

Carry On Essentials for Your Disney Cruise: A Disney Cruise Line Review

by Michele Dakho, PassPorter Message Board Guide (Moderator)

The best thing about embarkation day on Disney Cruise Line is that the minute you board you can start exploring the magic (or the Dream, the Wonder, or the Fantasy!).

Your vacation starts as soon as you hear the crew announce your family name as you board.

The porters take your baggage when you arrive at the Cruise Line terminal, and it magically arrives at your stateroom later in the day, which is fine and dandy; until you realize that you have items in your suitcase that are essential to the start of your vacation.

☐ The first day carry-on is essential to your cruise experience. That one bag is what divides the experienced cruiser from the novice and makes or breaks those first few hours onboard. It's the determining factor between wandering aimlessly or experiencing an "extra" day onboard.

☐ Everyone has a preferred carry-on bag. Whether it's the size or shape that appeals to you or if you're just stuck in a rut, you probably have a bag you rely on for traveling. Personally, I find that an old school backpack is the best vessel for my cruise essentials and I always make sure I have the following five essentials in my bag:

- Travel documents - Travel documents are always important, but for cruises that are heading into international waters you'll want to be especially careful to have everything in one place and easily accessible. This includes government-issued ID (drivers license and/or passport) and if you're using them for proof of citizenship, be sure that all birth certificates are certified with the raised seal, as they are the only ones that are valid. These documents fit perfectly into a holder in the front zipper pouch of the backpack, so easily accessible that a travel partner can unzip the bag and grab them for you without you even having to take it off your shoulders. The digital age we live in leaves many of us relying on our cell phones instead of hard copy for things like itineraries and boarding passes. Be sure to bring the chargers you need with you!

- Medications - Any time you travel you should keep essential medications on your person or in your carry-on. If you're on a prescription, pack it with you. There's no guarantee your bags will arrive in time for your scheduled dose, or that they will arrive at all.

Your medications can also fit in a secondary zipper part of your backpack, or you can put them in the bottom of the main compartment of your backpack if you don't need instant access to them. I have a clear zippered bag that's great for those random items I seem to need when flying: antibacterial hand wipes, an extra hair tie, etc.

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□• Bathing suit - This may not seem like a crucial essential in your normal carry-on bag, but for your Disney cruise, it absolutely is. Why? I'm glad you asked. The bathing suit is crucial because with it you're able to take advantage of the pools before everyone is onboard. This means far less crowds and more time for fun in the sun. The bathing suit fits into the main compartment of your backpack, as well as a travel-sized sunscreen and a nice, flat pair of flip-flops. These items all fit well into a large Ziploc bag, so if you want to change back out of your wet swimsuit you can put it back into the Ziploc bag. No need to worry about towels, they are abundant at all the pools onboard.

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□• Camera - You never know what kind of characters you may run into onboard. It's also nice to be able to get photos of the public areas before they are flooded with people. Protect your camera in a padded case, or wrap it in your (dry) bathing suit. If it's not waterproof, consider purchasing a waterproof case or use a good old-fashioned Ziploc bag. And don't forget your charger!

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□• Dinner wear - Although baggage handling is magically efficient, on occasion your luggage may not arrive to your stateroom in time for dinner (especially if you're on Main seating). While the first night's recommended dress is always Cruise Casual, the attire you boarded with may not always be dinner-worthy. If you're worried about your luggage not arriving in time, pack something to wear for dinner in your bag. Pick separates that can be combined easily for day wear and casual dinner wear (jersey fabrics are my favorite, a jersey dress is nice and cozy but looks cute and dressy enough for dinner).

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□ Here are a few friendly reminders about your embarkation day:

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□• The kids clubs don't open until after dinner on the first night, so anything you may need to keep your kids occupied until then, you should bring with you.

□• The shops onboard cannot be open while in port. The shops will open after you set sail, usually before the first performance in the Walt Disney Theatre. If you need aspirin or seasickness medication you can ask for complimentary packs at the Guest Services desk.

□• The lifeboat drill is mandatory, meaning everyone has to attend; yes, even you. All the ship services will be suspended during that time, so it's not like you could do anything else even if you wanted to.

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□ These five essential carry-on items will have you looking like a pro your first few hours onboard. Don't forget to grab a Personal Navigator when you check in before you board to get an idea of what's going to be happening on the ship. Bon Voyage!

About The Author: Michele is an Authorized Disney Vacation Planner with Pixie Vacations, you can find her on the boards as PixieMichele or read her other tips and tricks on her blog ThePracticalPlanner.blogspot.com. She is also a PassPorter Message Board Guide in the Disney Cruise Line forums.

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