

The Intentional Traveler's Guide To Cruising

Get The Most Out Of
Cruising With Great Tips
And Money Saving Ideas



THE INTENTIONAL TRAVELER • INTEND2TRAVEL.COM • UPDATED OCT 2019



Cruise village at Roatan

*Ships docked at Sint
Maarten*



*Ships anchored at Grand
Cayman*

7 Day Caribbean Itineraries

If you are looking for a little bigger taste of the Caribbean than those three or four night cruises, the next step up is the week-long cruise. The major cruise lines typically divide their itineraries between east and west Caribbean. The east usually includes St. Thomas and the Dutch side of Sint Maarten and often Nassau or Freeport and sometimes Haiti (a private beach area). The west usually includes Grand Cayman and Cozumel with one or two additional ports. These can be Negril, Jamaica, Roatan Island Honduras, Costa Maya Mexico and sometimes Key West.

With a few exceptions, most of these ports have things in common: beaches, water sports, diving and snorkeling. If these are your interests, we suggest packing a couple of beach and swim outfits, and, to save money bring sunscreen and a mask and snorkel. Often buying an inexpensive mask & snorkel at home is cheaper than renting at a Caribbean beach.

Stopping in Cozumel offers some duty free bargains. Good buys include silver, onyx and tequila (see customs rules below). Be sure and pick up vanilla as well but avoid ones that include Coumarin and/or high fructose corn syrup. The cruise ships will offer tours including beach trips and snorkeling but if you are looking for a day at the beach our recommendation is to take a taxi to Chankanaab Beach Park and pay the park

admission. You'll save a lot of money over the tour cost and can go and return when you want. It's not far and there are usually taxis waiting at the entrance to take you back to the ship. There is a bar, food, snorkeling rental and beach chairs and the water is great. But to get to the reefs it's a bit of a swim out.

There are two cruise ship areas in Cozumel. One is downtown and only a short walk to shopping and Senior Frogs. The other is a bit north (actually two piers) with

shopping areas dedicated to cruise passengers at each. There is also a smaller water front version of Senior Frogs which has a good snorkeling area right next to it. Be forewarned if your group includes teenagers. One of the local pastimes is pouring tequila into young Americans, so keep a watch. Cruise ships used to stay until late at night but most now leave much earlier in the day. We believe it was the teen passengers and out-of-control alcohol that caused this change.

Grand Cayman is the other usual stop on these itineraries and offers probably the better duty free shopping. It is a tender port so you have to take boats in from the ship which drop you off right in the center of Georgetown where there is great shopping. Grand Cayman is dotted with beautiful beaches (one called Seven Mile Beach), terrific snorkeling and diving and many American chain restaurants.

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A piece of advice here regarding money. The Cayman dollar is permanently fixed to the US dollar with the exchange rate being one Cayman dollar equaling US\$1.25. This makes everything 20% more expensive than it first appears. Be sure to inquire if a price is in US or Cayman dollars to avoid overpaying.

Our recommendation for a great day is a tour to "stingray city". Pick one that visits the stingrays and also a coral reef for snorkeling. It is advisable to book through your ship as it is a long day and getting back can get dangerously close to missing the departure time for the next port.

Costa Maya is a Mexican port and a new resort area that the government has developed out of the jungle. When we first visited fifteen years ago it was a pier, a half dozen tourist shops, a bar and an undeveloped beach area. It has now grown into a town, a number of new resorts and a nicely developed beach area.

Roatan is another stop that is often included on seven night cruises and is also very popular with ex-pat Americans and retirees. It has changed a lot over the last decade



or so. When we first visited, the ship docked at the Port of Roatan and we walked into the typical Honduran town to shop. Today the ships dock at the Cruise Ship Terminal with its attached shopping village which offers the same selection of jewelry stores and souvenir shops as dozens of other cruise ports.

Key West is our favorite stop with its' shops and restaurants and an interesting small aquarium only a short walk from the pier. There is also Mel Fisher's Atocha gold museum and don't miss the art galleries. Unfortunately cruise ships must sail well before sunset so you will miss the sunset celebration at Mallory Square. (The large cruise ships would block the view of the setting sun) which is a daily celebration in Key West.

Nassau is a port where we would recommend going over to Paradise Island and visiting the Atlantis resort. There is a daily admission fee to enjoy the facilities and most cruise ships offer tours there as well. In addition you can walk through town and shop for souvenirs, duty free watches, jewelry, clothes and liquor (see customs rules below).

Bahamas private island stop. Many cruise lines operate exclusive private islands where they anchor and offer a day of beaches, barbeque, water sports and more.

St. Thomas is the centerpiece of most Caribbean cruises. It is a U.S. possession with world-class beaches, historic sights and true duty free shopping. The cruise ships dock at either the Sub Base east of Charlotte Amalie or The West Indian Company Dock next to Havensight, just to the west of town. Getting into town from the Sub Base will require a taxi (or a tourist bus unique to St. Thomas) but there is a nice walking trail along the water from Havensight which goes thru the shops of Yacht Haven and into town.



There are plenty of things to do on this popular island like: (1) From Havensight take a cable car up to Blackbeard's Castle Resort for a drink and the view. (2) Go into Charlotte Amalie and sit in the Greenhouse Bar on the waterfront where John Updike wrote a short story for The New Yorker (In a Bar In Charlotte Amalie). (3) Walk down Creque's Alley where the Mamas and Papas essentially got their start as a musical band (immortalized in the song Creque Alley). (4) Stroll the ten blocks of Kronprindsens Gade and do some shopping or visit the shops and galleries in the alleys like Drakes Passage. (5) Take a trip to the far side of the island to Megan's Bay, which is consistently named as one of the world's ten best beaches. (6) Visit Coral World, especially if you have younger children with you. St. Thomas and St. Croix feature some of the best "duty free" shopping in the islands. The best duty free buys are European goods like Lladro, Rosenthal, Rolex, Dior, L'Occitane as well as duty free liquor where each person can bring back 5 liters duty free to the U.S.

Cruise ships often visit Sint Maarten, which is the Dutch side of an island that includes two countries. The north end of the island is the French part or St. Martin. The south is the Dutch side where most cruise ships dock at a pier area that includes a large shopping village.