



Top 10 Cruise Packing Tips

If you are anything like me, you would usually start packing for your cruise a week or more before you even leave home with the help of your trusty packing list and ideas as to how to save more space in your suitcase, like the ever popular rolling of clothing and storing socks in shoes. Or perhaps you are like one of my work colleagues, who likes to just throw their clothes into a bag the night before and still ends up packing things that I forgot all about.

Either way, you eventually learn that what you pack (or forget to pack in some cases) can make a real difference to your cruise holiday.

I've wasted valuable shopping time and money purchasing jumpers because I was not expecting the weather to get cold and have been caught out on port days with no warm layers (and the jumpers still look brand new as I haven't worn them too often since). I have also paid for the overpriced paracetamol in a ship's shop, watched other guests on board sweating up a storm as they forgot to pack shorts into their carry-on on embarkation day and have been caught in the heat waiting for their bag to be delivered to the cabin.

After a lot of trial and error, I think I may have this packing business down. Whether your goal is to avoid excess baggage fees by packing light, save your in-port shopping time for souvenirs rather than necessities or simply want to make sure you take exactly what you need for your next voyage, here are a few tips for when you are packing for your cruise.



TIP 4: Always keep your important documentation with you.

Always double check that you have your necessary identification and cruise documentation and never pack them in your checked luggage. You will want to have photo ID and your cruise ship boarding pass on hand to be able to easily provide this when asked (also if your suitcase misses the boat, you will still be able to get on board). Make sure that you have the correct kind of identification for the destinations of your voyage, whether this is a birth certificate and photo ID or your passport as well as relevant visas for the countries you are visiting. Many inexperienced cruisers have been turned away at the pier for having just a copy of their birth certificate (and not the original which would be required) or a passport with a name that does not match the name on the ships manifest (which is unfortunately very common for honeymooners). If you do require a visa or any immunizations for the regions you are cruising through, carry this documentation as well. Also, another great tip is making sure that either a family member/friend or your travel agent back home has a recent photocopy of your passport...just in case.

TIP 5: Pack less and do your laundry on board.

If you are wanting to take fewer items with you to make sure you have room left over for souvenirs, consider doing laundry along the way. However one should never assume that your particular ship or cruise line offers laundry facilities on board, so it is always a good idea to check first. The cruise lines that do offer laundry services will not offer this service for free, and it can sometimes be quite expensive. Some cruise lines offer complimentary laundry and pressing services for their suite guests and their elite/top-tier past passengers (so it can pay to be a loyal passenger). There is always the option of saving on laundry costs by bringing your own laundry detergent and rinsing smalls and shirts in your cabin's bathroom.

TIP 6: Mix and match your clothing.

If you are able to wear items of clothing more than once, you will find that you will not be fighting with your cabin mate about who gets the last coat hanger in the small closet in your room or hit with excess baggage fees for packing too much. Stick with neutral coloured pants/skirts/shorts so that you can match them with different coloured tops to express your style. Or bring shirts that can be dressed up for a formal night and then re-worn while out sightseeing a few days later. Opt for layers to be able to cope with the different temperatures you will experience in different ports. Change the look of one formal outfit with the use of accessories so that you are able to wear the same thing again (such as ties, scarves and jewellery) rather than having to bring two different suits or cocktail dresses. The majority of your ship mates won't know (or care) if you wear the same outfit twice.



TIP 7: Dress appropriate for your destination.

In other words, some places have a slightly more formal dress code than others. Expect to wear more of a resort-casual style if traveling through Europe. Other itineraries, such as those close to home, the Pacific Islands, Hawaii, The Caribbean and the Mexican Riviera are generally more casual than not. If visiting any religious sites in the Middle East and some parts of Europe and Asia, a more modest dress code applies. This is usually something that would cover your shoulders and knees...even though it can be quite hot. Also, don't forget about your in-port activities. Jandals are fine for the beach days however more comfortable footwear is better suited for those longer days of sightseeing or active excursions like hiking and cycling.

TIP 8: Save some room for shopping.

You are likely to pick up at least a couple of souvenirs during your cruise, so you will need to ensure there is enough space in your luggage to bring it all home. Whether you are picking up duty-free goods from the ship, the latest designer bags in Italy or a ukulele in Hawaii, consider packing a foldable duffel bag. It will not take up much space in your suitcase and you can fill it up with as much as possible before checking it in for the flight home.

TIP 9: Remember the basics.

Most cabins on board do not come with alarm clocks, so if you are wanting to get up nice and early while on holiday you will need to bring your own. If you would prefer to use your mobile for the job, ensure you have set your phone onto flight mode or at the very least ensured that international roaming has been disabled for the trip. International charges on your cell phone at sea are phenomenal and not the nicest bill to have to pay when you get home. Other things you may want to pack as they will either be very expensive to buy on board or not provided at all include over-the-counter medication, memory cards for your camera, batteries, ear plugs, sunscreen and plastic bags for transporting liquids or wet togs (or keeping water out of your gear while on water-based activities). Do not bother bringing hair dryers, as most ships should have this in your cabin already and leave your multi board at home as the staff can remove this from your luggage before your suitcase arrives into your cabin while going through security screenings. Multi boards can overload the power supply to your cabin so not the best idea. Instead, if you have a lot of electronics that can be charged via USB, invest in a USB multi adaptor instead. Also don't pack the coffee pod machine, the cafes on board can provide your morning caffeine fix (or order a coffee the night before and have it delivered as room service).



TIP 10: Don't assume your favourite toiletries will be in your cabin.

Unless you have chosen a particular cruise line because you know that they have L'occitane shower gel or Armani moisturiser, do not assume that the brands you use at home will be in your bathroom on board. You will always find the basic toiletries such as soap and shampoo (sometimes in non-branded dispensers on the wall). If you prefer a particular brand, you might want to make room in your suitcase for your favourites. Another tip, never unpack your toiletry kit. Leave it filled with travel-sized bottles and an extra toothbrush or razor. When it is time for your next voyage, all you have to do is top the product off or replace the bottles. This way you won't forget anything or waste time collecting items.