



Preparing for Your Cruise

(Especially Royal Caribbean's - "Explorer of the Seas" - Eastern Caribbean)

<p>All information was compiled from listed websites, Cruise Critic.com members, Fodor travel guides, Discovery Channel Caribbean Cruise Insight Guides, Porthole, Caribbean Travel & Life magazines and friends. Thanks to all!</p>
<p>12 million people cruise each year with 45% heading for the Caribbean and 13% to the Mediterranean. For Caribbean trips over 7 days, the average passenger age is the mid-forties. Women outnumber men but only by 1%. Cruise ships made 9,000 visits to 22 Caribbean ports of call recently. The Bahamas is by far the most popular Caribbean destination with 2,000 ship visits each year. Surveys indicate that each passenger spends on an average of \$104 in each port visited. Shore excursion costs can add up to \$300 or more on a 7 day cruise.</p>
<p>Repositioning cruises (when cruise ships change from regular summer routes to different winter routes) are offered in the spring and autumn, are often cheaper but also involve lengthy at-sea days for their crossings.</p>
<p>To learn more about cruise ships, purchase: <u>Cruise Ships</u> by Douglas Ward. This is considered the "bible of the cruise industry" for the past 20 years and is updated each year. The new <i>Ocean Cruising & Cruise Ships 2006</i> rates more than 260 major and minor ships cruising the world's oceans and waterways, with full coverage given to at least 12 new launches and expanded sections on the growing coastal and expedition cruise markets. A lavishly illustrated guide to cruising tells travelers how to make the most of their ocean adventure. Currently relied upon by more than 35,000 North American travel agents for its unsurpassed data and recommendations, the 2006 edition is completely up-to-date with cross-referenced data for easy ship-to-ship comparisons. Written by Douglas Ward, President of the Maritime Evaluations Group and one of the world's foremost authorities on cruising and cruise ships, <i>Ocean Cruising & Cruise Ships 2006</i> provides all the advice and information the first-time or experienced passenger will ever need. It's the essential guide to choosing the perfect cruise.</p>
<p>General Information about ships and ports</p>
<p>To track your ship's location and find out which ships are in which ports and when, press the Ctrl key and click on www.cruisecal.com. Locate ships at sea and weather observations http://sailwx.info/shiptrack/ ; http://www.kroooz-cams.com/rcclindex.html</p>
<p>For cruise ships USVI docking locations, check out where they are docking about a month before you sail.</p>

	www.ships.vi/index.html
	Check out the last inspection for your ship http://www2a.cdc.gov/nceh/VSPIRS/VspRptGreenSheet.asp
	Read reviews about your destination ports www.portreviews.com
	Check out informational websites on the Caribbean: www.doitcaribbean.com ; www.caribbeanportreviews.com ; www.usvimaps.com ; http://www.caribbean-on-line.com/
	For more port information, look through this list of the internet's travel information websites: www.traveltalkonline.com
	For copies of cruise dailies for Royal Caribbean and most ships: http://www.cruisedailies.com/portal/tabid/293/Default.aspx www.qwikfyx.com
	For shore excursions, check out http://www.shoretrips.com/
	To have booze, flowers, candy and other pleasantries delivered to cruisers onboard, try www.wellwishers.com
	Get official information from Royal Caribbean Cruise Line (now Royal Caribbean International): www.rccl.com or 800-527 6700 1050 Caribbean Way Miami, Florida 33132 Shop Royal Caribbean at 800-722-5443. Fax 800-722-5810 Before you Board Gifts & Gear http://www.royalcaribbean.com/giftcatalog Email the ship Explorer of the Seas at xplora@rccl.com
	Pre-register your cruise information online—it saves hours in line when boarding. You need your cruise number in order to do this. Go to www.rccl.com and click “Have a reservation?” You may need your passport information before registering...we don't know yet. https://secure.royalcaribbean.com/beforeyouboard/boardingDocuments.do
	Check the weather around the world: http://www.oceanweather.com/data/
	Track hurricanes at the National Hurricane Center www.nhc.noaa.gov Hurricane tracking all over the world: http://www.hurricanealley.net/
	To see the daily view from the bow of the Explorer (except at night) and chart her travels and speed as well as weather conditions: www.rsmas.miami.edu/rccl/obs/ex-rt-obs.pl Add this to your desktop for daily check-ins.(Recently the cam shot from the bow has been disabled.)
	Check out the University of Miami lab aboard the Explorer at http://www.rsmas.miami.edu/rccl/
	Join the Meet and Mingle group to meet fellow cruisers you met online at an onboard party often scheduled for the second day around noon (usually in the Porofino restaurant.) Mee the captain and enjoy food, drink and prizes (lanyards, SeaPass pouches, etc.). To register and join the Royal Caribbean “Meet and Mingle” group for our Explorer of the Seas cruise click: https://secure.royalcaribbean.com/ccEntry.do
	Message Boards
	Check out popular cruise reviews and message boards: www.cruise critic.com ; www.cruisereviews.com ; http://cruiseclues.com/
	To add graphics to your signatures on forum posts and message boards click here: www.glittermaker.com ; http://toons.artie.com/alphabet/names ;
	To add a cruise countdown and/or clock to your webpage or forum posts click here: www.tickerfactory.com ; www.caribbeanmag.com ; www.geocities.com/quietman01970/maker.htm ;
	To join the chat with fellow 10/6/06 cruisers http://boards.cruise critic.com/showthread.php?t=194786&page=17

