

New Cruisers:
Things We Wish We Knew Before We Left on our First Cruise
Our Best Hints from 12 Recently Returning “Catskill Cruisers”
Explorer of the Seas – Eastern Caribbean – October 2006

These are comments compiled from a dozen fellow cruisers on their first cruise
and are definitely just their personal opinions.

In some cases, the comments even contradict each other!

Please use your own judgment when deciding what to do and see. Enjoy!

1. Packing for this trip

I am so glad I brought these:

- good friends and new buddies**--that really increased the laughter and the WOW factors!
- scissors/jack knife/box cutter**—can’t tell you how many times we needed one of these.
- 100% aloe sunburn relief gel**—everyone borrowed mine!
- the **TWO gallon Ziploc** baggies—they were SO handy both coming and going (great for organizing complete outfits for each day! If you can’t find the TWO gallon size at your local Walmart, they can be purchased online at www.drugstore.com along with a bunch of bigger sizes too.
- Bonine, ginger candy and naseum gum** even though I NEVER get seasick, we had one day when I was really glad I brought an emergency supply.
- bandaids**—we used them more than once!
- neck coolers** for the hottest island trips (Puerto Rico is the hottest island in the Caribbean!)
- a **pump bottle of Purell** that we kept right by the door of our cabin and used every time we went in and out. Several people we knew were sick for several days during their cruise—losing valuable vacation time in your cabin should be a crime!
- my **OWN snorkel equipment**—not only could I snorkel at any moment’s notice (even on beaches without snorkel rental equipment shops) but I did not have to wait in line to do so nor use a mouthpiece some stranger had just used before me. Also, my DH like that my fins and snorkel were a different color than anyone else’s and he could pick me out in the water easily to know that I was safe and it also made it easier for him to locate our snorkel group to take pictures of us. Worth EVERY penny!
- an extra **empty duffle bag**; it made packing for home SO much easier on the last day.
- our own **THIN CHEAP beachtowels** because you can wear them and they dry quickly on board each day (the ones that RCL gives you are rough and small and thick and you will pay \$20 if you lose one on the beach, supposedly.)
- underwater cameras**—while I haven’t had these developed yet, I’m sure they are going to be wonderful—should have brought more than one underwater camera! (They are available onboard in the dive shop but they were cheaper in RiteAid or Target at home.)
- Milkbone dog biscuits** (small) really made a big difference (tropical fish food would have been better for the fish) the fish swarmed all over us and some even touched us!
- a **small waistpak** to keep SeaPass etc. handy at all times.
- an **Eagle Creek money pouch** that hooks over your belt with both black or tan straps and lays flat just inside your trousers for your money, SeaPass and passports to be carried safely and comfortably.
- a **coiled plastic wrist bracelet** (bring a hole puncher) for my SeaPass so it was always accessible and could even go into the water with me. (I also had a small compass, mini

flashlight and whistle on mine just for the fun of it!) You are allowed to punch a hole in your SeaPass but make sure it is at the opposite end from the directional arrows for scanning AND not through the either of the barcodes or the magnetic strip that contains your photo and cabin information.

