

Here Is Some of the New CDC Guidance on Cruise Ship Travel

This week, news came out that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) was sunsetting its Program for Cruise Ships Operating in U.S. Waters effective immediately, opting for a new set of guidelines for public health operations on cruise ships.

The CDC made the announcement on Monday, writing on its website that, “as of July 18, 2022, CDC’s COVID-19 Program for Cruise Ships is no longer in effect” and it will no longer update pages that tracked cases onboard ships. Some cruise lines, like Virgin Voyages, moved to drop some COVID-era restrictions after the news came down this week.

On Thursday, the CDC posted a new set of guidelines, which are not mandatory for cruise lines operating U.S.-based sailings. The CDC said the guidelines were published “to assist cruise ship operators in establishing health and safety protections to reduce the risk of introduction and spread COVID-19 during passenger operations and preserve onboard medical capacity.”

“Cruise ship operators should carefully consider and incorporate these recommendations in developing their own health and safety protocols. Plans should include triggers for a graduated approach to outbreak management in response to increasing case counts or other public health concerns,” it added.

Pre-Cruise Health Screenings

“Cruise ship operators should screen passengers for signs or symptoms of COVID-19, known close contact exposure to a person with COVID-19 within the 10 days before embarkation, or a positive COVID-19 viral test within 10 days before embarkation,” the CDC **wrote in its new update.**

Vaccination Requirements

The CDC is no longer requiring cruise ships to operate vaccination-only voyages. However, its new update is still recommending that “all eligible travelers be up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines.

Testing Requirements

Cruise lines no longer have to require guests to test before embarkation, but the CDC is still recommending it, too.

Onboard Response Plans

The CDC is still recommending that cruise line operators have a plan in place for a COVID-19 outbreak during a sailing, including isolation, quarantine protocols, and a medical facility onboard to be able to treat those who are infected and ill. That includes some kind of “surveillance protocols” to detect COVID-19 in passengers, isolation and quarantine protocols, medical facilities onboard, and the ability to “provide hospital level of care...for infected patients without the immediate need to rely on shoreside hospitalization.”

If an infection does happen, fully vaccinated close contacts should either be tested with a viral test daily until 5 days after exposure or quarantined until at least five full days after their last exposure. Those who aren’t up to date with their vaccines should either be quarantined for five days with daily testing and then wear a well-fitting mask when outside their cabin, or quarantined until at least 10 days after exposure.

Cruise lines should also have procedures in place for disembarking travelers with COVID-19 “who need a higher level of care that can be provided onboard” and “training protocols for all crew on COVID-19 prevention, mitigation, and response activities.”

Disney World's next-gen MagicBands arrive on July 27

MagicBands, once offered to guests staying on Disney World property for free, are not necessary for entry into the parks, but they do offer guests some conveniences. For instance, they can be used to unlock room doors and as a form of payment on property.

MagicBand Plus devices will be available for purchase online and at Disney's Orlando campus, starting at \$34.99.

The devices light up, recognize gestures and have haptic vibrations. They also give guests access to several exclusive in-park experiences, including interactions with the golden 50th anniversary statues located around the theme parks and a Star Wars game at Disney's Hollywood Studios.

MagicBand Plus devices also light up and interact with Disney's nighttime spectacles.

Hawaii's "Aloha Festivals 2022" to Be Held in September

Aloha Festivals, Hawaii's largest and longest-running cultural celebration, has announced its theme for this year: "Aloha 'Āina, Love of the Land."

"All that sustains us can be connected back to *'aina*; it calls to each of us in every generation, reminding us to care for it," said Debbie Nakanelua-Richards, co-chair of Aloha Festivals. "If we care for the *'aina*, it will continue to take care of us. Join us as Aloha Festivals celebrates *Aloha 'Āina* wherever you call home."

'Āina means "that which feeds," or "that which provides sustenance," and includes all of nature. "Aloha 'Āina" further imparts that reciprocity grows exponentially with time. The more a person cares for the land now, the greater care the land will have for their descendants. This same love for the land exists throughout the world and is an affirmation of humanity.

The mission of Aloha Festivals is to foster the aloha spirit through the celebration of the diverse customs and traditions of Hawaii.

