The Packing & Prep List

Everything from eight weeks out to the morning you board, in the order you actually need to do it. Free, printable, no email required.

THE SHORT ANSWER

Cruise preparation runs on deadlines, not just packing. Eight weeks out: check passport expiry, request an accessible cabin, and declare any wheelchair, scooter, CPAP or oxygen. Royal Caribbean asks for 30 days notice for special equipment and 60 for sign language interpreting; Norwegian asks 90 days for interpreters and 45 for other needs. Medication, documents and a swimsuit go in the carry-on, because checked luggage often arrives after sailaway.

Facts checked against official sources on 24 September 2026

Most packing lists are a pile of clothing with no sense of time. The trouble with a cruise is that half the work is *prep*, not packing, and some of it has deadlines that are weeks out. Miss the accessible-cabin request window and no amount of clever folding fixes it.

So this runs on a clock. Print it, tick it, stop worrying about it.

This one is free like all the others. No email, no sign-up, no gate. If you did get here from our welcome email, that is just us handing it to you rather than making you look for it.

Eight weeks out

The deadline items. These are the ones that cannot be fixed later.

Check before you sail

The official rules behind this guide, one scan away.

Point your phone camera at a code. Your phone opens the official page. The full web addresses are in the sources list at the back of this guide.

Check the official source

Cruise lines change these rules. What the official page says on the day you sail is what counts. These are not paid links.

Luggage policy
Royal Caribbean

What you can't bring
Royal Caribbean

What you can't bring
Carnival

What you can't bring
Norwegian

Full guide online: photos, live prices and the latest updates at **aicruisegranny.com/packing-prep-list**

Official sources only: no paid links on this page.

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- [ ] Check your passport’s expiry date — not that you *have* one, the actual date
- [ ] Request an accessible cabin if you need one. Royal Caribbean asks for **30 days** notice for special equipment and **60 days** for sign language interpreting; Norwegian asks **90 days** for interpreters and **45** for other needs
- [ ] Declare a wheelchair, scooter, CPAP or oxygen to the line’s access desk — and check your device fits the doorway
- [ ] Buy travel insurance. Buy it for medical evacuation, not lost luggage
- [ ] Book the excursions you actually care about, before they sell out
- [ ] If you are taking a grandchild without their parents, start on the documentation now

> **The scooter measurement.** Carnival publishes it plainly: "Scooters that do not fit in the stateroom will not be allowed on board." Standard cabin doorways are 22 inches on Carnival and Princess, 23 on Royal Caribbean, 26 on Norwegian. Measure before you sail, not at the pier.

Four weeks out

- [ ] Complete online check-in the day it opens — it sets your boarding time
- [ ] Print your luggage tags. Every line has moved to self-printed; Carnival’s deadline is **midnight the night before sailing**
- [ ] Order anything you are missing, with time for it to arrive and be returned if it is wrong
- [ ] Refill prescriptions. Bring enough for the trip **plus extra** — Norwegian says the voyage "plus 10 extra days"
- [ ] Ask your provider for a note if you carry controlled substances or injectables such as EpiPens or insulin
- [ ] Tell your bank you are travelling
- [ ] Book parking at the port, or work out how you are getting there

Two weeks out

- [ ] Photograph your passport, cards and insurance policy; email the pictures to yourself
- [ ] Check the weather for your actual ports, not the brochure
- [ ] Wear your cruise shoes around the house. This is not a joke and it is the single best thing on this list
- [ ] Decide the drink package question before somebody sells it to you on day one
- [ ] Download your port guides to your phone while you still have Wi-Fi

The week before

- [ ] Start the pile. Do not pack — pile. You will remove a third of it and that is the point
- [ ] Charge everything and put the chargers in one bag
- [ ] Set an out-of-office, stop the post, sort the pets and the plants
- [ ] Confirm your ride to the port

The night before

- [ ] Medication in the **carry-on**, in original labelled containers
- [ ] Documents in the carry-on
- [ ] Swimsuit in the carry-on — see the note below
- [ ] Luggage tags actually attached, not in an envelope
- [ ] Phone, camera and power bank charged. The power bank goes in your **carry-on**: TSA does not allow spare lithium batteries in checked bags

Why the swimsuit goes in your carry-on. Your checked bag will not be in your cabin when you board. Royal Caribbean publishes that luggage "may arrive after the sailaway." The pools open the moment you step on, the ship is at its emptiest, and that first afternoon is the best free thing all week. Most people spend it sitting outside their cabin waiting for a suitcase.

What to pack

Documents and money

- [ ] Passport — take it even on a closed-loop cruise where a birth certificate is technically enough
- [ ] Birth certificate and photo ID if you are sailing without a passport
- [ ] Cruise boarding pass and luggage tags
- [ ] Insurance policy number and the **24-hour emergency number**
- [ ] A card that works abroad, plus small bills for tips ashore
- [ ] Any visa or entry documents for the countries you visit

Medication and health

- [ ] All prescriptions in original labelled containers
- [ ] Written copies of the prescriptions, generic names included
- [ ] Motion sickness remedy, taken *before* you feel ill rather than after
- [ ] Pain relief, antacid, plasters, blister plasters
- [ ] Sunscreen, and more of it than you think
- [ ] Spare glasses or contacts, and a copy of the prescription
- [ ] Hand sanitiser — and know that the CDC publishes that it "does not work well against norovirus." Soap and water is the real answer