- a **SMALL tiny spiral notebook** with attached pen to keep track of all my ideas and thoughts each day in a journal.
- laptop** so everyone could keep in touch with friends and relatives at home and recordable **CD's and DVD's** to back up all our camera photos. We also brought a photo chip "**card reader**" and had a slideshow in our cabin at night to showcase everybody's daily photos.
- we brought **4 batteries and 2 1-gigabyte chips** for our digital cameras and on one day, this was NOT enough because we used up a lot of battery life and chip space by taking too much video. Taking short videos also lowered the photo count from around 300 high-resolution pix per chip to about 50 pix per chip—we were not prepared for that!
- personalized **business cards** with all our group's photos on them which we all used as introductions, thank you cards and email reminders to new friends we met onboard.
- a small **inflatable raft** with viewing window and several sets of "**arm floaties**" or "swimmies"—believe it or not, they took up very little room in our suitcases and they allowed the non-swimmers in our group to keep up with the strong swimmers while snorkeling or surfing. We brought the swimmies as a joke initially but they really did come in handy!
- our own **cake decorations** and number candles for the RCL birthday cakes we ordered onboard. Although their cakes were beautiful, our decorations made it so much more personal (candles are forbidden except in the dining room—fire is a ship captain's worst nightmare!)
- steamer** for getting the wrinkles out; we didn't really use it much but it WAS handy once or twice. No one really seems to be concerned about wrinkles while on a cruise anyway!
- my **hairdryer** because it had more power you didn't need to hold the button down continuously. (If you use a hair dryer for less than 5 minutes each time, the ship hairdryer was more than adequate and did the job in the same amount of time as at home for some of us. One problem possibly is that the ship's hairdryer is wired into place and CANNOT be moved around your cabin. Ours was in a drawer at a vanity table by the bed.)
- brought our own **party stuff** each night to personalize our dinner table and we actually made our waitstaff as happy as they made us! One night we all ate off ship on St Thomas and during the next dinner onboard nearby diners came over to tell us that they missed our antics and nightly display of hats, glittery crowns, funky glasses, horns, kazoos, drink bobbers, frog slingshots, blinkies and inflated mylar balloons, etc. (there is no helium onboard so we just pumped them up with our handy-dandy portable balloon pump and VOILA!! Par-tay!!!!)
- brought small ribboned dorm-style **bulletin boards** which stuck to our cabin doors to help identify our rooms, gave friends a place to leave messages and actually wound up helping OTHERS find their way to their cabins on our deck. (We only got off the elevators and went off in the wrong direction to our cabin twice; but it is EASY to do!)
- whole lot of **underwear** changes (at least two a day)
- my **watershoes** especially for Labadee especially if you have sensitive feet.
- couldn't live without a variety **Ziploc bags** to put wet clothing, dirty clothes, food etc.

I wish I had brought these:

- more **“gifts” for the crew**—while we did share all our little knickknacks and birthday hats, horns and party bags with them; I did not learn until too late that they do not eat the same food as the guests and APPRECIATE untouched desserts in the dining room and left behind booze in the cabins at the end of your cruise. They have very little space in their cabins but DO like things like shampoo and body lotions, candy and GUM, and place a high value on our magnetic door signs (for some reason or other) and swap them after we are gone!
- more **shorts** for casual day wear (I wasn’t in the pool as much as anticipated and had mistakenly brought more swimsuits than shorts.)
- more **underwear** (washing things out and leaving them in the sink or sending them to the ship’s laundry just wasn’t as great an option as we originally planned.
- a better choice of **hat** (more suited for the tropics; maybe a cooler straw hat or something!) A bigger sun hat almost sombrero sized to block sun out of your eyes so you can take better photos without using sunglasses using a digital LCD screen.
- a **clock with a large face** because the phone display time was not adequate for night viewing (though some of us brought clocks and never unpacked them!) Only once did we need to set an alarm or request a wake-up call when onboard!
- a **warm jacket** for disembarking in Bayonne on the return trip! (A beach towel will do!)
- more **comfortable formal shoes** so when my feet swelled up from my first UNCOMFORTABLE pair I would have had a nice alternative! (Pretty feet aren’t everything!)
- a thin stretchy **bungee cord** or two to make into a clothesline on the balcony and to help secure all your purchases to your wheelie luggage.

I shouldn’t have brought:

- So many clothes**—I wore less than 1/3 of what I brought and things were beautiful and cheap on the islands anyway (island dresses for \$10, T-shirts for \$4 and Hawaiian shirts for \$8.)
- So many shoes**—I wound up wearing two pairs of formal shoes, one pair of sneakers, two pairs of flip flops and two pair of sandals. That’s it! (I never wore my brand new water shoes from Zappos.com.)
- so many **bungee cords and duct tape**—what for????
- jewelry or other items that have **sentimental value**—although most of the stuff I thought I lost onboard showed up in odd places in my luggage when I got home!
- brought too much fancy dress and formal wear and not enough casual “island” wear.

2. Things I wish someone had told me BEFORE I left home:

- The **port side** gets the spectacular sunrises (around 6-6:30 each day but the starboard side has equally spectacular sunsets on the trip down to the Caribbean. The port side is predominantly the best island approach views as well. Make friends with someone on your deck that has a balcony on the opposite side of the ship from you!
- You can’t hear the sailaway **calypso bands** all over the pool decks, you have to stand nearby.
- Snagging your own **“personal taxi”** on each island is a GREAT thing and you can probably have them for the whole day too (if you are willing to tip well!) Everything was so much easier to do because we knew our taxi driver would come back to pick us up in a few hours and take us somewhere else—some even waited for us for several hours wherever we were!) Just ask, set a time and place and they will most likely agree to come back for you! (Especially on St Thomas and St Maarten.) They are VERY reliable!
- Taking the **LAST tender** at 4:30pm from Labadee is a really GOOD thing! Contrary to what you might think, it was not crowded on our trip, the lineup was non-existent and we got a

