



*Tuxes are spiffy on cruises, but are they necessary?*

If you're considering taking formal clothing for your cruise, first be aware that on most cruises today they are not required. However, for many senior cruise passengers, it's an enjoyable tradition to dress up in formal clothing for sit-down dinners and at the late night dance and entertainment programs. Dressing up gives feelings of elegance you don't have on nights out at home. Another plus is that you can get photos and/or video to show the folks at home how elegant you were on your voyage.

Before you pack formal clothing for a cruise, consider certain factors. First, along with shoes and other necessary accessories, those items take up considerable weight and space in your baggage. If you're accustomed to traveling with only carry-on bags, forget formal wear. If you take the upscale duds, you'll need at least one large suitcase for each person. Additionally, if you're flying to get to the cruise ship, the suitcases will have to be checked at ever-increasing airline charges.

Packing your formal clothes into suitcases, along with everything else you'll need on the cruise, requires careful planning. Put each group of clothing articles in separate flat transparent plastic bags. After patting the air out, pack them in layers. Pack medications, jewelry and allowable

toiletries in smaller sealable, transparent waterproof bags.

By using this system, in airport security the guards can see what's in each bag, and should quickly let you through the inspection line. Additionally, if security searches mess up your suitcase, the plastic bags make it simpler to stack in quickly and neatly again.

There's an alternative. Rather than pack the clothes tightly inside suitcases, which may cause wrinkles, some cruise passengers carry their formal clothes on hangers, covered by form-fitting bags. However, if you need to fly to the cruise embarkation port and use ground transportation, this could be awkward and inconvenient.

Once aboard, if your packed formal clothing needs pressing and/or cleaning, your cabin steward will take care of the service for you. Another option, available on many of the major cruise line ships, is to rent formal clothing from the onboard clothing shop.

When you're considering a cruise, check with your online or hometown travel agency about packing formal clothing and/or if the ship has a formal rental shop aboard. If you rent, it would save considerable time, weight and suitcase packing and carrying chores.