

USS Sam Houston Veterans' Assn. Cruise Get-Away 2025 Information Packet



NOTE: If you receive this Cruise-Information Packet (CIP) after 26 Oct 2024—the deadline for full Down Payment to have completed, you can still register for this cruise under the Group Booking ID if a stateroom is available. Should you wish to do so, the primary difference will be a higher cost for your stateroom. Please read on.

CRUISE GROUP BOOKING CONFIRMED:

Departure/Return Port: Cape Liberty, N.J. (opposite Brooklyn, N.Y.—across the Upper New York Bay)

Note: Cape Liberty is often used interchangeably with "Port Liberty."

Destination: Royal Naval Dockyard, Bermuda (17 & 18 May 2025)

Dates: 15–20 May 2025 (Thur.–Tues.; 5 nights aboard)

Departs: 4:00 p.m. on 15 May

Returns: 7:00 a.m. on 20 May

Cruise Line: Royal Caribbean

Cruise Ship: *Liberty of the Seas*

Reservation Group Name: **USS Sam Houston**

Reservation Group Booking ID: 654870

Reservation Phone: 800-465-3595, Option 5

Consult the Royal Caribbean Line website www.royalcaribbean.com for details about the *Liberty of the Seas*, the cruise itinerary, and shore excursions offered in Bermuda.

CONTRACTED STATEROOM COST

The cost of an Interior Stateroom is \$1490 inclusive of accommodations, taxes, fees, and port expenses. Excluded is a mandatory Gratuity of \$90/person (\$180 total for double occupancy). The price for the Interior Stateroom will increase with time if you did not pay the Down Payment in full by 26 Oct 2024. After that cutoff date, the contracted cost for Interior Staterooms ends, and their cost will be that advertised when you make your reservation.

The price of other stateroom types was never governed by the group contract. Their costs have always been the advertised cost when a reservation is made. The same Down Payment and Full Payment deadlines apply to all stateroom reservations.

The advertised cost of all staterooms will rise as the cruise date approaches, and the advertised cost on the day you would make a reservation will be the cost you pay for the stateroom. More information about staterooms and making reservations and payments follows in subsequent sections.

PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY

Any adult may register for this cruise. Membership in the USS Sam Houston Veterans' Assn. (SHVA) is NOT required, and you will NOT be required to join to participate in this cruise. Recipients of this CIP may share it with their relatives, friends, and anyone else who might wish to participate. This cruise is NOT a reunion of the SHVA, and no SHVA-related activities will occur during the cruise. You'll be on your own to enjoy the cruise.

I am the Chairman & Reunion Planner of the SHVA. I chose to establish a Group Booking in the name of the SHVA solely for the convenience of its existence. The Group Booking reserves a quantity of staterooms to ensure their availability through a contractual agreement with the cruise line.

SEASICKNESS: TO CRUISE OR NOT TO CRUISE?

Are you susceptible to seasickness? Do you suspect that you might be? If the answer to either question is yes, don't immediately rule out the cruise. You might be able to enjoy it despite susceptibility to the ailment. Over-the-counter medications are available that can eliminate the ailment or significantly suppress its ill effects. These medications have no noticeable side effects for most people.

Ocean-going cruise ships are enormously large and heavy vessels. These two properties render them highly stable in calm and mild seas. In rough seas, they might begin to *pitch* (vertical movement related to up and down motion of the front and rear of the ship) and *roll* (vertical movement related to the motion at the left and right sides of the ship). Stormy seas obviously pose the greatest potential for seasickness.

But ocean-going cruise ships have a "secret weapon" that has proven to prevent/minimize episodes of seasickness: "stabilizers." These are large blades that are extended from the sides of the ship below its waterline. Their angles are changed to oppose the force of the waves that are tending to cause the ship to pitch and roll. The result is a surprisingly smooth ride despite rough seas. This technology combined with other information technology aboard the ship related to weather conditions and forecasts allows their captains to adjust their routes to avoid storms and rough seas solely for the comfort of the passengers while keeping the ship on schedule.

Do NOT compare the ride of a cruise ship with that of a ferry, fishing boat, or any other boat or small ship; no significant comparison exists beyond their ability to float!