	To add your photo and pin for your home location to our 10/06/06 cruisers map: http://www.frappr.com/rollcallexploreroct62006
	Preparing for your cruise
	For a <u>sample</u> of Royal Caribbean’s “Guest Vacation Documents” (a 76 page booklet of important information and documents you need for your trip but wouldn’t normally get until you were all paid up and registered for a cruise) click on http://www.royalcaribbean.com/content/pdf/RCI_guestticket.pdf (Interestingly, there are apparently only 4 luggage tags per person in the packet and no information on what to do if you have more luggage than that...hmmm.)
	Insurance
	Check on the deadline for purchasing cruise insurance. It makes a difference if you have a “pre-existing” medical condition. Costs depend on your age (birthday) and timeline to the cruise date. There is a very spirited discussion among serious cruisers as to the need for insurance and who to purchase it from—the cruise line or a third party. Call your travel agent.
	Compare cruise insurance companies at www.insuremytrip.com Check out 15 companies with 79 plans.
	Documents
	Be prepared!! Personal ID documentation is EXTREMELY important—you can be denied boarding and miss the cruise entirely if your papers are not in order! Passports are the best documentation as they speed you through boarding lines. Passports are even REQUIRED for some excursions (like yachting to St Bart’s) <u>Everything</u> you need to know about this and the necessary forms (DS-11) are on the US Department of State’s website http://travel.state.gov This site even includes the Albany address for sending for your certified birth certificate (\$30). Your birth certificate can also be picked up locally in the town of your birth’s clerk’s office. Passport applications are also available in the county clerk’s office and some post offices. Monticello Post Office is listed as a passport issuance branch. Your passport costs \$97, requires two photos and is good for 10 years. The photo must be 2x2”, in color and no more than 6 months old. Digital photos can be used. <i>Walmart’s</i> photo shop will take two passport photos for \$10 with no reservations and little or no waiting. <i>David’s Fast Foto</i> 462 Broadway in Monticello also takes quality passport photos M-F 9-5pm for \$10.75 plus tax-794-3732. It is best to wear medium to dark shades because it is against a white background. You can get passport photos free at AAA offices.
	Starting December 31, 2006, the U.S. Government is introducing new passport rules that will affect travel to many destinations. Click to view the <u>new requirements</u> now. It is always best to check even though for a short time still, cruise lines may accept expired passports and raised seal birth certificates as proof of identity for some destinations.
	You can use www.vitalcheck.com service to obtain birth, marriage, divorce and death records.
	Check out the vaccinations needed for your destination http://www.cdc.gov/travel/vaccinat.htm
	Make two photocopies of the data page of your passport—one for someone at home and one for you to travel with. If you lose your passport, promptly call the nearest embassy or consulate and notify local police immediately. Non-American passport holders will have their passports retained at check-in, so make photocopies (a photo ID must be produced at the gangway to reboard the ship after each trip out.)
	Scan your passport and photo ID to a web-based email account. If anything is lost, you can log onto the internet café and print copies out in seconds.
	Check-in, Embark and Debark
	You should be aware of a new boarding policy. Due to new government regulations, all guests must board 90 minutes prior to sailing or will not be permitted to sail. This has been added to all guest documents as well as updated on the Royal Caribbean website. In addition, guests are requested to complete Online Check-in no later than 3 days prior to their cruise. If they do not complete Online Check-in 3 days prior, they will be required to complete this process at the pier at least two hours prior to the published sailing time.
	For information on the port city of Bayonne, NJ http://www.cityofbayonne.org/royal.htm http://www.bayonnenj.org/royal.htm
	Check out the Bayonne facility parking at www.centralparking.com free shuttle in tri-state area 800-327-6700, Live views from the Statue of Liberty and its harbor: www.libertycam.com

