

The JoCo Cruise New Monkey Handbook

So You've Booked a JoCo Cruise! What Happens Now?

Congratulations! You are the bearer of at least one (1) and possibly more (more) bookings on the JoCo Cruise. If this is your first JoCo Cruise, we salute you. If this is also your first cruise of any kind, we double-salute you. With well-sanitized hands.

You might be asking yourself: “What happens now? How do I spend the next few months getting excited about my upcoming cruise? Are there ways to get to know other Sea Monkeys before we board this luxury ocean liner together? Should I be looking up the performers and becoming intimately familiar with every single item in their back catalog? What do I wear? Do I need to bring a towel?”

To which we reply: “As much as we would like to make a *Hitchhiker's Guide* reference right now, because we know you hoopy froods *love references*, the ship will provide towels.”

As for the rest of your questions: that's what this guide is designed to answer.

A Guide to Your Guide

This handbook is designed to help you feel at home on the high seas. We've got ideas for what you can do RIGHT NOW to get to know other Sea Monkeys, as well as ideas for what you can do once you are on board the *ms Oosterdam* (pronounced “OH-ster-dam”). We've been doing this cruise for years now, so trust us: these tips *work*.

This guide covers the social and programming aspects of the JoCo Cruise. If you're looking for logistical information, like “how do I get to the cruiseport” or “whom do I contact about dietary restrictions,” visit JoCoCruise.com. For additional information about what to expect on the *ms Oosterdam*, as well as information about other amenities, visit HollandAmerica.com.

TL;DR: If Nothing Else, Do These Things

1. Join the [JoCo Cruise Forums](#)
2. Hang out with other Sea Monkeys the night before Embarkation Day
3. Attend a New Monkey Event (even if you're a Returning Monkey!)
4. Go to all of the Mainstage Shows (including our big outdoor concert in Loreto!)
5. Attend at least one panel, Q&A, or meetup
6. Visit the Game Room and play a game you've never played before
7. Hang out with your favorite JCC guest during their Office Hours
8. Start a conversation—or share a meal—with someone you've never met before
9. Attend at least one Shadow Cruise Event
10. Attend a Karaoke Night or Dance Party

What's a Sea Monkey? “Sea-Monkey” (with the hyphen) is what they called those packets of brine shrimp that were sold in the back pages of comic books. “Sea Monkey” (without the hyphen) is the colloquial name for JoCo Cruisers. JoCo Cruise attendees dubbed themselves “Sea Monkeys” during our very first cruise, and the name stuck.

A Day In the Life of a Sea Monkey

Imagine what might await you SOON™...

You wake up, and turn on your stateroom television while getting ready for the day. Use the on-demand menu to rewatch the mainstage performance you saw last night, catch a performance you missed, watch programming created by fellow Sea Monkeys, or play a classic movie from the ship's library.

Or you can have breakfast... okay, maybe *brunch* is more appropriate. Will you go up to the Lido Deck buffet, or enjoy complimentary room service? (If you get room service, try the muesli; if you go to the Lido Deck, try the taco bar.)

Then it's time to visit the game room, the crafts room, or attend a panel hosted by a writer—or maybe stop by a Shadow Cruise event! You'll have an Official Schedule to help you make these decisions, and any schedule updates will be listed in your daily copy of the Sea Monkey newsletter, as well as on signs and monitors located throughout the ship. If you want to chat with other cruisers or see what people are doing in real time, you can pull out your smartphone and check Twit-arr, the shipwide social network. (No Wi-Fi required!)

If it's a Port Day, you might choose to disembark for an excursion—or join up with fellow cruisers on a self-guided tour of the port. (If you book an excursion through Holland America, they can hold the the ship if your tour runs late. If you do a self-guided tour, you are responsible for getting back to the ship on time—and yes, people have missed the boat and had to catch up at our next port.) You can also stay on board, if you prefer; the game and craft rooms will stay open and there will probably be multiple Shadow Cruise events going on. It's also a great time to visit the ship's spa, or simply lounge on the deck and relax.