Consider the following situation that attests to the smooth ride of a cruise ship. It is a personal experience during the SHVA Get-Away Cruise 2023:

The ship had docked in Freeport, The Bahamas that the morning. I did not go ashore but decided instead to have breakfast—a large breakfast as usual when cruising. This necessitated that I take a nap. (I get caught in food-nap loops during cruises!) After a long nap, I awoke and decided go ashore so that I could justify claiming that I visited Freeport. So, I got dressed and grabbed my camera.

After exiting my Interior Stateroom and taking an elevator down two decks, I arrived on the deck where passenger disembarkation had occurred while in Nassau a day earlier—or so I thought. Things didn't look familiar, and I began to think that I was on the wrong deck. Soon a crew member noticed me, and suspecting that I was lost, asked "What are you looking for?" I replied, "I'm looking for the exit to go ashore." She said, "You can't. We're sailing and have been for three hours!" She then gave me a look which suggested that she believed I had overdosed on some serious, mind-altering drugs!

The message of this story begins with being aware that I had an Interior Stateroom—no porthole (window). Next, no windows or other openings with outside views were on my route to depart the ship. Hence, I had no visible evidence that we were at sea. The only other possible option for me to deduce that the ship was sailing would have been pitch and roll of the ship. The ride was rock-steady!

That smooth ride is what you can expect during the SHVA Cruise Get-Away 2025.

I have a great recommendation if you want to cruise and are willing to take a chance with seasickness:

RESERVE AN INTERIOR STATEROOM. THIS IS THE ONLY STATEROOM TYPE THAT CAN BE YOUR MOST WELCOME REFUGE.

Interior staterooms are located along the fore-to-aft centerline of the ship and below decks near the waterline. This places them at a location within the ship that is subject to the least movement related to both pitch and roll—the most severe movement in rough seas.

To illustrate this concept, grab a broom and hold its handle vertically. Pinch it with two fingers near the center. With the free hand, move the top of the broom handle to the left then right about 12 inches from vertical. You will notice that a location on the broom handle that is about two inches below the top of the handle moves almost the full distance of the swing. This upper location on the handle corresponds to the locations of the Balcony and Suite Staterooms. A portion on the handle that is about two inches above where you are holding the broom handle has little movement during the swing. This latter location corresponds to the location of Interior Staterooms. Thus, Interior Staterooms have this advantage over all other types of staterooms—especially the Balcony and the Suite Staterooms.

Moreover, all staterooms other than the Interior Staterooms have windows. The last thing a person needs who is or might be subject to seasickness is a view of rough seas! Closing curtains is not helpful because the person will only visualize what's happening outside that window. If you reserve a stateroom other than an Interior Stateroom, your best—and only—refuge will become a seat on the floor in a hallway for the Interior Staterooms! You will NOT be able to change your stateroom reservation aboard the ship. You'll be sacrificing some degree of luxury for your potential well-being if you reserve an Interior Stateroom.

If you take medication for seasickness and reserve an Interior Stateroom, you'll have two preventive measures working for you and against seasickness.

STATEROOM-RESERVATION DETAILS

You should only reserve your stateroom in the Group Booking as stated on page 2.

You must pay a \$500 Down Payment in full no later than 26 Oct 2024 to reserve your stateroom. Full Payment for the stateroom must occur no later than 14 Feb 2025. No installment is imposed.

Your stateroom reservation includes ship accommodations, taxes, port fees, anchorage-to-shore transportation (tendering), most meals, some non-alcoholic beverages (sodas are not free), and most onboard entertainment. Excluded are photographs; shore excursions; internet & telephone services; specialty restaurants; purchases from ship stores; and items of a personal nature, such as medical services, laundry services, spa treatments, salon services, etc. Cash is not used for anything aboard the ship. You will use your Stateroom Key Card for all on-board payments without exception.

Room Service (food delivery) is not available on this cruise ship and likely not any cruise ship. You may bring food from wherever you obtained it into your stateroom. You place used dishes and utensils in the hallway outside your stateroom as you do at hotels. Many stewards work around the clock to keep everything shipshape for your comfort and enjoyment.

All staterooms have refrigerators; none have microwave ovens.

