

2016 Honors Accordion Orchestra Cruise

NOVEMBER 6-13, 2016

Royal Caribbean – Liberty of the Seas
Galveston, TX



Registration Fees for the ALL ORCHESTRA RETREAT - \$150

Come and enjoy 3 full days (at sea days) of Orchestra rehearsals, 3 days of shorter sectional rehearsals - **and a final concert – ON BOARD!**



Select your cabin NOW - \$250 deposit per person (Refundable)
Balance due Aug. 1, 2016

Enjoy 7 Day Cruise
for as little as \$108 per day (3 in window cabin)!
All you can EAT Included!

This retreat is designed for the serious accordion ensemble accordionists. We will be learning and performing light POP to Classical material - All designed for the final **CONCERT ON BOARD the Liberty of the Seas!**

Cabin Priced Guaranteed for 30 days - Except the Promenade & Balcony cabins are 30% off until April 2. ALSO – MAX of 50 Accordionists!

CALL DIRECT to Royal Caribbean to Book:
800-465-3595 - Group Number - #2013714

Plan to stay over Sun. night in Houston for a Concert by Stas. We can help you make hotel & Airport arrangements.



All orchestra selections will be work shopped and conducted by Stas. These will include custom written arrangements by Stas Venglevski and Shelia Lee to **include all level accordion players!!**

Cabin Choices	Cost 1st or 2nd in Cabin ea.	#1 or #2 Total w/ Tax	Per Person Per day	#3 or #4 Total w/ Tax	Per person divided by 3	Per Person Per day	Per Person divided by 4	Per Person Per day
Inside (1st & 2nd)	583	683.45	97.64					
Inside w/3 or 4)##	597	697.45		439.45	611.45	87.35	568.45	81.21
Window (1st & 2nd)	706	806.45	115.21					
Window w/3 or 4)	734	834.45		619.45	762.78	108.97	726.95	103.85
Promenade** (2 Only)	657	757.45	108.21					
Balcony** (1st & 2nd)	1180	1280.45	182.92					
Balcony** w/3 or 4)	1143	1243.45		477.45	988.11	141.16	860.45	122.92
Jr Suite	1189	1369.16	195.59					
** ON SALE 30% OFF - UNTIL APRIL 2								
## Inside Cabins Could Have Bunk Beds - ALSO there is a \$12.95 Mandatory Gratuity is per day per guest								

Itinerary

Sun Nov 6	Galveston TX (Depart 4:00 pm)	Thu Nov 10	Falmouth, Jamaica (8am – 5 Free)
Mon Nov 7	At Sea (Rehearsal day)	Fri Nov 11	At Sea (Rehearsal day)
Tue Nov 8	Cozumel, Mexico (7am – 4 Free)	Sat Nov 12	At Sea (Rehearsal day) / Performance
Wed Nov 9	Grand Cayman, (10:30am - 6 Free)	Sun Nov 13	Galveston TX (Arrive 8:00 am)



See Website for Registration and more details - www.accordionhonors.com

E-mail: info@accordionhonors.com

2016 Honors Accordion Orchestra Cruise Enrollment

Join us for Honors Accordion Orchestra Cruise
Sunday, Nov 6 – Sunday, Nov 13, 2016
Royal Caribbean - Liberty of the Seas, Galveston TX
Conductor & Music Director: Stas Venglevski
Organizer: Shelia Lee - Secretary: Megumi (Meg) Hada

Enjoy 7 days cruise for as little as \$109 per day per person (3 in window cabin)!
 All you can Eat, and room service included!
 Select your cabin NOW- \$250 deposit per person or \$500 per cabin
Promenade and Balcony Rooms on Sale Until April 2
Balance due Aug 1, 2016

Cruise reservations: Call RC at 800-465-3595 (8am to 7pm Mon-Sat.)

Say "Accordion Honors Cruise" and Group #2013714

(If you can beat our prices – please furnish us your **Reservation Number to be Included with our GROUP**)

Registration Fee for All Orchestra Retreat is \$150 (for Accordionists ONLY)

To register please fill out this form and send with a **check Payable to "Honors Accordion Program"** to:

Honors Accordion Program c/o Megumi Hada

P.O. Box 1144, 315 N Allen Genoa Rd

South Houston TX 77587-9998

(Cancellations – 50% refund, no refund after August 1)

First Name		Last Name	
Address			
City	State	Zip	
Phone	Mobile		
E-mail			
What size you prefer for your T-shirts		Size	Qty.
Lady's –XS S M L XL XXL Men's –XS S M L XL XXL XXXL 1 st one is free with registration. Additional T-shirts \$20 (\$25 for XXL & XXXL)			
Additional T-Shirt			
Additional T-Shirt			
What level are your accordion skills? base on PH books			
Bk 1-2 <input type="checkbox"/> Bk 3-4 <input type="checkbox"/> Bk 5-6 <input type="checkbox"/> Bk 7& up <input type="checkbox"/> Semi-Pro <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher <input type="checkbox"/>			
How long have you played the accordion? since youth? _____ (Years?) started as adult? _____ (Years?) Do you have a regular lesson with a local or Skype teacher? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> Do you rehearse at least monthly with a duet or ensemble (any instrumentation)? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> Have you rehearsed and performed before with an accordion convention or camp or retreat orchestra? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> Have you rehearsed with Stas or Shelia before? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>			
Are you planning to stay one more day at Houston after cruise to participate Stas & Chamber Orchestra Concert? (Concert will be on Sun. Nov. 13 evening in down town Houston) YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>			
Amount Included: \$150 plus any additional shirts – please state sizes for additional. There are no registration fees required for NON-ACCORDIONISTS – or those not participating with the Orchestra Rehearsal or performance. ENCLOSED:\$ _____			
Many retreat attendees like to share contact information. Please check the box(es) below designating what contact info you wish to share (a sheet listing attendees and released contact info will be handed-out at the cruise). Name <input type="checkbox"/> Address <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail <input type="checkbox"/> Phone <input type="checkbox"/> State room # <input type="checkbox"/> Do not share any contact info <input type="checkbox"/>			
We have professional dancers in our group. Are you interested in a free dance class? YES NO If yes, what kind of dance do you want to learn? Waltz <input type="checkbox"/> Foxtrot <input type="checkbox"/> Rumba <input type="checkbox"/> Cha-cha <input type="checkbox"/> Tango <input type="checkbox"/> Swing <input type="checkbox"/> Salsa <input type="checkbox"/> Merengue <input type="checkbox"/> Two steps <input type="checkbox"/> others _____			

Galveston Cruise Guide



2016

Welcome!

As one of the most popular cruise ports in the United States (currently ranked the fourth busiest), Galveston has become a cruise mecca. Whether you want to sail on a quick party trip to Cozumel, take a week-long cruise around the Caribbean, or even sail on a multi-week repositioning cruise to Europe, the island offers the perfect starting point for any sort of vacation.

And whether it's your first cruise or your fiftieth, there's always a sense of excitement and adventure as you get ready to sail. Of course, there is also a lot of planning and preparation that goes into taking a trip. If you're unfamiliar with Galveston cruising, then trying to figure it all out -- when to arrive, where to park, where to stay -- can be overwhelming.

To help your trip go as smooth as possible, we created this *2016 Galveston Cruise Guide*. Within this guide you'll find anything you could want to know about cruising from the island, as a supplement to GalvestonCruiseTips.com.

If you still have questions about cruising from the island after reading this guide, then you can email us directly at GalvestonCruiseGuide2016@gmail.com.

This exclusive email address is only for people who have purchased this guide, and you will receive a personal response.

Happy Cruising!

T. Callais

Tanner Callais
Founder
GalvestonCruiseTips.com

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Planning & Packing

Packing for Your Cruise

Going on a cruise creates some interesting packing dilemmas. Headed to the Caribbean, you'd think it would be as simple as throwing a couple of swimsuits in a bag. But with formal nights, on-shore excursions, and more, you actually need to pack for several different situations. We've compiled our suggested list of items below for a 7-day cruise.

