

There couldn't be a better time for Harmony than now...

And before you know it, you will be boarding this elegant beauty, joining old friends and making new acquaintances as we convene the Society of Air Force Nurses 2017 Convention at Sea. Whether you're a cruise virgin or a salty veteran, it's important to count down the important items that need to be done prior to holding that frosty glass in your hand as you watch reality fade into the distance. This is the first in a series of communications intended to make your preparations for the conference cruise as thorough and smooth as possible.

Here are the items you need to focus on first:

1. Passport
2. Travel arrangements/hotel reservations
3. Roommates and personal/travel information updates
4. Travel protection
5. Online information and cruise planning
6. Complete the transfer/special needs form

1. **Passport.** If you do not have a current passport that is good until March 16, 2018 or beyond, now is the time to get it renewed or apply for one. If you prefer to cruise without a passport, the current immigration laws allow you to do so on this specific itinerary, by presenting a certified birth certificate PLUS a government-issued photo ID such as a drivers' license (those under 16 may present just the birth certificate). However, be advised that should something happen while you are out of the U.S. and you need to fly back into the country, you will not be allowed to do so without a passport, therefore passports are highly recommended by U.S. Immigration and by the cruise line.

2. Travel Arrangements and Hotel Reservations.

- A. We highly recommend that you arrive in Ft. Lauderdale on Sept. 8, 2017, the day before embarkation on the Harmony of the Seas. With so many flight delays and cancellations that occur, it is safest to fly in a day early and jump start your vacation with a night in a nice local hotel. We have a group rate at the lovely Embassy Suites by Hilton Ft. Lauderdale 17th Street, located between the airport and pier for the utmost in convenience. Like most Embassy Suites hotels, it provides a complimentary hot breakfast buffet and an evening reception, and rooms include a sofa bed in the sitting room. Room options (including accessible rooms) and rates are as follows:
 - King Bed for single or double occupancy (\$143.19 incl. tx)
 - Two Double Beds for single or double occupancy (\$154.29 incl. tx)
 - Two Double Beds for triple or quad occupancy (\$165.39 incl. tx)
 - Two Double Beds for quint occupancy (\$176.49 incl. tx)

NOTE: One person should make the reservation on behalf of all guests staying in the same hotel room together.



Click here to make your hotel reservation:

<http://embassysuites.hilton.com/en/es/groups/personalized/F/FLLSOES-SPC-20170908/index.jhtml>

Those needing an accessible room should contact Susan at scombs@dreamvacations.com, 949-709-0098. The reservation will be guaranteed to the card provided by July 1, 2017. Once we sell out of our inventory at the Embassy Suites, reservations will be made at a nearby Hilton hotel with which we have an overflow contract at approximately the same rate – those members will be advised as necessary. Transfers between the hotel and ship will be arranged as a group and must be reserved on the form that follows.

The hotel offers a shuttle from the Ft. Lauderdale Airport for \$9 per person, available by calling 954-315-1313 once bags are retrieved. A taxi to the hotel costs approximately \$15. Those who need a wheelchair lift and ramp should call Yellow Cab and request a wheelchair accessible van (hotel does not have one). Their number is 954-777-7777. The link to their website is: <http://yellowcabbroward.com/>.

- B. For those who must fly into Ft. Lauderdale on Sept. 9, 2017, the day of cruise embarkation, your flight must arrive no later than 1:00 pm to reserve the cruise line transfers, which can be reserved for \$16.75 per person (see reservation form). If you must travel on this day, I recommend taking the earliest flight out to allow for any delays. I discourage itineraries with connecting flights on the day of embarkation as they double the risk of delays and cancellations. The ship departs at 4 pm – this is a change from the original departure time -- so you need to be at the pier no later than 2 pm to get checked in on time. The airport is about 15-20 minutes from the pier, if you plan to use a taxi (about \$25) or Uber.
- C. When the cruise comes to an end, the ship's crew will determine a disembarkation schedule based in part on your flight schedule and where you are located on the ship. Return transfers to the airport may be reserved for \$16.75 per person (see reservation form). Return air schedules must not depart earlier than 11:30 am if using the ship's transfers, and I recommend not booking flights any earlier than that even if you are planning on using a cab or Uber.
- D. If you need to fly into Miami International Airport on the day of embarkation, the cruise line will provide transfers at a cost of \$30 per person if your flight arrives by 12:00 noon. If you are flying out of Miami post-cruise, the transfers are also \$30 per person, and your flight cannot depart earlier than 12:30 pm (see reservation form).
- E. You are welcome to make your own flight arrangements following the arrival and departure guidelines provided above. Royal Caribbean has a flight booking engine that you can access through your reservation online (see below). It is easy to use if you want to book your flights directly online. If you prefer to have a professional book your flights, we're happy to help – there is an agency air ticketing fee of \$25 per person.

3. Roommates and Personal/Travel Information Updates.

Several members are seeking roommates for the conference cruise. We will be posting a list on the website, so if you would like to be included on the list, please contact me ASAP at scombs@dreamvacations.com or 949-709-0098. If any of your personal information changes, such as your address, phone number, email address, roommate, credit card, etc., please remember to keep me informed as I must keep your cruise reservation properly updated. If you book your own flights, please send me a copy of your reservation so I have it in case of emergency, to make your transfer reservations with the cruise line, and can add the fare to your insurance coverage should you want it covered.