STATEROOM COSTS

The contract with Royal Caribbean applies only to Interior Staterooms. Other stateroom types could not be included in the contract because the proximity limit to the cruise-departure date had occurred. The situation is similar to the policy for airfares: the closer to the flight date, the greater the cost! But you can reserve an Ocean View, Balcony, or Suite Stateroom if desired. If these latter stateroom types are available, their costs will be the advertised cost when you make your reservation. The dates mentioned for completion of the Down Payment and Full Payment apply in all cases. Refer to the Royal Caribbean website for costs and details related to all staterooms. NOTE: The contract has fixed the cost of only Interior Staterooms and only before the deadline for Full Down Payment (26 Oct 2024). Afterward, the cost for reservations of Interior Staterooms as well as other stateroom types will be that advertised when you make your reservation.

The deadline for Down Payment for all type staterooms remains 26 Oct 2024 with Full Payment due by 14 Feb 2025. If any deadline for payment cannot be met, you can still obtain a stateroom of your choice if that stateroom is available. This situation is discussed further in a subsequent section entitled “Can’t Make a Payment Deadline for a Stateroom Reservation?”

GRATUITY

This is a mandatory payment that is NOT mentioned in the cost of any stateroom. It is \$90/person for Interior, Ocean View, or Balcony Staterooms, and \$103/person for a Suite. You have the option to “prepay” the gratuity. Doing so will lock in the costs mentioned. If you do not prepay the gratuity, you’ll be assessed a daily gratuity amount that will be added to your SeaPass Account at a higher cost. All pre-cruise and on-board purchases of spa and salon services, beverage and beverage packages, specialty dining and specialty-dining packages, and mini bar purchases will be assessed as an additional gratuity charge.

CAN’T MAKE A PAYMENT DEADLINE FOR A STATEROOM RESERVATION?

If you are unable to meet any payment deadline or you did not make a reservation before the Down Payment deadline, you can still reserve a stateroom for this cruise if one is available. The difference is that your stateroom reservation—delinquent or new—will cost you more than it would have. The reservation for which you had made partial payments might have been cancelled, and you will make a new reservation at the advertised cost for the stateroom. The increased cost can be significant based on how long you wait. The price for an Interior Stateroom was \$655/person when I established the Group Booking on 25 Sep 2024. The

advertised cost for the same stateroom on 20 Oct 2024 has increased to about \$805! Therefore, book your stateroom as soon as possible as the price will continue to increase with time. Prior payments would be transferred to a new reservation account with a \$500 Down Payment due within 30 days, and Full Payment will be due by 14 Feb 2025.

CANCELLATION

Give serious thought to reserving a stateroom for this cruise because you could lose nearly all money paid for your reservation if you must cancel and you did not obtain insurance.

If you reserve an Interior Stateroom and cancel before the deadline for Full Payment—14 Feb 2025, you will receive full reimbursement of the amount paid.

For all other type staterooms, your reimbursement would be dependent upon the purchase option you chose when you made your reservation. (Again, this is a situation akin to purchasing airline fares.)

If you reserved an Interior Stateroom and cancel after the deadline for Full Payment—14 Feb 2025, cancellation penalties are applied as follows:

Cancellation Period	Penalty Percentage Owed	Latest Cancellation Date
89 to 75 Days Prior to Sailing	25% each Guest	15 Feb 2025
74 to 61 Days Prior to Sailing	50% each Guest	02 Mar 2025
60 to 31 Days Prior to Sailing	75% each Guest	16 Mar 2025
30 to 0 Days Prior to Sailing	100% each Guest	15 Apr 2025

- The table above applies Cancellation Penalties for Interior Staterooms ONLY.
- THE PURCHASE OPTION FOR OTHER STATEROOM TYPES DETERMINES HOW THOSE REFUNDS ARE HANDLED.
- The Penalty Percentage Owed applies only to the cost of the stateroom. Taxes, fees, port expenses, and gratuities are fully refunded in all instances of cancellation.

