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27 Essential Items to Pack for Your Cruise (And Avoid Regrets!)



Planning a cruise is exciting, but packing can be tricky. Whether you're a first-timer or a seasoned cruiser, forgetting key items can certainly put a damper on your vacation.

Here's a comprehensive guide to ensure you pack everything you need for a smooth and enjoyable cruise experience. Remember, your holiday is what YOU make of it!

Must-Pack Essentials for Your Cruise

1. Passports or Government ID

Your passport or ID is crucial for boarding and disembarking. Keep it in a secure place, not in your checked luggage. A passport holder can help keep it handy and safe.

2. Boarding Day Carry-on Bag

Pack a carry-on bag with essentials like medications, valuables, a change of clothes, and shoes. Your checked luggage might take a few hours to arrive at your cabin.

3. Cruise Documents

Print your cruise documents, including boarding passes and itineraries. Many cruise lines have apps, but having a printed copy can be a lifesaver if Wi-Fi is spotty. Put a copy of these docs in your checked-in luggage and keep the originals in your handbag.

4. Luggage Tags

Print extra luggage tags and consider purchasing reusable plastic holders specific to your cruise line. MSC include luggage tags with the ticket. If you are taking the MSC SHUTTLE from the airport to the cruise terminal, be sure not to tear, cut or damage it as the CSA Staff will attach them to your bags!

5. Shore Excursion Confirmations

Print copies of your shore excursion bookings and keep them handy. Digital copies on your phone can also be useful.

6. Sunscreen

Don't forget reef-safe sunscreen, especially for Mozambique, Caribbean and Hawaii cruises. Onboard stores might not open until after departure, so pack it beforehand.

7. Aloe Vera

Bring Aloe Vera gel or after-sun lotion to soothe any sunburns.

8. Lip Balm with SPF

Protect your lips from the sun with a quality lip balm containing SPF.

9. Over-the-Counter Medication

Bring a small pharmacy with basics like pain relievers, cold medicine, and allergy pills. Ship stores are limited and expensive. Ginger is excellent for motion sickness!

10. Medication for Kids

If traveling with children, pack paediatric medications as they are hard to find on the ship.

11. Plasters for Blisters

Walking around the ship and ports can lead to blisters. Pack blister-specific plasters.

12. Dress Code Attire

Check your cruise line's dress code. Pack at least one pair of pants or nice jeans and a shirt with a collar (men) for dining areas with dress codes.

13. Shoes

Include dress shoes for formal nights and closed-toe shoes for activities like ziplining or ropes courses.

14. Socks

Don't forget socks for takkies and dress shoes.

15. Mini Laundry Detergent Packs

Laundry services on ships are costly. Pack travel-sized detergent for washing a few items in your cabin sink.

16. Downy Wrinkle Release

Irons are not allowed onboard, so bring wrinkle-release spray for your clothes. I saw this at Clicks before.

17. Laundry Stain Stick

A stain remover stick like Tide To Go can save your outfit from unexpected spills.

18. Power Bar with USB Outlets (Non-Surge Protected)

Cruise cabins typically have limited outlets. Bring a cruise-approved power bar to charge your devices.

19. Power Adapter

Pack a universal travel adapter for pre- and post-cruise hotel stays and to create an extra outlet in your cabin. The round German type for 220V is available so your South African Cell Phone charger will work!

20. Towel Clips

Prevent your towels from blowing away in the sea breeze with towel clips.

21. Towel Bands

A lighter alternative to clips, towel bands keep your towels secure.

22. Refillable Water Bottles

Stay hydrated with an insulated refillable water bottle.

23. Seasickness Medication

Pack motion sickness remedies like Bonine, sea bands, and ginger sweets to prevent seasickness.

24. Credit Card and Small Bills

Bring a credit card for emergencies and small bills for tips.

25. Ziplock Bags

Use Ziplock bags for organizing small items and keeping snacks dry. A large one is good to put your valuables in during the tender boat ride.

26. Extra Mobile Phone Charger Wire

Pack an extra charger wire to avoid high prices at convenience stores.

27. Reading Glasses & Sunglasses

Bring an extra pair of reading glasses and sunglasses to avoid inconvenience.

28. A Bathing Suit and Cover Up

Pack a bathing suit and cover up for poolside relaxation.