- good 30 minutes more on this beautiful beach (a not-so-great seashell washed up at my feet at the very last minute and I plan to have it made into jewelry anyway.)
- Only certain **pools and hottubs** are open all night and they VARY from night to night! Temperature varies from hot tub to hot tub and, with the exception of the Solarium whirlpool, they are NEVER really hot.
 - Watch the morning interviews of RCL-TV with the Cruise Directors because they cover each day's events across the ship in about 15 minutes.
 - You must **make time** for yourself to go and do and see everything on the ship or else you just won't do it at all. Go to each deck and look at everything forward and aft by checking out the glass lighted ship models on each floor. (We would have missed seeing the spectacular Ship Shape Gym if we hadn't MADE ourselves go there even though we didn't use the equipment!) The bathrooms by Portofino and outside the Windjammer are interesting as is the heliport on the very bow of the ship just up a few steps from Deck 4. But most of all, don't miss the peekaboo bridge looking into the real Captain's bridge, the "iceberg" and thermal screen of your face near the Aquarium Bar. The Viking Crown Lounge and Dizzy's are a MUST!
 - You can have your **photos developed** onboard at the Photo Gallery and made into CD's for back up and ease of sharing with others. The Photo Gallery is right outside the dining rooms and in the hottest part of the ship. Searching for your formal portraits each day after dinner is a CHORE! Have everyone in your group search for everyone else's photos in your group and place them all together in a pre-determined place in the slots each day until you decide whether to buy them or not. They ARE already grouped by early or late seating and in groupings for each island but, oddly enough, after a few minutes of searching, everyone begins to look alike. It turns out that it was much easier to search by what you were wearing the day before (and I heard lots of other people say the same thing!)
 - Find the **RCL-TV channel** that gives you the ship's location, weather, pool temperatures etc
 - You have to **disable one phone** in your cabin to use CyberCabin (since we had three phones in our room, this was not a problem. I don't know what you need to do if you only have one phone.) Bring a longer phone extension cord (or get one from Guest Relations) so you can put the phone where YOU want it in your cabin.
 - The **instructions for disembarking** back home in Bayonne are NOT broadcast on the cabin intercoms so you MUST be out of your room to hear them. You can only wait in three areas of the ship—The Aquarium Bar, the Solarium or the Palace Theater (ugh!) You can read the disembarking instructions on your TV the night before or that morning.)
 - Only the aft elevators go down to Deck 1** and that is where you disembark in Bayonne at the end of your trip **BUT you are only allowed to use the aft elevators if you put yourself in the "Need Assistance" category.** Everyone else MUST use the forward elevators, get off on Deck Two and **WALK DOWN THE LAST FLIGHT OF STAIRS WITH WHATEVER LUGGAGE YOU STILL HAVE WITH YOU!!** (We thought "Needs Assistance" was just for disabled or wheelchair cruisers but SHOULD and COULD have listed ourselves in that category too because of the amount of luggage we were carrying off on our wheelie baggage.)
 - You must wait in a separate line once on the pier at Bayonne to **get a porter** for your luggage. You might want to have one person standing by your luggage in your color-specific luggage space and send another to get the porter. You can get TWO porters at once if you like; so send someone from your group IMMEDIATELY to the "porter" line in the center of the baggage building and send others to find and collect your luggage in your color zone. So MUCH black luggage it is hard to find just yours; we put blinkies on ours! It is very busy and very chaotic here!

- That you are **NOT permitted to take photos** as you are disembarking in Bayonne—not even when you get out on the “street”!
- That **customs** is a joke—our porter took our purchase “declaration sheet” which we meticulously filled out the night before along with our luggage and nothing else was ever said or checked regarding our purchases in the Caribbean.
- Any **unused blank “White” luggage tags** are being auctioned off on E-bay since they mean your luggage will be off-loaded first!
- That some of us will experience “**reverse” seasickness** or mal de débarquement on land for several days after we return home (it does make the office a whole lot more fun!)
- That at least one person will most likely **die** in this population of 3,000+ people while we are onboard. It would have been less unnerving if I had thought about it beforehand! (Three people died while on our cruise and one is still hospitalized on St Thomas following a stroke while riding a jetski.)
- That **laundry** is quick and easy onboard and we could have brought less clothes (\$3 a shirt including pressing.)
- Wish I hadn’t bought such **heavy or fragile souvenirs** like liquor, glassware and boxes of rum candy because you have to carry all this off the ship yourself (unless you are brave enough to pack it in your checked luggage. BTW: we had several things broken in our baggage when we first embarked for the cruise in Bayonne and people who saw the baggage being handled reported that it was not done carefully at ALL!! Also, one piece of luggage was lost in our group when boarding and they went without ANY toiletries for two days before it was located. Some luggage tags and identification pieces were missing from some people’s luggage and they were delivered to the wrong rooms! If you cannot live without an item—make SURE IT IS IN YOUR CARRY-ON OR CARRY-OFF LUGGAGE and move it yourself.)