OTHER IMPORTANT PRELIMINARY INFORMATION & REVIEW

- **You have no reason to travel to New York City or otherwise be there unless you are visiting a relative or friend, or you just want to visit the city.**
- **Although the ship will depart the cruise terminal at 4 p.m., you must arrive at the terminal between 11:00 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. for Check-In. Do NOT plan to arrive after 2:30 p.m.**
- The costs of all stateroom types are inclusive of taxes and port fees. A mandatory Gratuity will be added: \$90/person for Interior, Ocean View, and Balcony Staterooms; \$103/person for Suite Staterooms.
- The cost of staterooms includes all food on board except at specialty restaurants.
- The cost of staterooms includes beverages except alcohol, sodas, and “specialty” drinks.
- All stateroom reservations and initial payments are made by calling Royal Caribbean at 800-465-3595, Option 5. Mention the Group Name “USS Sam Houston” and the Booking ID “654870.”
- Only Interior Staterooms have been blocked under the contract. **Other stateroom types can be booked, but their costs are not fixed under the contract. Their costs will be those advertised at the time of their booking. RESERVE YOUR STATEROOM EARLY.**
- All staterooms require a \$500 Down Payment to reserve. The deadline for payment of this deposit is 25 Oct 2024. Payment of the full cost of any reserved stateroom is required by 14 Feb 2025. No installment is imposed; pay at your convenience.

- Full refunds are provided for cancellations of only Interior Staterooms if cancelled before 15 Feb 2025.
- Refunds for reservations of all other stateroom types are handled in accordance with the purchase option chosen when you reserve your stateroom. (Plans are akin to options for purchasing airline fares.)
- The ship has no “single occupancy” charge for any stateroom. Thus, one person in any stateroom will pay nearly double the advertised “per person” cost for a stateroom. (Taxes, fees, and gratuity are not doubled for a single-person occupancy.)
- All stateroom types are available with occupancy of more than two people. Inquire when making your stateroom reservation if you desire an occupancy for more than two people.
- **Cash transactions do not occur on board the ship.** Purchases/Services are billed to a SeaPass Account that you will establish during Check-In which will be linked to a credit/debit card that you will provide. Your Stateroom Key Card will be used for all on-board purchases.
- I have chosen the “My Time Dining” option for your daily evening meal in the Main Dining Room. (More about this topic in a subsequent section entitled “Dining.”)

If 26 Oct 2024 passes and you wish to reserve a stateroom, you can and should do so under the Group Booking ID as that can benefit you and all who reserved their staterooms under that ID. The benefit would be “perks” that would be awarded to all registrants in the group based on total revenue gained by Royal Caribbean. For example, everyone in the group might receive a \$50 On-Board Credit. If our group earns any perks, Royal Caribbean will notify you. As of 19 Oct 2024, we have no perks—it’s still early.

WILL I NEED A PASSPORT FOR THIS CRUISE?

An excerpt from the Royal Caribbean website addresses this topic:

*Everyone must present an **accepted form** of identification to board the ship. We strongly recommend that all guests present a passport as their form of ID on boarding day, and for some guests, a passport is required.*

The passport must be valid for six months after the day your cruise ends. The name on your passport should match the name on your reservation.

While some other forms of ID may be accepted for your cruise, a passport is the very best option and here’s why:

- *A passport is the hassle-free, gold standard for traveling between countries.*
- *Boarding and disembarking through customs with a passport is usually faster than other types of ID documents.*
- *If you have an issue while exploring a foreign port (such as missing the ship), it’s best to have a passport with you.*

What if the name on your identification does not match the name on my reservation due to a legal name change, married name, or other reason? Royal Caribbean provides the following information on its website:

If your name has changed since your document was issued, you will either need to update the name on that document, or bring an additional, official supporting document to help explain why the name is different. This can include one of the following:

- *State, county, or province-issued marriage license*
- *Divorce decree*
- *Government-issued, name-change document*
- *Official adoption papers*

U.S. citizens who are able to present a birth certificate plus a government ID for their itinerary should keep in mind that the name on BOTH of these documents must match each other and match the reservation. If they don't, you'll need a supporting document as listed above.

GUESTS WHO DO NOT BRING THE REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION MIGHT BE DENIED BOARDING.

For this cruise, you are NOT REQUIRED to have a passport. This cruise is “closed-looped”, i.e., the ship departs from and returns to the same port in the U.S. for all passengers on board. U.S. Customs & Border Patrol does not impose passports for passengers on closed-loop cruises. For this cruise, you will be permitted to board the ship if you do not have a passport, **but** you must present another qualified ID such as a Real ID-compliant Driver’s License or state-issued ID Card. Your Driver’s License might not be Real ID Compliant if you have not renewed it over the past 10 years or so. Check with the issuing agency if you are unsure. **If you have used your Driver’s License to board a commercial flight within the past 10 years or so, it is an acceptable ID for this cruise.**

If you intend to board the ship without a passport, you’ll be tasked with not missing the ship when it departs a foreign port, ensuring that you will not have to remain ashore for medical care at a foreign port, and being certain that you will not have to be removed from the ship at sea and taken to land for medical treatment. I’m certain that you will make every conscious effort to avoid encountering either of these adversities, but you have no guarantee that you’ll succeed. Therefore, your best bet is to have a passport. Obtain a first-time passport or renew the one you have if permissible. You must allow two months for passport processing in either instance.

