Try to take clothes that match together so you can wear an item at least twice or three times. Wash and wear clothing helps limit the amount clothes you need. Rolling your clothes helps us get more in less space. Some cruise lines offer laundry services for a fee, but often run specials towards the end of your cruise—a good value if you are continuing your vacation. Be careful if you air dry your clothes, as they will use heat drying. Cruise packing is a real balancing act between trying to look nice and not taking too much, even though you only have to unpack and pack once on you floating hotel. We both use packing cubes to help organize our items. Even when I unpack, I just throw the packing cube in the drawer—less to pack later. You may want to take a picture of any high dollar item you are taking or make a detailed packing list with specific description (an example, Blue Microfiber Travel Smith Blazer). We have done both. Do not bring a hair dryer, clothes steamer or iron. They are prohibited due to the fire risk. Ship safe hair dryers are provided on most cruise lines.

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6. You may want to consider buying supplementary baggage insurance, especially if you travel with expensive clothes. If your luggage is lost, report the loss immediately with the airlines as soon as you realize that your bag(s) are damaged or missing. Get a copy of the report for your records. Also, ask the airline agent for a written authorization to buy “reasonable and necessary” items (toiletries and a change of clothes) to cover you until the suitcase(s) arrive.
7. Always lock your luggage with a TSA approved lock. It might deter a potential thief.
8. The TSA limits the size of all liquids to a one quart clear plastic bag. No one individual bottle may be over 3 ounces. Our website [www.dreamdestinations.com](http://www.dreamdestinations.com) has a link to the TSA on the resources section so you can get any of your questions answered about the latest rules. Do not carry coins in your pockets; put them in your carry-on bag.
9. Bring travel size toiletries.
10. We always carry money belts. See my money plan checklist to help you plan to safeguard your money and to have the resources you need to have to have a safe, fun trip. Foreign coins cannot be changed in banks or at currency exchanges—they only accept folding money. Try to use them before you leave the country or prepare to keep them as mementos. On our website on the European Destinations landing page, there is a power point about Smart Money Travel Tips ([www.dreamdestinations.com](http://www.dreamdestinations.com)).
11. Reconfirm your flight 48 hours prior to departure. Arrive 2 ½ hours prior to departure for an international flight, 1 ½ for a domestic flight.
12. To minimize jet lag and lessen travel discomfort of sitting for long periods, wear comfortable clothes and shoes. If it is an overnight flight, try to sleep; avoid caffeine, alcohol and heavy meals. Drink plenty of water! Anne carries an eye shade, ear plugs, slipper socks and an inflatable pillow—I carry an inflatable pillow and ear plugs.
13. Try to move at least every two hours or so, if possible, to help prevent your joints from stiffening. Raising your feet will help circulation and minimize swelling in your feet and ankles. We also do leg/foot exercises to help our circulation.
14. If you plan to call home, get an international phone plan. If you do not get a plan and use your phone, it can run into hundreds of dollars, especially if your data plans are running and you have not turned off your data roaming feature on your mobile device. Texting can be one option that cost less, but check with your carrier before you go.
15. Consider wearing a medical alert bracelet if you have a medical condition such as allergies or reactions to certain medications.
16. We always carry a very small first aid kit. Mine has band-aids, 4 antiseptic towelettes, antibiotic ointment, some Tums and some aspirin. Also it is wise to carry a small bottle of hand sanitizer.
17. Verify that your medical insurance covers you while traveling outside the US. Please note—Medicare does not provide coverage outside the US. The large cruise ships have a doctor on board, but it may not be covered by your medical insurance. Please check prior to your trip...
18. We always buy travel insurance; not only does it cover you for possible financial loss; it can help you continue a trip when problems arise.

