



| Onboard the Explorer of the Seas & General Cruise Ship Tips | |
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| <p>Maiden Voyage: October 28, 2000 Passenger Capacity: 3,114 Godmother: Jackie Joyner-Kersey Gross Tonnage: 138,000</p> | <p>Length: 1020' Beam: 157.5' Draft: 29' Cruising Speed: 23.7 knots</p> |
| <p>You can contact staff aboard the Explorer of the Seas by fax at 305-539-4204. You can email "Guest Relations" for most questions or arrangements. Check in with the "Dining Coordinator" for special meal/dining arrangements. Contact the "Room Steward" for questions about your stateroom. Xplora@rccl.com</p> | |
| <p>www.ultimatetaxi.com/cruise_photos/explorer_of_the_seas22.htm http://bgcruise2002.tripod.com/ship ; http://bgcruise2002.tripod.com/onboard ; http://www.akerfinnyards.com/deliveries.cfm</p> | |
| <p>The 142,000-ton, 3,114-guest "Explorer of the Seas" boasts the highest space-per-guest ratio in the cruise market – and includes enhanced staterooms, expanded dining options and exceptional recreational facilities. It is perfect for families, sporty types and those who enjoy a lively atmosphere but hate kitsch. It may not be as suitable for the elderly or those who might be less mobile and able to make their way around such a huge ship. Her international crew numbers c. 1,214 and passenger capacity is 3,840.</p> | |
| <p>Royal Caribbean is the current holder of the "world's biggest" ships title with it Voyager series of ships. Where 75,000 ton ships make up the majority of fleets, the Voyager mega-ships are nearly twice that at 137,300 tons apiece. Mega-ships come in two types: "Contemporary" which are aimed at mass market and priced accordingly and "Premium" which are much higher priced, carry fewer passengers and offer a touch more class. A quick way to find out is to get the Passenger Space Ratio (PSR) is by dividing the tonnage by the passenger capacity. (ex: Explorer of the Seas: 142,000 tons divided by 3,114 passengers = 45.6) The higher the score the better! This will give you a quick idea of how crowded each cruise ship will be.</p> | |
| <p>According to Royal Caribbean--in order to ensure everyone has time to pass through security, all guests must check in at least 90 minutes in advance of scheduled departure. If you have not checked in 90 minutes prior to departure, you will be considered a no-show, and your booking will be cancelled and cancellation penalties applied. Friends and relatives are welcome to come to the dock to see you off. However, for security reasons, they will not be allowed to board the ship at any port</p> | |
| <p>You should be aware of a new boarding policy. Due to new government regulations, all guests must board 90</p> | |

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| | 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. |
| | The Purser's Office (also called Guest Relations or Information Desk) is the nerve center of the ship for general information and minor problems. |
| | There are 8 + 8 (16) stair steps between each deck. They are often quicker and less crowded than the elevators. You eat in the back of the ship and are entertained in the front of the ship. |
| | Take ship photos early before everyone boards. |
| | The Explorer of the Seas was refurbished in September 2005 with new carpets, bedding etc. |
| | "Muster Drill" is a life jacket/life boat drill and usually takes place one hour after everyone has boarded the ship or just before casting off. You are required to go to the lifeboat deck and practice with a life vest (usually found in your stateroom closet or on the bed—with information on your drill station location). Drill is VERY crowded. |
| | The only aggravating part of the entire journey involves the mandatory "muster drill" that happens at 4:00pm. It took about 25 minutes to get through and if you don't get lucky enough for a station inside the ship, you are going sweat it out on the deck for a long time. It was a very uncomfortable drill – especially for the fact that it was hot and people were closely packed together. |
| | Smoking is often only allowed on port side or in special cigar bar areas. Never flick your cigarette butt off a deck to avoid starting a fire on a balcony or deck below. |
| | Don't wear your favorite hat on deck—it's ALWAYS windy. Don't go up on deck at night alone! If you are blown overboard, no one would know! Don't wear a skirt and walk on the top deck or front of the ship on a windy day (another lesson learned). |
| | Don't miss the Planet Ice Show. Everyone who has seen it raves about it!!! Tickets are very limited and were handed out during departure. Get tickets the first day. There are four shows, and I'm sure if you want to see it again, they will let you, If I were to return on the cruise I would go to the show both nights, it's that good! There are about 12 figure skaters that have a choreographed program with fun music with fancy lighting effects. Do not miss it! |