Women's Packing List

- Shorts (x3)
- Pants (x3)
- Variety of tops (including 1-2 long-sleeved)
- Sundresses/skirts
- Swimsuit (x2)
- Swimsuit cover-up
- Bras
- Panties
- Socks
- Walking shoes
- Flip-flops
- Formal shoes
- Formal attire
- Sleepwear
- Light jacket (ideally with hood)
- Sweatshirt/pullover
- Toothbrush/toothpaste
- Razor
- Shampoo/soap (if you like your brand)
- Comb/brush
- Q-tips
- Contact lenses/glasses
- Hair products
- Deodorant
- Lotion
- Floss
- Makeup kit
- Feminine products
- Curling iron/straightener

Men's Packing List

- Shorts (x3)
- Pants (x3)
- T-shirts/tank tops (x5)
- Swim trunks (x2)
- Long-sleeved shirt
- Underwear
- Socks
- Walking shoes
- Flip-flops
- Formal attire (Tux rental available onboard; button-up shirt and slacks are fine)
- Formal shoes
- Belt(s)
- Sleepwear
- Light jacket (ideally with hood)
- Sweatshirt/pullover
- Toothbrush/toothpaste
- Razor
- Shampoo/soap
- Comb/brush
- Q-tips
- Contact lenses/glasses
- Hair products
- Deodorant
- Lotion
- Floss

Packing for Your Cruise

(Continued)

Miscellaneous

- Wine/champagne (one 750 ml bottle per adult)
- Corkscrew
- Wristwatch
- Emergency contact numbers
- Medication (keep in carry-on bag)
- Sunglasses
- Port information
- Reading material
- Chargers for electronics
- Digital camera
- Extension cord with multiple plug-ins
- Ziploc bags
- Ear plugs
- Small first-aid kit (include Dramamine)
- Playing cards
- Bug Spray
- Sunscreen
- Antibacterial hand sanitizer
- Hat/visor
- Aloe vera

What NOT to Pack

(Against rules/supplied/not needed)

- Towels
- Hair dryer
- Household appliances
- Clothing iron
- Alcohol/beer (except wine/champagne)
- Guns/knives(>4")/weapons
- Candles
- Incense
- Shoes with wheels
- Hoverboards

Can I Bring Alcohol Aboard?

Carnival: Passengers can bring one 750 ml bottle of sealed wine or champagne per adult. No beer or other alcohol is allowed. Carnival charges a \$15 corkage fee if you drink your wine/champagne in the main dining room, bar, or other onboard restaurant.

Royal Caribbean: Royal Caribbean allows its passengers to bring two 750 ml bottles of wine or champagne per stateroom. Unlike other lines, Royal Caribbean does not charge a corkage fee. No beer or liquor is allowed to be brought on board.

Disney: Adults can bring two bottles of wine or champagne (no larger than 750 ml) or 6 beers (no larger than 12 ounces) on board at the beginning of the voyage and at each port of call. No other alcohol is allowed. Disney charges a \$25 corkage fee.

Before You Leave Home

(Cruise Day Checklist)

One week before leaving:

- Arrange for a pet-sitter or kennel, if needed
- Reserve cruise parking or port transportation
- Alert credit card companies of upcoming travel
- Pay any bills that might come due during your trip
- Place a hold on mail service

One day before leaving:

- Make any final runs for needed items
- Print cruise documents
- Print hotel/car confirmation (if applicable)
- Print flight boarding pass (if applicable)
- Set email auto-responder
- Fully charge any phones, cameras, or electronics
- Withdraw cash from ATM (don't forget \$1's for tipping porters)



Day of departure:

- Clean any perishable items from refrigerator
- Take out trash
- Set thermostat to away temperature
- Set water heater to vacation mode
- Make sure all door and windows are locked
- Ensure that each person has needed identification before leaving home

Cruise Day Schedule

Cruise day can be hectic. With thousands of people headed to the cruise ships, the port is a hive of activity. To keep things as smooth as possible, we recommend adhering to the following schedule. This bases your day off of your anticipated boarding time.

All guests must be checked-in and on the ship 90 minutes before the ship departs. Carnival traditionally leaves port at 4 p.m. on cruise day. Royal Caribbean typically follows at 4:30. **See your cruise documents for the official time.**

● Drive time + 30 minutes:

Leave home for Galveston if driving or airport if flying

● 30 minutes before boarding:

Arrive at parking lot if driving

Arrive in Galveston if being dropped off at the port from outside Galveston

Start heading toward port if being dropped off at the port from within Galveston

● Before entering cruise terminal & security:

Make sure you have everything you need for the next few hours in your carry-on luggage (passports, medication, important documents, etc.)

● Boarding Time

● 30 minutes before sailing:

Go through the muster drill on ship; learn where to go in case of emergency

● Sail Away!

You're on vacation!



Parking & Transportation

Directions to the Port

All cruises embark at the Port of Galveston. The port is located on the northern end of the island, at the intersection of Harborside Drive and 25th Street. Of course, you'll be able to see the ships from a distance. The port is approximately 50 miles from downtown Houston, 40 miles from Hobby Airport, and 70 miles from Bush Intercontinental Airport.

If driving, expect the trip to take about one hour from Hobby Airport and two hours from Intercontinental Airport.

Directions to the Galveston Cruise Terminal from Houston:

1. Take I-45 South (Gulf Freeway) to Galveston.
2. From I-45 South, take the Harborside Drive exit.
3. You will come to an intersection after about 1/5 of a mile (Teichman Road). Turn left.
4. This road turns into Harborside Drive. You will take Harborside all the way to the port.
5. The port is located at the intersection of Harborside Drive and 25th Street.

Directions to the Galveston Cruise Terminal from Beaumont:

1. Take I-10 West to Galveston.
2. Take Exit 829 for Winnie/Galveston.
3. Turn left onto Hwy. 124 toward Galveston.
4. Hwy. 124 turns into Hwy. 87 past High Island. Continue on Hwy. 87 to Galveston ferry.
5. After exiting the ferry, continue 1 mile, turning right on Harborside Drive.
6. The port is located at the intersection of Harborside Drive and 25th Street.

The Port of Galveston address is **2502 Harborside Drive, Galveston, Texas 77550**.

Airport Transfers

Flying into a Houston for your cruise? Getting from Houston to Galveston is unfortunately the biggest headache in cruising from the island. Fortunately, there are plenty of options for reaching the terminal.

Cruise Line Transfers

Cruise lines offer transfer service from both Houston airports to the port. For example, Carnival offers round-trip service for \$74 per person from Hobby Airport and \$94 per person from Bush Intercontinental Airport to Galveston.

The transfers are convenient if you are traveling on cruise day, but aren't very flexible and are expensive. We suggest other modes of transportation from Houston to Galveston, unless you are traveling in a small group.

Independent Shuttles

A small cottage industry has formed to transfer passengers between Galveston and Houston, and they are your least expensive way to get to your cruise. Here are three local companies that can get you to the ship:

Cool Tours offers a shared shuttle between Houston airports and the Galveston cruise terminal. Prices change regularly, but can be affordable compared to other options — especially if traveling with a larger group.

<https://cooltoursgalveston.com>

Island Breeze Shuttle provides a shuttle for \$150 roundtrip for two passengers from Hobby and \$190 roundtrip from Intercontinental.

<http://www.islandbreezeshuttle.com>

Galveston Express provides both shared and private shuttle service from the airports to the cruise port. For just \$50 roundtrip per person from Houston Hobby and \$60 per person from Houston Intercontinental, this is the cheapest way we've found to get to the cruise terminal.

<http://galvestonexpress.com>

Airport Transfers

(Continued)

Taxi

Taxi fare roundtrip from the airport to the Galveston cruise terminal can cost upwards of \$250-300 from Bush Intercontinental Airport and \$150-200 from Hobby Airport. (Rates vary depending on traffic.) That's on the expensive side, but remember that usually up to four passengers can ride for that price. That makes the cost cheaper per person than the cruise line shuttles. Plus, with a taxi you don't have to reserve ahead and you can leave whenever you are ready, instead of waiting on a shuttle to fill up.

Car Rental

The good news about car rentals is that you will have your own wheels if you want to explore the area before or after your cruise. The bad news is that you will likely have to pay for the rental and parking while you are on your trip.