If you need an afternoon nap, we don't blame you; after all, there's a big evening planned. Dinner, of course—whether you choose a three-course meal in the dining room, a fresh-grilled hamburger and fries on the Lido Deck, or one of Holland America's speciality restaurants—and a mainstage show featuring our JoCo Cruise performers and special guests. After the show, there's still more fun to be had: your night might include gaming, dancing, karaoke, late-night hot tubbing, or sitting on the deck with friends and gazing at the stars.

What to Do Before Your Cruise

Get to know the JoCo Cruise performers and special guests. Haven't heard Jonathan Coulton's latest album or read N.K. Jemisin's newest book? (That'd be [Solid State](#) and [The Stone Sky](#), respectively.) Time to visit your online streaming emporium and/or local book-and-record-store of choice. You can also follow our performers and guests on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and any other social media networks that might start competing for our attention in the next few months.

Follow the JoCo Cruise on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Want the latest news about new performers, cruise announcements, and contests? (Yes, sometimes there are contests. With prizes!) Follow us @JoCoCruise on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), or at JoCoCruise on [Facebook](#). Don't forget to like, retweet, heart, star, thumbs-up, or emoji-face us.

Join the [JoCo Cruise Forums](#). This is the official site for JoCo Cruise discussion, so create an account and start getting to know your fellow cruisers. The forums are also a great place to ask any questions you may have, even *after* reading this guide.

Submit a Shadow Cruise event. Want to arrange a kazoo choir or a librarians' meetup? Make a [Shadow Cruise Event Request](#). Check the [JoCo Cruise Forums](#) to make sure someone isn't already submitting a similar event—we have a lot of librarians on the ship, after all.

Submit a video to the JoCo Cruise Shadow TV Channel. Every stateroom on the *ms Oosterdam* includes a television with on-demand programming. All of the mainstage shows will be available to watch on demand, and we're also featuring original programming created by by JoCo Cruisers. Submit your own programming through the [Shadow TV Submission Form](#).

Start prepping your cosplay, Fancy Pants, or formal wear. There are plenty of opportunities to get all decked out—PUN INTENDED—while on the ship. The Fancy Pants Parade awards a trophy to the person with the Best In Terms of Pants. Glam up for Formal Night in the main dining room; Black Tie, White Tie, or Novelty Tie are all appropriate choices. Many people choose to wear cosplay to Formal Night, and we'll also have a designated "Cosplay Day," "Heroes Day" and "Pajamas Day." Plus, there's the Paul F. Tompkins Memorial Mustache and Feztravaganza, during which mustaches and fezzes are encouraged but not required. (Any event involving fancy/formal/cosplay/fez wear is always encouraged *but not required*.)

Submit games to the Game Library. Have a unique or unusual game that you'd like to temporarily donate to our Game Library? (You'll get it back when the cruise is over.) Bring it onboard—and don't forget to retrieve your game from the library before you leave for the cruise!

What's the Shadow Cruise? The Shadow Cruise includes all of the entertainment or activities organized by JoCo Cruise attendees. Past Shadow Cruise events have included book readings, concerts, special-interest meetups, and singalongs.

To learn more about what people are planning for the 2018 Shadow Cruise, visit the [JoCo Cruise Forums](#)—and you can also [submit a Shadow Cruise event of your own](#).

What to Expect on Embarkation Day

Embarkation Day—that is, *the day you board the ship*—is busy and can be stressful, but it's also a lot of fun. You get to board the ship! You get to see your friends! You get to go to a party that has free drinks, and listen to the *ms Oosterdam* toot its big horn as it pulls away from the dock! You get to watch the city of San Diego disappear into the distance!

Here's how to maximize the fun and minimize the stress.