PROHIBITED ITEMS ABOARD THE CRUISE SHIP

Cruise ships have restrictions for items prohibited on board which closely match those for commercial flights. Basically, do NOT attempt to bring any of the following classifications of items on board:

<i>Illegal drugs/substances</i>	<i>anything considered a weapon/ammo</i>	<i>replicas of weapons/ammo</i>
<i>explosives</i>	<i>knives/sharp items*</i>	<i>flammable items</i>
<i>heat-generating items*</i>	<i>electrical extension cords</i>	<i>alcoholic beverages</i>

Items with an asterisk (*) have exceptions; consult the Royal Caribbean website or call the phone number provided for reservations for additional information.

IMPORTANT: The Samsung Galaxy Note 7 cell phone is prohibited on cruise ships.

This phone has been associated with many incidents of fires on board commercial flights.

The above list is far from being all-inclusive; it mentions only some of the common categories of items that might be desired on board. Use common sense. Consult the Royal Caribbean website or call the number provided for reservations if you want to bring an item whose prohibition might be uncertain.

ON-BOARD ENTERTAINMENT & SHORE EXCURSIONS

Various types of entertainment and activities occur on board at various times. Many will occur during the evenings when there’s nothing but total darkness to view outside beyond the ship! All entertainment and activities will likely be free. The daily schedule of this entertainment and activities will be placed in your stateroom or on its door daily. The schedules will also be available on the Royal Caribbean app that is discussed later.

You must register and pay for shore excursions, but you may go ashore without charge to “do your own thing.” If the ship must anchor offshore, you will board a tender (small boat) for shuttle to shore. Your stateroom cost includes the cost of tendering. Available shore excursions for this cruise are listed on the Royal Caribbean website and can be purchased there. You may also register for shore excursions on board the ship. I recommend that you review the excursions on the website now. If you deem any excursion a “must do,” register for it on the website as soon as feasible. Excursions often reach capacity long before the cruise-departure date! If you

register for an excursion on the website, you'll pay for it then. If you wait until you are on board to register, you'll be taking a chance on a vacancy being available and paying a higher cost.

If you go ashore without participating in an excursion, ensure that you return to the ship before the specified time for boarding. The ship will depart without you if you are not on board and not registered with a shore excursion. If transportation related to a shore excursion is late, the ship will wait as the crew will be aware of the situation. If you are alone, the crew will have no way of assessing your situation.

DINING

A food court-type arrangement serves a variety of items for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Outside of the established hours for these meals, a few popular items will be available. The food is free, but beverages are not.

All passengers are invited to dinner each evening in the Main Dining Room(s) and have choices for their preferred seating times in the Main Dining Room. If you change your dining time to "early" or "late" during Check-In, you'll be assigned a table number in the Main Dining Room and a daily seating time. This information will be included on your Stateroom Key Card.

A third option for dining in the Main Dining Room is "My Time Dining." I have chosen this one for our Group Booking. With this option, you choose the time you would like to dine on each evening. The staff will do its best to accommodate you. **YOU ARE NOT LOCKED INTO MY TIME DINING.** You may change that option when you reserve your stateroom. The agent will inform you that My Time Dining has been chosen for you and ask if you wish to change it. You won't have to remember to ask.

Food in the Main Dining Room is free, beverages are not. The dinner menu changes daily. Each menu will be available on the "Royal Caribbean app" as well as the ability to select a time for your dinner if you remain with My Time Dining. You may also establish your seating time by speaking with a Receptionist in the Main Dining Room.

The meal in the Main Dining Room is free, and you may eat as much as you wish. Try a second menu item; get extra dessert!

If you miss your evening dining appointment, the staff will arrange for your seating as feasible.

You might receive information which might seem to suggest that casual attire is improper for the Main Dining Room. I have been ignoring this and never been asked to leave or be better dressed. I've always worn shorts, T-shirts, flip-flops, and my bucket hat without incident, and I have never been the only person in the Main Dining Room in such attire. If you're casual, you'll be OK.

