

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 get ready? 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 attendees, as well as ideas for what you can do once you are onboard the *ms Nieuw Amsterdam* (pronounced “/niu/ /'am.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 cruise port” or “whom do I contact about dietary restrictions,” visit JoCoCruise.com. For additional information about what to expect on the *ms Nieuw Amsterdam*, as well as information about other amenities, visit HollandAmerica.com.

TL;DR: If Nothing Else, Do These Things

1. Participate in a New Attendee Event (even if you're a Returner!)
2. Go to all of the nightly Main Concerts with your assigned Team (Red/Gold)
3. Attend at least one panel, Q&A, or meetup
4. Visit the Game Library and play a game you've never played before
5. Hang out with a favorite JoCo Cruise guest during their Office Hours
6. Start a conversation—or share a meal—with someone you've never met before
7. Attend at least one Shadow Cruise Event
8. Attend a Karaoke Night or Dance Party

A Day In Your Life Aboard JoCo Cruise

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 Main Concert performance you saw last night, catch a performance you missed, watch programming created by fellow attendees, or play a classic movie on the ship's on-demand TV service.

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

Then it's time to visit the Game Library, the crafting room, or attend a panel hosted by a writer—or maybe stop by a Shadow Cruise event! You'll have our Official Schedule to help you make these decisions—the online version (accessed via the ship's network, no need to purchase Internet access), the printed daily schedule (delivered to your stateroom each day!), as well as on signs 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 messaging system. (No paid 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, the ship will be aware of any (unlikely) problems or delays you encounter. 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; gaming and crafting are always there for you, 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 or the PIZZA PLACE on the Lido Deck, or one of Holland America's specialty restaurants—and a Main Concert 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 Ursula Vernon's or Ryka Aoki's latest novels? (That'd be *Some Guys*, *Paladin's Hope (The Saint of Steel Book 3)*, and *Light from Uncommon Stars*, 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, TikTok, 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.

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," "Formal Night," "Birthday Day" and "Jammies Day." Plus, there's the Poolside Fancy Headwear and Moustache Formal, during which mustaches and fancy headwear are encouraged but not required. (Any event involving fancy/formal/cosplay/headwear is always encouraged *but not required*.)

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, shared-interest meetups, and singalongs.

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 Nieuw Amsterdam* honk its big horn as it pulls away from the dock! You get to watch South Florida 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 to get into the terminal facilities, and as you go through the embarkation process. You can carry your own luggage onto the *ms Nieuw Amsterdam*, 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.

Arrive at the terminal at your assigned boarding time. This year, due to new COVID safety procedures, all passengers will receive an assigned boarding time. (This will be found on your boarding documents from the HAL check-in process.) Please don't show up to the terminal prior to your boarding time, as the terminal staff will not begin processing anyone earlier than their assigned time.

You may show up later than your assigned time, if necessary; you won't "lose your spot" or anything. But please note, the ship sails at 5 p.m., and you need to be on board at least 90 minutes before the ship sails. It should take at least a half-hour to complete the embarkation process (including in-terminal COVID testing), and it might take longer depending on how many people are in line, so plan accordingly.

Here's what you can expect during embarkation: First you'll present your boarding documents (either the digital Express Docs via HAL's Navigator app, or printed out ahead of time via your Holland America account), ID, and proof of vaccination. You'll be taken for testing, then wait in a seating area for the test results; eventually, terminal staff will call you in groups to begin the check-in process. Then you'll wait in line and pass any hand-carried luggage through a scanner, and you'll go through a scanner as well.

You and your carry-on luggage will go through scanning (nothing you haven't done a bunch of times at any airport). You'll then meet the terminal staff who will help you complete your check-in via numerous kiosks in the terminal. You'll need your Express Docs (or printed boarding pass) and your travel documentation (passport). A couple of quick scans and you're all set with that part!

You won't actually receive your stateroom keycard in the terminal; it'll be waiting for you in an envelope just outside your stateroom door. You will, however, move from this point to the next step of your terminal process—one more quick line to get your JoCo Cruise program (the "Blue Book," even though this year it's greenish), the Day 1 printed schedule, and your JoCo Cruise badge and lanyard. Make sure to get these, because a) they function as your Red Team/Gold Team/Club SRO "pass," and b) you can write your name and info on them for ID badge purposes. Finally, it's time to board the ship.

Here's what you can expect once you're on the *ms Nieuw Amsterdam*: 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 Orientation panel, catch up with friends, explore the ship, 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. And streaming reliability is highly variable.)

Then, get ready for the Sail Away party, as we all gather to enjoy some complimentary beverages, say hello to friends, and say goodbye to land!

What are Helpers? The Helpers are JoCo Cruise attendees who have stepped up to give us a little extra help. They're the people who will be directing you to the swag table on Embarkation Day or staffing the JoCo Cruise Help Desk in the Atrium on Deck 1.

On-duty Helpers can be identified by their brightly colored vests. If you have a question while on the JoCo Cruise, look for a Helper!

What to Do on the Cruise

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

We also livestream our Main Concerts on the ship's television system, 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 *Nieuw Amsterdam's* on-demand TV menu. Those who selected to join Club SRO will view the Main Concerts in B.B. Kings Lounge, but anyone may drop in and watch the shows from there as well!