3. On board the Explorer of the Seas:

On board, my most favorite things were:

- the **ship staff** because they were so friendly, helpful, fun and joyful.
- My **balcony**; great for room service breakfast and late night stargazing; soothing ocean sounds of the ship’s wake at bedtime; getting up for the sunrise every morning; also essential for early morning port arrival views and quiet reading and resting times.
- Talking to staff** about their families and countries; they are often VERY homesick and give up a lot to be on ship for 6-8 months.
- Dizzy’s Lounge** –beautiful uncrowded space with great view of the pool deck and almost 360 degree huge glass windows!
- Name That Tune** – We all needed our daily fix of Name that Tune with Alvin--he is a great pianist and the game is always fun and challenging. We love games and we love music and we are very competitive and it was all great! (Even though the prizes were plastic RCL baggage tags etc.—it was still worth it every day—especially the times it was held in Dizzy’s Lounge—our favorite bar at the very tip top of the ship! Deck 14, I believe!)
- Karaoke** – some people are REALLY great and others are REALLY bad—it’s all good fun!
- The **heliport** somewhere on Deck 4 or 5 on the bow—go all the way to the front and climb the port or starboard stairs. It is the webcam view of the ship and VERY windy here at all times! (You can do your best imitation of “King of the World” from Titanic!)
- The **Water & Air kiosks** on either side of the Aquarium Bar—little known spaces that have an “iceberg” and a thermal imager for you to find your “hotspots”!!!

- The **Adventure Ocean Arcade**—truly one of best arcades ever; I saw more adults than kids here at certain hours of the day.
- The **endless decorative detail** and art work in corridors, bars nice and bright and new looking and photogenic. Everyplace you pointed a camera was exciting and over the top background.
- Eating dinner together** each night at a table for 12 and sharing the day's events.
- the two dinners when the **waitstaff and chefs all come out to greet us**—it's LOUD and a great celebratory feeling for ALL.
- Playing and **participating** in the high energy **Quest** game—funny and different!
- the **Solarium** was PERFECT with no children and nothing but the peaceful sounds of the ocean and pool water splashes—don't know how they managed to accomplish this?
- live music** in every venue: the Schooner Bar, Dizzy's, Maharaja Lounge, Aquarium Bar and ESPECIALLY the little pub (Crown & Kettle??) across the promenade from the Weekend Warrior Bar.
- meeting and visiting with the most interesting people** in the hot tubs each day or night—learning about where they came from and what they did—one of the few places onboard to have real conversations—good for couples and singles alike. (At the pools, most people were sleeping or reading, in the dining room people were just eating at separate tables with no mingling.)
- the best **Long Island Ice Teas** in the world are served on the pool deck!
- we loved collecting daily **drink glasses** on the pool, fancy swirl or martini glasses in the various bars and every color of the loving cup series that was served each night at dinner. We plan to stock our bar at home with RCL glassware!
- the Aquarium Bar is truly the most beautiful and dramatic bar and **plays Latin music and makes specialty Latin drinks...yum!**
- get an iced **bucket of beer** at the Weekend Warrior Bar...you keep the bucket!