	Embarkation procedures for the 3,000+ passengers on the Explorer have been clocked at 22 minutes. Bring credit card, debit card or cash to get your SeaPass (onboard charge card.) No cash is used aboard ship (except for tipping.) Bring paper punch to put a hole in SeaPass and attach to lanyard or wrist band.
	Your dining table number will be on your SeaPass when you check-in.
	Cruise check-in lines were split up according to the deck your stateroom is on and some lines move fairly quickly. However, make sure to have all your forms completed (including the Bahamas immigration card??). RCCL's previous cruisers get to wait in special lounge areas.
	Cannot stress enough how important it is to fill everything out ahead of time and have your credit card handy for the SeaPass. It made our check-in quick.
	Ever since 9/11, if you leave a US port and then enter a US port a day or two later (such as the British Virgin Islands) you have to go through Homeland Security inspection. Even going from Puerto Rico to the Virgin Islands counts. This inspection applies even if you don't leave the boat! Everyone lines up and presents their passport. It took about 4 hours to get everyone through the line. The non-US line went faster as there are fewer non-Americans aboard. Keep that in mind if you plan an early escape when visiting a US port. Every one must show up, and it is the biggest pain you will experience.
	To avoid customs or security delays, carry medications in their original containers. Don't pack sharp objects. To avoid having your checked baggage chosen for hand inspection, don't cram bags full. Pack shoes on top and pack articles you don't want touched in clear plastic bags.
Staterooms	
	In choosing the perfect stateroom (more than 106,000 included), check out schematics and photos for all cruise lines and all cruise ships at http://www.cruisedeckplans.com/
	While still at the embarkation pier during check-in, you can ask for more room keycards. It takes less than a minute extra to produce them and are great for traveling with children. These will open your door but can't have any charges put on them or be used to get on or off the ship. You can also get a Set Sail pass for teenagers that limits the amount they can charge.
	Never cruise without a balcony room My wife and I spent many nights out there, just talking for hours and watching the dark sea and the millions of stars.
	Book a room on "the hump" to see fore and aft (like #8616).
	No outlets in bathrooms (probably because they have no GFI –ground fault interrupter safety outlets)—so bring an 8' extension cord but be careful around water! Bring a power strip cord to use for multiple charging of cameras, videocameras, electric razors, flashlights, cell phones, hair curlers, iPods, Nintendo etc.
	Shipboard hair blow dryers are not very powerful and require you to hold down the button for continuous use. Don't count on quality shampoo and rinses onboard (some cruiselines only supply soap!) Bring your own in fabulous travel bottles from http://www.easytravelerinc.com/index.asp
	Bring a steamer or pay \$1.50 for ship's laundry to steam your clothes. Bring Downey Wrinkle Release and use your blow dryer! It works!
	I do recommend bringing a travel clock as besides the phone you have no concept of time.
	Plastic clothes pins will help keep items from flying off your balcony.
	Bring binoculars for viewing ships and islands off your deck. You might also want them for some excursions (like El Yunque).
	Take a small collapsible cooler or ask for larger ice bucket for your room when you board.
	Book a room on the port side of the ship if you want to cheer on those running up the docks to the ship each shore day at departure time!!! It is the best show!
Health: Sunscreen, Seasickness, Bug Repellent	
	To prevent sunburn: Bring the best sunscreen (SPF 30-50.) You will need it on deck and for EVERY excursion. Don't forget your back and legs when snorkeling and the tops of your feet when walking. Some people say that, in an emergency, pouring coca-cola on your sunburn will lessen the sting (but not the burn) temporarily. Purchase 100% aloe products to reduce the inevitable pain of sunburn.
	Protect against jellyfish and other marine life stings along with sunscreen from