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19. Prior to getting on the ship, the cruise lines will in-process you at the departure port. They will take most of your luggage to the ship for you (you may want to have a few one-dollar bills for tips handy). Be sure it is properly tagged with your stateroom number. Keep your valuables with you—we always just keep our carry-on bag with us. If you want to use the pool, make sure you have a swim suit and a cover up in your carry-on bag, as sometimes it takes a while for your luggage to be delivered to your stateroom. You will need your travel documents and passports. You can speed up this process by pre registering online. We always order our luggage tags early when we pre-register. They will also ask for a credit card or cash to be used to settle your bill. You can give them a card and then settle the bill with cash or another card or multiple credit cards. Be patient; sometimes this is the only real hassle of cruising, but most cruise lines have it down and things move quickly. They will issue you your on-board ID/ship credit card. No need for money on the ship; just charge it to your room. Please be careful, the charges add up fast! You can check your charges from your room on the TV on most ships. Cruise lines will usually provide a copy of your bill prior to the last night dinner service. If you want to be sure it is accurate, you need to keep your receipts or a running total. If you spot a problem, go to the purser's office or guest relations desk quickly to avoid long lines, especially on the larger ships.
20. The cruise lines offer just about any service aboard ship you can imagine. Some are free (meals, shows, coffee, tea, and activities); some require extra charges like the Spa, shore excursions, specialty restaurants, alcohol drinks soft drinks, & specialty coffees. Many cruise lines have special drink packages for alcohol and/or soft drinks. You are not required to get any of these extras but if you want to experience any of these, the earlier you book these the better the chance you will get what you want when you want it.
21. A lifeboat drill will be held soon after you board the ship. Take it seriously; learn where to go and what to do.
22. On the ship, be sure to lock any valuables in the safe that you do not need on the ship. All ocean cruising ships use on board credit cards that also unlock your cabin room. It also will serve as your boarding pass when you return from a port visit. Make sure you have it when you leave your cabin. They are small and easy to forget or lose.
23. Some ships toilets operate on a vacuum principle to save water. Follow the warnings on the ship—never throw foreign objects into these toilets as they can damage the entire ship's system.
24. You will receive a daily printed schedule of what is happening on the ship for every day of the cruise. It is very detailed and will help you plan what you want to do on and off board ship.
25. Pre and Post Cruise tours are a great way to see sights that need extra time to fully appreciate. A couple of tips—cruise tours require packing & unpacking—try to keep what you will need handy in your suitcase without having to unpack your entire suitcase to get what you need. Some couples like consolidating items in one suitcase, but Anne & I just use our own suitcases. Second, recognize there is a time schedule. Be courteous; be on time for events and departures. It's a good idea to get the cell phone number of the tour guide in case you get lost or some other emergency arises. If you are visiting a foreign country, you might want some local

currency. If we decide to get local currency, we always get some small bills for tips & small purchases.

26. Service aboard cruise ships is unbelievable. You will want to take your cabin steward and waiter home. They often work 18-20 hours a day, 7 days a week. It is amazing what a few kind words to them or a small present like a candy bar does for them. Phone cards are always appreciated. Anne always asks what our new friends would like, since the seldom get to leave the ship. Remember, they mostly come from foreign countries, are away from their family and love ones. Treat them with respect and do not forget to tip them.
27. If any problems arise on the cruise or you need help, visit the guest relations area of the ship. They can help with lost items, on board ship billing problems, getting change, getting a daily printed newspaper—a host of problems or information you might need.
28. If you need cash, most large cruise ships have an ATM on board. If you use them, try to use them as little as possible to avoid paying fees. Also be aware that most cruise lines allow you to get cash to gamble with onboard but often charge 3% extra.
29. You will have your picture taken on the ship several times, beginning with embarkation. You might want to wear something nice. Pictures are for sale but you are not required to buy. We recommend that you take advantage of the professional photographers during your cruise. You may get a great photo for a minimum charge. If you don't like them, don't buy.
30. There are two ways you have access to a port-- docked or by tender (a smaller boat that takes you to the port). Docked means you can walk off the ship and basically leave when you want to leave the ship. Tendered is whole different issue. Depending on the number of smaller boats being used, this can really restrict the time you have to visit a certain area. It also means some waiting. Most tenders we have been on are very efficient, but on one ship the tender service was so bad we never were able to get off the ship at one port (needless to say we do recommend this cruise line for our clients). Also recognize that safety issues may alter the cruise itinerary and you could miss a port.
31. Shore excursions and port visits also bring up other issues. We prefer to walk in ports on our own, but depending on the distance from the port to what you want to see, this may not be possible. Every cruise we have been on offers some type of briefing about the upcoming port, talks about the shore excursions available, and provides shopping tips. While most of the information is objective, realize that shops often pay commission to become a preferred vendor. Before you think this is a rip-off, realize that the cruise lines reputation is on the line and they often guarantee your purchases are quality items. Our best advice is to read the fine print and know what a good price or deal really is. Shore excursions are great fun but sometime pricey. Some ports are long distances from the key sites or major cities, so often it makes sense to use the bus service tour to get to what you want to see. When we see an excursion we like offered by the ship, we usually try to see if we could replicate on our own for less cost or use one of the other companies we have that offer shore excursions. A word of caution—if you do it on your own and are late getting back to the ship, they will leave without you and it is your responsibility to catch up with the ship. Some outside companies provide better deals in some instances than

