

# CRUISING FROM GALVESTON

For those cruising from Galveston, this should serve as a primer for getting there, and boarding.

Before you leave, you will want to make sure that you have printed baggage tags and attached them to each bag that you will not be hand carrying on board. If you can print them in color please do. Make sure your deck and cabin number show on each tag, and that you also have your name on each piece of baggage.

The trip to Galveston takes about five hours, but of course traffic through Houston can have an impact. Saturdays and Sundays are not as bad, but may not be as fast as you would think. From the DFW area, take I-45 south. The mile markers end with mile zero on Galveston Island so you can easily see how many more miles you need to travel.

As you get to mile marker two or three, you need to start planning to get into the far right hand lane. As you go over the bridge to the island, there are signs showing that the far right lane is an exit only and goes to the Cruise Terminal Pier. After exiting I-45, you will turn left and start on the 4.5 mile drive to the Cruise Terminal. During this drive, you will pass through an industrial area so don't think that you are lost. As you get closer to the Cruise Terminal, you will see the cruise ship(s) ahead to the left. At this time you will start passing through part of the City of Galveston. Traffic will be backed up several blocks in the left hand lane for those wanting to turn into the Terminal area, which is where you want to go. HOWEVER, two lanes turn left into the Terminal area, so go ahead and use the second from the left lane to skip ahead of all that traffic backed up in the left lane.

After you turn in at the light, there will be individuals directing traffic in front of the Cruise Terminal. Unloading of baggage and all passengers **except** the driver occurs in this area. Baggage handlers are dressed in identical Hawaiian shirts and will assist you in unloading your baggage onto a cart. To make sure all of the baggage you've given him shows up on the ship, ask if you can take a photo of him and your traveling companions to start your trip log. On 20 cruises, we've only had one bag that was turned over to them not show up on board (this was not in Galveston). The customary tip for these guys is \$1 to \$2 per bag. DON'T short change them or make them mad as you just gave him all of your baggage. These bags will be delivered outside your cabin door. Your bags will generally all show up at once, but if they don't, don't panic yet. The timing of the delivery will depend on when you check in.

**PARKING:** After dropping off luggage and other passengers, the driver should proceed to the designated parking area A or B. You will not go back onto city streets, but the parking lots are about 2 blocks away on the seaside. This parking is fenced, and cost \$45 for a 4 night cruise, \$10 per day for 5 to 7 night cruises, and \$85 for an 8 night cruise. Further information may be found at the Port of Galveston parking page:

<http://www.portgalvestonparking.com/>. Parking may be paid for by cash, credit card or travelers checks. Parking for Disabled Vets/Purple Heart recipients is free. After parking, catch the free shuttle back to the terminal and find you traveling companions somewhere in line.

Check in for the cruise is similar to checking in for an airline flight. On the ground floor, you will show your boarding pass and perhaps your photo id. Your carry-on bags will go through a screening machine identical to those at the airport. You will also pass through a "metal" detector, and might also be hand wanded, again just like at the airport. Once through, reclaim your carry-on bags and proceed to the elevators or escalators which

will take you to the second floor where the ticket agents are located. The waiting line there feeds to about 20 agents, with someone at the end of the line directing you as agents become available. Everyone in your cabin should go to the agent at the same time. You will need to have your boarding pass or booking document available, and the photo id that each passenger will be using. The agent will ask if you want to use the credit (or debit )card you booked with as the charge card for your onboard purchases, or if you want to use cash. Using cash will require you to pay up before you can get off the ship at the end of the cruise. If you use a credit (or debit) card, getting off is much easier. The agent will also take a picture of each traveler, and give you your cruise card. This card is both your room key, and used when you purchase anything on board, including souvenirs, excursions, drinks, or gambling. When you get off and on at any port, it is also scanned by Ship Security where their screen shows your picture that was taken when you first checked in. This is part of the overall security to ensure that only documented cruise passengers get onboard. If you choose to, you can get a hole punched in the card so you can wear it on a lanyard around your neck. If you don't want to pay a ridiculous price for a lanyard, bring one from home with you. After you have checked in and are on your way to the gangway, a ship photographer will be set up to take your embarkation picture, generally with a background that shows the ship name and destination. There is NO charge for this, and you will encounter ship photographers almost everywhere. Get as many pics taken as you want as you will have an opportunity to view them later at the photo shop and decide if you want to buy them. If so, the cost will be added to your onboard account. You can take any that you don't want to buy and put them in the "recycle" slot at the purchase counter. You should receive a pocket ship map upon entering and you will want to keep it with you for a couple of days until you think you know your way around.

I suggest going to your cabin first so you can drop off your carry on baggage. You might take this opportunity to put your valuables in the safe and familiarize yourself with how your safe operates. Be sure and find out what time the "safety" drill will be held, and where you will need to go. This information is on the back of your cabin door. There will probably be a flyer on your bed advising what activities, when and where will be held for the remainder of the day. Most action before "sail away" is going to be on the upper decks where the pool and buffet are located.