	<p>http://www.buysafesea.com/ http://www.coppertone.com/</p> <p>Banana Boat sport sunscreen up to SPF 50 won't disappear when you sweat and is available at CVS drugstores and online at bananaboat.com/ http://www.drugstore.com/qxb7507_333181_sespider/banana_boat/banana_boat.htm</p> <p><i>Natural and biodegradable (PABA-free) sunscreen</i> (which is quite a bit more expensive) is required at some snorkeling sites (like Cozumel) to prevent damage to coral reefs (any regular sunscreen will be <u>taken from you</u> and returned to you when you leave the dive site.)</p> <p>http://coolasunblock.com/ http://www.mothenature.com/shop/detail.cfm/Sku/81499 (natural products from Mother Nature) http://www.hawaiiantropic.com/products/index.html (Hawaiian Tropic) website unknown (Bulldog Sunscreen) http://neutrogena.com/ProductsDetails_164.asp http://www.mexitanproducts.com/ http://www.natures-gate.com/service/search.asp http://www.caribbeanbest.com/beach.html (Buy it online or in St. Thomas) http://www.kissmyface.com/Category/Kiss+My+Face/Sun+Care/</p> <p>Don't forget <i>hair and scalp sunscreen</i> from http://www.medshopexpress.com/109568.html or Bumble and Bumble (available on eBay). Beauty companies, recognizing the impact of the sun, have been developing new hair-protection products -- everything from shampoos (like Davines Alchemic Shampoo) to styling sprays (Ojon Shine & Protect Glossing Mist), as well as leave-in conditioners (Kiehl's Leave-In Hair Conditioner, Fekkai's Sun Bandana invisible protect/condition), color protectors (John Frieda Radiant Red Color Envy daily color sealer) and so-called sun shields (Phyto Plage protective sun veil). The cost ranges from \$6.50 to \$28.</p>
	<p>For Seasickness: Bring Bonine. Take one each night no matter what the weather. Bonine (meclazine) makes you drowsy, especially with alcohol, and is best taken each night at bedtime. Take your first Bonine the night BEFORE the cruise. It is available in drugstores as "Antivert" for about \$.10 a pill. Ask for it in Walmart Pharmacy for \$12. Wristbands are available onboard for \$15 (need one on each wrist.) Ear patches are available onboard for 4 for \$25. For all natural seasickness prevention, each morning take ginger pills or candied ginger available at health stores. Eating a green apple helps! The ship's medical staff will give you an intravenous shot of antihistamine for major seasickness (supposedly works almost instantaneously.) Paracetamol plus motion sickness pills are available at ship's Reception. For seasickness supplies, try www.doctorstrust.com for ginger root pills (you need 4-8 per day—100 for \$2.39) For \$10 pair of sea bands, try http://www.sea-band.com/seaband.htm or shop K-mart, Eckerd, Walmart, or RiteAid for them. Relief band for nausea http://www.reliefband.com/main.html or http://www.mypilotstore.com/mypilotstore/sep/939 For natural relief http://www.nativeremedies.com/cantravel-motion-sickness-prevention-remedy.html</p>
	<p>Bring Immodium or Pepto Bismol (not as strong) for diarrhea brought on by island food or water. Chamomile tea is a good folk remedy. Pack a thermometer for keeping track of your temperature if feeling ill. If dehydrated, drink ½ teaspoon salt and 4 tablespoons sugar in one quart of water. Spray-on bandaids are great for your first aid kit</p>
	<p>The main (though small) health risk to travellers on land in the Caribbean is Hepatitis A. Although not required, an injection of gamma globulin before departure gives good protection against infectious hepatitis. Wash and peel fruit, avoid contaminated water (drink bottled water) and practise scrupulous handwashing.</p>
	<p>The only area which usually carries a malaria risk is Hispaniola (more in Haiti than the Dominican Republic) Pack mosquito repellent and use it when in port (mostly in evening.) Bug repellent is recommended for some excursions (like the El Yunque rain forest—but choose repellents that won't harm the aquasystem).</p>

	<p>Because your feet are the most important part of any vacation fun; we include some websites for specialized footwear to keep your feet safe and happy and reduce the chance your vacation could be ruined by foot fatigue or injury. Most travel planners recommend that you do NOT wear new footwear for the first time on vacation. This is one of those times when “old” is best; bring along your tried and true broken in footwear.</p> <p>http://www.zappos.com/welcome.zhtml?0807 http://www.rei.com/category/4501262.htm http://www2.llbean.com/category/1014.htm http://www.backcountry.com/store/group/170/c100000009/s40/Womens-Water-Shoes.html</p> <p>(See more websites in the watersports section)</p>
	<p>Pack new specialized “blister” bandaids that prevent the bursting and speed the healing of blisters. They are designed to stay on your feet 3-5 days even in water and are virtually invisible on the foot.</p> <p>http://www.drugstore.com/blister+bandaids</p>
<p>Emergency Travel</p>	
	<p>If you miss your ship and it sails away without you:</p> <p>http://www.flycsa.com/index.cfm (Caribbean Sun Airlines- between Antigua, San Juan, Santiago, St Croix, St Kitts, St Maarten, St Thomas, St Vincent, Tortola) http://www.seaborneairlines.com/ 888-359-8687 (between San Juan, St Thomas and St Croix) http://www.flycapeair.com/common/index.php?lng=ENG&div=AA&nav=AA&page=A01&flash=1 (San Juan, St Thomas, St Croix, Vieques, Tortola) 800-352-0714 http://www.charterflightscaribbean.com/ (San Juan, St Thomas, St Croix, Beef Island, Virgin Gorda, St Maarten, St Kitts, Antigua, Dominican Republic) 787-398-3181</p>
<p>Handy Tips</p>	
	<p>Bring bungee cords (to keep balcony doors open, etc), wind sock (to identify and decorate your balcony), Pack a battery touch light or flashlight for night trips to the bathroom. Post-its are handy for leaving notes for your room steward, etc. and duct tape might be handy for patching luggage, hemming skirts, fixing breakage etc.</p>
	<p>Bring two highlighters to mark up the “Cruise Compass” activities sheet every night. It helps to plan the next day’s extensive shipboard activities.</p>
	<p>Put everything essential in your carry on luggage as your big luggage may not show up in your room for hours (10pm). You are allowed ____?____ carry-on pieces .</p>
	<p>RCI: recommends maximum 200 lbs luggage. (In fact, this is the maximum allowable written in your Cruise Ticket Contract.) Shipboard record is 27 pieces of luggage! Next time you pack to travel, weigh your luggage at home to get an approximate weight of each. A rough packed weight approximation is: large wheelee luggage 36 lbs, small overnight bag 22 lbs, large foldover suit bag 26 lbs, small duffle bag 16 lbs and average backpack 12 lbs. Remember you can only store your luggage under the bed so “nesting” luggage is best. Try foldable duffle bags for bulky items like snorkel equipment etc.</p>
	<p>Find all kinds of travel products at http://www.luggagecarriers.com/</p>
	<p>Pack and use Ziploc baggies. You can purchase 2.5 gallon bags in Walmart or Target as well as some grocery stores and use them for packing underwear, separating wet swimsuits or dirty laundry from your other clothes or put a complete child’s outfit in them and seal one up for each day of your trip. Double up the bags for leaky items like shampoo, sunscreen or alcohol. Use smaller sandwich bags to isolate your jewelry, makeup or medicines. Bring Ziplocs to bring leftovers back to your room for snacks. Keep your valuable documents clean and dry or put each day’s receipts in one to stay organized. You can buy two sizes of the giant Ziploc’s “Big Bags” (2’ x 1.7’ or 2’ x 2.7’) to keep your stuff together, decrease wrinkles or prevent customs from touching everything (including your nice underthings!) at http://www.drugstore.com/search/ziploc big bags You can also buy Glad “Press N’ Seal” here-- place it between any bottle opening and their caps for leakproof bottle packing. Consider Eagle Creek Pack It Folders http://www.eaglecreek.com/ , or Coleman’s Space Savers by Space Bags https://www.spacebag.com/spacebag/901715/ to reduce the volume in your suitcases. Pack mates at http://www.packmate.com/share/cgi-bin/site.cgi?site_id=pacmate&page_id=home</p>
	<p>“Lock” your luggage as it sits alone and unattended for long periods of time. To avoid customs <i>breaking into</i></p>