In addition to our big nightly concerts, 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 Library. Want to try playing something new? Got a favorite game you'd like to share? Head over to the Game Library (a.k.a., the Main Dining Room on Deck 3). Gaming is a great way to meet new people and playtest new games—and the Game Library has a literal ton of games (as in 2,000 pounds!) We've also set aside some 24/7 gaming tables in the Lido Marketplace area. And the best part is because we control the whole ship, you can set up and play nearly anywhere else where there isn't an event scheduled, too!

Do some Console Gaming and Arcade Gaming. We're bringing a whole raft of old-school console games (which you can find up in the EXC Center on Deck 11), as well as a number of free-play classic arcade cabinets (which will be in the Billboard Onboard area on Deck 2). No quarters necessary!

Visit the Craft Room. 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. And feel free to craft in the lower level of the Main Dining Room, up until they need to clear everything for dinner seatings.

This year, there's also a dedicated space for general crafting in the Lower Main Dining Room (Deck 2, Aft) towards the back. Look for the table signs indicating they're dedicated to people doing crafting. The area will generally be available at all times, save for between 3pm - 10pm (when the dining room staff has to set up for, serve, and break down from dinner.)

Dress up for Theme Days. Cosplayers and fashion enthusiasts have a lot of opportunities 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 attendees, 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.

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

What are New Cruiser Ambassadors? New Cruiser Ambassadors are experienced JoCo Cruisers who will be available to help New Cruisers get acclimated. You can't miss them in their pink sashes, and they're there to help answer any questions you might have (or at least point you in the right direction to get said answers.)

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 Attendee events!
- Play a game together! The Game Library has "Hi!" Die table signs 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 "Hi!" Die signs. Put one on your table, or look for tables that already have "Hi!" Dies on them.

Attending group events, like the Sail Away cocktail party or the Poolside Fancy Headwear and Moustache Formal, 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.

Our friends Jenn and Trin at Friendshipping are providing us with highly visible buttons you can wear—a green "YES" button to indicate you're ready to make new friends, and a red "NO" button to indicate you are having quiet time. If you see people wearing these buttons, please respect the terms. Even if a person wearing a "NO" button is talking to someone else, please don't approach them—let them decide whom they wish to interact with and when.

What's the "Hi" Die? It's the JoCo Cruise's official Friendship Mascot. If you see the "Hi" Die on a dining room table, a gaming table, or a crafting area table—really, on any flat surface—consider it an invitation to join whatever's going on and make friends. You can pick up a "Hi" Die sign at the Game Library. If you've got an extra seat at your lunch or dinner table, set out the "Hi" Die 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 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? Are they wearing a red "NO" Friendship button?

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 and sharing your photos on social media (including the JoCo Cruise Discord and Community Facebook groups), 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 attendees with kindness and respect. This is an enthusiastic and supportive community, and it is all of our responsibility to maintain it. Invite people into your conversations and activities; be supportive when your fellow attendees try new things (or choose not to); participate, connect, help out. Events like these can feel lonely and intimidating when you're new and don't know anybody. Be welcoming, inclusive and friendly, and look out for one another!

Don't harass others. We are not a community that tolerates harassment. This includes (but isn't limited to): any kind of physical, verbal, or psychological abuse; threats, intimidation, and bullying; slurs about race, gender, sexuality or ability; unwanted romantic attention, sexual harassment, and generally creepy or stalker 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. We're all responsible for making sure this doesn't occur in our community.

Be excellent to the ship's staff and anyone you encounter at a port of call. Remember that we share this community with others. Please don't be the person who makes the attendees look bad to the HAL staff and/or the locals.

Don't steal things. Obviously.

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

We're here to help. Don't hesitate to reach out and ask for help addressing an issue. If the matter is related to the ship and its operations, or the health or physical well-being of passengers and/or crew, we must defer to the Nieuw Amsterdam management. The ship's management, the officers, and crew are all ultimately responsible for the safety and well-being of every person on board. We and they are all doing our best to ensure you enjoy your experience and that the values of our community are upheld.

Our experience and expectation is that JoCo Cruisers 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 are subject to or witness behavior that violates our Code of Conduct, contact any Helper or JoCo Cruise staff member; alternately, you can submit a Code of Conduct Violation Report form at the JoCo Cruise Info Desk. (You may submit this report anonymously if you prefer.) You can also dial the number below from any ship's phone. Off-ship, you can email conduct@jococruise.com. JoCo Cruise will make every effort to protect the privacy of anyone reporting a violation.

JoCo Cruise Bingo

Meet some JoCo Cruisers online pre-cruise	Have a burger, hot dog or Beyond Meats at the Dive-In	Dress up for a Theme Day	Go to a karaoke event	Go to a dance party
Put a "Hi" Die on your gaming or dinner table	Dress up for Formal Night	Play a classic arcade game or a console game	Dip at least a toe in one of the pools or in the ocean	Go to the Lido Deck for sail-away
Visit the Crafting Room	Go to a panel or Q&A	FREE	Play a game you've never played before	Go to a Main Concert
Attend the Farewell Party	Go to a meetup	Attend a New Cruiser event	Follow JoCo Cruise 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