Clothes

- [ ] Two evening outfits. **Two.** Royal Caribbean, Carnival and Princess all publish two formal nights on a seven-day sailing
- [ ] Three bottoms and five tops, one colour family, everything matching everything
- [ ] A cardigan or light jacket. Ships are air-conditioned to somebody else’s taste
- [ ] Two swimsuits, so one is always dry
- [ ] A cover-up. You cannot take a wet swimsuit into a dining room
- [ ] Two pairs of shoes you can stand in for three hours, already broken in, at least one with grip
- [ ] A rain jacket with a hood, not an umbrella

The small things that matter more than they should

- [ ] A lanyard for your cabin card. It is your key, your wallet and your ID for a week
- [ ] Magnetic hooks — cabin walls are steel and hanging space is not
- [ ] A small torch for finding things in a dark inside cabin
- [ ] Sunglasses
- [ ] A refillable water bottle
- [ ] A highlighter for the daily programme, if you are that sort of person. I am

What NOT to pack, because they will take it

This is the part other lists get wrong, and it is drawn from each line’s own published prohibited-items page.

- [ ] **Power strips, extension cords and surge protectors.** Prohibited by Royal Caribbean, Celebrity and Norwegian. Carnival's list appears to permit them with a caveat. A plain USB charging block is fine
- [ ] **Clothing irons and garment steamers.** Banned by every major line. Only Princess provides irons, in its self-service laundry rooms
- [ ] **Candles and incense**
- [ ] **Marijuana and CBD** — including medical, including where it is legal ashore. Every line prohibits it
- [ ] **Knives and scissors over four inches**
- [ ] **Kettles, hot plates and coffee makers**

> **And the thing people wrongly leave at home:** your **curling iron, flat iron and hair dryer are allowed**. Carnival lists them as permitted outright. People pack the banned power strip and leave the permitted curling iron behind, every single sailing.

The full per-line breakdown, with links to every policy page, is on our cruise packing list.

IF YOU DO NOTHING ELSE ON THIS LIST

Wear the shoes in. Put the medication and the swimsuit in your carry-on. Take the passport. Leave the power strip.

Four things. The rest is detail you can fix on board.

Questions about prepping for a cruise

When should I start getting ready for a cruise?

Eight weeks out for anything with a deadline: passport expiry, accessible cabin requests, declaring a wheelchair or scooter, and travel insurance. Royal Caribbean asks for 30 days notice for special equipment and 60 for sign language interpreting; Norwegian asks 90 days for interpreters and 45 for other needs.

What should I put in my cruise carry-on?

Medication in original labelled containers, all travel documents, a swimsuit and a change of clothes, and your power bank. Checked luggage often does not reach the cabin until the

evening, and TSA requires spare lithium batteries and power banks to travel in carry-on rather than checked bags.

What will a cruise line confiscate?

Most commonly power strips, extension cords and surge protectors, which Royal Caribbean, Celebrity and Norwegian all prohibit. Also clothing irons and garment steamers, candles and incense, marijuana and CBD including medical, and blades over four inches. Hair dryers, curling irons and flat irons are allowed.

Do I need to print my own luggage tags?

Yes, every major line has moved to self-printed tags issued through online check-in or e-documents. Carnival publishes a deadline of midnight the night before sailing. Porters at the pier can usually make up replacements.

Where these facts come from

- Royal Caribbean, onboard luggage policy (https://www.royalcaribbean.com/faq/questions/onboard-luggage-policy)
- Royal Caribbean, prohibited items policy (https://www.royalcaribbean.com/faq/questions/prohibited-items-onboard-policy)
- Royal Caribbean, guests with mobility disabilities (https://www.royalcaribbean.com/experience/accessible-cruising/mobility-disabilities)
- Celebrity Cruises, before you board (https://www.celebritycruises.com/faqs/before-you-board)
- Carnival, prohibited items (https://www.carnival.com/help/prohibited-items)
- Carnival, wheelchair users (https://www.carnival.com/about-carnival/special-needs/wheelchair-users)
- Norwegian Cruise Line, prohibited items (https://www.ncl.com/in/en/prohibited-items)
- Norwegian Cruise Line, medical needs (https://www.ncl.com/cruise-preparation/accessibility/medical-needs)
- Princess Cruises, accessibility guide (PDF) (https://www.princess.com/content/dam/princess/princess-cruises-brochures/princess-accessibility-guide-single-pages-080725.pdf)
- TSA, lithium batteries over 100 watt hours (https://www.tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/whatcanibring/items/lithium-batteries-more-100-watt-hours)
- CDC, traveling abroad with medicine (https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/travel-abroad-with-medicine)
- CDC, norovirus and cruise ships (https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/about/index.html)
- US Customs and Border Protection, WHTI fact sheet (PDF) (https://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/assets/documents/2018-Jan/fieldops-whti-fact-sheet.pdf)

Ports change their rules and their prices. Check the official pages above before you sail.

About the "I" on this page. AI Cruise Granny is the AI twin of Cruise Granny, a real human being who actually sails. Every experience written here in the first person is hers. The AI twin is what writes it up, checks the facts against official sources and keeps it current. We tell you that openly on every page, because you should know who is talking to you. More about how this works.