	your checked locked luggage when you are not present, replace locks with plastic cable ties. Use a unique combination or odd colors to help your luggage stand out in a crowd. Bring extras for the return trip through customs.
	To avoid having Transportation Safety Authority (TSA) inspectors cut the locks to inspect your luggage, use only TSA approved locks. They use a special “master key” to open them and then they relock them. Learn more about TSA locks from their website at http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/assistant/locks.shtm Find a list of TSA approved locks at http://www.thereareplaces.com/ You can purchase TSA approved locks at most stores now and online from: www.safeskieslocks.com (wild colors and flower patterns) www.travelinsider.com
	Bring half the clothes and twice the money!
	Onboard in-line, ice-skating and some excursions REQUIRE long pants. Some activities require closed shoes or swimwear.
	Rent your tux on the boat for about \$85 when you make your reservations. It is totally worth it and you don't have to pack a tux. Don't forget to rent shoes and socks. You get to keep the socks. Know your tux measurements before you book cruise and reserve ahead. You can purchase a fine tuxedo online or from JC Penney starting at \$99. http://www.jcpenney.com/products/tuxedo
	You can't bring booze onboard to keep in your stateroom. RCCL inspects luggage for alcohol. Apparently you can bring “cordials”—bring Bacardi cordials onboard. Bring booze in empty Dasani water bottles! Put liquor in with mix in store-bought drink mix bottles and re-seal.
	Bring Crystal Light and 1 liter bottles. Bring your own insulated drink container with lid.
	Fire is the greatest threat to cruise ships. Do not flick cigarettes into the water to prevent butts/ash/flame from blowing back onto balconies and starting fires. No irons, heating pads or candles are allowed in cabins. (Bring battery powered candles for romantic stateroom.) No irons are supplied or permitted onboard (fire hazard). If you pack an iron; it will be kept until you depart the ship (along with 1,000 others to rummage through.)
	Bring or make “business cards” to exchange with other passengers. You can get 250 full color business cards for free or fully customize your own for about \$60 for 500 at http://www.vistaprint.com/
	Tour guides may be holding several cameras at one time so put your name and ship on yours. This is especially helpful when trying to locate your disposable camera in the bunch at lost and found.
	Create and buy quality custom t-shirts, sweatshirts, pants and shorts for your whole crew at www.uberprints.com . Put your ideas on clothing, hats, mugs, greeting cards, gifts and home décor items at www.cafepress.com , Buy color changing T-shirts, shorts, sandals, watches, hats, hair clips, jewelry and nail polish that change color in the sun at www.delsol.com
	Check out beach wedding dresses at www.dressy.com or http://giftshop.sandals.com/productList.cfm?category_id=1000
	Funky sea glass bracelets, earrings and necklaces sold throughout the Caribbean or from Whie Light at www.seaglass.us
	Cruise ships do not allow pets with the exception of the Queen Elizabeth 2 which has a kennel onboard.
	Tipping
	You need \$5 bills for tipping the shore porter BEFORE he takes your bags (you will not see him AFTER.) Fodor recommends tipping bellhops and porters \$1 per bag.
	RCI suggests tipping \$3.50/per person/per day for the room steward (\$5.75 for suites) as well as \$3.50 a day for your waiter, \$2.00 for your assistant waiter and \$.75 a day per guest for your head waiter. Tips can be added to your SeaPass cruise charge card (staff are not as happy with this form of tipping.).
	Use this handy cruise tip calculator http://cruisetip.tpkeller.com/
	You need approximately \$136 to tip ship's staff.
	Tip staff additionally with international calling cards--\$5, \$10 or \$20 denominations in Walmart, Rite Aid or Shoprite (phone calls home for staff are very expensive). Most cards become active the day of purchase and MUST be used within 15 months. Purchase cards just prior to actual cruise date or buy