Enterprise is the only rental agency on the island, and the company is finicky about allowing one-way rentals from the Houston airports. Instead, they want you to book a roundtrip rental. However, you can rent from Enterprise locations away from the airports and book one-way rentals to Galveston. Keep in mind that rental rates can vary dramatically based on season. We've seen rates as high as \$60 per day to as low as \$20. For the best rates, we suggest searching at <http://www.kayak.com>.

Our Suggestion...

Admittedly, since we live in the area we haven't had to find transportation from the airport to Galveston. That said, our suggestion would be to take a shared shuttle ride from Galveston Express. At \$50/\$60 per person roundtrip (depending on which airport you use), this is the cheapest route we've found to the island.

Cruise Parking

There are nine different parking lots that you can choose to use, which range in price from \$45 to \$90 for 7 days of parking. Our suggestion is to go with one of the four more-established lots: **Lighthouse Parking**, **EZ Cruise Parking**, **Galveston Park N Cruise**, or the official **Port of Galveston** lots. Most lots will have a free shuttle that goes back and forth from the port for passengers and their luggage.

Parking Lot	7-Day Cost	5-Day Cost	Distance (Blocks)
Cruise Park Galveston	\$45	N/A	3
Discount Cruise Parking	\$50-60	\$40	30
81 st Dolphin Parking	\$55	\$40	6
Lighthouse Parking**	\$60	\$40	5
Galveston Park N Cruise**	\$65	\$46	1
EZ Cruise Parking	\$65	\$50	3
Port of Galveston Lots	\$65	\$45	5
Port Parking**	\$60	\$50	8
Galveston VIP Indoor Cruise Parking**	\$90	\$65	1

*Rates are for online prepaid parking. Drive-up parking is usually \$5 more. Sales tax of 8.25% is not shown in rates above.

**Offers covered parking

Parking Discounts

Nearly every parking lot on the island offers \$5 off your parking if you reserve and pay online ahead of time. EZ Cruise Parking also offers discount coupons. If you plan to park there, we recommend signing up for their email list on their website for discounts. Here are some recent codes:

“2016” - \$15 off 7-day parking | “ANYSAIL” - \$10 off 4-5-day parking

“15parkwalk” - \$15 off 4-5-day parking if you don't use their shuttle

“20parkwalk” - \$20 off 7-day parking if you don't use their shuttle

Cruise Parking

(Continued)

Cruise Park Galveston

2815 Harborside Drive
IslandCruiseParking.com
409-354-8787
(no shuttle provided)

Discount Cruise Parking

8115 Harborside Drive
DiscountCruiseParking.net
409-599-4016

81st Dolphin Parking

2801 Market Ave
81stDolphinParking.net
409-256-6877

Lighthouse Parking

309 29th Street
LighthouseParking.org
210-413-0293

Galveston Park N Cruise

2514 New Strand Street
GalvestonParkNCruise.com
866-479-7275
(no shuttle provided)

EZ Cruise Parking

2727 Santa Fe Place
EZCruiseParking.com
409-939-0648

Port of Galveston Lots

3300 Harborside Drive
PortGalvestonParking.com
409-766-6100 ext. 163

Port Parking

202 37th Street
PortParking.com
855-435-7678

Galveston VIP Indoor Cruise Parking

111 Rosenberg
GalvestonVIPCruiseParking.com
409-765-7300
(no shuttle provided)

 = Suggested Parking

Hotels with Cruise Parking

Since Galveston caters to tourism and the cruise industry, many hotels will do everything they can to earn your business. That includes letting you park your car during your trip at a huge discount... or often even for free. To take advantage of this perk, you simply need to stay at the hotel/motel before you leave on your cruise. All of the following hotels offer some sort of parking discount or package.

Two-Star Accommodations

Super 8 Galveston

2825 1/2 B 61st

409-740-6640

Free Parking

<http://www.super8galveston.com>

Howard Johnson Express Inn

8216 Harborside Drive

409-744-1100

Free Parking

<http://www.hojo.com>

Rodeway Inn

6107 Broadway Street

409-740-2491

Free Parking

<https://www.choicehotels.com>

Inn at the Waterpark

2525 Jones Drive

409-740-1155

Parking Package Offered

<http://www.innatthewaterpark.com>

Scottish Inns Galveston

928 Ferry Road

409-762-3311

Free Parking

Beachcomber Inn

2825 61st Street

409-744-7133

Free Parking

<http://www.galvestoninn.com>

Candlewood Suites

808 61st Street

409-744-4440

\$25 Parking

Comfort Suites Galveston

3606 89th Street

409-741-9977

Free Parking + \$15 Shuttle

<https://www.choicehotels.com>

Baymont Inn & Suites

2826 63rd Street

409-744-3000

Free Parking

<http://www.baymontinns.com>

Red Roof Inn Galveston

5914 Seawall Blvd

409-740-1261

Free Parking

<https://www.redroof.com>

Hotels with Cruise Parking

(Continued)

Two-Star Accommodations

Holiday Inn Express

8628 Seawall Blvd
409-740-7900

\$50 Parking + Shuttle

La Quinta Inn & Suites (Seawall)

8710 Seawall Blvd
409-740-9100

\$50 Parking + Shuttle

<http://laquintagalvestonseawallwest.com>

The Villa Bed & Breakfast

1723 25th Street
409-766-1722

Free Parking

<http://www.thevillabedandbreakfast.com>

Comfort Inn & Suites Beachfront

6302 Seawall Blvd
409-741-8888

\$50 Parking + Shuttle

<https://www.choicehotels.com>

Commodore on the Beach

3618 Seawall Blvd
409-763-2375

Free Parking (only during low season)

<http://www.commodoreonthebeach.com>

Three-Star Accommodations

Hampton Inn & Suites

6431 Central City Boulevard
409-744-5600

Parking Package

<http://hamptoninn3.hilton.com>

Victorian Condo Hotel Resort

6300 Seawall Blvd
800-231-6363

\$40 Parking + \$10 Shuttle

<http://www.victoriancondo.com>

Gaido's Seaside Inn

3700 Seawall Blvd
409-762-9625

Free Parking

<http://gaidosseaside.com>

Holiday Inn Resort

5002 Seawall Boulevard
409-740-5300

Free Parking

Four Points by Sheraton

2300 Seawall Blvd
409-974-4796

\$40 Parking

<http://www.fourpointsgalveston.com>

Hotels with Cruise Parking

(Continued)

Four-Star Accommodations

Hilton Galveston Island Resort

5400 Seawall Boulevard

409-744-5000

Free Parking + Shuttle

<http://www.galvestonhilton.com>

Hotel Galvez

2024 Seawall Blvd

409-765-7721

\$18 Parking + Shuttle

<http://www.hotelgalvez.com>

The Tremont House

2300 Ship's Mechanic Row

409-763-0300

\$18 Parking + Shuttle

<http://www.thetremonthouse.com>

The San Luis Resort

5222 Seawall Blvd

800-445-0090

Free Parking + Shuttle

<http://www.sanluisresort.com>

DoubleTree by Hilton

1702 Seawall Boulevard

409-762-4141

\$50 Parking + Shuttle

<http://doubletree3.hilton.com>



Eat & Play



Things to Do in Galveston

Of course you're coming to Galveston to take a cruise, but the island is a destination in of itself. With dozens of attractions, there is no shortage of things to do. We've compiled a list of the island's top activities that you won't want to miss...