THE ROYAL CARIBBEAN APP

The Royal Caribbean app is a free, extremely handy tool that will facilitate many things during your cruise. One of its most useful features might be the ability to send text messages to passengers on board. Your existing cell phone messaging app will not function aboard the ship! You can use only the Royal Caribbean app to communicate with your friends on board. I'll provide more information about the Royal Caribbean app in the subsequent section entitled "Cell Phone & Internet."

LUGGAGE

You and the items that you intend to bring on board in your luggage and carry-on items will undergo security screening like that for commercial flights. The difference is that if you have any prohibited item, it will be tagged and stored at the terminal. You will retrieve it upon your return. If any illegal items are involved, you might be subject to criminal prosecution.

Consider the following personal experience with Check-In security for the SHVA Cruise Get-Away 2023:

I had intentionally placed a small, telescoping, back scratcher in my computer satchel. After I had successfully passed through the metal detector, a security official associated with the X-ray screening of carry-on items asked, “Do you have a fork in your computer bag?” That statement caught me off guard, and I began to wonder if I might have mistakenly put a fork in the satchel—that would not have been impossible for me! I told him that I don’t think that I have a fork in the case. The X-ray view of the contents of the satchel remained on the monitor, and he showed it to me. The image of concern was the back scratcher, and I told him so. We both began to giggle, and I was permitted to proceed without opening the satchel!

I don’t know what might have happened should I have had a metal fork in the satchel. Metal forks and butter knives are readily available in all dining areas of the cruise ship!



You will have the option to “check” your large luggage at the cruise terminal upon arrival. This will be the initial process of your Check-In for the cruise. I recommend that you check your large luggage and keep your carry-on items if they are not too heavy, numerous, or bulky. You’ll understand why shortly.

You will also have the option to tag all your luggage before you leave home if you have print capability. These tags will have your name, stateroom number, ship, and cruise period and will be available from the Royal Caribbean website after you have fully paid for your stateroom. Most people who can print the tags will only be able to do so on regular printer paper (20-lb. paper) because that’s what they will have. Although the instructions suggest a triple fold to add strength to the tag, this might not be sufficient. The worst concern might be illegible ink if the tag becomes wet. At some cruise terminals, luggage check-in might occur outdoors at an uncovered area. Should rain occur, the ink on the tag might smear and become ineligible. This can be problematic but will NOT prevent your luggage from being loaded aboard the cruise ship. Determining the owner of unidentifiable luggage will be solved aboard the ship by inviting those with missing luggage to an area where that luggage will be. To preclude luggage from becoming unidentifiable, I offer the following suggestions:

Place a piece of paper inside your luggage that has your name & stateroom number.

Also tag your carry-on items.

**This could be beneficial should you set a carry-on item down on board and forget that you did so—
especially while waiting to occupy your stateroom.**

Paper tags are typically not durable. You might want to use a luggage tag designed for insertable information. You are not required to use the tag available from the website; you can be “creative.” For example, you can cover both sides of your home-printed paper tag with clear shipping/packaging tape. This simple hack will add both strength and waterproofing. If you do not tag your luggage before arriving at the cruise port, the cruise staff will tag it at the terminal when you Check-In. You might encounter a short line.

You must arrive at the cruise terminal between 11 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. on 15 May 2025 for Check-In. If you do not check your large luggage upon arrival at the terminal, you will be dragging it along during subsequent processes of Check-In and aboard the ship. The various processes of Check-In will be the first instance of an unchecked-luggage nuisance. When you are permitted to board the ship, your stateroom will NOT be ready for occupancy for two hours or more. You will not be able to enter it for any reason until the stewards have completed their work. Thus, when you are permitted to board the ship, you’ll be invited to enjoy food in the food court area on board and relax there. You’ll have to drag your unchecked luggage (and everything else you have) with you: the second instance of an unchecked-luggage nuisance! Next, you must go to your assigned

Muster Station (mentioned on your Stateroom Key Card) to attend a short session of mandatory emergency training: the third instance of an unchecked-luggage nuisance! You will also have time to look around the ship and/or relax in public areas inside and outside the ship before your stateroom is ready. Should you choose to do so, you guessed it—the fourth instance of an unchecked-luggage nuisance! Check your large luggage to facilitate your mobility after boarding the ship.

