

TIPS: CRUISING DURING THE HURRICANE SEASON



There is no doubt that this is the most active hurricane season during the past years. It is such a big issue that news was filled with this topic all over the world. Nearly everyone knows about the unpredictability and the consequences of those weather extremes by now. Nevertheless, there are still people complaining about cruise lines changing the ship's itinerary to avoid the ship sailing right into a hurricane. Recently, the protest of passengers on a bigger ship nearly ended up in mutiny. But how can it come that far?

The hurricane season officially runs from June 1 through November 30. The reason why many people choose this time for cruising is that prices tend to drop to their lowest point at this point of the year. If you choose to travel during the hurricane season you must also be aware of the fact that there are special conditions concerning your holidays.

Cruise lines reserve the rights to alter itineraries by changing or eliminating the ports of call. This information can be found in the fine print in the contracts. In most cases cruise lines try to give their guests the same or a comparable itinerary and often the itinerary is just put into the reverse order, meaning you cruise the Western Caribbean first instead of the Eastern Caribbean if the storm heads east, and the other way round. Sure it is always possible to stay on the old itinerary and hope that the storm won't hit the ship, but safety comes first.

Furthermore it's not always easy for cruise lines to find an alternate place to anchor when a storm threatens their scheduled ports-of-call. Many ports are already booked up with regular visitors and also other cruise ships might want a calm place to stay, till the storm is over. If all this is delivered to the passengers in the right way, in most cases everybody understands the situation and there are no big disappointments.

But sometimes the staff onside the cruise ship has a considerable lack of communication skills. The most important thing is to communicate changes nicely to the passengers, help them with questions, explain to them what will happen and deal appropriately with customer complaints. Otherwise they might feel cheated and become upset.

Unfortunately, some disappointments could not be avoided this year. Some small islands have been destroyed and can not be visited for some time. Hurricane Ike which was a category 4 storm destroyed nearly 80% of the homes on Grand Turk. Although it would be hard enough to repair all the homes on the island in the first place, government stresses on repairing also the cruise centre. The reason is that many islands depend on the tourists coming and spending money there.

Take some advice when choosing “the hurricane season” for cruising:

1. Choose rather a multiple-stop cruise - often cruise lines just go the reverse way and do not leave out ports.
2. Prepare some extra time - maybe the ship can not be back in time, if a hurricane threatens its home port.
3. Don't plan big things like weddings in a special port on a particular date when you can't be 100% sure that you will be there on time.
4. Book your airline tickets through the cruise line itself. Some lines pay for rebooking in cases of hurricane threats. If you arrange it on your own you might have to cover the costs yourself.

By Wiebke Wohlfahrt

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