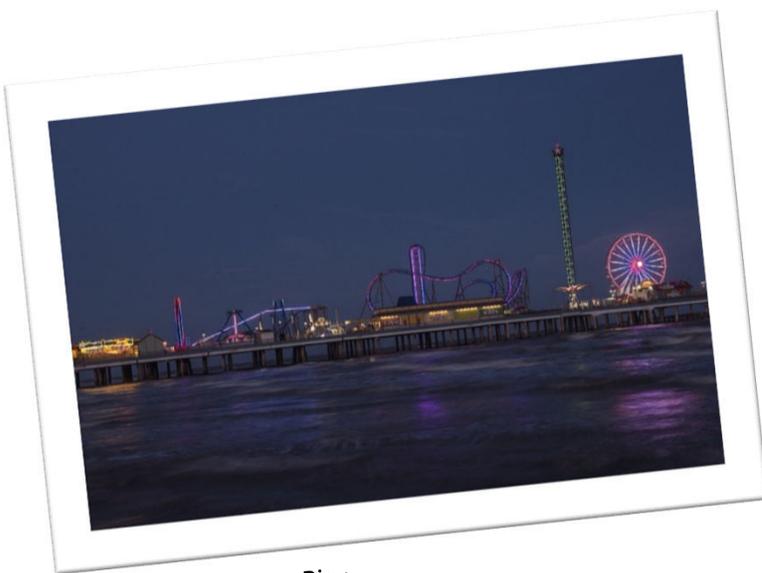
Galveston/Port Bolivar Ferry

Want to get on a boat, before you get on your boat? Then take a free trip on the ferry to the Bolivar Peninsula. The ride takes about 15 minutes, although during the heavy traffic of the summer months the wait to ride can take 2 hours or more. Insider tip: People who walk aboard can hop right on the next boat. Park in the free lot by the dock and simply walk aboard for a quick trip.

Beautiful Architecture

Galveston has more history than just about any other city in Texas... and that comes to life in some of the island's famous mansions.

The Moody Mansion is a 28,000 square-foot home built around the turn of the century. Today it has been restored to its original glory and offers tours seven days a week. Bishop's Palace was built in 1892 and is now considered one of the best examples of Victorian architecture in Texas. Ashton Villa is even older, dating back to 1859. It was from Ashton Villa's balcony that the "Juneteenth Proclamation" was read, freeing Texas slaves. Today the building is also known as one of the most haunted buildings in America.



Galveston Pleasure Pier

Galveston Pleasure Pier

The former site of the Flagship Hotel, the Pleasure Pier is one of Galveston's newest attractions.

The amusement park includes roughly a dozen of rides (including a roller coaster) and a restaurant, all sitting out in the Gulf of Mexico.

<http://www.pleasurepier.com/>

Things to Do in Galveston

(Continued)

Lone Star Flight Museum

One of our favorite things to do, the Lone Star Flight Museum houses dozens of airplanes, primarily from World War II. If you're feeling adventurous, you don't have to just look at these beautiful planes — you can ride in them. The museum offers flight sessions for everything from B-17s to P-51 Mustangs. <http://www.lsfm.org>

Schlitterbahn Galveston

You've likely heard of Schlitterbahn. The water park in New Braunfels is consistently voted the best in the world. Now Schlitterbahn has been brought to Galveston. The park has dozens of rides — including many that are indoor and heated, so you can enjoy them even in the winter. <http://www.schlitterbahn.com/galveston>

The Elissa

One of Galveston's most famous attractions, the 141-foot long Elissa is a three-masted sailing ship built in 1877. Today the ship is immaculately restored, and sits in port right next to the Galveston cruise terminal. Visitors are welcome to come aboard and tour the ship, and experience one of the island's crown jewels.

Moody Gardens

If you drive into Galveston from Houston, you can't miss Moody Gardens. Its iconic pyramids house a living rainforest with over 1,000 species of plants and animals, an aquarium, an IMAX theater, and much more. It's a great way to spend the day and see many animals that you can't see anywhere else. <http://www.moodygardens.com>

The Strand

A short walk from the Port of Galveston, the Strand District gives you a taste of old Galveston. Today it is a popular shopping area, with restaurants, boutiques, art galleries and more. Be sure to check out La King's Confectionary to pick up something sweet before your cruise. If you have an hour or two before boarding, then the Strand is a great option.

Things to Do in Houston

Many cruise passengers drive or fly through Houston on their way to their cruise. And while we think Galveston is a must-see for anyone sailing from the island, there is still plenty to do and see in Houston, America's fourth-largest city.

Houston Museum of Natural Science

Sitting in the heart of the city near Rice University, the Houston Museum of Natural Science is a world-class facility. Inside you'll find classic exhibits including dinosaur bones and ancient mummies, as well as a planetarium, IMAX, and butterfly center. The museum is an especially welcome place to spend an indoor afternoon if visiting during the hot and humid Texas summer. <http://www.hmns.org>

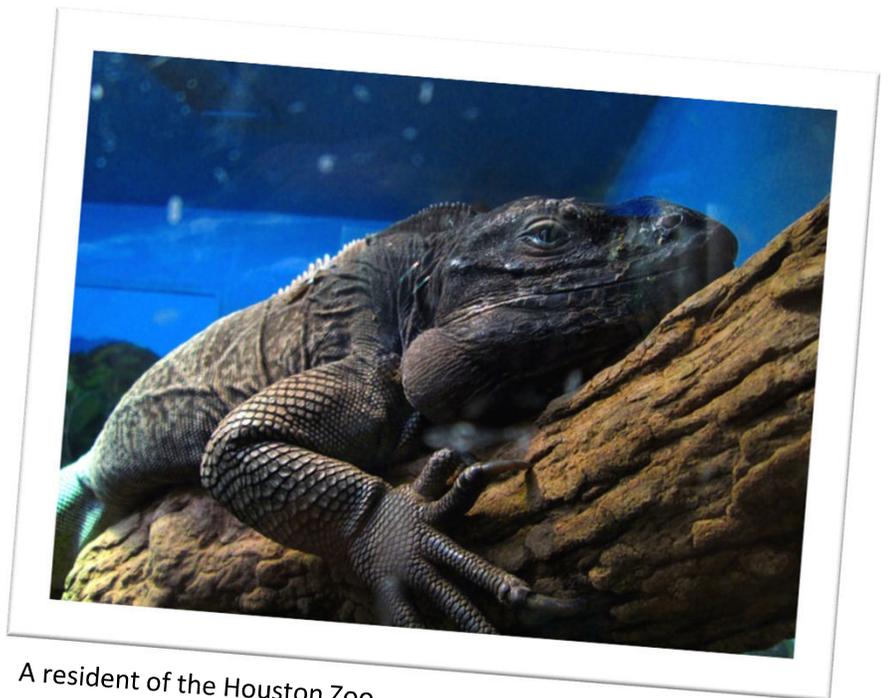
Houston Zoo

Houston isn't famous for its zoo, but the Houston Zoo is a top of the line complex offering a chance to see wildlife up close and person. Giraffes, elephants, gorillas, and chimpanzees -- they are all housed here at the zoo. The sea lion exhibit near the entrance is always a popular draw. Our suggestion is to wear comfy walking shoes and bring a stroller if you have little ones. The zoo is plenty large and requires some serious walking. <http://www.houstonzoo.org>

Minute Maid Park

Catch the hometown Houston Astros if they are in town (season runs April-September). If not, you can still tour Minute Maid Park and see where Houston's MLB franchise calls home. This downtown stadium opened in 2000 as a replacement for the famed Astrodome.

<http://houston.astros.mlb.com/hou/ballpark>



A resident of the Houston Zoo

Things to Do in Houston

(Continued)

Space Center Houston

Any Texan will be proud to tell you that the first word spoken on the surface of the moon was "Houston." If you're a space-buff, then Space Center Houston is a must see. The center is home to a Saturn V rocket, along with capsules from Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo missions. Especially popular is the Level 9 tour -- a behind the scenes VIP tour of NASA that is limited to only 12 people each day (obviously, reservations are recommended). <http://spacecenter.org>

Beer Can House

This is an off-the-radar sight that you have to see to believe. In 1968, Houston man John Milkovisch began to cover his house with aluminum siding -- made of empty beer cans. Today the house is covered with more than 50,000 cans. You can visit the house during the weekends to see it up close and personal. <http://www.beercanhouse.org>



Saturn V rocket at Space Center Houston

Recommended Eats

Thanks to being a tourist destination, Galveston offers an unexpectedly large variety of restaurants. Whether you want seafood on the Seawall or pizza on the Strand, there's something for every taste.

Gaido's (Seawall; Upscale; Seafood)

A Galveston icon, Gaido's is perhaps the island's most famous restaurant. Serving seafood in a classic white-tablecloth atmosphere, the legendary locale offers gulf views as you dine. Be sure to get a photo in front of it's famous giant blue-crab before you leave!

