



LOVE2 CRUISE

Embarkation Day Guide



CRUISE EMBARKATION DAY

A Guide for new cruisers & tips for cruise connoisseurs



If this is your first cruise, I'm sure you're super excited, but probably wondering what to expect on your cruise embarkation day. So I'm going to explain a typical first day on board. But also cover what you need to do in advance to make sure your first day goes as smoothly and stress free as possible. As we go along I'm sure to cover some frequently asked questions most people have.

Important things to do before Embarkation Day

If you speak to anyone who has been on a cruise, they will tell you the check-in and embarkation is so much easier than checking in at an airport. But you can make sure the check-in and the whole first day experience is enjoyable by spending some time getting things ready in advance.

- **Online check-in**

Most cruise lines now have website or mobile app check-in. Make sure you do this in advance. This will include inputting emergency contact details, passport details, health forms, uploading covid passes, confirming you have read and accepted the rules of your cruise company.



- **Print your documents**

It is always a good idea to print important documents, in case you cannot access a digital copy. You know, that unexpected situation when the wifi crashes, you lose signal or heaven forbid, your phone battery dies! Copies of your booking confirmation. Insurance. Covid passes. Covid test results. Photocopies of passports/medical cards. Tickets for any excursions you have booked. Itineraries - if you have prepared any.

- **Pre-purchase Drinks Package and Shore Excursions**

Depending on your cruise line and the package you have booked, there may be an option to purchase a Drinks package* and Excursions. Most companies offer you the chance to book these online. Take some time to read the small print and decide what package is best for you. *this can be done onboard but you might get a better deal doing it before.

- **Register at Kids clubs**

If you are travelling with children you will have the option to register the children for the kids club. This is usually offered online and, with exception of teen club, parents/guardians have to attend the club in person once on board to confirm registration. *this can be done onboard.

Important things to do ON Embarkation Day

- **Passports and Medical Cards**

Pack your passports and medical cards (along with your printed documents mentioned earlier) in your hand luggage - as you will hand in your suitcases before check-in.



- **Bring an Embarkation Day Bag**

I like to call this 'an embarkation day bag' - the equivalent to a carry on if you are flying on an airplane. The reason being, you will be met at the cruise terminal by lovely porters who will take your big heavy cases off your hands, and you won't see them again until they magically arrive at your cabin, late afternoon/early evening. Heaven! But, in those few hours waiting for your case, you will thank me for your embarkation day bag. So bear this in mind and I'll go into more detail why and what to pack in another post.

- **No need to arrive early**

Post-Covid, most cruise lines have allocated arrival times, so there is no need to arrive early in the hope you will be at the front of the queue. Just make sure you arrive at your allocated time. It should be stated on your booking confirmation or confirmed once you complete your online check-in. *check your specific cruise line policy.

- **Where do I go?**

As I mentioned earlier, as soon as you get to the cruise terminal, on foot, in a taxi, from the car park... a porter will take your cases from you. So don't forget to keep ALL your documents, passports and medication you need on you.

There are always plenty of staff to show you where to go. The process is usually a line through hand baggage check and security, just like at an airport. This is followed by check-in desks.

Depending on whether the ship is ready/or controlling passenger flow, you will then be allowed to board the ship. Again, this will depend on your departure port. Whether it is open air and up a gangway, or a large port, it may be internal and a zigzag walk and an internal walk to the ship.



Crossing over the line from gangway to ship for the first time is exciting, and that feeling never goes away, regardless of how many cruises you go on. Your holiday has just begun. A member of staff will scan your card [or medallion], take a good look at you - SMILE - cross reference your photo and welcome you to come aboard. You are then officially on holiday!

- **Stepping Aboard**

When you step aboard, some cruise lines can be a bit intimidating. They go with the hard sell, lots of 'have your photo taken', sign up for an excursion, have you bought your drinks package yet?....

Remember, you can say NO and you can come back later. So just smile with a polite no thanks, and walk on by. Enjoy the first few moments, breathe in, relax and take a moment to enjoy yourself.

I like to find somewhere to sit down and grab a coffee and just relax for a while. Some people head straight to the pool, or buffet. You will know what you want. It is a personal choice.

- **Bring a Lanyard**

Many cruisers love a lanyard. You will be issued with an ID card (or medallion on Princess) which will open your cabin and identify you to purchase products, order drinks. So having it on a lanyard makes it hassle free, hands free and less likely to lose!