Chances are the ship will depart the pier before your stateroom is ready for occupancy. This will likely not disturb you. What might disturb you if you are new to cruising might occur when you are granted access to your stateroom and your checked luggage is not there.

DO NOT PANIC!

Your checked luggage was not left at the terminal. It is on board the ship, and you will receive it.

The stewards are charged with preparing your stateroom for occupancy then delivering your luggage. Luggage delivered two hours after you are granted access to your stateroom is not unusual.

During the last evening aboard before returning to Cape Liberty, N.J., you will have the option to have your large luggage delivered to the cruise terminal for you. To participate, you must place your luggage outside your stateroom door by a prescribed time during the final evening aboard. It will be collected overnight and placed at a designated area in the cruise terminal after docking. You will retrieve your luggage there and proceed through Customs. Also, any prohibited items that had been stored for you during Check-In will be available for your retrieval nearby. Many people choose to take their large luggage upon disembarking. Doing so will not save much time when departing the ship but eliminates searching through luggage in the terminal. The luggage at the terminal will be sorted by stateroom decks which significantly facilitates searching.

CELL PHONE & INTERNET

Cell phone service is not available after the ship leaves a U.S. port—phone calls, text messaging, internet phone calls, and most other everyday uses of your cell phone except for self-contained games and the like—will not be available unless you subscribe to a satellite service. If you are interested in this expensive service, your first step is to contact your cell phone provider. Internet access via cell phone is possible without satellite service: more information follows.

All isn't lost! Paid internet access via the on-board Wi-Fi network is available aboard the ship. The cost is about \$27 for each device for each day that you choose for the paid subscription. You can arrange for this service in advance when making your stateroom reservation, via the Royal Caribbean website, or with Guest Relations once aboard. (On-board purchasing is more expensive.) If you choose paid internet access, be aware that one subscription grants internet access for one specific device ONLY. With a single subscription, you cannot share internet access with another device that you or another person has. The idea of having one device on the internet at a time does not apply.

Cruise ships have Wi-Fi networks although without free internet access for passengers. Be aware that Wi-Fi is a communication service for and within a specific entity. Internet access is an add-on to a Wi-Fi network. Most people erroneously use “Wi-Fi” and “Internet” interchangeably because most Wi-Fi services that we dealt with have free internet access available.

Wi-Fi service aboard cruise ships is free but its internet access is not. The Wi-Fi on board has two significant benefits for passengers: 1) it's a source of a variety of information related to cruise, the ship, meals, and more, and 2) it's a means to communicate with other passengers through a method similar to normal text messaging. These functions are possible only through the Royal Caribbean app and are free.

The Royal Caribbean app is a free download to your cell phone from the Royal Caribbean website or from the Wi-Fi network aboard the ship. The app does not use the text message app on your cell phone; the feature is a function of the Royal Caribbean app and operates only while aboard the ship.

NOTE: If you go ashore in Bermuda, your cell phone will have no communication capability unless you subscribe to a satellite service. But if you subscribed and a person you wish to contact is a passenger on the cruise, you will not be able to contact that passenger via cell phone unless that passenger has also subscribed to a satellite service. The Royal Caribbean app will not function while ashore.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Purchasing travel (or “traveler’s”) insurance is a wise decision because it can help you recoup much or most of the money that would be lost for many common circumstances that could necessitate cancellation of your reservation. The cruise line offers this insurance, but I recommend using **Allianz Travel**. A policy with Allianz Travel covers expenses related to all travel and lodging related to the cruise. What’s more is that a policy covers a cruise cancellation that would involve a qualified situation concerning someone who would not be involved with the cruise! A policy with Allianz Travel costs less than that offered by the cruise line and provides better coverage. Visit www.allianztravelinsurance.com for more information. If you do not have internet access, go with a policy offered by the cruise line.

OVERNIGHT STAY BEFORE THE CRUISE-DEPARTURE DAY

If you intend to travel to the Port Liberty area via commercial transportation, you should plan to arrive by the evening before the day of cruise departure, i.e., arrive by the evening of 14 May 2025. Schedule disruptions for commercial transportation have been causing increased incidents of delays and cancellations—primarily with airlines. Also, airlines have recently been having trouble getting passengers and their luggage to the same airport at the same time. If your scheduled arrival would be on the day of departure, you’ll have a fair chance of missing the boat—for real!