	them in port to ensure they cover cruising area. If you are buying international calling cards to tip ship staff, do not buy them ahead of time (most cards have a 12-15 time limit). Buy them in the first port as these are sure to work in the ship's ports calling area.
	Since a contented staff provides better service and therefore encourages more repeat business, it is in the cruise companies' interest to recruit, train and retain the best crews. Royal Caribbean leads the way in personal development, career prospects and amenities for staff. They provide a computer with email access in each staff cabin and excellent training programs as well as rising pay scales, share options and a pension scheme for all employees.
	Cell Phones and Walkie Talkies
	Cellular phones from Cingular and Sprint may work on some islands and some ports but Verizon will not work ANYWHERE! Calls cost \$2-5 a minute depending on carrier. You can rent phones that work onboard ship (approx. \$100 week) but even their reception is often sketchy. http://cingular.com/customer_service/cingular_world
	More about cell phones: the new shipboard technology to provide ocean going service was NOT onboard the Voyager last year and I have no news about Explorer. Watch the general Royal Caribbean board for people who have come back recently and ask there. When it does get installed it will work ONLY with GSM phones, which leaves a lot out—all Verizon wireless, Sprint and other PCS types. The only service I know that is GSM is in some Cingular cities. Phones worked well when we could see the coastlines of the Eastern US, and Florida and the Keys. Verizons and Sprint work in St. Thomas, and San Juan. Probably nobody will have cellular service at St. Maarten though. http://cruises.about.com/od/cruisenews/a/041203celebrity.htm ; http://www.royalcaribbean.com/pressroom/info.do;jsessionid=0000cVTuazviiSbGGpjjfAoKgUn:v2mocbr0?prDate=12-03-2004&prCode=B
	Your cell phones may or may not work but most usually involve expensive roaming charges. Prepaid phones do not have international roaming which is what you need
	RCI charges \$8 a minute for phone calls. And you can make and receive calls on the ship, however the person calling you on the ship must have a credit card ready to charge the call before they place it. You can charge your call to your SeaPass but they cannot, nor can they call you collect. Be sure to advise anyone of this that you give the ship number to.
	AT&T, Cingular and Timbale have cell phone service in the Caribbean. We bought a new Cingular phone, with a quadband and got an international calling plan. We had service for about 90 minutes of sailing then lost it. We did not pick it up again until we reached Jamaica. We got no service in Labadee. We had service on the ship and on land in Jamaica, Gcaymans and the Bahamas but not at sea. The calls we made were \$1.99 per minute but no roaming charges. 18000Mhz triband phone. http://www.cingular.com/customer_service/roaming_gen
	We have T-Mobile cell phone service and with T-Mobile, you have to call them to set up the international service. It is free of charge to have the service, but is \$1.00/minute if used on the islands and \$5.00/minute if used on the ship. Make sure she asks her service provider what the per minute charges are as they may be higher than she wants to pay.
	Sprint works in San Juan and St Thomas without roaming charges.
	If you go to Cingular.com and look up their international plans, you can click on the cruise ship networks and see which ships offer it. 8nterference8 MoS I have it so we will be only be able to call from the ports. We just made sure to get new quad band phones and turn on the international service.
	My DH had Verizon and had service at the ports as well but not at sea either.
	Rent global satellite phones from www._____ Rent GSM global international phones from http://www.mobalrental.com (\$49 works in 140 countries but not the US; \$99 works in 140 countries including the US.)
	You will need international service added to your cell phone to call in or out from the Caribbean. You need to arrange that with your cell phone provider before you leave. Keep in mind that while abroad, you need to dial 001 + the regular phone number to place the call.
	Buy international phone cards in port and phone home from shore pay phones. Your cruise documents will