Keep the stuff you need close to you. You'll want your passport, your boarding documents, and your credit cards easily accessible, because you'll need them as you go through the embarkation process. You can carry your own luggage onto the *ms Oosterdam*, or you can check luggage with the ship's porters and have it hand-delivered to your stateroom. If you choose the latter method, make sure anything you need for the rest of the day (medication, sunscreen, change of clothing) stays with you; although the porters are very efficient with luggage delivery, some people might not receive their luggage until after dinner.

Don't worry about being the first people on the ship. Yes, we know you want your cruise to start as soon as possible. But boarding runs for several hours, and it goes more smoothly if we don't all try to board at once. Enjoy a leisurely breakfast at the hotel, or make that last trip to the drugstore to buy more sunscreen.

Do plan to arrive at the pier well before departure. The ship sails at 4 p.m., and you need to be onboard at least 90 minutes before the ship sails. It should take at least a half hour to complete the embarkation process, and it might take longer depending on how many people are in line, so plan accordingly.

Here's what you can expect during embarkation: You'll wait in line and pass any hand-carried luggage through a scanner, and you'll go through a scanner as well. Then you'll fill out some health forms to certify that you neither have a fever nor diarrhea. Holland America doesn't want to spend the next seven days playing Pandemic, especially when the disease is norovirus—which, in a closed environment like a cruise ship, is a serious (but easily manageable) concern.

After that you'll wait in another line to get officially checked in by Holland America; they'll look at your passport, boarding pass, and credit card, take your photo, and issue you your cruise keycard. This keycard gets you into your stateroom *and* on and off the ship during port days, so don't lose it!

Then you'll wait in one more line to grab your JoCo Cruise program and schedule, your badge (which you can use as a name tag) & lanyard, and your Red Team/Gold Team wristband. After that, it's time to board the ship.

Here's what you can expect once you're on the *ms Oosterdam*: Depending on when you board the ship, your stateroom might not yet be ready—but the buffet on the Lido Deck will, so feel free to enjoy lunch. Then you'll have some time to relax, attend the What to Expect If You're a New JoCo Cruiser panel, catch up with friends, explore the ship, make a Twit-arr account, or make a few final phone calls before the ship sails and we lose land-based cell service. (Sea-based cell service is available, it's just... extremely expensive.)

Then, get ready for the Departure Cocktail Party, as we all gather to enjoy some complimentary beverages, say hello to friends, and say goodbye to land!

What are Helper Monkeys? Helper Monkeys are JoCo Cruise attendees who have volunteered to give us a little extra help. They're the people who will be directing you to the swag table on Embarkation Day, or helping you check out a game from the Game Library.

On-duty Helper Monkeys can be identified by their brightly colored vests. If you have a question while on the JoCo Cruise, a Helper Monkey is a good person to ask!

What to Do on the Cruise

Watch our Main Stage (and smaller-stage) performances. You won't want to miss any of our big mainstage shows—we'll have a new show each day, featuring musicians, comedians, writers, and more. There are enough Sea Monkeys on board that we perform each mainstage show twice; your Red Team/Gold Team wristband lets you know which performance to attend.

We also livestream our mainstage shows on the ship's television, so you can watch the performance from your stateroom. If you do miss a show—or if you just want to see it again—you'll be able to select past performances using the *Oosterdam's* TV menu.

In addition to our big mainstage shows, some of our performers and featured guests will put on smaller shows in some of the ship's more intimate venues. Seating will be limited, so get there early if you want a spot.

Attend panels, Q&As, and meetups. Our performers and featured guests will be participating in a number of panels, Q&As, and meetups throughout the cruise. (Yes, like a convention.) Seating may be limited for some of these events, so don't be late.

Visit the Game Room. Got a favorite game you'd like to share? Want to try playing something new? Head over to the 24-hour Game Room. The Game Room is a great way to meet new people and playtest new games—and if you prefer the classics, you can always see what's available in the Game Library.

Visit the Craft Room. If you feel the urge to serge, we have a dedicated crafting space *and* plenty of supplies. You can participate in a themed crafting event, or drop in to do some last-minute sewing or hot-gluing before Formal Night.