If you drive to the Port Liberty area, you have better control over your arrival time. But if you drive, you’ll incur a \$30/day parking fee that will total \$150–\$180 for the period of the cruise. This fee will be comparable to the cost of a hotel room for a recommended overnight stay at a hotel for those who will travel via commercial transportation.

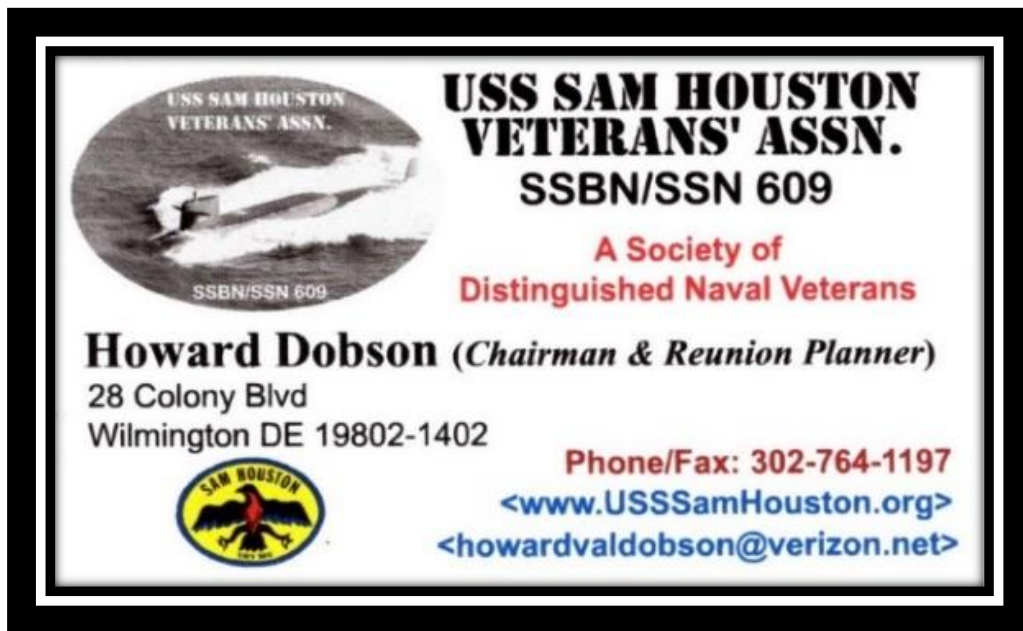
For those who will use commercial transportation, I will investigate ground-transportation options available after arrival at Liberty International Airport near Newark, N.J. and at Amtrak’s Penn Station, Newark, N.J. I will also investigate one or two hotels in the area for an overnight stay before the cruise. The hotel(s) that I will recommend will likely be affordable for most people and provide a comfortable stay in safe surroundings. The hotel(s) will have a full-service restaurant, or one will be available within a walkable distance in a safe area. My recommendations for a hotel stay will follow in a supplemental document that I will issue no later than 31 Jan 2025.

WRAP-UP

I hope that I have provided adequate information for your consideration of taking this cruise. You can enjoy the cruise even if you’ve been to Bermuda or if you will be a first-time “cruiser.”

If you have limited funds, you’ll enjoy walking among the shops and restaurants near the dock. I usually do not have enough money to take shore excursions; so, my excursions are often close to the dock. A meal of local cuisine at a restaurant near the dock and buying a T-shirt have sufficed as tours for me. If you are in the same boat as I (yes, pun intended!), the dockside option might also suit you.

If questions or concerns arise concerning stateroom reservations, the cruise terminal, the cruise ship itself, shore excursions, or anything that occurs on the ship, please call the phone number for reservations mentioned in this CIP. Agents will be able to address your concern. You may contact me if you wish information about matters otherwise. My business card is below. Please be aware that I usually use my nickname, "Val," in unofficial matters. My real name is **Howard Dobson**. Nevertheless, I am one and the same person@#\$\$%^&*!



Bon Voyage



Revision Summaries:

Rev. 1 (21 Oct 2024)

- *Added new section "Contracted Stateroom Cost" that includes the contracted cost of an Interior Stateroom.*
- *Added detail to the section "Gratuity."*
- *Updated section "Can't Make a Payment Deadline for a Stateroom Reservation?" to include the actual advertised cost of an Interior Stateroom on 20 Oct 2024 to encourage making reservations as soon as possible.*