The Royal Court Investiture and Opening Ceremony on September 10 will kick off the month-long celebration. The evening will begin with The Royal Court Investiture at Helumoa Gardens located at The Royal Hawaiian, A Luxury Collection Resort. In a ceremony that honors Hawaii's *ali'i* (ruling chiefs), this year's Aloha Festivals Royal Court will don regalia worn only by *ali'i* of the highest rank. Following the Investiture, the Opening Ceremony at The Royal Grove at Royal Hawaiian Center will feature hula and musical performances.

Aloha Festivals will host a block party with the 68th Annual Waikiki Ho'olaule'a on September 17. Waikiki's beachfront Kalakaua Avenue will feature booths highlighting Hawaiian cuisine, crafts and culture. Attendees can enjoy local flavors and multiple stages of entertainment.

On September 24, the 74th Annual Floral Parade will draw the curtain on the event. It will feature a colorful procession of Hawaiian culture through Waikiki. The parade starts from Ala Moana Park through Kalakaua Avenue to Kapi'olani Park. Intricate floats will be adorned with a rainbow of flowers; men and women on horseback will showcase the traditional art of *pā'ū* riding. Participants from marching bands and civic leaders will highlight the *aloha* spirit that unites Hawaii's community.



9-Night Quito Pre-Cruise & Galapagos Experience

- 2-Night Pre-Cruise in Quito, Ecuador with flights to and from Baltra, Ecuador
- Luxury hotel with meals, drinks, Celebrity Concierge Service and fully guided tours
- 7-Night **All-Inclusive** Galapagos cruise
- Daily Shore Excursions lead by Galapagos National Park Naturalists (2 per day) showing some of the world's most up-close and stunning wildlife encounters
- All gratuities included



7-Night Post-Cruise Machu Picchu Experience

- Flights from Baltra, Ecuador to Lima, Peru and Cuzco, Peru Round Trip
- 3-Nights in Lima, Peru with tours included
- 2-Nights in **The Sacred Valley** with tours included
 - Full day tour of **Machu Picchu**, the Lost City of the Incas
- Glass-domed train service from the Vistadome and Belmond Hiram Bingham trains
- 2-Nights in Cuzco, Peru the capital of the former Inca Empire with tours included
- All meals included
- All gratuities included

U. S. PASSPORT WAIT TIME IS NOW 8 to 11 WEEKS FOR 'ROUTINE SERVICE'

Getting a U.S. passport renewed still takes longer than it did pre-COVID, but wait times have improved since the worst of the pandemic, according to a U.S. State Department spokesperson speaking to TMR this week.

According to that spokesperson, passports are now being issued within 8 to 11 weeks for routine service and as little as 5 to 7 weeks for expedited service, time periods that cover "when an application arrives at a passport agency until we issue a passport."

That turnaround time is longer than it was in 2019 when the State Department increased the typical processing time from 4 to 6 weeks to 5 to 7 weeks, but still a major improvement over what some travelers have experienced over the last two-plus years.

During the pandemic, wait times, at certain periods, were stretching into 18 weeks. Travel advisors speaking to TMR at the time said that the wait times were a major issue for clients, many of who were forced to cancel or postpone trips because of extended turnaround time.

Since then, the U.S. State Department promised more staff to help with the delays and an executive order signed in December 2021 promised to allow Americans to renew their passports securely online with "safety security" and to make it easier to connect with TSA in order to get questions and concerns answered.

The increase in staff has helped processing times return to closer-to-normal, but still, the spokesperson told TMR that "to avoid

Those who are traveling with less time to spare are able to schedule an in-person appointment at a regional passport agency in order to expedite the process. Those appointments can be scheduled only via a phone call and only within 2 weeks of the travel date. Applicants will be required to provide proof of travel when making the appointment.

According to the State Department, that is the quickest way to get a passport. Other options, including passport expediting companies and other private companies that charge fees for a quick passport turnaround, will not get travelers their passports any quicker than they would by applying through a regional passport agency.