Dress up for Theme Days. Cosplayers and fashion enthusiasts have a lot of opportunity to show off their finery, whether you're putting on your *Star Trek* jim-jams for Pajama Day, getting photographed in your TARDIS ballgown on Formal Night, or crafting a new pair of pants for the Fancy Pants Parade.

Check the JoCo Cruise social media accounts (and your email) to learn which Theme Days will be part of this year's cruise, so you can pack accordingly.

Attend—or host—Shadow Cruise events. The Shadow Cruise is run entirely by Sea Monkeys, and Shadow Cruise events are great places to meet new people and hang out with friends. There'll be concerts, readings, playtests, singalongs, and more. If you want to host your own Shadow Cruise event, you can submit a proposal before the cruise—or after you're onboard (pending space availability)!

Attend New Monkey events. Both the official cruise programming and the Shadow Cruise will have events specifically designed to benefit New Monkeys. Attending New Monkey events is a great way to meet new people and make new friends—and don't forget to join us at the Sea Monkey Orientation!

What are Sea Monkey RAs? Sea Monkey RAs are experienced Sea Monkeys who will be available to help New Monkeys get acclimated. (Just like college.) You'll learn more about Sea Monkey RAs when you arrive on the cruise—and make sure to attend one of their events!

A Quick Guide to JoCo Cruise Friendshipping

One of the best parts of the JoCo Cruise is getting the chance to meet like-minded people and make new friends. It's scientifically proven that if you have repeated, spontaneous, positive interactions with people, friendship is likely to result—and there are plenty of opportunities for repeated, spontaneous interactions when we're all sharing the same cruise ship. (It's on you to make sure they're positive ones.)

Here are some great ways to get to know your fellow cruisers:

- Start a conversation! Ask people if they've been on the JoCo Cruise before, or which performer they're most excited about seeing.
- Attend one of our New Monkey events!
- Play a game together! The Game Library has Friendly Fez table tents that you can display if you're looking for new people to join your game.
- Share a meal! The Main Dining Room will also have Friendly Fez table tents. Put one on your table, or look for tables that already have Friendly Fezzes on them.

Attending group events, like the Departure Cocktail Party or the Paul F. Tompkins Memorial Moustache Formal and Feztravaganza, are also good ways to meet new people. These parties are designed to let people mingle and get to know each other, so feel free to introduce yourself.

Be aware that not everybody comes on the JoCo Cruise with the goal of making new friends. For some people, this is more of a private vacation than a Nerd Summer Camp at Sea. When you see people reading quietly in the library, or sitting around a deck table that's far away from all the other tables, that probably means they want to do their own thing.

What's the Friendly Fez? The Friendly Fez is the JoCo Cruise's official Friendship Mascot, developed by Jenn Ellis of Twogether Studios. If you see the Friendly Fez on a dining room table, a game room table, or a crafting room table—really, on any flat surface—consider it an invitation to join whatever's going on and make friends. You can pick up your own Friendly Fez at the Game Library. If you've got an extra seat at your lunch or dinner table, set out the Friendly Fez and see who stops by!

An Even Quicker Guide to JoCo Cruise Fanshipping

The JoCo Cruise features multiple performers and special guests, many of whom could be described as Genuine Famous People.

Because of the nature of the cruise, it is very likely that you will find yourself in close proximity to someone whose work you admire — and by “close proximity” we mean “standing behind them in the pizza line.” (Even Genuine Famous People eat pizza sometimes.) This is a great opportunity to practice Good Fanshipping.

Fanshipping is a lot like friendshipping. It's about respecting boundaries and making everyone everyone involved feel comfortable. So, when you find yourself behind a performer at the buffet, or on the same excursion as one of our special guests, roll a quick Perception Check: are they with their families? Do they appear to be in a hurry? Are they doing something you might be interrupting, like reading a book or eating?

If a performer or guest does not appear to be preoccupied, it is fine to introduce yourself and say something to the effect of “I really appreciate your work.” Then pay attention to what happens next; if the performer says “Thank you” and nothing else, that probably means they aren't in a good place to have a conversation right now, and you should probably move on.