<http://www.gaidos.com>

3828 Seawall Boulevard

Rudy & Paco (Strand; Upsale; Seafood/Steak)

Rudy & Paco offers a unique twist on classic seafood and steak meal. With a Cental/South American flair, the food is like nothing else. The location is also fantastic on the Strand, near the cruise terminals. Reservations are highly suggested.

<http://www.rudyandpaco.com>

2028 Post Office Street

Mama Teresa's Flying Pizza (Strand; Affordable; Pizza)

If you've visited the Texas Gulf Coast before, this restaurant might sound familiar. It used to be located across the ferry in Crystal Beach before Hurricane Ike destroyed the business. Today it has reopened in Galveston, offering the same relaxed atmosphere and delicious pies as it used to.

416 21st Street

The Spot (Seawall; Moderate; Seafood/Drinks)

The Spot is your classic beach bar on the Seawall. It is actually five different places in one complex. Whether you want a boat drink or a burger, this is a great place to have it all with a great view of the water.

<http://thespot.islandfamous.com>

3204 Seawall Boulevard

Recommended Eats

(Continued)

Mosquito Café (East End; Moderate; Breakfast)

Don't let the name fool you, this place is very inviting. While they serve all kinds of food, it's the go-to on the island for a good sit-down breakfast.

<http://www.mosquitocafe.com>

628 14th Street

The Original Mexican Café (East End; Affordable; Mexican)

Texas is known for its Tex-Mex food, and The Original Mexican Café doesn't disappoint. All the classic Mexican fare is served in this classic Galveston establishment.

<http://www.theoriginalgalveston.com>

1403 Market Street

Olympia Grill

Located just steps from the cruise terminals at Pier 21, Olympia is Greek-dining with a Gulf Coast twist. This is a great choice if you want to stay near the ships or if someone in your group is vegetarian.

<http://www.olympiagrill.com>

100 21st Street



Olympia Grill at Pier 21

Cruise FAQ & Tips



Do I Need a Passport?

Although technically you may not need it, we highly recommend anyone cruising from Galveston have a valid passport no matter their age or circumstances. It will simply make things much easier.

That said, if you can't get a passport for some reason, there is a possibility for you to still cruise. The United States is part of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WTHI). Passengers leaving from and returning to the same port — called a “closed-loop cruise” -- can travel with only a birth certificate and government-issued photo ID. Here are the specifics from the government's website on the topic:

“U.S. citizens who board a cruise ship at a port within the United States, travel only within the Western Hemisphere, and return to the same U.S. port on the same ship may present a government issued photo identification, along with proof of citizenship (an original or copy of his or her birth certificate, a Consular report of Birth Abroad, or a Certificate of Naturalization). Please be aware that you may still be required to present a passport to enter the foreign countries your cruise ship is visiting. Check with your cruise line to ensure you have the appropriate documents.”

We think that sounds like a lot of trouble. **Get a passport and make sure it's valid for at least six months after your departure date.** You can't put a price on peace of mind.

Cruise Ship Tipping

These days, most cruise lines automatically opt passengers in for pre-paid gratuities. These cover any tips that are due to your stateroom attendant and waiters. For instance, Royal Caribbean charges \$12.95 to each person's account each day. If you want to opt out of these charges you can, but you shouldn't go without tipping. The crew works hard to make your cruise pleasant. If you can afford the cruise, you can afford to tip. If you opt out, you'll receive tip envelopes at the end of the cruise to distribute as you see fit.

Suggested Tip Amounts (per guest, per day):

Dining Room Services: \$6-7

Stateroom Attendant: \$4-5

Room Service: \$2 per order (at time of delivery)

Cruise Tips & Tricks

No matter how many times you've cruised there are always a few tricks you can learn to save money, time, or stress. Keep these in mind on your next trip.

Order that second entrée

Still hungry after your meal or not sure which entrée you want to eat? You can order more of anything you like (or try one of everything), no questions asked.

Order off the menu

Did you love that dish you had two nights ago in the dining room, but it's no longer on the menu? Try ordering anyway. The cruise lines will usually make it special for you.

Only go first if you like standing in line

Lines are a fact of life on a cruise. Whether it's boarding, debarking, or catching a show, trying to be first to go usually means a long wait. Instead, just let the crowd rush through and then go at your own pace later.

Security is not exactly like the airport

Security to get on the ship is more lax than you'll find at an airport. You usually have to walk through a metal detector and have your bag x-rayed, but no taking off shoes, belts, or going through full-body scanners.

Cameras are constantly watching

If you are in a public place on the ship, don't expect to have any privacy, even if no one is around. Cameras cover the ship for safety reasons. Keep this in mind if you think about doing something bad because no one is looking.

Free motion sickness pills

We suggest bringing your own, but Guest Services has motion sickness pills that they will give you for free if you need them.

Don't expect to hit it big in the casino

Have fun in the casino, but know that cruise ship gambling is notoriously tight since there is no competition. You're likely better off putting that money toward drinks or an excursion.

Cruise Tips & Tricks

(Continued)

Traveling with kids? Take advantage of babysitting

Yes, there are kids activities throughout the day, but cruise lines also offer evening babysitting services to give mom and dad a break so they can catch dinner and a show.

Your balcony isn't as private as you think

Most balconies offer some privacy, but the partitions between other balconies often don't cover floor to ceiling. People on other balconies can often see into your space.

Go to the spa/health classes for possible free services

Sure they are designed to sell you something, but the intro classes hosted in the spa and health center at the start of the trip often need volunteers to showcase their services. You might get a free massage or other treat if you are lucky.

Ports of call aren't always Disney World

Just because a cruise line ports there doesn't mean the cities you visit will be nice and safe. We recommend staying in the tourist areas and staying vigilant, as you would in any unfamiliar city. Petty theft is common in many Caribbean stops.

Walking a couple of blocks can save money

You'll be greeted by all sorts of vendors when you get off the ship. If you want to save money on everything from souvenirs to taxi rides, head a couple of blocks away from the ship to find cheaper prices.

Always bring Ziploc bags

Ziploc bags are unbelievably handy. From holding snacks for the kids to keeping things dry while you swim, these bags are worth their weight in gold.

You'll get sunburned quicker on your trip

At lower latitudes like in the Caribbean, the sun's rays will hit you more directly. The result is that you'll burn much quicker than you would back home. Be ultra-vigilant with sunscreen to keep from turning into a lobster.

Duty-Free 101

Since a set of special rules apply for places like airports and cruise ships, they are able to sell goods without having to pay import taxes (or duty) on them first. Most consumers never see this tax or even know it exists — but when goods like alcohol or cigarettes are imported to a country, most governments charge a duty on its value.

Since duty-free shops get a pass on these rules, they can offer pretty big savings compared to back home.