| | Join the adult scavenger hunt called "Quest." It's a riot! We went to the Quest game this evening. It was HILARIOUS and for adults only. If you are shy, my only suggestion is don't volunteer to be a runner. |
| | The Love and Marriage game is a riot and so is The Quest. I happened to participate in Karaoke and made it to the finals where we performed in the ice skating rink in front of 650 people. Ahhhh! |
| | Karaoke was funny to watch in Maharaja Lounge. Although I personally did not experience it, my parents loved the ballroom dancing in the evenings in the Maharaja's lounge. They were surprised that it wasn't better announced. |
| | The Spectrum Motown band was a great show. Rain Beatles revue is 4 stars! Dorothy Rainbow Connection is 4 stars. It is forbidden to record or film any of the ship's entertainers for copyright reasons. |
| | Don't miss the salsa dancing at the Aquarium Bar! |
| | Singles Social at 6pm. Over 40's Singles Social at 7pm. |
| | Bars open at noon. Chambers Nightclub is open 11pm to 4am. www.royalcarib.com/activities/sp.html Chambers Nightclub has a very cool club atmosphere. It is two floors with a medieval Goth theme. The party only started happening around 11:00-11:30 at night, and on my cruise the crowd was dominated mostly by 18-21 year olds. At 28, I felt old. I went to the Chamber on several occasions and each time the DJ was playing hip-hop music – not my favorite to dance to. As a result, I ended up really not spending as much time as I would have liked in the club. |
| | Check your cruise charges each day on your TV set to make sure you are not overspending (or have charges that are not yours listed.) Most mistakes are made when staff handwrites your drink orders on pool decks. Save every receipt from Sail & Sign account in case of a dispute. |
| | Check out RCCL's Adventure Ocean Youth Program: |

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| | http://www.royalcaribbean.com/content/pdf/Adventure_Ocean_Fact_Sheet.pdf |
| | Take a tour of the marine science lab. Explorer of the Seas is the ONLY cruise ship on earth with real working science labs on-board. The University of Miami's <i>Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science</i> has a marine science lab and an atmospheric lab on the Explorer. View selected ocean science videos and presentations by on-board scientists and technicians. Touch an iceberg! For additional information about the science aboard the Explorer of the Seas, click on: http://www.rsmas.miami.edu/rccl/ |
| | Several of us did the tour of the Weather/Atmospheric Lab and it was worth it. There are interesting little instruments all over the decks of this ship and we found out what they were all there for. Lots of data being collected...very interesting. |
| | On Friday, trailing the hurricane, there was some wind, wave swells, and overcast weather. The ship never felt different and no one complained of sea sickness. On the contrary...we headed to what had become a wave pool on the pool deck and had a blast. On good waves, you started in the water and ended up sitting up on the side of the pool...too funny! |
| | I know many say they don't spend too much time in their room, but on a 7-day cruise, I did not feel like I was missing much if I opted to relax with drinks or room service on my balcony for an hour or two on one or two afternoons. The room became another destination for me on this cruise. It was so relaxing! Loved the safe, the nooks and crannies everywhere for putting away stuff and thought the double-door shower was great (no clingy shower curtains). Two of our travel mates stayed in an Owner's Suite and had us up for cocktails before dinner and the suite is truly amazing (loved the 40" plasma screen TV)...just too expensive! I'm more than happy with #8358. We had coffee each morning early on the balcony and it was a nice way to start the day. |
| | It was nice to be on the ship while everyone else's was in port as it was very quiet and relaxed. |
| | At least two people a day slip and fall at the adult Solarium pools. They had slippery wood decks. Always wear swim shoes on deck. A personal lesson was learned, as I was entertainment on the first day. |
| | Pools are salt water and the same temperature as the sea—usually in the 70's. Pools are open 24 hours. |
| | There are two saltwater pools on the Explorer – the Main pool and the Solarium pool. The Main pool area consists of two rectangular pools that are bridged together by a walkway. On the side of each pool is a circular hot tub that is large enough to fit 10 adults comfortably and open 24 hours. The ship's live band plays at the front of the pool, and can be heard throughout the surrounding multi-level pool decks. Although many lounge chairs, regular chairs and tables are available throughout this deck, it can be difficult to find an open chair during 'at-sea' days. Towels for the pools are given to you the first day in your cabin, and you're told that you're responsible for not losing it. You can exchange your towel with an attendant at one of kiosks located around the pools. |