On board, my least favorite things were:

- waiting for the elevators** at peak times; try to go at off peak times or ride up to go down or walk the stairs! When the doors opened on our floor, they were always full already. (This was the #1 complaint of EVERYONE I spoke to!)
- the **line into the dining room** each night at dinnertime—it was held up by people who did NOT know how to properly use the “mandatory” hand sanitizer at the entrance. This group of louts (which included me) never seemed to learn that you do NOT have to touch the sanitizer itself—just pass one hand swiftly under the ball once or twice and then rub your hands together as you walk on into the dining room.
- the **noise level** in the dining room is quite high and hearing impaired people might have trouble catching every word said there.
- breakfast in the dining room**—you spend 1 and half hours getting breakfast when you could have it in Windjammer by buffet in no time at all (only wait is for an omelet)
- room service** never came on time especially shore days.
- Poolside games**—mostly too loud and childish but possibly amusing to watch from a DISTANCE!
- The **casino**; for some trips you were really FORCED to walk through the casino to get somewhere else on the ship and it was always crowded, loud and SMOKEY! To avoid the casino you would have to detour to an outside deck or go up one deck and come back down on the other side of the casino to get to the Palace Theater or The Chambers nightclub or the Studio B ice skating/Quest games. It was all too disorienting!
- the **karaoke list** is NOT extensive and they didn't even have what I would call standard cruising songs! You must make your selection in a darkened room and many people

had trouble reading the tiny print under those conditions (bring a mag light and your glasses!) You cannot bring your own CD and sing in the Karaoke Idol competition (although you can use your own CD in the Family Karaoke sessions). Personally, I don't see the difference. Also the karaoke book is alphabetical by song TITLE and you will eventually have to give up and read the right hand column until you come to the name of a group you know and or like!

--**early seating** because everyone with young children also chose early seating; you also miss the opportunity to take a quick nap or spend that time on the pool deck with 360 degree sun sets; evening events were usually after late seating anyway.

On board, I wish I had:

- Eaten a **ham and cheese croissant sandwich** in the Café Promenade or stolen lots of their cookies!
- wish I had gone to the **gym every day** just to try out all the equipment to see what we want to have at home.
- left more stuff** like food, booze and toiletries behind in our cabin for staff to share and party with --we thought we were doing them a favor by packing up everything and bringing it home but, in reality, they really appreciate UNOPENED articles of food, beverage and toiletries that are left behind. They also like Ziploc baggies and stationery and trade off our magnetic door signs if left behind. Also, I should have asked them if they wanted anything when we went ashore each day.
- more time **relaxing in the sun** ANYWHERE onboard.
- seen more **sunrises** or **sunsets**.
- picked late seating, taken an afternoon nap, stayed out later and **enjoyed more night life**.
- done **yoga, gym** or gone to **heliport** or went to pool deck for **calypso band times**.

On board, I wish I had skipped:

- The **oceanographic lab lectures**—could have been interesting but were really boring instead and you were just standing on Deck 1 listening to a lecture ! Most people tried to skip out half way through! The second half up on deck would have been better we think.
- The **Captain's speech** from the Promenade bridge—ditto about being boring.
- all **production shows** in the Palace Theater (especially the Broadway tunes and the music through the decades presentations) but the first and last were decent.
- Desserts**
- the one **veal** meal at dinner--it was grisly and on a greasy bone.

4. On the islands of St Thomas, St Maarten/Martin, Puerto Rico and Labadee, Haiti

On land, my favorite things were:

- how very very nice and polite and helpful 99.9% of the **native islanders** were to us.
- buying beautiful cheap cheap CHEAP clothing and goods on the islands** (our favorite was a beach towel with ALL the islands on a map in bright Caribbean colors that turned into a BACKPACK for all our beach stuff AND was a great sweat-wiper while walking to and from the beach!
- the view, the shops, the bar and the banana daiquiris at **MountainTop** on St Thomas.
- Coki Beach** is right next door to **Coral World**—something for everyone! (All tour operators on St Thomas have \$4 off coupons for Coral World).