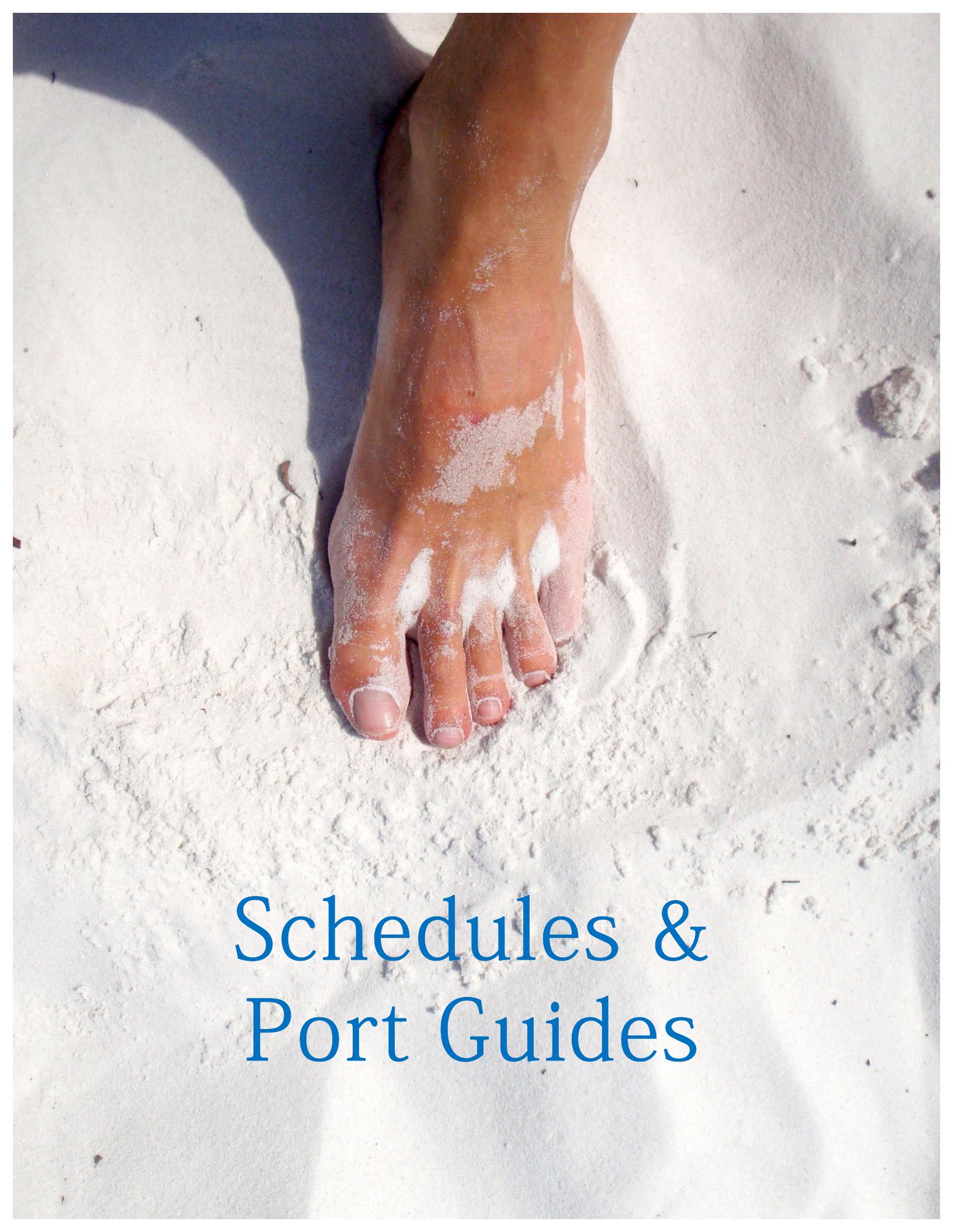
What this doesn't mean, however, is that you buy a store out of liquor and be set for years. Specifically, "the law limits personal importation by an adult to once every 30 days with limits of: **1 gallon of distilled spirits, 3 gallons of wine, and 288 ounces of malt beverages (24 12-ounce containers).**" Keep in mind that this is per adult. So a couple can bring in twice as much.

If you are sailing from Texas, then you will also be subject to state tax laws (even if you don't live there) when you return. The Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission has enacted a tariff where "cruise travelers disembarking out of the Port of Galveston will need to pay the tax for alcoholic beverages and cigarettes imported into the state that were purchased either on the ship's duty free store or at a foreign port of call."

That means every bottle or cigarette you bring back home will see a small tax. **The tax runs about \$3.75 for a liter and \$1.50 per pack of cigarettes.** And to our knowledge, there is no personal exemption. Every bottle is hit with this tax.

Quick Guide to Duty/Tax Rules

- Personal duty exemption of \$800 of goods, including 1 liter of alcohol, and 200 cigarettes per adult.
- Amounts above your personal exemption are taxed at a rate of 3%.
- Texas law allow you to bring back 1 gallon of alcohol or 3 gallons of wine per adult.
- Every bottle of alcohol or pack of cigarettes brought into Galveston will be taxed (\$3.75 per liter/\$1.50 per pack).



Schedules &
Port Guides

2016 Cruise Schedule

January

Saturday	Jan 2	Carnival Freedom
Saturday	Jan 2	Carnival Triumph
Sunday	Jan 3	Carnival Magic
Sunday	Jan 3	Liberty of the Seas
Monday	Jan 4	Disney Wonder
Thursday	Jan 7	Carnival Triumph
Saturday	Jan 9	Carnival Freedom
Sunday	Jan 10	Carnival Magic
Monday	Jan 11	Carnival Triumph
Saturday	Jan 16	Carnival Triumph
Saturday	Jan 16	Carnival Triumph
Sunday	Jan 17	Carnival Magic
Thursday	Jan 21	Carnival Triumph
Sunday	Jan 24	Carnival Magic
Monday	Jan 25	Carnival Triumph
Saturday	Jan 30	Carnival Triumph
Sunday	Jan 31	Carnival Magic

Sunday	Mar 6	Liberty of the Seas
Monday	Mar 7	Carnival Triumph
Saturday	Mar 12	Carnival Freedom
Saturday	Mar 12	Carnival Triumph
Sunday	Mar 13	Carnival Magic
Sunday	Mar 13	Liberty of the Seas
Thursday	Mar 17	Carnival Triumph
Friday	Mar 18	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Mar 19	Carnival Freedom
Sunday	Mar 20	Carnival Magic
Sunday	Mar 20	Liberty of the Seas
Monday	Mar 21	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Mar 26	Carnival Freedom
Saturday	Mar 26	Carnival Liberty
Sunday	Mar 27	Carnival Magic
Sunday	Mar 27	Liberty of the Seas
Thursday	Mar 31	Carnival Liberty

February

Thursday	Feb 4	Carnival Triumph
Saturday	Feb 6	Carnival Triumph
Sunday	Feb 7	Carnival Magic
Sunday	Feb 7	Liberty of the Seas
Monday	Feb 8	Carnival Triumph
Saturday	Feb 13	Carnival Freedom
Saturday	Feb 13	Carnival Triumph
Sunday	Feb 14	Carnival Magic
Sunday	Feb 14	Liberty of the Seas
Thursday	Feb 18	Carnival Triumph
Saturday	Feb 20	Carnival Freedom
Sunday	Feb 21	Liberty of the Seas
Monday	Feb 22	Carnival Triumph
Saturday	Feb 27	Carnival Freedom
Saturday	Feb 27	Carnival Triumph
Sunday	Feb 28	Liberty of the Seas

April

Saturday	Apr 2	Carnival Freedom
Sunday	Apr 3	Carnival Magic
Sunday	Apr 3	Liberty of the Seas
Monday	Apr 4	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Apr 9	Carnival Freedom
Saturday	Apr 9	Carnival Liberty
Sunday	Apr 10	Carnival Magic
Sunday	Apr 10	Liberty of the Seas
Thursday	Apr 14	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Apr 16	Carnival Freedom
Sunday	Apr 17	Carnival Magic
Sunday	Apr 17	Liberty of the Seas
Monday	Apr 18	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Apr 23	Carnival Freedom
Saturday	Apr 23	Carnival Liberty
Sunday	Apr 24	Carnival Magic
Sunday	Apr 24	Liberty of the Seas
Thursday	Apr 28	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Apr 30	Carnival Freedom

March

Thursday	Mar 3	Carnival Triumph
Saturday	Mar 5	Carnival Freedom
Sunday	Mar 6	Carnival Magic

2016 Cruise Schedule

May

Sunday	May 1	Carnival Magic
Sunday	May 1	Liberty of the Seas
Monday	May 2	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	May 7	Carnival Freedom
Saturday	May 7	Carnival Liberty
Sunday	May 8	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	May 8	Liberty of the Seas
Thursday	May 12	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	May 14	Carnival Freedom
Sunday	May 15	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	May 15	Liberty of the Seas
Monday	May 16	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	May 21	Carnival Freedom
Saturday	May 21	Carnival Liberty
Sunday	May 22	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	May 22	Liberty of the Seas
Thursday	May 26	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	May 28	Carnival Freedom
Sunday	May 29	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	May 29	Liberty of the Seas

June

Saturday	Jun 4	Carnival Freedom
Saturday	Jun 4	Carnival Liberty
Sunday	Jun 5	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Jun 5	Liberty of the Seas
Thursday	Jun 9	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Jun 11	Carnival Freedom
Sunday	Jun 12	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Jun 12	Liberty of the Seas
Monday	Jun 13	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Jun 18	Carnival Freedom
Saturday	Jun 18	Carnival Liberty
Sunday	Jun 19	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Jun 19	Liberty of the Seas