| | Count on being assigned one beach towel per person by the cruise line—you are responsible to keep track of it. You must turn it in to get another one or you will be charged \$8 for it. Buy thin beach towel for excursions. Cruise ship towels are thick and heavy to carry around. (Buy a cheap one in the first port.) |
| | The Solarium pool is a smaller adults-only area that offers shaded lounge chairs in its quiet space. The lounge chairs are VERY hard to come by, since the space is smaller there are fewer chairs and people get here EARLY to claim these. The Solarium pool area has a Greek theme, complete with columns framing the pool and a bull looking out over the water. There are two more hot tubs located in the Solarium, separated from the pool area. Pool waiters walk around both pool areas all day, selling pre-made frozen drinks or offering to take drink orders. I have found that you can get a stronger drink by walking up to the bartender at the poolside bar. |
| | The Solarium was magnificent. You could see that RCCL paid attention to detail here. The theme of Spanish Matadors was evident from the huge sculpture of a bull down to the exquisite tiling on the floor. Instead of just a ladder, the salt water pool had majestic steps to guide you in, and there were fountains of water spraying into the pool every 30 seconds or so. The lounge chairs were padded and very comfortable. This area is adults-only, and the staff made sure that this rule was obeyed. We found the Solarium pool was a great place to relax, read a book, and take it easy. There were also two quite large whirlpools on either side of the pool. |
| | The polar opposite of the peaceful serenity of the Solarium is found at the Main Pool area! There are two |

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| | oversized pools, 4 or 5 whirlpools, a mist station that sprays cool mist on you at the press of a button and plenty of deck chairs. As to be expected, there were many children in the pool area, and they all seemed to be having a wonderful time. Of course, what Caribbean cruise is complete without a reggae band, and the one on Explorer played all the classics. The cruise staff also conducted pool games here, including Mr. Sexy Legs (which is hysterical – definitely NOT to be missed!), 70’s line dancing and horse racing. We didn’t mind if we did not find a lounge chair right next to the pool... it was pretty noisy, and we had a great view of the sea from one deck higher. Ultimately, we were happy wherever we settled. |
| | Apparently horse racing has been replaced by Nascar racing on some ships. |
| | Pool deck chairs are gone by 8am. Chairs on deck above by 10am. Do not expect to save chairs if you are not going to sit in them! Most cruise lines have a policy of “Items left unattended on sun chairs for more than 30 minutes are subject to confiscation” and they wind up in the lost and found. This does not seem to be regulated by pool deck staff and passengers are forced to work this out themselves (sometimes with ugly consequences.) Books, sunscreen and towels will not save you a chair if you are not using it. Take your things with you or make an “I’m NOT a chair hog; I’m away... for 15 minutes, lunch, or a swim” deck chair sign. It might work. |
| | For any fitness buffs out there, the Shipshape Center will not disappoint. In addition to being esthetically pleasing, the gym on Explorer of the Seas was fully loaded, complete with dozens of cross trainers, stairmasters, treadmills and stationary bicycles. They also had a large variety of free weights, as well as traditional exercise weight machines. While on the cardio equipment, you have the choice of either looking out to the sea, or watching the overhead televisions. The machines are equipped with personal earphones jacks (you need to ask the staff for the earphones), so that only those who want to hear the television will actually hear it. Of course, they also offered aerobics, step, body sculpting, etc... classes in the large and airy aerobics room. There are 4 or 5 hot tubs located outside and a very large hot tub located in the indoor exercise area. There was also a large thalassotherapy pool which was free to use. Apparently, one is to spend a few minutes in the pool before and after working out, in order to replenish the minerals in your skin. Who knows? It was very comfortable, with plenty of jets all around. |
| | We got up and ran five miles on the jogging track, the only complaint is that some of the walkers would hog up the track and it was really hard to pass them. They should mark it for walkers on the right and runners on the left just to give some guidelines. It is 5 times around for a mile. |
