

Within two weeks of booking your cruise

- Buy travel insurance
- Renew your passport or apply for a new one
- Sign up for Cruise Critic's Meet & Mingle parties and join the roll call for your cruise

Three to four months before your cruise

- Research entry requirements and apply for visas
- Book your flights
- Book your pre- or post-cruise hotel
- Research shore excursions, destination information and private guides
- Design and order group T-shirts, hats, Mardi Gras beads or tote bags
- Pay your final bill (this can vary by cruise line and itinerary so abide by the terms of your booking)

Two months before your cruise

- Book shore excursions, either through the ship or independently
- Arrange for rental cars in port
- Make plans for independent touring – restaurant reservations, hop-on hop-off bus schedules, etc.
- Shop for large-ticket items (new cruise wardrobe and formalwear, suitcase, snorkel and fins, hiking boots)

One month before your cruise

- Book airport transfers
- Fill out and print out cruise line e-docs
- Sign up for pre-printed luggage tags if your cruise line still offers them
- Book a beverage or dining package
- Book pre-cruise spa treatments and specialty dining reservations
- Get any immunizations you might need

Two weeks before your cruise

- Make arrangements for your home while you're gone (hold your mail, book Fluffy's kennel stay, etc.)
- Draft a packing list – take into account items you'll need to dress appropriately in different cultures and for the destination's activities and weather (hiking boots, snorkel, fleece hat, etc.)
- Acquire the appropriate documentation necessary if only one parent is traveling with children

One week before your cruise

- Leave your travel information and copy of passport with a family member or close friend
- Call your bank and credit cards to alert them to your travel plans
- Locate port parking information and directions if you're driving
- Sign up for international calling or a discounted plan for your phone
- Get your pre-cruise pedicure/manicure or haircut
- Check the weather in your destination
- Pack
- Shop for last-minute cruise necessities (travel-size toiletries, a sun hat, memory cards, etc.)
- Stock up on reading material (magazines, e-books, library books, etc.)
- Refill any prescriptions you'll need on the trip and get a doctor's prescription to take in case your meds get lost
- Acquire some foreign currency or small bills for tipping
- Upload photos from your camera to your hard drive so you can start your trip with a clean memory card
- Finish up all necessary work projects
- Start eating up all the food in your fridge
- Print out e-docs and attach cruise line luggage tags to your bags

The day before your cruise

- Charge all your electronics -- then pack the chargers
- Get together your plane or car snacks, or any soda/water/wine you're bringing onboard
- Double-check you've packed everything you need
- Make a list of anything you need to pack the morning of your cruise
- Set an alarm (or two) if you have an early departure
- Set your work out-of-office message
- Check in for your flight