Thursday	Jun 23	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Jun 25	Carnival Freedom
Sunday	Jun 26	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Jun 26	Liberty of the Seas
Monday	Jun 27	Carnival Liberty

July

Saturday	Jul 2	Carnival Freedom
Saturday	Jul 2	Carnival Liberty
Sunday	Jul 3	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Jul 3	Liberty of the Seas
Thursday	Jul 7	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Jul 9	Carnival Freedom
Sunday	Jul 10	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Jul 10	Liberty of the Seas
Monday	Jul 11	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Jul 16	Carnival Freedom
Saturday	Jul 16	Carnival Liberty
Sunday	Jul 17	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Jul 17	Liberty of the Seas
Thursday	Jul 21	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Jul 23	Carnival Freedom
Sunday	Jul 24	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Jul 24	Liberty of the Seas
Monday	Jul 25	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Jul 30	Carnival Freedom
Saturday	Jul 30	Carnival Liberty
Sunday	Jul 31	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Jul 31	Liberty of the Seas

August

Thursday	Aug 4	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Aug 6	Carnival Freedom
Sunday	Aug 7	Carnival Breeze

2016 Cruise Schedule

August

Sunday	Aug 7	Liberty of the Seas
Monday	Aug 8	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Aug 13	Carnival Freedom
Sunday	Aug 14	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Aug 14	Liberty of the Seas
Thursday	Aug 18	Carnival Liberty
Friday	Aug 19	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Aug 20	Carnival Freedom
Sunday	Aug 21	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Aug 21	Liberty of the Seas
Monday	Aug 22	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Aug 27	Carnival Freedom
Saturday	Aug 27	Carnival Liberty
Sunday	Aug 28	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Aug 28	Liberty of the Seas

September

Thursday	Sep 1	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Sep 3	Carnival Freedom
Sunday	Sep 4	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Sep 4	Liberty of the Seas
Monday	Sep 5	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Sep 10	Carnival Freedom
Saturday	Sep 10	Carnival Liberty
Sunday	Sep 11	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Sep 11	Liberty of the Seas
Thursday	Sep 15	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Sep 17	Carnival Freedom
Sunday	Sep 18	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Sep 18	Liberty of the Seas
Monday	Sep 19	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Sep 24	Carnival Freedom
Saturday	Sep 24	Carnival Liberty
Sunday	Sep 25	Carnival Breeze

Sunday	Sep 25	Liberty of the Seas
Thursday	Sep 29	Carnival Liberty

October

Saturday	Oct 1	Carnival Freedom
Sunday	Oct 2	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Oct 2	Liberty of the Seas
Monday	Oct 3	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Oct 8	Carnival Freedom
Saturday	Oct 8	Carnival Liberty
Sunday	Oct 9	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Oct 9	Liberty of the Seas
Thursday	Oct 13	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Oct 15	Carnival Freedom
Sunday	Oct 16	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Oct 16	Liberty of the Seas
Monday	Oct 17	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Oct 22	Carnival Freedom
Saturday	Oct 22	Carnival Liberty
Sunday	Oct 23	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Oct 23	Liberty of the Seas
Thursday	Oct 27	Carnival Liberty
Saturday	Oct 29	Carnival Freedom
Sunday	Oct 30	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Oct 30	Liberty of the Seas
Monday	Oct 31	Carnival Liberty

November

Saturday	Nov 5	Carnival Freedom
Saturday	Nov 5	Carnival Liberty
Sunday	Nov 6	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Nov 6	Liberty of the Seas
Thursday	Nov 10	Carnival Liberty
Thursday	Nov 10	Disney Wonder

Cruise Schedule

November

Saturday	Nov 12	Carnival Freedom
Sunday	Nov 13	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Nov 13	Liberty of the Seas
Monday	Nov 14	Carnival Liberty
Monday	Nov 14	Disney Wonder
Friday	Nov 18	Disney Wonder
Saturday	Nov 19	Carnival Freedom
Saturday	Nov 19	Carnival Liberty
Sunday	Nov 20	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Nov 20	Liberty of the Seas
Thursday	Nov 24	Carnival Liberty
Friday	Nov 25	Disney Wonder
Saturday	Nov 26	Carnival Freedom
Sunday	Nov 27	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Nov 27	Liberty of the Seas
Monday	Nov 28	Carnival Liberty

Friday	Dec 23	Carnival Liberty
Friday	Dec 23	Disney Wonder
Saturday	Dec 24	Carnival Freedom
Monday	Dec 26	Carnival Breeze
Monday	Dec 26	Liberty of the Seas
Wednesday	Dec 28	Carnival Liberty
Friday	Dec 30	Disney Wonder
Saturday	Dec 31	Carnival Freedom

December

Friday	Dec 2	Disney Wonder
Saturday	Dec 3	Carnival Freedom
Saturday	Dec 3	Carnival Liberty
Sunday	Dec 4	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Dec 4	Liberty of the Seas
Thursday	Dec 8	Carnival Liberty
Friday	Dec 9	Disney Wonder
Saturday	Dec 10	Carnival Freedom
Sunday	Dec 11	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Dec 11	Liberty of the Seas
Monday	Dec 12	Carnival Liberty
Friday	Dec 16	Disney Wonder
Saturday	Dec 17	Carnival Freedom
Saturday	Dec 17	Carnival Liberty
Sunday	Dec 18	Carnival Breeze
Sunday	Dec 18	Liberty of the Seas



Roatan, Honduras

Port Guide: Cozumel

By far the most common port for cruises sailing from Galveston, Cozumel has turned into a major destination. In fact, you'll likely find four or more ships in port at the same time.

Cozumel is so popular that there are two different docks for cruise ships. You'll most likely dock at the International Pier, located about 5-10 minutes south of the main city. The second port is Punta Langosta, located right in front of town.

Cozumel is reasonably safe, despite the headlines you might hear out of Mexico. With tourism as its prime industry, the island rolls out the red carpet to cruise passengers. English is widely spoken and U.S. dollars are widely accepted (as in all ports).

If you're interested in shopping and eating, then you'll love the main strip located downtown. There is every type of store you can imagine, along with dozens of restaurants (including party spots like Hooter's and Senor Frogs). We would be remiss, however, if we didn't encourage you to explore town on your own and discover some of tropical beauty the island has to offer.

Looking to swim and get away from the crowds? Catch a taxi (they have standard rates listed as you get off the ship, so don't get overcharged) to Playa Palancar on the southwestern shore. Here you can eat, drink, swim and sun all in one spot without the usual crowds.

Popular excursions from Cozumel include a number of options for snorkeling and diving, as well as tours of Tulum – the ancient Mayan city on the mainland.



Ships in port in Cozumel

Port Guide: Progreso

Progreso sits on the Gulf of Mexico on the country's Yucatan Peninsula, due south of New Orleans. The first thing you'll notice when you arrive is the pier. Progreso is home to Mexico's longest pier, jutting miles into the Gulf. At the end of the pier is the city, which is famous for its long stretch of beach and "malecon" – the shoreline shopping and restaurant district.

While there is definitely beach and swimming, the water isn't as clear as you'd expect from a tropical vacation. In fact, many people skip town altogether, electing to go explore Merida, Mexico's famous colonial city. Excursions to Mayan ruins further inland are also popular from this spot. Cenotes – large sinkholes filled with crystal blue water – are also prevalent in the area and are a nice way to cool off in the hot summer months.



A cenote in Mexico

Port Guide: Roatan

If you want the charming Caribbean, then Roatan is your place. Sitting out about 30 miles from the coast of Honduras, the island has seemingly been cut-off from the rest of the world. Given its location, it's a place where the major companies haven't yet taken over. Instead of soaring high-rises and beach bars, you'll find a much quieter town and local dives.

Cruise passengers disembark either at Coxen Hole or Mohagonay Bay. From there, most passengers hop in a taxi to head to the western edge of the island where there are some smaller hotels and restaurants, and fabulous beaches. West Bay is the most popular stretch of beach. With that also comes lots of other people and vendors hawking their wares and para-sailing. If you want a spot that's quieter, check out Half Moon Bay on the West End.



