



DREAMLINES TIPS FOR FIRST-TIME CRUISERS

You never forget your first cruise. Cruising is an exciting way to travel the world and experience a unique vacation. But if you've never done it before, it's understandable that you might be a little bit nervous. Will you need a passport? What is there to watch out for before you depart? And what should you pack? These questions, and more, are probably on your mind. But never fear – we've gathered a list of expert tips to ensure that your first cruise is nothing but smooth sailing.

PASSPORTS, DOCUMENTS, AND ONLINE CHECK-IN: WHAT DOCUMENTS DO I NEED?

You've already booked your first cruise? Well done! You've already completed the most important step on the way to your dream vacation. But before you can hop onboard, there are still a few things to take care of. As early as possible, double check that your travel documents will be up-to-date and valid during the required time period as well. Give yourself plenty of time to apply for a new passport or ID card, if necessary. The same goes for visas, if any of the destinations you'll be visiting require a visa for U.S. citizens.

Read more: [Do I need a passport to go on a cruise?](#)

Equally important is a pre-departure health check-up. Make sure you've got an ample supply of any medications you'll need to take while cruising, and ask your doctor if you'll need any vaccinations or booster shots to travel safely in the destinations you'll be visiting.

You can find out about visa and vaccination requirements for the specific countries you'll be visiting on the U.S. Department of State's website:

<https://travel.state.gov>

Last but not least, you've got to complete your online check-in. You can usually do this online via the cruise line's website. You'll be asked to either enter your booking number or create an account, and then fill out a form online that contains all of the important data for the authorities of the different ports and countries you'll be visiting during your cruise. Though the deadline may vary by cruise line, this form is typically due no later than one week before departure.

CHECK-IN AND EMBARKATION

At check-in time, you'll be asked to show your travel documents and your credit card. Upon successful completion of this, you'll receive your cruise ID card, which you'll need throughout the duration of the cruise. Your ID card is your room key, your ID, and your method of payment for onboard purchases, all in one. The cruise line will keep track of purchases made with your ID card and send you an invoice at the end of the cruise. You'll only need your credit card for stepping onshore, if you plan on shopping or eating out at your destination. And whenever you leave and return to the ship, your ID card is your key to check in and check out.

Dreamlines recommends: Bring a lanyard to keep track of your ID card. The ship's reception can punch a hole in the card so you can attach it to your lanyard or keychain for safekeeping.

ALL HANDS ON DECK: THE MANDATORY SAFETY DRILL

Finally, the time is here: You're on the ship, about to embark on your first cruise. But there's still one important hurdle to clear before you can start on your dream vacation: the muster drill.

This safety drill is a necessary part of every cruise. It doesn't matter if you're cruising for the first time or the fifteenth – participation is mandatory. Some muster drills take place on deck using life jackets from your stateroom. Others take place in theaters and lounges. In any case, this is where you'll receive important information in case of an emergency. Remember to take your ID card with you to the safety drill – the crew will scan every passenger's card to make sure that everyone has participated.

ONE LAST TIP: STAY ON DECK FOR THE BEST VIEW

After the muster drill, you won't have to wait much longer until the ship departs. Though you may be tempted to head to your stateroom as soon as it opens, if you can hold off a few hours to start unpacking or exploring the ship, your patience will be rewarded. Departure is possibly the most exciting part of the cruise. Excitement is in the air and the anticipation is tangible as hundreds or even thousands of people kick off the start of their dream vacation. You'll want to find a good place on deck so you can wave to your loved ones onshore and watch the ship pull out of the harbor. There will be plenty of time to explore below deck later.