| | Staterooms are made up twice a day. Ask the steward for “egg crate” foam or a better mattress if your bed is too uncomfortable for you. Faucets are Centigrade not Fahrenheit. Make sure the lid is down when you flush the toilets. |
| | You can sign up for a “Sea Players” card at the casino. You can also get cash from the casino cashier and charge it to your SeaPass (up to \$2,000 per day) and avoid ATM fees. Casino is always smoky. |
| | Take the time to look for your cruise ship pictures and purchase one. They are displayed each day on one of the lower decks. They are done by professionals and cost \$20 for 8x10 and \$10 for 5x7’s. DO NOT waste your money buying the video or DVD of your ‘Cruise week’. I paid \$30 for the DVD and it was about 20 minutes long. No sound, only corny music focusing mainly on the ship I. Very little of the actual people on board. It reminded me of an infomercial. |
| | When shopping in the Promenade stores, do not hesitate to buy the Explorer T-shirt. When you leave, you will never be prouder to wear it. Also, they sell a blow up toy of the ship. It was moderately priced and a real gem. |
| | By far, the Viking Crown bar takes the cake for being the best place to enjoy the view of the ship itself. |
| | The bow – go to the bow (via outside stairway near Maharaja/Connoisseur Cigar Club) – this was fun standing at the front of the ship with the wind hitting you. |
| | This was my favorite spot on the ship. The guests on Explorer of the Seas are allowed to go to the very front of the ship, located all the way forward on Deck 5. To be exact, you need to exit on Deck 4 and climb the outdoor steps to Deck 5. There are benches to relax on and enjoy the serenity of the seas. It is beautiful at night, and a romantic place to stargaze. However, it is unlit at night so be careful. |
| | The guys in our group were thrilled to catch NFL games on Sunday and Monday in the Weekend Warrior bar |

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| | on the Promenade. The sports bar was fun. If you buy a bucket of beer, they give you a really nice ice bucket, opener and shirt for free. |
| | Don't be surprised to see the "blue boys" dressed in blue overalls and performing aerial maintenance tasks that require dexterity and agility high above the ships decks |
| | RCI provides the special shoes and harness/helmet equipment for rock climbing. There are three "paths" to climb on the wall, some more difficult than others. Rock climbing sessions start every 15 minutes, include instruction, and the climbing time is about 3 – 5 minutes per person. |
| | Being Canadian, I was excited about ice skating in the middle of the Caribbean. However, the daily <u>Compass</u> stated that advanced skaters needed to supply their own skates (who packs ice skates on a cruise?) while beginners needed to sit through a half-hour lesson, which I did not need. I never bothered to investigate it any further, and ended up missing the ice-skating. |
| | From the moment I stepped off that boat, I missed it. And today, I miss it even more. I feel lucky to have had this experience and wish that everyone I know could experience this unbelievable adventure. You truly cannot go wrong to choose this ship as your next vacation experience. |
| | Food/Drink |
| | The average cruisers gains 5 lbs. on a 7 day cruise. |
| | Ask that your assigned dinner table in the dining room be near a window for spectacular ocean sunset views. Breakfast and lunch is open seating. Evening attire is resort casual. No tank T-shirts or shorts allowed in dining rooms. Large dining room tables seat 10 while small ones seat 6. |
| | Food cannot be taken off ship (especially fruit) and may be confiscated when debarking |
| | All food is free (including the two midnight buffets and unlimited ice cream bar). This means you can eat in the main dining room, the <i>Windjammer Café</i> buffet, <i>Island Grille</i> , <i>Johnny Rockets</i> 50's diner or any of the other food spots along the Promenade for free (except <i>Portofino</i> which has a \$20 additional charge and requires reservations. http://oasis.fortunecity.com/tropicana/431/Voyagertour27.html , www.johnnyrockets.com www.cruiseweb.com/RCI-DINING.HTM http://oasis.fortunecity.com/tropicana/431/Voyagertour30.html |
| | The Windjammer is a buffet style dining area up top toward the stern of the ship. Usual time from door to sitting and eating is estimated at about 15 minutes even during peak hours. |
| | Café Promenade is the best place for lunch and snacks. It has the best sandwiches & panninis, pizza and coffee onboard—free and open 24 hours! |
| | Don't miss the two midnight buffets: the Gala Buffet and the Pool Buffet. |