A quiet walk in Roatan

U.S. dollars are widely accepted and English is spoken in any tourist area on the island.

Like many Central American destinations, Roatan does have some issues with crime – especially petty theft and robbery. If you stay in the tourist areas and use common sense (don't be flashy with money or jewelry) then you should have no problem. We'd suggest avoiding the less-developed areas of the island unless on a guided tour.

Port Guide: Belize City

Don't speak Spanish? That's perfectly fine in Belize, where English is the common language. Belize City is normally a jumping off point for most cruise passengers to points around the country. The city offers a tourist village to greet passengers with shopping and restaurants, but the bulk of things to do sit outside the city.

Our favorite excursion is a trip to the ruins of Altun-Ha, a major archeological site located further inland. The trip gives you a chance to view the Belizean countryside on the way there and concludes with a jungle river ride back to the city where you'll see monkeys, crocodiles, and iguanas.

Other passengers elect to head to Ambergris Caye (pronounced "key"), which offers the laid-back feel of the Caribbean that you'd expect from a quiet island. Stroll along the beach or eat your lunch with your feet in the sand on this castaway paradise.

Overall, Belize is a natural, unspoiled natural wonderland. You'd be missing out if you don't take advantage of your time here to see the wild side of Central America.



Wild monkey in Belize

Port Guide: Grand Cayman

If you were to draw a triangle between Havana, Cancun, and Kingston, then Grand Cayman would sit right in the middle. It's blessed as being one of the most popular offshore banking centers in the world, but also one of most popular cruise ports in the Caribbean.

When you arrive, don't be surprised to see 3-5 other cruise ships already anchored offshore (in Grand Cayman you port offshore and take a tender boat in). That means the island can get plenty busy on cruise days.

The island's 7-Mile Beach is a major attraction, located just north of where the ships anchor. The water is crystal clear, and the white sand makes it look like something out of a postcard. Public beach access is located near the halfway point of the beach. You can also hit up one of the restaurants or some resorts and access the beach with a chair and umbrella for a small fee.

If traveling without kids, check out the Cayman Spirits Co. distillery, where you can tour the facility and sample authentic Caribbean rum. If you have kids, then you have to visit Stingray City, a popular spot that lets you swim with marine life.

As you would expect from a country known for its banking (and with nearly 2 million cruise tourists each year), U.S. dollars are readily accepted around the island, as are major credit cards.



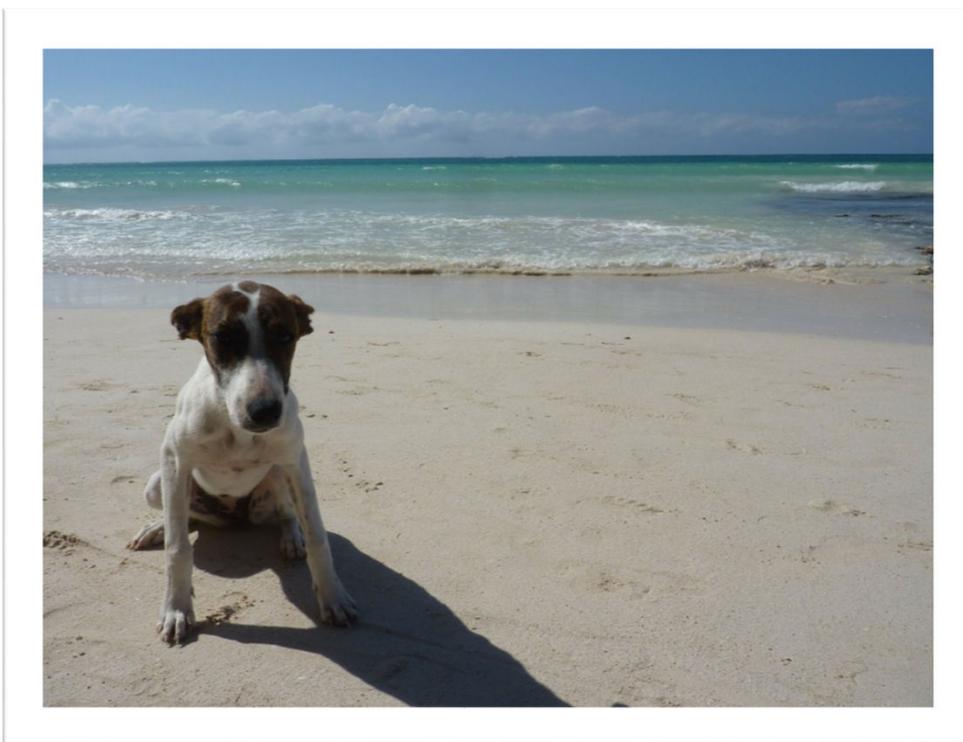
Grand Cayman's clear water

Port Guide: Ocho Rios

What was once a sleepy little town has now become a tourist hotspot thanks to cruise ships docking off the coast. Ocho Rios -- 8 Rivers in Spanish -- still offers the classic Jamaican vibe and natural beauty in spades. From the ship you'll see Bay Beach (also known as Mallards Beach) at the end of the terminal. This is your classic Caribbean spot with clear water, palm trees, and powdery sand. Expect to pay a couple of bucks per person for access, but it's worth it.

Much of what people like to explore in this port is actually away from the beach. Dunn's River Falls and Blue Hole are both major attractions. These two spots offer amazing jungle waterfalls that you can explore and swim; we know of nothing else like them in the Caribbean.

The town is also famous because of its location as the set of Dr. No -- the classic James Bond film. You can even take an excursion to go explore what's now known as "James Bond Beach" if you're a mega-fan.



One thing to watch for: While Jamaica is synonymous with the "ganja" culture, marijuana is illegal to buy or smoke. That doesn't mean it won't be offered. If you decide to partake in this Jamaican tradition, you do so at your own risk.

A local dog getting some sun in Jamaica

Port Guide: Montego Bay

Montego Bay is a much bigger city than the other ports in Jamaica -- Falmouth and Ocho Rios. So don't expect the quiet charm that you would find in a smaller town on the coast.

The real highlight of Montego Bay itself is duty-free shopping. If you are interested in beach time to work on your tan, there is Doctor's Cave Beach. You'll have to pay entrance fees and to rent a chair/umbrella, but you'll have a gorgeous Caribbean beach to hang out on all day long.

Most excursions in the port head to the outskirts of the city for resorts or even further to the Ocho Rios area. In Ocho Rios there are abundant waterfalls and swimming holes that come highly recommended by cruise passengers. There are also ziplines and four-wheeler excursions for those feeling a bit more adventurous.

If you simply want to hang out and enjoy a cold beverage, you can check out Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville. The multi-leveled restaurant sits right on the water and even has a huge waterslide that will drop you (or your kids) from the upper level into the sea.

Falmouth

Falmouth sits on Jamaica's northern coast, between Montego Bay and Ocho Rios. And fitting to its location in the middle, it's also a medium-sized town compared to its two sister cities.

Much of what's interesting to do in the port revolves around the natural beauty of Jamaica. Adventure tours, waterfalls, and Burwood Beach all come highly recommended. You'll find that most excursions head to the east toward Ocho Rios where the famous Dunn's River Falls (a natural waterfall and swimming spot) is located.

If you're interested in something that's scenic, yet not quite as adventurous as climbing a waterfall, then you might be interested in rafting on the Martha Brae River. This quiet ride on a 30-foot bamboo raft will seem worlds away from the hustle and bustle of back home -- or even the cruise ship.

For an authentic taste of Jamaica, check out Leon's Lobster Hut. It's a very authentic (i.e. rustic) restaurant right on the water. While it may not look like the nicest place, the lobster is said to be fantastic.

Helpful Contacts

Royal Caribbean

<http://www.royalcaribbean.com>
(800) 256-6649

Carnival

<http://www.carnival.com/>
800-764-7419

Disney Cruises

<https://disneycruise.disney.go.com/>
800-951-3532

Port of Galveston

<http://www.portofgalveston.com/>
Security: (409) 766-6172

Yellow Cab Galveston

<http://www.yellowcabgalveston.com/>
(409) 763-3333

Galveston Police

<http://www.galvestonpolice.net/>
409-765-3702



Enjoy the
Adventure!

