

5 Things to Know about Embarkation

Your embarkation day is an important part of your Disney Cruise experience. Let's review a few important details and get you prepared so all you'll need to do is look forward to the fun!

PORT ARRIVAL TIME

The Port Arrival Time you select is the earliest time Disney would like you to arrive to the cruise terminal. This is NOT the time you will actually board the cruise ship.

You can show up later, but you may be turned away if you arrive earlier. Sometimes they will allow you to arrive earlier if you have an afternoon time, but they are not as lenient with the first groups of port arrival times.

After you make your final payment (and your check-in window opens), you will be prompted to fill out an online check-in form - including uploading all of the required travel documentation. At the end of the form, you will select a port arrival time.

We prefer a boarding time in the middle, and I arrive a few minutes after so that I can check in and walk right on the ship. If we can be onboard by 12:30 / 1PM, we are happy!

HAVE YOUR DOCUMENTS READY

It's a best practice to complete your preboarding documents online - well before arriving at the port terminal.

You will still need to present some physical documents at the terminal before you will be permitted to board the ship. Have these documents ready.

As soon as possible in the planning phase (well before Embarkation Day), gather together ALL of the required documents - including passports, birth certificates, travel visas, minor authorization/permission forms, Online Check-In Port Arrival forms, and government IDs. See [the official list of documents here](#).

Keep the documents together in a safe place until travel time. On your Embarkation Day, carry them in a folder or envelope for easy access upon arrival.

Warning: Every single time a Disney Cruise Ship sails away, there are sad people left at the port terminal because their documents were expired, and Disney could not allow them onboard.

So please, please, please - check and triple-check the expiration dates of everyone's passports and government IDs. They will expire. Don't "think" you know when they expire. Take a look and verify.

FUN BEFORE YOU BOARD

If you are sailing out of Port Canaveral, there are character meets in the terminal so while you wait, you will be entertained. Meeting Captain Mickey or Minnie is a delightful experience to kick off your cruise even before you board the ship.

Other photo opportunities to enjoy while waiting to board:

- Ship model with cutaway sides
- Take a snap of your family in front of the Ears Portal that leads to the gangplank
- Be sure to stop at the onboarding Photo with DCL photographers

The terminal will have vending machines for snacks and beverages, a restroom, cartoons playing, and maps on the floor for exploring.

QUICK TIP: The ONLY place to get a DCL pressed-coin will be in the terminal. They do not have machines on the ships.

YOUR CHECKED LUGGAGE

Before heading inside the cruise terminal and meeting Captain Mickey, you'll want to drop off your checked luggage curbside. This will be a quick pull-up, unloading, and handoff operation. For a smoother process, be sure your DCL baggage tags are already attached to your luggage.

A few other notes:

- Have your Port Arrival Form with you when you pull up because they do request to see that to verify you're 1) on this ship, and 2) within your proper port arrival time
- Have your vehicle organized with what should be dropped off curbside and which bags will be carried on.
- Tipping anyone who handles your bags is customary and appreciated. This includes bus/car drivers and curbside porters.
- Have small bills available for the tips as it will be difficult to get larger bills changed. The amount is up to you, but \$1-2 per bag is a guide.
- If driving, you'll park your car after luggage drop off.

Once you drop off your luggage, you won't have access to your bags again until they arrive in your stateroom later in the day. **This is why it's extremely important to pack your carry-on bag with all of the essentials you'll need during the day.**

YOUR CARRYON BAG

Pack the swimsuits, sunscreen, and anything you may need in your carry-on bag.

On the day you embark, luggage usually takes a little longer to get to your room. Make sure you have everything you need for a few hours as your luggage will not arrive in your room until later in the day.

If you or the kiddos don't want to miss any time enjoying all of the pools and water activities, make sure to pack bathing suits, change of clothes, naptime needs or comfort items, and prescription medications to have at hand. Of course, those important documents we mentioned above should be in your carry-on too.

Another important carry-on item - bottled water and water bottles.

Pack your own bottled water. They are expensive onboard. If you prefer, you can bring your water bottle or tumbler and fill it at the various beverage stations located around the ship.

As a planner, I had compared dozens of packing lists before deciding what I was going to bring on my first cruise. One thing I kept seeing was a lanyard, but I didn't see myself wearing one so I decided to omit it.

Let me tell you, lanyards are super handy to keep your Key to the World (your combination room key and charging card) in. Then you don't have to worry about carrying a purse or wallet.

We always pack our large Tervis / Yeti type of tumblers. There are beverage stations located throughout the ship but they provide very small cups. I know they take up a lot of space, but I would still recommend bringing a large (24-ounce or more) tumbler. I mostly keep mine filled with water, but occasionally I will treat myself to some soda, juice, etc.



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