

# INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1986, I went into a travel agency looking to book a warm weather getaway, but I didn't know where I wanted to go. I had hoped to get some information from the travel agent and then narrow it down, although Mexico and Club Med were definitely possibilities. The agent was knowledgeable about cruise vacations and suggested I consider this vacation option. She then gave me a brochure for Carnival Cruise Lines to look through. At the time, I was traveling solo, as my friends either did not have the money to go or could not get the time off from work. As it turns out, there was a singles group going on a cruise that fit my travel dates, so I decided to join them. I had the time of my life and the rest is history.

I enjoyed that vacation so much that I decided to go on another cruise the following year and another the year after that. At that point I decided to work on board the ships as a Purser Officer. Upon my return to land, I spent some time working as a Business Development Manager for Carnival Cruise Lines, where I had the opportunity to present at numerous consumer cruise evenings and seminars. I have also continued to take cruise vacations and have sailed

twelve times as a guest on various lines, not counting the approximately seventy cruises while working on board the ships.

As a Purser, one of my jobs was to record guest complaints. I found that many problems could have been avoided had the guest been aware of some simple tips. When presenting at consumer information seminars, I found that many people were hesitant to try cruising, either from a lack of knowledge or from misconceptions about what cruising is all about; thus, the premise for this book. It is meant to be a reference manual, providing information about all you need to know on all facets of a cruise vacation, from selecting and planning your cruise to disembarkation and your return home.

In this book you will find practical information and tips on planning and taking a cruise vacation. I deliberately do not give detailed information on the various cruise lines, ships, itineraries, and ports of call because all of this information can be found in the cruise line's brochure, on the web, or through a knowledgeable travel agent. Further, this information (e.g. ship itineraries) is constantly changing, so including it in this book would render it obsolete in a short period of time. Instead, I have kept this manual as brief and succinct as possible (and as a result, as inexpensive as possible) to include only important information that you may have difficulty accessing elsewhere. This book describes some of the processes, regulations, and procedures that take place before, during, and after the cruise. Understanding these items plus following the tips and recommendations can help you to avoid potential hassles and assist in making your cruise vacation the best possible.

Each chapter is set up in chronological order to mimic the phases of a cruise vacation.

1. **Why Cruise?** – looks at the benefits of cruising, why it is a good value for your vacation dollar, and overcoming objections.
2. **Planning Your Cruise – The Basics** – takes you through the process of selecting a cruise, including which cruise line, ship, itinerary, duration, cabin, season, and pricing to make sure that you book the right cruise for your needs.
3. **Planning Your Cruise – Additional Information** – discusses working with a travel agent, pre- and post-cruise vacation options, loyalty programs, theme cruises, groups, weddings, payment options, cancellations and refunds, and vacation insurance.
4. **Preparing For The Cruise** – once you have booked your cruise, this chapter takes you through some of the preparations needed before you depart, including passports, visas and other cruise documents, packing, spending money, how to handle motion sickness, and ship/shore communications.
5. **Embarkation Day** – takes you through the whole embarkation process, from the time you arrive in the cruise departure city to getting to the pier, up to the time you actually go on board the ship.
6. **On Board The Ship – Amenities** – describes all of the ship's amenities including cabin, dining options, bar, photos, gift shops, spa and beauty salon, gym, infirmary, laundry/dry cleaning, and information desk services.

7. **On Board The Ship – Activities** – outlines some of the activities on board and services available such as cocktail parties, internet café, children’s activities, entertainment options, casino, golf, art auctions, and various at-sea contests, events, and games.
8. **Ports of Call** – discusses procedures for leaving and returning to the ship, shopping tips, shore tours, and port lectures.
9. **Disembarkation and Return Home** – explains important items on customs and immigration, luggage procedures, tipping, closing your shipboard account, comment cards, and tips for your return home.

At the end of each chapter, you will find a summary in point form for quick access to the important items that were discussed.

Appendices are included at the end of the book to provide further information. Appendix A includes websites of the major cruise lines and cruise information sites as sources of additional research. Appendix B lists the current ships in service for each cruise line, along with the date each entered service, its size, and passenger capacity. Appendix C outlines potential ports of call from various home ports in each region of the world. Appendix D provides a chart that indicates which cruise lines have ships that call on each port of call. Use these appendices to assist in your research in deciding which cruise line, ship, and itinerary to select. There is also a glossary of terms that you more than likely will hear during the cruise. You will benefit greatly from knowing what these mean.

This book is intended as a reference manual for those who have never been on a cruise or for those who have cruised and would benefit from additional information. Hopefully even the most experienced cruiser will find some valuable information. The Cruise Lines Industry Association (CLIA) has statistics indicating that over 11 million people went on a cruise in 2005, and that number is growing. With the help of this book, I hope that you will be one of them in the near future.