	list the international phone number to call back to the ship.
	For detailed information on which ships have cell phone service http://www.cellularatsea.com/shipsinservice.htm
	European GSM cellular phones will not work in the USVI. U.S. standard digital cellular phones will probably work if your carrier offers roaming features and allows roaming in the Virgin Islands. If your cellular phone provider is Sprint PCS or Cingular Wireless your phone will work; they are cellular phone providers in the Virgin Islands. Some ATT users and Verizon users have reported; that their phones work, others have said their phones have not worked and some note the phone worked with large roaming charges. If you use ATT, Verizon or another carrier you should call customer service to find out whether your phone will work in the USVI http://www.worldcell.com/
	Walkie Talkies are great for groups but very annoying for fellow passengers. Here are the rules: 1) Get at least 5 mile kind with lots of sub codes. The sub-codes minimize 9nterference from others on board. Sam's Club usually has some good deals. 2) Get the ones with the vibrate feature and put them on vibrate ONLY. 3) Turn OFF the chirp. 4) Make sure all that use them understand they are NOT a toy. Use them for short conversations ONLY. 5) You do NOT have to yell into them and keep the volume down. 6) Do NOT use them during shows, in the elevator or in the dining room. 7) Respect others' desire for quiet.
	http://www.garmin.com/mobile/products.html#handheld
	We use Motorola T7100s, which are rated at 7 miles. They are somewhat bigger than the small 3 and 5 mile types but can cut thru 6 deck levels on the ship so one of us can go the the guest relations desk on 4 or 5 and talk to the other back in the cabin on 9 or 10 and be understood. Check out Motorola's Talkabout 2-way radios with sub-channels at _____
	The Motorola ones are hard to beat. The models in the 6000 series are all 5 mile range or longer, have a drop in charger and have a vibrate feature. We've used them on 6 cruises in the past three years, and have great results on them. They must be FMRS and GMRS channel models, and have the codes as well. We use a higher channel and sub channel, and have changed channels a couple of times.
	For just about the price of the rentals you can get a set of Cobra or Uniden. We picked up 2 for \$34.00, now they have the 18 channels 38 private channels and the weather on the local NOAA—we actually were getting the weather while in San Juan, I was on deck 6 in the cabin, my wife was up on deck 12 and we were chatting
	I got the Deck Phones. You get them onboard at the Purser desk on Navigator of the Seas. They have a limited supply so go right away. They are \$25 to rent. They are cell phones and have been programmed with a 4 digit number. You can call the number from another deck phone or from any phone onboard. You cannot use them off the ship.
	I simply purchased the onboard internet connection (\$100) and with my laptop used Skype (a voice over internet program) to make calls to landlines. Using my headset, the clarity was more than acceptable. You purchase Skype credits in \$10 blocks I think, and you could talk all day and not use that up based on their rates.
Watersports and Equipment: Snorkel, Scuba	
	Whether scuba diving or snorkeling, buy a disposable underwater camera in a drugstore at home (RiteAid \$15 or SpongeBob's at Target \$8). Also available at island dive shops for more \$\$. Cheap underwater cameras are fun but take lousy photos. Buy one onboard for \$20 or online at Walmart for \$5, or a \$10 reusable one at www.snorkel-mart.com or the recommended Fuji disposable underwater camera at Target for \$7.
	Get a an underwater cover for your own digital video camera www.ewa-marine.de or purchase one from www.amazon.com
	Bring your own snorkel or rent from the ship--not onshore--condition and hygiene are more reliable. www.snorkel-mart.com (get a free snorkel camera with combo) http://scuba.about.com/cs/snorkelgear/bb/snorkelquip.htm ;

	<p>http://www.island-scuba.com/c-scuba-snorkels.html ; www.diverwest.com ; www.joediveramerica.com ; www.target.com ; www.diveshop.com ; www.snorkelcity.com ; www.samsclub.com ; www.diversdirect.com ; www.overton's.com ; http://www.scuba-accessories.com/</p>
	<p>Really really cheap snorkels at http://www.rinovelty.com/Products.asp?cat=beachpool&sub=BESM Buy adult and child snorkel vests from http://www.floridascubadepot.com/scuba_gear/Kids_Snorkel_Vest or rent from ship for about \$6-8.</p>
	<p>Costco has snorkel mask, fins, travel bag with instructional DVD for \$39. Check our Scuba Toys www.scubatoys.com or specifically at http://www.scubatoys.com/store/detail.asp?PRODUCT_ID=Mojave for dry snorkel selection as well as Tusa Liberator masks to wear with eyeglasses. Walmart has semi-dry snorkels by US Divers for \$17. Don't forget eBay—search for members Scuba Shop USA, bestscubaonline, sea-avenger; Divers-supply; Procella; unrealfind; scuba4dude.</p>
	<p>Check our www.vinow.com for best snorkeling sites and excursion companies.</p>
	<p>If you plan on doing a lot of snorkeling, it may pay to bring your own equipment. New technology snorkels clear water from the tube automatically (100% dry snorkels) when you surface and can be bought online for about \$30 (with matching panorama face mask for \$30 and fins \$30). Your mask fits properly if it sticks to your face briefly when you breathe in. Spit in your mask, buy a commercial “mask defogger” or use a drop of dishwashing liquid to prevent fogging. http://www.herringtoncatalog.com/fs161.html</p>
	<p>When snorkeling, don't wear shiny jewelry—it attracts sharks and barracudas. Never snorkel alone or at night. Avoid areas with heavy surf or strong currents. Most beaches have swim areas marked with white buoys so, for safety sake, confine your snorkeling to those areas. Fodor recommends that you resurface immediately if you hear a motorized vessel approaching and clasp both hands together over your head which translates as “Diver OK”. (as opposed to waving your hands over your head meaning “Diver needs help”.) Check out Magens Bay (St Thomas) and Trunk Bay (St John) snorkeling adventures.</p>
	<p>Bring swim shoes for some beaches to avoid foot injuries/stings that could spoil your trip. Stepping on a sea urchin can require a trip back to the ship's medical services. Also, for example, on Labadee's Hideaway Beach there are small shells and coral at the waterline. (Some rugged-type water shoes are not permitted at the Cayman's Sting Ray City to avoid injury to the sting rays.) Water shoes come in lots of variety, from sock-like booties to rugged open-air sneaker-type shoes that shed water and dry quickly. Check out water/swim shoes at: www.sportchalet.com ; www.worldwatersports.com for \$15. www.llbean.com (great water shoes for kids) http://www.landsend.com/cd/fp/prod/0,,1_2_1930_59671_137253_115660_5:view=-1,00.html?CM_MERCH=PAGE_58083&sid=4367182449395127050 (Land's End sneaker/walking/water shoes \$30) http://www.teva.com/ (river and hiking sandals) http://www.herringtoncatalog.com/ls522.html (Keen's waterproof hiking sandal with toe-guard and multi-terrain lug sole: http://www.cabelas.com/products/Ccat20640.jsp (men's sandals and watershoes) http://www.rei.com/category/4501269.htm (rugged hiking and water shoes) http://www.amazon.com/gp/search.html/ref=br_ss_hs/002-3221180-9614456?platform=gurupa&url=index%3Dmerchants%26merchant%3DA363XKZVKSMVXW%26node%3D1036682&keywords=water+shoes (For 114 varieties of water shoes from slippers to boots and waders)</p>

