

What Not to Pack: Lessons Learned from our Disney Cruise

by Mary Augustine, PassPorter Guest Contributor

There are many packing lists for cruising available, both in guidebooks and online.

I referred to a three-page list while packing for our first Disney Cruise Line voyage. We brought four full-sized suitcases and three carry-ons, to supply three adults for just four nights. Thank goodness for luggage porters! Next time, my goal is two medium-sized suitcases for the three of us, along with one small carry-on bag. We won't be packing or ordering water for the cabin. No shampoos, conditioners, soaps, lotions, or blow dryers will be packed. We won't be packing beach towels. Snacks will be left behind on our next trip. We've also learned that minimal cash is needed. The following are a few suggestions for what not to bring.

Water

□ We ordered a case of water, based on my husband's decided preference for water as a beverage (he ordered it exclusively at every meal onboard). We found the (tap) water available at the beverage stations, and that served at meals and with room service, to be adequate. On Castaway Cay, beverages were available at lunch, and were offered on the one excursion we experienced there. At a cost of \$35 for the case of water delivered to our cabin, and considering that we consumed only one bottle, that was a rather expensive bottle of water! Not to mention the space that case of water occupied in our stateroom. At least we weren't hauling the water onboard. Thus, for our family, bottled water in our cabin was totally unnecessary. In the future, I will only bring or order what is needed for any shore excursions. Lesson learned.

□ Personal care items

□ I'll admit it. I'm selective regarding skin care products. As a retired dermatologist, I have opinions on soap, shampoo, conditioner, lotions, and more. I always pack my preferred products on trips, not wanting to rely on hotel brands. My husband and daughter also have their preferences, resulting in multiples of three being packed for most of our personal care products. However, on the Disney Dream, we found the H2O+ ™ products to be entirely adequate. In addition, the Steiner London products available in the fitness center/spa showers were also satisfactory. Thus, for our next cruise, I will happily lighten our luggage by leaving my own and my family member's soaps,

shampoos, conditioners, and lotions at home.

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□I read that some have found the hair dryers on the Disney Dream to be rather weak and inadequate. I, too, found ours to have little air output, until I read the instructions, stating it should be plugged into the round outlet, found on the right hand panel of the stateroom desk. This made quite a difference in the output, and it worked satisfactorily for us. By now, I should know this - when in doubt, read the instructions! No need to pack a blow dryer for our next Disney Dream cruise.

Beach towels

□Living in the mountains of Colorado, we look forward to the beaches and swimming while cruising. I assumed that we should bring beach towels to enjoy these activities. We learned that this was completely unnecessary, as towels were provided at the pools onboard, in the fitness center and spa, and were also available in abundance at the dock on Castaway Cay. Additional items eliminated from the packing list!

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Food/ snacks

□We brought a cache of snacks and packaged food for our daughter, who is gluten-sensitive. Of course, we contacted the Disney Cruise Line about her food sensitivity in advance (must avoid wheat, oats, rye, and barley), filled out the appropriate forms, and ensured that this was annotated on our reservation. Yet, as our experience with travel elsewhere has been that gluten-sensitive accommodations are often lacking, we arrived prepared for the worst. As soon as we boarded the Disney Dream, we headed to Cabanas for lunch. We asked a passing Cast Member about speaking to the Head Server, and within moments, we were speaking to him, receiving information about the buffet, and offers of specific gluten-free products (such as bread), as well as instructions regarding our evening meal. Every meal onboard went well. This was probably the highlight of the cruise for our daughter, who has experienced restaurants being less than accommodating, occasionally misguided, and sometimes indifferent to gluten-sensitivity. Our wonderful Disney Dream servers made every meal a celebration, which included special items for our daughter. We are unaware of any instances of errors in accommodating her gluten-sensitivity. We were overwhelmed with the special attention to her dietary concerns. For our next sailing, we will eliminate that suitcase of gluten-free packaged food and snacks.

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Cash

□We were aware that the Key to the World Card was the exclusive method of paying for items onboard and at Castaway Cay (except for room service tips, and stamps on Castaway Cay), but just couldn't resist

bringing ample cash onboard, just in case. No, we aren't serious shoppers, and we didn't have a list of things to buy in Nassau. We brought home most of the cash, and asked ourselves, why did we bring cash as if we would be paying for meals/drinks/snacks/photos/souvenirs onboard with it? We could have used cash to settle our account before debarking, but, a) Who wants to spend precious onboard time waiting in that long line at Guest Services when, if you use your credit card, it is charged automatically? They place a final bill in your stateroom on the last night of the cruise, and you have nothing to do, unless there is an error). And, b) We use our Disney Visa for nearly everything possible, then pay it in full each month, yielding Disney Rewards which we put to good use.

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□ In sum, we learned that bottled water, certain personal care items, beach towels, snacks, and excessive cash were not needed on the Disney Dream. I can't wait for that next cruise with our shortened packing list and lighter loads!

About The Author: Mary Augustine is retired. She has been a Disney fan since the original Micky Mouse Club was on television!

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