- **Can I go to my Cabin?**

Depending on what time you board, your cruise cabin might not be ready. Often you will be told a time that you can go to your cabin, but it is always worth a wander around the ship to get your bearings [when doing this, maybe check where your cabin is located] and you might have a pleasant surprise if it is already clean and ready for you.

It probably won't be, you'll have to wait an hour or so before you can head to your cabin. However, you can use all the facilities. You can still eat at the buffet - the restaurants might not be open yet, but check, most people won't go there so it will be nice and quiet. Order drinks, swim in the pool and explore the ship while you wait.

- **Kids Club**

Another thing you can do while waiting for your cabin, is visit the Kids club. The first visit is to meet the staff, check out the facilities and make sure everything you registered online is correct. The staff will explain the procedures with you. When and how you can drop off/collect your children. How they will contact you etc. Also a chance for the children to look around.

- **Time to explore your cabin [stateroom]**

So, you've eaten lunch and explored the ship, your cabin [stateroom] will be ready. Most are unlocked with your ID card, if you are sailing with Princess they now have a medallion on the newer ships which recognises you as you approach your door - very clever! I love this feature.

Take photos

Here's a little tip, if you're planning to take photos or videos, do this NOW. Because your cabin will never be this tidy again.

Cabin Steward

You will have a cabin steward allocated to your room - they will be looking after you the whole cruise and will not change. They try to be in the area when guests arrive so you will hopefully meet them. If you have any questions about your room they will be able to help. Do you need an extra pillow, clothes hangers, should your bed be a twin instead of the double. These are the things they can help with.



Wifi/App

There'll probably be instructions in your cabin about the ship's app and wifi. Most now have an app everyone can use for basic information, plus things like booking shows and restaurants, even messaging or tracing your companions location. This is free. More services may be available to wifi paying guests. If you have problems connecting you should speak with guest services, not your cabin steward.

Paperwork

You'll usually find some papers in your cabin when you arrive. On the desk or on your bed. There might be a welcome letter, perhaps even an invite to a reception.

Most cruise lines have a daily planner - some are switching to a digital version - but most still have a paper version, a bit like a short newspaper. You will get one each evening, for the following days activities, restaurant opening hours, gym hours, shows in the theatre etc. Make sure you always read this - as some things might need booking in advance to ensure you get a place!



Reservations for Dinner

This will depend on your cruise and your dining package. If you need to make reservations, or wish to book a table in a speciality dining room, it is a good idea to do this early. Just use your phone in the cabin to phone the reservation desk, or the app if this option is offered.

Unpacking

Controversial, this one! When do people unpack?

Well, this can depend on when your cases turn up. Afterall, you have the luxury of waving them off in the morning and them magically arriving at your cabin door. Personally, if they are there, then I like to unpack as soon as I can. Sometimes I have no choice and have to wait until later in the day as the cases arrive later. I know some people like to relax by the pool, enjoy sailaway and dinner. Then unpack. Some people even live out of a case... apparently!?!

If you have a lot of outfits that need hanging - please ask your cabin steward for extra hangers. I never have enough. Especially when you have extra guests in a cabin.



- **Safety [Muster] Drill**

Cruise lines call a safety drill a 'muster drill' This is the important safety briefing about what happens in an emergency. Don't be scared. It's just the same as having an announcement on a flight. It's always good to know, and you should take the time to do this!

Most cruise lines moved away from doing this in person and now show it on the app or on the stateroom TV and then ask passengers to go to the muster station [your assigned assembly point for an emergency] to have their cruise card scanned. This verifies you understand and know where you should meet in an emergency.

- **Sailaway [Departure]**

You may have boarded quite early. Had lots of nerves, excited to explore the ship, grabbed lunch, found your cabin, maybe even a dip in the pool! But it's getting late? Are you ever actually going to leave?

It can feel a bit like this on your first cruise. You've done so much, you are starting to slack and you are still in port. Not to worry, the time has finally come. Don't miss out. Don't stay in your cabin.

There will be a big celebration - usually on the top deck with the cruise director and entertainment team. There will be music and dancing, people waving as you set sail. If this is your first cruise you won't want to miss this moment!



I hope this has helped. All that is left to say is have a wonderful cruise and enjoy your holiday!

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