

11 Halloween Cruise Tips



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Spending any holiday at sea will likely add some excitement to an otherwise standard sailing, but if you're booked aboard a Halloween cruise, you're in for an extra-special treat. Most of the mainstream cruise lines encourage dressing up (yes, even for adults), and some also offer onboard trick-or-treating for kids. Below are some Halloween tips and tricks we picked up during a voyage over October 31.

1. Be aware of the date.

Some cruisers don't celebrate Halloween. If you don't prefer to participate, either consider another sailing date, or resign yourself to the fact that you're likely to be surrounded by costumes, spooky decorations and candy. While most cruise lines limit celebrations to October 31, Disney goes into Halloween mode for nearly two months -- often surprising unsuspecting passengers when the ghosts and pumpkins come out in September.

2. Theme your costumes.

If you're traveling in a group, go with a common theme. It's much more fun that way, and it'll be easier to spot your travel companions if you get separated during the festivities. It can also lessen the load when packing if you're able to share accessories and things like face paint. Plus, some ships hold costume contests, and groups always get attention.

3. Keep it clean ... at least until late at night.

We've all heard the jokes that Halloween is basically an excuse to take any costume and make it sleazy. Keep in mind that there will likely be children on the cruise with you, and you might feel a teensy bit out of place if your

costume amounts to little more than thigh-highs and a push-up bra. If your ship hosts an after-hours adult costume contest, by all means, have at it. Just wait until the kiddos are asleep.

4. Consider the weather.

Halloween generally evokes thoughts of cool, crisp weather, but if you're aboard a Caribbean sailing, that thick, heavy costume might not work so well when you're trying to bust a move out on deck. Our costume involved a sweatshirt, and we quickly realized it wasn't the best decision when coupled with the muggy Bahamian air. Likewise, that skimpy mermaid or Tarzan costume you were thinking about might not be totally appropriate for a fall cruise through Canada and New England.

5. Complete all extensive preparations well before you board.

If you're cruising during Halloween, make sure all major costume construction takes place well before you board your ship. We had to spray-paint tights for ours; waiting until the night before our sailing to do so meant we had to transport pantyhose that were still drying (and full of fumes).

6. Avoid bulky props.

Unless you're driving to your embarkation port, the logistics of bringing bulky costume-related props onto your ship might be more trouble than they're worth. Go with simple (but creative) costumes involving props that are small or that can easily be assembled onboard. Also consider that many cruise hallways and stairwells are narrow, which can make it difficult to navigate the ship with large accessories.



7. Pack your costume in a carry-on.

This rule applies even when it's not Halloween: Pack a carry-on. Some cruisers travel with *only* a carry-on. (Kudos to them!) But if you're like us and routinely check bags, make sure to pack some hand luggage with all

essentials -- including your costume. You don't want to be the only one who's not dressed up for Halloween if your bags are lost.

8. Pack toy weapons in your checked bags -- or leave them at home.

According to Transportation Security Administration rules, replica weapons aren't allowed in carry-on luggage. If you're flying to your cruise, be sure to stow any fake guns, knives, swords, pitchforks, pirate hooks and the like in your checked bags. TSA also warns that anything resembling an explosive (hand grenades, bombs, etc.) will be treated as the real thing until proven otherwise, which can result in delayed luggage. Be aware that, even if you're not flying, your bags will still have to clear security at the cruise port. In addition, many cruise lines ban passengers from bringing toy weapons or realistic replicas onboard, so you might be better off leaving them at home.

9. Check your ego at the gangway.

"I'm too old." "Halloween is for kids." "What will the other Diamond Platinum Pinnacle Elite Members think of me?" So many adults miss out on the fun of Halloween cruises because they're worried about their pride. Remember: If you're in costume, nobody has to know who you are, and you'll likely never see most of your fellow cruisers again anyway. Don't be afraid to act like a big kid -- you'll find it's lots of fun.

10. Prepare to stay up late.

Halloween, by its very nature, thrives on nighttime activities. Offerings vary from cruise line to cruise line and from ship to ship, but many offer trick-or-treating, late-night dancing and costume contests (including those specifically for adults). Sleep in, or take a nap if you need to, but Halloween on a cruise ship is one night when you definitely don't want to be in bed early.

11. Expect people to ask for photos.

If your costume is particularly creative, funny or unique, don't be surprised if fellow passengers request photos with you or of you. It's up to you whether you'd like to allow them to take pictures; either way, consider it a compliment.