| | In the dining room, you will be presented with a menu when you sit down for dinner (and breakfast and lunch). The menu is also posted at the restaurant before that meal. So you can wander by in the afternoon and take a gander at the menu. If there is nothing to interest you, you could try to get in to one of the specialty restaurants like Johnny Rockets or go to the Windjammer. At dinner, there will be a Chef's Special, plus about three other regular entrees (meat, fish, poultry). In addition, there is a section called "lighter fare" with grilled meats, veggies, appetizers, etc. You will certainly have many choices in appetizers, soups, salads and entrees and will not have to have fish! Same thing in the Windjammer and at the specialty restaurants. If you have a severe allergy, be sure to take a bottle of Benadryl onboard with you, plus Epi Pens (if you need them) and advise your waiter, assistant waiter and head waiter the first night. You can also e-mail RCCL and let them know about your food allergies. |
| | Meals include free water, coffee, tea or lemonade. All other drinks cost extra. You can buy an unlimited "Coke" fountain drink and juice card for around \$40 (depending on your age and the number of days you are sailing.) Buy your soda/juice drink card AFTER the ship leaves port to save on the sales tax but remember that cards are only available at the beginning of the cruise on embarkation day. They are usually \$4 day for 17 and under and \$6 day for 18 and older and are available in any of the bars and lounges or at Adventure Ocean. |

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| | Royal Caribbean is a Coke ship (no Pepsi). |
| | On the day of embarkation, you can purchase three different levels of “Wine and Dine” packages (Diamond, Platinum or Gold) which include various numbers and selections of wine at a 25% discount. RCCL says to ask any staff member to direct you to someone who can arrange this. |
| | Don't be ashamed--many cruisers ask for double entrées at meals. A lot of people order 2-3 appetizers and two different platters at times during the week. It is not unusual and don't be embarrassed. Order double lobsters for lobster night on the <i>day before</i> . |
| | Ask waitstaff for food plate covers to take leftover food to your cabin. |
| | There are 35 bars (including two poolside bars) and drinks average \$7. A 15 % gratuity is included in every drink order. Check this out first--this information is on the TV in your room. |
| | Get milkshakes etc. from takeout window at Johnny Rockets to avoid the \$3.95 surcharge (food is free). To-go orders take about 5 minutes. |
| | Enjoy free champagne during the Captain's Reception on the Promenade. |
| | Buy souvenir love cups on the ship—different colors each day for \$6.95. You can also purchase drinks in the swirl glasses in varied colors for a little more (like \$8.95) and still keep the glass. |
| | There was also an omelet station in the Island Grill, which is the back part of the Windjammer, where a chef cooks up made-to-order omelets |
| | Have breakfast delivered to your room on busy shore days during rush hours—it's much quicker. Room service was great for the days we docked at an island early. We would leave an order card on the door the night before and our food was always delivered on time. Room service usually called minutes before it was delivered. |
| | “Room services” is available to other parts of the ship than just your room, I've been told. |
| | Try free self-serve ice cream all over the ship! There were ice cream machines everywhere (including the kid's pool) and the kids were serving themselves constantly. The donuts and coffee in the promenade shop was wonderful. Actually everything was good. Self serve ice cream on Promenade used to be available 24 hours, now it is closed at 8 p.m. There is an ice cream bar for an extra charge, where different (better) kind of ice cream can be bought. |
| | Be forewarned: several of us are <i>looking forward</i> to dressing up for the two formal dinners on the at-sea nights. This can be anything from a fashionable pantset or a simple black cocktail dress and sports jacket/tie to a ballgown and tuxedo (you can rent a tux onboard for \$85. They suggest you try one on in a rental shop near your home first to get the sizes right.) On the formal nights they had tons of backgrounds to choose from for formal pictures These two meals are usually the best of the cruise and often include elaborate food presentations as well as unlimited lobsters and steaks, etc. Some cruisers will prefer to eat in their room those two nights or in the ships' grills and cafes instead. To order cruiseline formalwear http://www.cruiselineformal.com/ |
| | Don't be late for the formal dinner because then EVERYONE has to wait for you! |