- the **Mafolie Hotel** for dinner in Charlotte Amalie in St Thomas; we hung 900 feet above the harbor in an outside setting with FABULOUS food and a spectacular sunset and twilight views of our twinkling ship down below!
- snorkeling at **Pinel Island** on St Martin; it's beautiful with white sand and gorgeous clear and calm and serene water (perfect floating water and shallow out to a good distance) ; was not inhabited but was not a "tourist" beach; although the fish were not that *abundant* they were beautiful and we even found large seashells (which we put back for you to find). It was a very peaceful day on a mostly deserted island with a small bar/snack bar and very cool little gift shop tents. We also enjoyed the cushioned umbrellas and chairs for the lucky few! (Our taxi driver corrected our erroneous idea that we could walk back and forth from Orient Beach to the Pinel Island dock and then agreed to escort us for the whole day so that we could do both! BTW: Taxi drivers eat for free at the beachside snack bars on Orient Beach, so don't necessarily believe them when they recommend "the best" restaurant.)
- having a last minute cold beer at **Sharkey's** on the pier at St Maarten and within one block of the ship. (Take a look at the picnic benches there—too cute!)
- the shaved ice slushies in Old San Juan—many native fruit flavors (like soursop)--and they helped stay cool as you strolled the streets slurping them.
- Old San Juan** was completely charming and safe with narrow blue cobblestoned streets and gracious green mini-parks and sculptures and courtyards everywhere. We did not have enough time here to enjoy the beauty of the art.
- lunch at "**OstraCosa**" in Old San Juan; the food, the atmosphere and the waiter were perfect and you could buy the famous PR vanilla and Alto Grande "Super Premium Grade" coffee in a great spice/gift shop right next door--Spices Caribee (The liquid vanilla is the purest and the cheapest you can find anywhere and one huge bottle will last you forever at home! Only two other coffees can be called Super Premium BY LAW—Mountain Blue from Jamaica and Kona from Hawaii).
- the free shots of **Bacardi slushies** at the pier in Puerto Rico! They were ICE COLD and used liquors that are not available in the USA at this time.
- absorbing the **culture** and being awed by the views and colors of the Caribbean everywhere we went.
- dinner at the **Mafolie Hotel** on St Thomas—so beautiful, cozy and peaceful—a VERY relaxing atmosphere and the food was great too!
- ALL the beaches of the Caribbean because they were so warm with gorgeous colors and it was so relaxing just floating in the sun and waves.

On land, my least favorite things were:

- The **HEAT**; we were really UNPREPARED for the staggering heat in Old San Juan and wound up taking more cabs than we thought we would just for the air-conditioning. On the other islands we mostly beached it and could go in the water to cool off.
- Trying to get **back to the ship on time** so as not to be left behind! Timing your departure and arrival on the ship each day was stressful every day.
- not enough time** to enjoy all the islands have to offer—you had to choose between shopping sightseeing and beaches—tough choices.
- not having a place to **wash saltwater and sand off** after Coki Beach and the condition of the beach and Coral World was not as well-kept as other island beaches and exhibits.

On land, I wish I had done this:

- been WAY **more generous to the Haitian people** on Labadee; They live in the poorest nation on the planet and are even just plain HUNGRY/starving all over the island and almost all the time! I should have bought their homemade music CD from EACH of the

- three bands playing on the peninsula and tipped them generously for all their services and paid them more than fair market price for their BEAUTIFUL wood sculptures.
- done less drinking of banana daiquiries at MountainTop on St Thomas and more **browsing** in their many cute gift shops!
- bought more booze** at the pier in Puerto Rico's two-story duty free shop because they are half price compared to home and have rum flavors not offered in the USA yet--they make great gifts for friends back at home. Each cruiser could bring home 6 bottles but there were lots of people in our group who didn't buy any and were willing to claim some more for you if you asked them.
- relax more** and had more time on each island.
- more walking/strolling/sightseeing/eating/phototaking along the quaint and charming streets and parks and historic houses of **Old San Juan** and brushing up on my Spanish.
- more **shopping and browsing** everywhere we went (less excursions).
- worried less about people back home expecting **gifts**.
- more **shopping** on St Thomas and less beach there.

On land, I wish I had skipped:

- NOTHING!
- the **lo-o-o-ng HOT walk** from the closest street all the way up to the El Morro entrance in Old San Juan—it was really brutal as there is NO SHADE (the palm trees bordering the path were blown down and not replaced.) Someone should tell the parks administration that a little shuttle tram from the street to the entrance would be nice. Once there, it was horrible to contemplate the walk BACK to the streets. There is even a sign at the start of the walk that warns you to bring PLENTY OF WATER!! (If you MUST do El Morro; at least take a cab UP the hill to the street drop off point. Then you might be able to make the long unshaded walk back and forth to the fort and then walk back DOWN HILL to the ship.)
- RCL's El Yunque tour**—not that the rainforest was disappointing but the RCL tour of it was! Too short a time at the forest (with NO chance to visit the \$12 million "El Centro" inter-active multi-media welcome center or to bathe under the waterfalls!) Also, too much time sitting in traffic with construction delays on the way there; too brief a stop at the very cheesy touristy souvenir stop, NO food available during the tour and leaving only an hour and a half to tour Old San Juan (even though we ran to Senor Frogs right near the ship—to grab a bite. We should have eaten at Mojios just up three blocks from the ship behind the casino and behind Senor Frog's.)