the cruise lines. For example in Istanbul, we hired a private guide and saw everything we wanted to see. It was a good value for the money. Please. Check with us for advice about shore excursions so we can help advise you on the best course of action.

32. Prior to leaving your cabin or a room on a cruise tour for the last time, double check to make sure you did not leave anything, especially small items like phone chargers. It is easy to do.
33. Anne is our photo guru (if you have seen any of our trip photos on our web site, you know how good a photographer she is). We always bring extra camera batteries and several digital camera disks. One trick to help us remember where shots are taken is to take a picture of a town name on a sign post or other identifying feature. On a Rhine river cruise, we actually took photos of castles and then their names on a map to help us identify them.
34. We always carry at least one backpack (ours fold up) when we go to a port. You might consider making a shopping list & a budget. One word of advice—if you see something special and it seems reasonable, get it! In Tallinn, Estonia, we once saw a really nice piece of Amber jewelry but did not know if it was a good deal. Later we decided to return and buy it but had considerable trouble finding the exact store again. We ultimately found it but it taught us if it looks like a pretty good deal, go for it. Also, it is a good idea to know what the best buys at your ports are. Again in Tallinn, we learned this lesson the hard way. Since Anne had bought some pashimas on the ship, we decided not to buy some handmade shawls in Tallinn—big mistake—turns out they were super values!
35. Before you buy something, consider how you plan to get it home. You may like it in the store but consider the hassle of getting home, especially if it is breakable. Shipping home may be an option but works best with larger stores. Shipping means more costs, paperwork, insurance and what type of shipping method (mail, UPS, FedEx) you want to use.
36. Check our web site for the latest on Customs Regulations. You will have to fill out a Customs form (one per family) and go through immigration when you return home.
37. On the last night of the cruise, you will be asked to pack your bags and place them outside your stateroom by a designated time so the crew can get them ready to take off the ship. Make sure you follow their instructions and just like when you boarded, keep your valuables with you with your carry on-bag. Do not expect that you will be able to leave the ship quickly when it docks at the disembarkation port—it may have to clear customs or immigration. Do not try to make your return flight too early on disembarkation day if possible. If you do have an early flight, let the purser's office know prior to the last day of the cruise. Also, some cruise lines let you carry off your own luggage and leave early, but policies vary. If you are traveling with a group, try to get the same colored luggage tags, so the group can leave the ship at the same time.
38. **RELAX and HAVE FUN!** Cruising is our favorite vacation—you get it all, at your floating resort--great food, unpack once, awesome service and a chance to visit some of the most unique places in the world while staying in a deluxe stateroom. Thanks for allowing **Dream Destinations** to help you plan your vacation. We appreciate your business. Your journey begins here!