Perfectly Baked Beans

Ingredients:

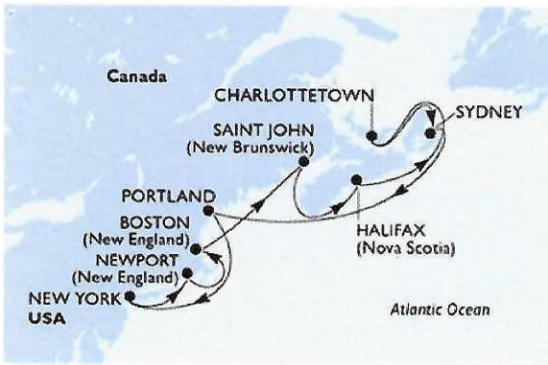
- 4 slices regular bacon, diced
- 1 medium onion, cut into small dice
- 1 medium green bell pepper, cut into small dice
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into small dice
- 1 fresh jalapeno, chopped
- 4 large cans (28 ounces each) pork and beans
- 1 cup barbecue sauce
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup distilled or cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 1 tablespoon yellow mustard
- 2 chipotle peppers, minced
- 6 slices thin bacon



Directions:

- 1 Adjust the oven rack to the lower-middle position and preheat the oven to 325 degrees F.

- 2 Fry the regular chopped bacon in a large, deep skillet until the bacon has partially cooked and released about 1/4 cup drippings. Add the onions, peppers and jalapenos, and saute until tender, about 5 minutes. Add the beans, barbecue sauce, brown sugar, vinegar, ketchup, mustard and chipotles, and bring to a simmer. (If the skillet is not large enough, add the beans and heat to a simmer and then transfer to a large bowl and stir in the remaining ingredients). Pour the flavored beans into an aluminum pan. Top with the uncooked slices of bacon (you can halve the slices if you like). Then bake until the beans are bubbly and the sauce is the consistency of pancake syrup, about 2 hours. Let stand to thicken slightly and serve.



Embarkation Date

04 October 2023

Ship

MSC MERAVIGLIA

Itinerary

New York,Newport,Boston,Saint John,Halifax,Charlottetown,Sydney,Portland,New York

Embarkation Port

NYC

Duration

11



DAY	DATE	PORT	ARRIVAL	DEPARTURE	ACTIVITY*
1	Wed, Oct 04, 2023	New York, New York	-	7:00 PM	Docked
2	Thu, Oct 05, 2023	Newport, United States	7:00 AM	4:00 PM	Tender
3	Fri, Oct 06, 2023	Boston, United States	8:00 AM	3:00 PM	Docked
4	Sat, Oct 07, 2023	Saint John, Canada	9:30 AM	5:00 PM	Docked
5	Sun, Oct 08, 2023	Halifax, Canada	11:00 AM	9:00 PM	Docked
6	Mon, Oct 09, 2023	At Sea	-	-	-
7	Tue, Oct 10, 2023	Charlottetown, Canada	7:00 AM	6:00 PM	Docked
8	Wed, Oct 11, 2023	Sydney, Canada	8:00 AM	7:00 PM	Docked
9	Thu, Oct 12, 2023	At Sea	-	-	-
10	Fri, Oct 13, 2023	Portland, United States	7:00 AM	7:00 PM	Docked
11	Sat, Oct 14, 2023	At Sea	-	-	-
12	Sun, Oct 15, 2023	New York, New York	7:00 AM	-	Docked

Call for special rates!

Over the past decade, MSC Cruises has gone from operating one ship in North America -- mostly targeted to Europeans sailing in the Caribbean -- to a line sailing five ships in and around the Caribbean, including several marketed to North Americans departing from U.S. homeports.

If you don't know a lot about MSC Cruises and you're wondering if the line is the right fit for you, we are highlighting some of the reasons why you just might love the line.

Pools (Plural!) - If you've ever found yourself bemoaning the too-small pool on your cruise ship, you're going to love MSC's ships. Seaside, Divina and Meraviglia all have three to four pools, giving you plenty of choices.

4D Cinema and Formula One Simulator—On MSC's newest ships, you'll find an amusement park and a game room vibe that's too fun to miss. Among the many diversions are a 4D cinema and Formula One race car simulator that will get the heart pumping.

Waterslides—If you like a little more splash with your recreation, you'll want to check out the top-deck fun on MSC Seaside and MSC Meraviglia, both of which have three or four bendy waterslides.

Chocolate and Gelato—Who doesn't love an after-dinner chocolate or a scoop (or three!) of gelato on a warm Caribbean day? All MSC Cruises ships sailing out of North American homeports feature an extra-fee chocolate shop and a gelateria.

