



RIVER CRUISING

There are a few unique things about river cruising that I like to share with clients, even if this isn't your first river cruise:

- Pack a comfortable pair of walking shoes. Part of the magic of river cruising is getting out to explore the cities and towns.
- The rooms are beautiful, but get out of it as much as you can. Meet your fellow cruisers, explore the ports, and enjoy the cuisine.
- Be patient, flexible and make the most of interruptions. Water levels have a big effect on river travel, so there can be delays, changes in the itinerary, and sometimes a ship change to get further down a river.
- Bring a good camera and carry it with you around the ship. The scenery is magnificent, and the best views are on the sun deck.
- Be sure you know in advance if drinks and gratuities are included in your fare. Some cruise lines only include beer/wine with lunch and dinner. If you are unsure, call me.

TRAVEL TIPS

BEFORE YOU TRAVEL

Passport: Be sure your passport is valid and has at least 6 months remaining at the END of your vacation. The State Dept also recommends having at least two blank pages.

Confirmations: Print out confirmations for everything you booked (insurance, cruise, tour, hotel, boarding passes, excursions, car rental, etc.) and check in ahead of time whenever possible to save time in lines and secure the best available options.

Research your destinations: Know what there is to do, what the typical weather is like on the dates of your travel and how to get around. Consider ordering a travel guide or maps, and book in advance—don't wait in line or risk sold-out excursions.

Medication: Check your supply of medications and be sure to refill anything you will need. Pack these in your carry-on in their original bottles with your name on them.

Pets: Make arrangements to have your pets cared for. If friends or family will be taking in your pets, have a back up plan. Many boarding facilities require an evaluation before they will board your animal and many fill up quickly. Plan at least one month ahead.

Credit Cards: Call your banks to make sure there are no overseas restrictions and notify them that you are traveling outside of the country. Find out if any of your credit cards have no international transaction fees or which one has the lowest fees and try to use it exclusively. However, you will need to bring the card you used to reserve your flights and hotel. You want some back up credit in case of an emergency. If possible, carry one each— Mastercard, Visa and Amex. Some places may not accept one or the other. Make photo copies or write down the numbers and the bank's contact information. Keep safe, but separate from your cards. If a card is lost or stolen, this info will help.

Cash: Try to use credit cards for anything you can. Carrying cash can make you a target of theft, and there are fewer headaches and fees if you need to convert your cash. Get any cash before you leave. This will save on fees. Most Caribbean countries will take US Dollars, but outside of the Caribbean, convert your money. It is best to do this before you leave. Leading up to your vacation, save all of your ones and fives to use for tipping.

Cell Phone: Consider adding an international plan, otherwise keep your phone on airplane mode, and then turn on WiFi (airplane mode will shut off WiFi, so you need to turn it back on to access any available networks). You don't want background functions to use data or phone calls/texts coming in while roaming internationally.

At Home: There are a few steps I recommend taking for safety and to save money:

- Mail—Put a hold on your mail by going to www.usps.com or have a trusted neighbor collect it, so it doesn't pile up.
- Emergency Contact—Provide them a copy of your itinerary, passport, visas, a key to your house and give them my contact information in case of an emergency while traveling.
- Lights—Put one or two lights on a timer, or at least leave a light on in the house.
- Thermostat and Water Heater: Turn off or lower your heat, air conditioner and water heater.

TRAVEL TIPS



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- At any port you will be leaving the ship, verify that your watch is set to the ship's time. Missing the ship can do more than ruin your vacation.
- When you get off the ship at port, your ship may not be in the same place when you return. It will be in the same area, but may have been repositioned so another ship could depart. Be sure you know your ship name.
- It's up to you whether or not you ever see the other passengers after the cruise, so don't be shy. If you make a fool of yourself, it's OK. Have fun! You may just make lifelong friends or travel companions.
- Ships may be tied together in port (up to four deep). Embarking and disembarking (getting on and off the ship) can be a lot of exercise if you are the outside ship. Sometimes you can walk through the other ships, but sometimes you have to walk up and over the sundeck to get across.
- Keep the previous tip in mind when it's time for bed. It's a good idea to close your curtains and expect someone to see you when you open the curtains in the morning. You may be tied to a ship and have someone sitting 3 feet from your window/balcony.
- Bring a wide-mouth water bottle so you can fill it with ice for your excursions.

When You Are Traveling

Passport: You will need your passport whenever you are crossing a border, boarding a plane, train or boat and when checking into a hotel. Tips to protect your passport (permits and visas):

- When not required, keep it securely locked in your room (in a safe when possible) and carry a photo copy.
- While carrying, keep it in a protective case or zip lock bag to prevent water damage and excessive wear. Also, keep it in a secure compartment of your carry-on, which will be with you at all times.
- Carry a photo copy when a passport isn't required.
- Very few destinations require you to carry your passport once inside the border (Thailand, Russia and Venice are some exceptions), but always verify when you are going through customs.

Travel Insurance: Carry a copy of your policy or coverage page with you when leaving the ship or resort. For medical, you want to be able to prove you have coverage if anything unforeseen happens. Many countries do not have the same laws we do, and do not have to treat you if you can't prove coverage.

Valuables: Carry as little cash and valuables as you can get away with, especially when going off the ship, or off a resort property. Tourist destinations are notorious for pick pocketers and other theft. Keep valuables locked in your room (in the safe or locked suitcase). Most theft is sparked by temptation or easy opportunity... limit both by keeping your valuables out of sight and inconvenient to access.

Get out of bed: Every day is costing you money. Get up and out to enjoy your unique surroundings, activities and new cultures.

Be Annoying: Talk to everyone... your waiter, concierge, bartender, customer at the next table... ask where the hidden gems are, where to go, what to see and where to eat. You will find that people love to share experiences and you can benefit from that.

Flying during meal time: Before leaving your hotel or ship, if room service is included (or buffet), order some food or take some food that travels well (another great reason to pack ziplock bags). You will be glad you did if you're on a shorter flight with no meals.

Photos: Take lots of pictures! Also take advantage of all photo opportunities from the photographers on your ship or resort. You are not obligated to purchase photo packages, but you may find that one would be the perfect souvenir from your trip.

Specialty dining: Most cruise ships/resorts have specialty restaurants. On most cruises, there is an extra charge. In most resorts, they are included, but may require reservations. Nobody likes a schedule on vacation, but make reservations... especially if it's free!

My Contact Info: Be sure to have my toll-free number **800-631-1984** and email address **mark@litvacations.com** in case of an emergency. Share this info with your emergency contact as well. In countries where toll-free numbers don't work, first dial the country code 001 and then replace 800 with 880. Please note this will NOT be a toll-free call.

Most of all: Have fun!