| | The captain, respectfully known as the Master, exudes authority and calm and is prepared to act diplomatically while always ensuring the safety of his ship. Desired seating at the “Captain's Table” on formal nights is often based on frequent and known cruisers, beautiful women, VIPS from political and entertainment areas, those staying in the most expensive suites and cruisers from the Captain's own home country. Most captains will cringe but ultimately politely answer “Say, Captain, who's driving this ship anyway?” For those who need to know: Adventure OTS - Capt Arnolf Remo (commanding as of 3-12-06) Adventure OTS - Capt Olav Gunnar Nyseter (on holiday as of 3-12-06) Brillance OTS - Capt Thomas Wildung (retiring 4-30-06 to get married) Brillance OTS - somebody's got to be relieving Capt Thomas Empress OTS - Capt Manolis Kasselas (commanding as of 2-13-06) Empress OTS - Capt Teo Strazick (on holiday as of 1-22-06) Enchantment OTS - Capt Per Arne Kjonso (commanding as of 2-13-06) Enchantment OTS - Capt Gunnar Oien (on holiday as of 2-13-06) |

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| <p>Endeavor OTS (2007) Explorer OTS - Capt Ole Johan Gronhaug (commanding as of 3-5-06) Explorer OTS - someone is keeping a secret! Freedom OTS - Capt William Wright (as of 5/06 for 6 months) Freedom OTS - Grandeur OTS - Capt Svein Stienmoen (commanding as of 3-2-06) Grandeur OTS - Capt Haakan Admarker (on holiday as of 3-2-06) Jewel OTS - Capt James MacDonald (commanding as of 3-11-06) Jewel OTS - Capt Thore Thorolvsen (on holiday as of 1-14-06) Legend OTS - Capt Tor Isak Olsen (commanding as of 2-18-06) Legend OTS - Capt Nikolaos Antalis (on holiday as of 1-12-06) Majesty OTS - Capt Per Kristofferson (commanding as of 2-12-06) Majesty OTS - Capt Ron Holmes (on holiday as of 2-12-06) Mariner OTS - Capt Johnny Faevelen (commanding as of 3-5-06) Mariner OTS - Capt Gerry Larsson-Fedde (going to Voyager in April) Monarch OTS - Capt Hakan Lindergren (commanding as of 2-10-06) Monarch OTS - Capt Rolv Chr Olaussen (on holiday as of 2-10-06?) Navigator OTS - Capt Rick Sullivan (commanding as of 3-11-06) Navigator OTS - Capt Leif Otto Bang (on holiday until 3-21-06) Radiance OTS - Capt Hernan Zini (commanding as of 3-5-06) Radiance OTS - Capt Rune Loekling (on holiday, back in April) Rhapsody OTS - Capt Anders Ingebrigtsen (commanding as of 3-5-06) Rhapsody OTS - Capt Anders must like to sail alone Serenade OTS - Capt Erik Tengelsen (commanding as of 2-25-06) Serenade OTS - Capt Stig Neilsen (on holiday as of 2-25-06) Sovereign OTS - Capt Richard Brearley (commanding as of 1-22-06) Sovereign OTS - I'll try to find out myself when I'm there 4-28-06 Splendour OTS - Capt Raadmannsoey (commanding as of 2-19-06) Splendour OTS - Capt Yngvar Knutsen (on holiday as of 2-19-06) Vision OTS - Capt George Paraskevopolous (commanding as of 2-12-06) Vision OTS - Capt Kjetil Gjerstad (on holiday as of 2-12-06) Voyager OTS - Capt Charles Teige (commanding as of 3-4-06) Voyager OTS - Capt Svein Pettersen (on holiday as of 3-4-06)</p> |
| <p>We would like to plan our own 10/6/06 “Bon Voyage” or Sailaway party when the ship first weighs anchor and cruises past the Manhattan skyline (hopefully right after the dreaded Muster Drill.)</p> |
| <p>General Excursions Info (Ports of call will be listed separately later on)</p> |
| <p>Most cruises leave the port of call at sunset, providing passengers with the nightly ritual of “sail-away”. The official line is that a timely departure allows the ship to reach the next port on schedule, but the reality is often more related to ship revenues; the casino and on-board shops can only open once the ship is at sea. However, cruises often spend one long evening at a particular port to provide a welcome opportunity to explore independently. While sunset time varies and is much quicker in the Caribbean; it generally occurs between 5-6 pm. Check out each destinations’ sunrise and sunsets for the whole year at http://www.gaisma.com/en/dir/029-region.html Calculate your own favorite sunrises and sunsets at http://www.adventist.org/sun/</p> |
| <p>Twilight is shorter near the equator. Darkness falls almost <u>instantly</u> after sunset and there is little or no twilight. The reason is a little complicated to understand, though. The sun rises and sets more vertically in the tropics—meaning it goes up higher at the equator (becoming completely and directly overhead and leaving no shadows at noon) and consequently comes down at a steeper angle than at more northern or southern points on the globe where we live. [Note: Because the earth is on a tilted axis, this almost vertical position of the sun varies between the Tropic of Cancer through the Equator to the Tropic of Capricorn.] Additionally, for people standing on the equator, the world is spinning “faster” (in miles per hour) than for those in the Northern or Southern Hemispheres even though the earth really makes one full rotation on its axis for everyone on the</p> |

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| | <p>planet in just 24 hours. Thus the sun seems to be going “down” at a faster clip the closer to the equator you are.</p> | | | | | | |
