

Items Not Allowed On a Cruise Ship?



Leave the Flame Thrower at Home – and Maybe the Baby

An online uproar recently followed the announcement that Carnival Cruise Lines would not allow passengers to bring on board personal grooming appliances (hair dryers, crimpers and the like) that exceed 700 watts. Carnival spokesperson Jennifer de la Cruz characterized the new restriction as a mistake and said it was in place less than a day, but the vociferous response touched off a spate of discussions about what is and is not confiscated on cruise ships. So what are the forbidden items ? Read on to find out.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) guidelines specify that in addition to guns, illegal drugs, fireworks and ammunition, all lighters with fuel are forbidden unless they are in a DOT-approved case. You can't have realistic replicas of explosive devices, either. No matches are allowed except one packet of safety matches in carry-on luggage. Most cruise lines don't allow irons because of the danger of fire, but generally they are provided for passenger use in the laundries, where they have automatic cut-offs.

From there, the rules change line by line. Royal Caribbean International, for instance, allows walkie-talkies up to five watts and covering up to 10 miles, as do Disney and others. But Disney doesn't permit VCR/DVD players, Nintendo or other video game consoles because of compatibility issues with stateroom TVs. You can't bring metal detectors on their ships or onto their private island, Castaway Cay, because anything found would have to be returned to the owner or donated to charity. Most cruise lines don't allow knives longer than three or four inches on their ships, and they don't want baseball bats, hockey sticks, spears, cricket bats, or bows and arrows.

Royal Caribbean forbids HAM radios, bleach or surfboards, except the ones the

line offers for its FlowRider. Crystal and Carnival want passengers to skip the Segways, too. Carnival passengers have to leave their throwing stars at home and Princess guests will have hookahs confiscated. And, sorry, forget the pepper spray, handcuffs, etc. Slingshots, blowguns and medical marijuana also are on the confiscation list for many lines.

Alcohol policies vary drastically, and lines like Royal do not return any alcohol confiscated on embarkation day - contrary to the wisdom of the Web, where passengers urge one another to try smuggling in the booze, since the cruise line will just hold it until the end of the sailing if they catch you. Disney allows guests to bring alcohol on board to drink in staterooms; Holland America Line allows only wine and champagne at embarkation, with a limit of two bottles of wine per stateroom, while other lines allow guests to drink what they buy in port, but not to bring alcohol on board at embarkation.

Norwegian Cruise Line doesn't allow alcohol brought on board and is popularly thought to be the strictest line in enforcing the policy. Cruise lines that include drinks in the ticket price, like Regent, Windstar, Silversea and Seabourn, will allow guests to bring their own alcohol on board and drink it in their staterooms; generally, if passengers want to bring their own bottles to the dining room, there is a corkage charge.

If you don't read the rules carefully, one item that may be prohibited on board is your child. Although a handful of lines allow children of all ages, many prohibit infants under six months or a year, and some only allow children two years old and up. If you come to the ship with an underage child, you and the child are likely to be told you cannot board -- and no compensation will be offered.

Because of the threat of fire, cruise ships are concerned about overloaded extension cords and multi-plug adapters, which many insurance companies frown on even on shore. This is a gray area, and most of the lines allow their security people license to judge whether something is dangerous. Portable fans are another bone of contention. Why do passengers bring them? Some prefer the fan to air conditioning, and others want them for the soothing white noise they generate. Some cruise lines require guests to clear their fans with a staff electrician. The cruise lines can confiscate anything they consider a threat to the safety of the ship at any time, from the initial screening before boarding, until the time passengers get off the ship. It isn't unusual for someone who has left a hair curler plugged in, while away from a stateroom, to find that it has been removed. Most confiscated items are restored at the end of the cruise - apart, of course, from explosives, etc. And the vast majority of passengers never even run into an issue. But be sure to read the cruise line policy before booking; it can save you time, money, embarrassment...and bad hair days.