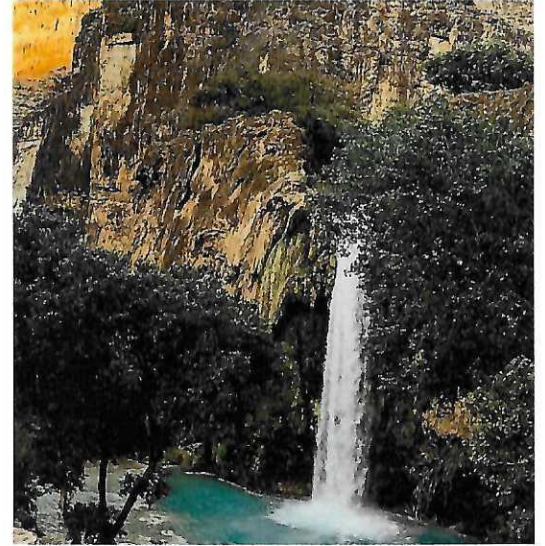
Yacht Club—Suite cruisers will love MSC's Yacht Club, which can be found on all MSC cruise ships sailing out of the United States (except MSC Armonia). This exclusive suite enclave comes with a number of perks and is one of the most widely praised suite experiences in the cruise industry. Inclusions feature priority boarding, all drinks, butler service and access to an exclusive pool, restaurant and lounge.

Swarovski Crystals—MSC ships have the most beautiful atrium staircases in the world. Bedazzled with thousands of Swarovski crystals encased in glass, the staircases twinkle and sparkle. (Everyone has their picture taken on these stairs.) But it's not just the stairs that impress. MSC's ships are beautiful and sophisticated, with lots of glass, shiny metal and sculptures you can't help but admire. If you like a ship that's refined, sleek and glitzy without overwhelming the senses, you'll love MSC's ships, especially Divina, Seaside and Meraviglia.

Mask Mandates Are Returning at These National Parks

Due to a rising number of COVID cases, the National Park Service has reinstated mask policies in indoor spaces for some parks.

What do Denali, Glacier, Grand Canyon, Grand Teton, Yellowstone, and Yosemite national parks have in common? In addition to being some of the largest and most popular protected public spaces in the United States, they've all recently reinstated indoor mask policies due to a rise in COVID cases throughout the country.



The new mandates are based on a Department of Interior policy that is informed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's COVID-19 community levels, classifications that rank community caseloads as either "low," "medium," or "high." Currently, the towns in and around the above national parks are experiencing high levels of COVID transmission.

Because all national parks adhere to Department of Interior guidelines, it's a good idea to check the individual park's website or download the NPS app for information on current COVID measures before visiting any given national park in the U.S.

Grand Canyon National Park said that it has reinstated the "masking requirements to protect our community, park employees, and visitors." Grand Canyon added that its leadership decided that it will only remove the masking restrictions after two consecutive weeks of "medium" COVID-19 community levels.

"We are concerned with cycling back and forth from week to week as the COVID pandemic develops and changes," the park stated. "Park leadership's efforts are to strive for consistency in policy and process and ensuring our operations and staff are as safe and secure as possible."

Although Grand Canyon won't remove the mandate until there have been two consecutive weeks of reduced cases, the NPS said it is up to park managers to decide when to remove masks. The other parks haven't yet announced what measures they'd use to give the all clear.

While masking isn't required in most outdoor areas, it will be necessary for national park service buildings (like visitor centers, gift shops, offices, restaurants, and bus depots) and on all tour buses and shuttles. Currently, in Denali, Glacier, Grand Canyon, Grand Teton, Yellowstone, and Yosemite all visitors age two and older are required to wear masks in indoor areas, regardless of vaccination status.

BEST MEGA-SHIP CRUISE LINE

Travel + Leisure recently announced the winners of their World's Best Awards (WBA), and Celebrity Cruises was ranked as number one in the best Mega-Ship Ocean Cruise Line category. Their sister brand, Royal Caribbean International, was also a winner in the category and they are both thrilled to share the spotlight! Look for our current and future groups on both of these lines in addition to booking your individual reservations.