| | <p>The more technical answer about tropical sunsets is that at low latitudes, the sun sets perpendicular to the horizon, while at higher latitudes, the sun can set at a more oblique angle, allowing it to remain close to the horizon after sunset for a longer period of time. The sun rises and sets because of the Earth's rotation. It's easy to understand how things move in the sky due to the rotation by looking at a long-exposure photo taken at night. Each of the circular streaks there is a star, and over the hour or so that the photo was taken, each star appeared to circulate around the North Star, Polaris, seen in the center of the pattern. You can see from the picture that stars closer to Polaris than the horizon never rise nor set, but continually circle the pole star in the sky. Stars farther from the pole star do rise and set, as the circles on which they travel cut below the horizon. The same idea goes for any object in the sky, including the sun and the moon.</p> <p>One more thing you need to know about these rotation patterns is this: Polaris sits directly above the North Pole. If you were standing at the North Pole, you would see Polaris directly overhead. All the objects in the sky would simply circulate around that point, and nothing stationary in the sky would rise nor set. This makes sense if you think about standing at the pole, while the Earth's rotation simply spins you around in place. You end up looking in different directions, but nothing enters or exits the sky above you. The closer to the north pole you are, the higher Polaris is in the sky. At the Equator, Polaris is on the horizon.</p> <p>This means that at the north pole, the sun doesn't rise or set at all due to the Earth's rotation. The sun does move through the sky (from one of those circles on the film to another) on a yearly cycle, though, and this is why there is light at the north pole for 6 months and night for 6 months. Thus, above the arctic circle (or below the antarctic circle), at the right time of the year, you can see the midnight sun-- a sun which doesn't set all day. At that time of year, the sun is a circumpolar object, sitting on one of those star-trails in the picture that never descends below the horizon.</p> <p>Now imagine that you are pretty far north, but not above the arctic circle. Polaris is very high in the sky, and as the Earth turns, the sun may be on one of those circles you see in the photo which just grazes the horizon. The sun sets, but sets at an angle. It stays close to the horizon for a long time, making twilight linger.</p> <p>The further south you travel, the lower Polaris will appear in the sky, and the further and quicker the sun will dip below the horizon at night. Eventually, once you get to the tropics, Polaris is on the horizon, and the sun sets directly down below the horizon. Since it has very little movement horizontally with respect to the horizon, it quickly leaves the horizon behind after sunset, making for a very quick twilight. Then, as you proceed southward from the equator, the effect is reversed. Twilights become longer and longer, you see the South Celestial Pole higher and higher in the sky, more objects become circumpolar (i.e. never rising or setting), until eventually you're at the south pole, and the South Celestial Pole is directly over your head, and once again everything is circumpolar, and nothing rises or sets due to Earth's rotation.</p> <p>I should say one more thing here: there is nothing inherently special about the star Polaris. It just happens to be very near the North Celestial Pole, the geometrical point directly above the Earth's north pole. There is also no corresponding bright south pole star. I hope this gives you a better understanding of sunrises and sunsets!</p> | | | | | | |
| | <p>Plan your excursions early as it saves cruise time and they can fill up. You can book ship excursions about 90 days prior to departure. The most popular excursions fill up quickly. Check out the choices at www.rccl.com/shoreexcursions. You can book excursions online all the way up to 10 days before the cruise. Our cruise excursions can be booked after April 1st. They can also be booked on your TV in your stateroom. https://shorex.rccl.com/RC/ShoreXList.asp?pport=SM</p> | | | | | | |
| | <p>Keep in mind these shore hours for our cruise:</p> <table data-bbox="276 1816 974 1890"> <tr> <td>Monday-</td> <td>St Thomas</td> <td>1pm to 11pm (10 hours)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tuesday-</td> <td>St Maarten</td> <td>7am to 6pm (11 hours)</td> </tr> </table> | Monday- | St Thomas | 1pm to 11pm (10 hours) | Tuesday- | St Maarten | 7am to 6pm (11 hours) |
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|---|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| | Wednesday- Thursday- | Puerto Rico Labadee | 7am to 3pm (8 hours) 9am-5pm (8 hours) |
| When tendered to shore, generally if the ship docks at 7am; you will be off by 8:00-8:30. | | | |