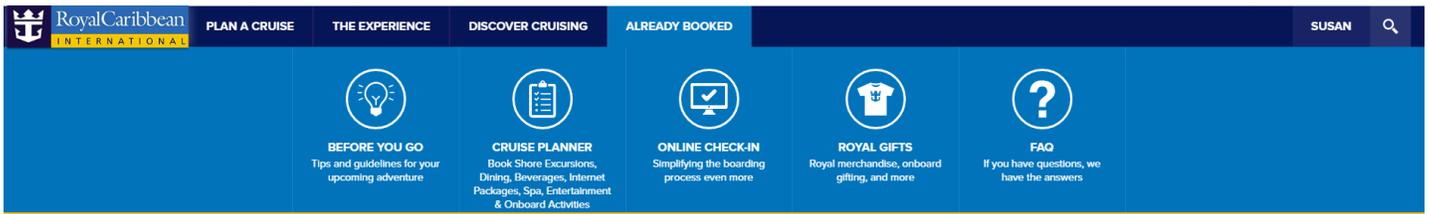
4. Travel Protection

If you have already elected to insure your cruise, we can add third-party coverage for any additional trip elements including your airfare and hotel stay – just let us know. If you haven't yet insured your cruise, it's not too late -- you may do so at any time up to the final payment date. We highly recommend doing so by then as you will be within the penalty period for cancellation from that point forward. Information about the coverage can be found at:

http://scombs.dreamvacations.com/travel/cruises/Editorial.html?edType=Custom%20Page&pagename=resources_travelprotection I am happy to answer any questions about the coverage at any time.

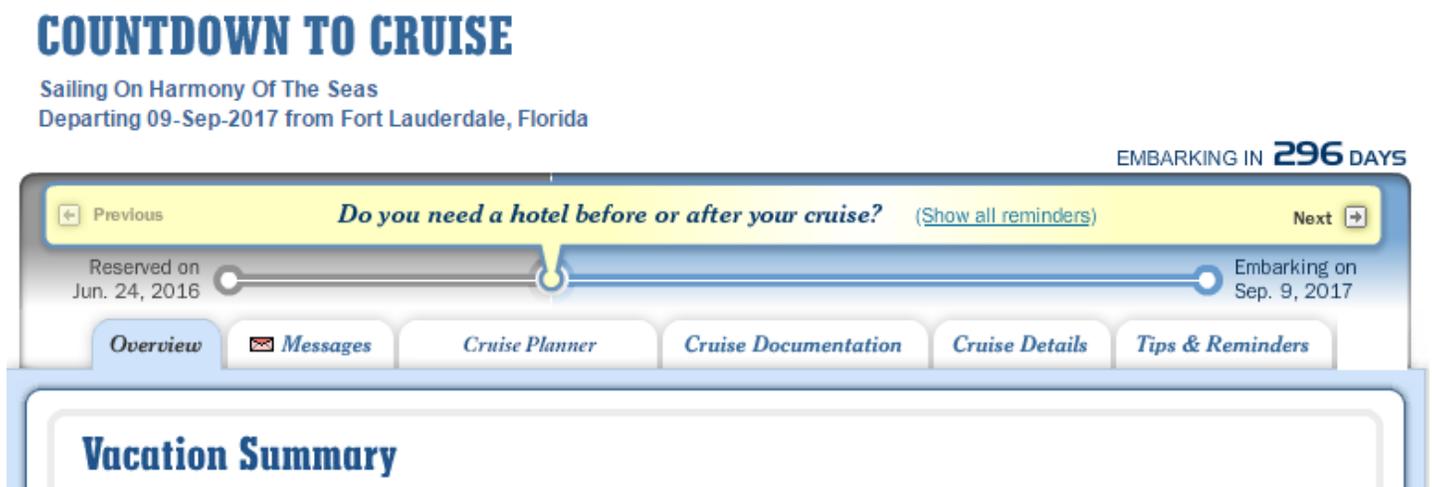
5. Online Information/Cruise Preparation & Planning

Royal Caribbean has created a fantastic resource for its guests that assists with preparing for the cruise and planning for time while aboard. When you get a chance, go to royalcaribbean.com, which will show as <https://secure.royalcaribbean.com/>, and choose **Already Booked** from along the top of the home page and you'll see a drop-down list that will look like this:



This is your “dashboard” for everything having to do with your cruise. This is where you’ll complete your Online Check-In 90 days prior to sailing and print your boarding pass once you are paid in full. You’ll click on the Cruise Planner icon to order your optional items such as shore excursions, beverage packages and Internet packages (some of which are already available to be ordered now). It’s also where you’ll make all your advance reservations for onboard entertainment, specialty dining and spa treatments about 90 days prior to our departure date. The “Before You Go” and “FAQ” sections provide valuable information about preparing for and getting the most out of your cruise experience. Of course, you have me as a resource as well – I’ve sailed the ship and am very familiar with the cruise line procedures and policies.

From the Online Check-In page, enter your reservation number and you’ll be able to see this:



The tabs across the top take you to lots of helpful information, some of which won’t be available until we get closer to the cruise. However, their **Air2Sea** flight booking engine is available now and can be accessed from the Overview tab. You can use it to see what fares Royal Caribbean is offering for flights and you can book them directly using their booking engine online if you’d like. If you are planning to stay with the group in the hotel pre-cruise, do not book the hotel through the cruise line – please book it on the reservation form provided or call me. All cruise line transfers may be booked through me as well, by reserving them on the form provided below.

As we continue to get closer to departure you’ll continue to receive more updates and reminders. As always, if you have any questions at all, don’t hesitate to email me or call me.

6. Please complete the transfer/special needs form by clicking here:

 <https://surveyhero.com/c/3716f33>

Thank you!

Susan

Susan Pretkus-Combs

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949-709-0098



Combs, Catalina & Associates