



First Time Cruiser Checklist

Use this checklist to work through your first cruise from booking to the trip home. Mark completed items and cross out anything that does not apply.

Cruise line and ship: _____

Sailing dates: _____ Departure and return ports: _____

Before you book

- ☐ Choose your destination, preferred dates, trip length, and departure port.
- ☐ Set a total trip budget, including transportation, hotels, gratuities, and extras.
- ☐ Compare the specific ships, itineraries, and cabin options you are considering.
- ☐ Review what the fare includes and what costs extra, including taxes and fees.
- ☐ Confirm deposit, final payment, cancellation, refund, and change terms.
- ☐ Check age, pregnancy, accessibility, and other eligibility rules that apply to your party.

Confirm your travel documents

- ☐ Confirm the required documents for each traveler and every port on the itinerary.
- ☐ Check passport validity and blank-page requirements for your destinations.
- ☐ Check whether visas, entry authorizations, or transit permissions are needed.
- ☐ Make sure names on reservations match the travel documents being used.
- ☐ Confirm any consent, custody, or supporting documents needed for minors.

For U.S. travelers, the State Department recommends a passport book for cruises, even when the sailing permits other documents, in case an emergency requires a flight home. A passport card cannot be used for international air travel.

Current guidance: [U.S. Department of State cruise guidance](https://travel.state.gov/cruises/cruises.html)

Questions to resolve before booking



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After booking and before you leave

Organize your reservation

- ☐ Review your confirmation for the correct dates, ship, cabin, travelers, and price.
- ☐ Put payment dates, check-in opening dates, and booking deadlines on your calendar.
- ☐ Create your cruise account, link the reservation, and download the cruise line app.
- ☐ Complete online check-in when available and save the required boarding documents.
- ☐ Select your terminal arrival window and distinguish it from the final boarding cutoff.
- ☐ Print or prepare luggage tags according to the cruise line instructions.

Plan transportation and activities

- ☐ Plan arrival with time for travel delays; consider arriving at least a day early.
- ☐ Arrange flights or driving plans, hotels, parking, and transfers as needed.
- ☐ Choose a return flight that allows for disembarkation, transfer, and airport check-in.
- ☐ Review dining preferences and any dining, show, or activity reservation requirements.
- ☐ Compare excursions by timing, physical demands, accessibility, and cancellation terms.
- ☐ Compare drink, internet, and dining packages against your likely use and their rules.

Prepare for health and unexpected changes

- ☐ Review travel insurance terms, covered reasons, exclusions, limits, and purchase deadlines.
- ☐ Ask about medical care and evacuation coverage for your itinerary.
- ☐ Arrange dietary, accessibility, medical equipment, or refrigeration needs in advance.
- ☐ Discuss travel health and motion sickness concerns with your healthcare professional.
- ☐ Save travel assistance contacts and give a trusted person your itinerary.

Current guidance: [CDC cruise travel health guidance](https://www.cdc.gov/cruise/travel/health-guidance) | [U.S. Department of State travel insurance guidance](https://www.state.gov/travel/insurance-guidance)

My next task and deadline



First Time Cruiser Checklist

Boarding day and your time on board

Before boarding

- ☐ Recheck terminal location, travel alerts, required documents, and arrival instructions.
- ☐ Keep boarding documents, medication, valuables, and first-day essentials in your carry-on.
- ☐ Confirm phone settings and your carrier plan before using service at sea.
- ☐ Arrive within your assigned window and before the final boarding cutoff.

Once on board

- ☐ Complete the required safety briefing and locate your muster station and emergency exits.
- ☐ Learn how your cruise card or wearable works and how to contact Guest Services.
- ☐ Check dining arrangements, activity reservations, and any special requests.
- ☐ Review your onboard account regularly and understand any payment holds.
- ☐ Wash hands with soap and water before eating and after restroom use; report illness to the ship medical team.

Health guidance: [CDC cruise travel health guidance](https://www.cdc.gov/cruise/travel/health-guidance)

Before going ashore

- ☐ Record the all-aboard time in ship time and allow a return buffer.
- ☐ Carry the documents the ship and port require, plus the port agent contact details.
- ☐ Confirm excursion meeting points, return arrangements, and what happens if a tour is late.
- ☐ Check local customs, clothing rules, and restrictions on taking food or other items ashore.

Before leaving the ship

- ☐ Review your final bill and follow the luggage and disembarkation instructions.
- ☐ Keep next-day clothes, medication, documents, and valuables out of collected luggage.
- ☐ Confirm transportation home and check the cabin, drawers, outlets, and safe.
- ☐ Follow customs declaration requirements and keep receipts you may need.

Need help planning the details? Visit jkatravel.com.