| ALERT: ship time may differ from island time! (On St Thomas it is an hour difference.) Look up world time http://www.timeanddate.com/ | | | |
| After shore excursions, you need to be back on ship approximately 30 minutes before departure time. (Note: St Thomas is the only port where you can stay <i>late</i> for excursions. This is the one night we are able to eat dinner onshore.) | | | |
| Caribbean maps can help plan your itinerary: http://www.caribbean-on-line.com/maps/ | | | |
| Although the Virgin Islands are US territory, they are <u>not</u> a US Commonwealth like Puerto Rico; so you must still prove citizenship when you depart-- though not when you arrive (from the US or Puerto Rico.) Fodor strongly recommends valid passports when traveling to the US Virgin Islands. | | | |
| Take your passport/birth certificate, photo ID and RCCL's SeaPass onshore each day. You need your SeaPass every time you get off or back on the ship. Take your credit card in case you MISS THE BOAT and have to book a flight to the next island!!!! | | | |
| There are many good reasons to book your own excursions, tours and taxis (most especially to avoid the rush/crush of the cruise ship crowds) so check out the internet links provided here. | | | |
| We prefer to explore ports on our own, since it is cheaper and gives us freedom to go where we want. However, buying excursions from cruise company provides security of knowing you won't be late back on ship. So it's a choice between freedom and security Most popular, like swimming with dolphins, are selling fast. Onboard you can buy either from the excursion deck, which means long lines on the first night or on your TV screen in your room. | | | |
| I set up all the Caribbean tours except one with "Port Promotions" and was not disappointed. www.portpromotions.com | | | |
| Some excursions have height, weight, age, health or attire restrictions (like kayaks and mini powerboats have a combined weight limit of 300-500 lbs, similar weight limits for horseback riding) Some excursions require wading into shore, climbing steep or rocky inclines or being in tip-top physical condition (like the Tree Tops Ropes course). | | | |
| Most scuba diving excursions require that you be a certified diver with experience in the last two years. (even the beginner scuba lessons require a permission document called PADI with a physician's signature. Download a copy at www.padi.com Fodor recommends that you do the classroom study and pool exercises at home and bring a "transfer" form to certified island dive instructors who can then check your qualifications and issue you a certification card--"C card"—by the Professional Association of Diving Instructors ((PADI). Try an introductory course called a "resort course." Scuba dive shops with Master scuba instructors may be able to help you get certified in 2-3 hours. www.scubadivevi.com ; www.admiraltydive.com ; www.blueislanddivers.com ; www.sawyerdive.vi ; www.cokidive.com ; www.divestjohn.com ; www.divelowkey.com or try a cross between snorkeling and scuba (Snuba) with a 20 foot air hose that connects you to the surface www.visnuba.com | | | |
| You can begin the PADI certification program for your scuba certification onboard in the ship's pool. | | | |
| Tropical fish like Milkbones, corn flakes or frozen peas. | | | |
| Avoid the mustard-colored fire coral which can give you a bad burn. Apply ammonia | | | |
| Beware the manchineel tree which grows near the beach which has green apple like fruit that is poisonous and bark and leaves that burn the skin. | | | |
| Buy local CD's or artwork on the islands to remember your trip. Buy postcards to include in your photo album. | | | |
| Due to post 9/11 security, they now have a mandatory immigration check and everyone must present their SeaPass ship card, passport/birth certificate and a picture ID. All crew and passengers must attend a HOMELAND SECURITY check that takes place in the dining room before the ship disembarks in St. Thomas. This goes for EVERYONE, regardless if they are leaving the ship or not. Fortunately, this went quite fast. Show your passport and SeaPass card to the agents and off you go. | | | |

| | Internet |
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| | <p>Internet connections are available in the Cyber Café, through WiFi hotspots (\$.50 a minute) and by purchasing Cyber Cabin access in your room (\$125 for 9 days.) All internet connections onboard are reportedly very slow—much like dial-up on land. Users report a lot of dropped transmissions and times that it is just truly impossible to connect. WiFi is best near the internet café or outside up top.)</p> |
| | <p>Use web sites to share cruise photos http://www.kodakgallery.com http://community.webshots.com/ www.webshots.com www.clubphoto.com</p> |
| | <p>Use web sites to share cruise videos www.dropshots.com ; www.snapfish.com</p> |