	<p>http://www.swimoutlet.com/Water_Shoes_s/356.htm (water shoes, sandals, fin socks and boots for snorkeling, hand fins and mono-fins, sun protection baby wipes, etc)</p> <p>http://www.store.coegawear.com/index.asp?PageAction=VIEWCATS&Category=5 (quality children's water shoes, swimwear and shorts)</p> <p>http://www.ruggedbear-online.com/ingispsuprow.html</p> <p>www.zappos.com (For 1,000's of shoes of all kinds)</p> <p>http://www.zappos.com/n/es/d/722139739/page/1.html (just their water shoes)</p> <p>www.shoebuy.com</p>
	<p>To keep valuables safe when swimming/snorkeling, try the 100% waterproof floatable Keymaster from Aquapac http://www.aquapac.net/dotcom/</p> <p>or purchase a \$6 Beach Safe (also lanyards and fanny packs) from http://www.cruisecritic.com/store/index.cfm</p> <p>Many different sized options available at http://www.waterproof-paper.com/cases/</p> <p>Magellan sells a nylon body pack waterproof bag large enough to hold your camera for swimming and scuba diving http://www.magellans.com/store/Safety_Security_Security_Wallets_Money_BeltsSV530?Args=</p> <p>To make your iPod waterproof for swimming, surfing or snorkeling: http://www.herringtoncatalog.com/as612.html</p> <p>To make your cellphone waterproof: http://www.herringtoncatalog.com/fs151.html</p> <p>You can buy a water wallet onboard ship or on some beaches for keeping your money dry and with you while snorkeling.</p> <p>Check out a hunting/fishing waterproof pouch for \$6 at http://www.nationaleash.com/money_tuck.htm</p> <p>Buy a waterproof beach safe from Cruise Critic at http://www.cruisecritic.com/store/product.cfm?ID=26</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Other People's "Bring Lists" (will be updated as good lists appear)</p>
	<p>Things we were glad to have brought with us:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bonine, Immodium, Excedrin, Imitrex, Sudafed, Tums - Band-aids and alcohol wipes - full-size bottle of conditioner - nail clippers - scissors - small notebook and a few pens - lots of \$1- and \$5- bills <p>Things we wished we'd had brought:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scotch tape - refillable water bottles - cord to hang wet clothing - extra bathing suit (suits took forever to dry in the room) - packets of Crystal Light or iced tea - small shower puff - one more disposable camera than we thought we'd need (they're pricey and not great quality on the ship) - everyone's addresses for postcards! So obvious that we completely forgot! - more than one card that could be used for the safe (shopping cards etc). The one we brought got demagnetized and we weren't able to use the safe for the rest of our trip. <p>Brought, didn't need to use, but would bring again anyway:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - aloe - power strip - rain ponchos

- towelettes (ended up just using Purell)
- socks
- extra sweaters for inside the ship (was never cold)
- large clips

Common "must have" items that we didn't bring and wouldn't have had a use for if we had:

- duct tape (though I might bring it in the future)
- highlighters
- garment steamer
- alarm clock
- bungee cord

Best buys that we made specifically for this cruise:

- snorkels and masks
- water shoes
- expandable water-sport zippered tote that doubled as airline carryon
- disposable water cameras (much cheaper than on ship)
- waterproof neck case and silk money belt