Performers and special guests will often schedule specific times, called “Office Hours,” during which they will be in *very good places to have conversations*: the bar, the pool, the cafe. Those are the best times to ask questions and share your thoughts.

What to Do After the Cruise

The cruise hasn't even started and now you have to think about what will happen after it's over?! It's okay. There are still plenty of fun things to do after the cruise, like keeping in touch through the [JoCo Cruise Forums](#), sharing your photos on social media, turning in your JoCo Cruise Bingo Card (see below), and reading/listening/watching the amazing stuff created by JoCo Cruise performers and special guests.

We know that it's hard to go back to dry land. But the sea will not forget you, and we'll all see each other again SOON™.

The JoCo Cruise Code of Conduct

Be excellent to each other. Treat your fellow Sea Monkeys with kindness and respect. This is an enthusiastic and supportive community, and we hope it will always be this way. Invite people into your conversations and activities; be supportive when your fellow Sea Monkeys try new things; participate, say hello, help out. Events like these can feel lonely and intimidating when you're new and don't know anybody. Be welcoming, inclusive and friendly!

Don't harass others. Some things that are not OK: any kind of physical, verbal, or psychological abuse; threats, intimidation, and bullying; slurs about race, gender, or sexuality; unwanted romantic attention, sexual harassment, and generally creepy or stalky behavior; and photographing anyone or engaging in physical interactions (hugging, tickling, backrubs, etc.) without consent. If someone asks you to stop doing something and you keep doing it, that's harassment.

Be excellent to the ship's staff and anyone you encounter at a port of call. Bad behavior by individuals reflects poorly on our group as a whole, and we don't want to be remembered as the rude people who ruined everyone's cruise.

Don't steal things. I mean, obviously.

Don't use illegal substances or bring them onboard. No exceptions.

The ship's management has the final say. The officers and crew of the Oosterdam all want you to have fun, but they're also responsible for the safety and well-being of every person on board. Don't hesitate to come to us if you need help dealing with an issue, but know that if it involves the ship and its operations, or the health or well-being of passengers and/or crew, ultimately we must defer to the Oosterdam management.

In general we expect that, as in years past, JoCo Cruisers will act responsibly and look after one another. But in the event of a breach of this Code of Conduct, we reserve the right to take action, including (but not limited to) limiting access to events, expulsion without refund, and/or permanent banning from JoCo Cruise events.

During the cruise, if you witness behavior contrary to this Code of Conduct, are concerned about another passenger's behavior, or feel that you are being or have been harassed, contact any Helper Monkey or CALL 74701 from any ship phone. Off-ship, you can email JoCo Cruise management at info@jococruise.com.

JoCo Cruise Bingo				
Hang out at a JoCoTel before departure	Enjoy the Taco Bar	Dress up for a Theme Day	Go to a karaoke event	Go to a dance party
Put a Friendly Fez on your gaming or dinner table	Dress up for Formal Night	Join the JCC Forums	Attend the Loreto concert	Go to the Lido Deck for sail-away
Visit the Craft Room	Go to a panel or Q&A	FREE	Play a game you've never played before	Go to a Main Stage show
Attend the Farewell Party	Go to a meetup	Attend a New Monkey event	Follow JCC on social media	Introduce yourself to someone you've never met before
Spend an hour doing absolutely nothing	Join the Fancy Pants Parade	Eat a meal with someone you've never met before	Go to a Shadow Cruise Event	Attend a performer's Office Hours

Mark squares off as you complete them, and if you get BINGO or BLACKOUT, please share your card on Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram using the hashtag #JoCoBingo2018. We'll collect all entries shared with that hashtag, pull out our random winner-chooser device, and few lucky people will win prizes!

You have until Thursday, March 1, 2018 to share your bingo card on social media if you want to be considered for the prize drawing. Now get on out there and enjoy your cruise!