

LAURA ON LIFE

You Can Learn ALOT About People When Cruisin

If you want to learn about another person's personal habits, the best way to do it without asking is to go on a 5-day cruise with them. There is nowhere to hide.

My mother, my daughter and I went on a cruise together. Of course we did not go on this cruise to find out each other's personal habits. We are family. We thought we already knew them. But this was our first cruise, so, of course, we didn't.

My daughter is thirteen years old and, judging by the amount of time she spent reading in the cabin, my mom and I were driving her nuts.

Our first night was little rough for all of us. The sea was particularly choppy. Even the guy teaching people the Cha-Cha was wobbling.

"...and kick, and...whoa!"

People were stumbling around as if they had too much to drink. Though it was easy to tell the people who did have too much to drink. They were the ones who could stand upright. None in our cabin got sick, but I'll admit to thinking I was going to be.

Things were looking a bit better the next morning. Then began what we fondly called "The Dining Wars." I wanted to experience everything the ship had to offer even if it was cold scrambled eggs on the Lido Deck. Mom wanted to eat in the main dining room "where the rich people eat" but she didn't want to do it alone. I



Laura Snyder

understood my mother's need for dining consistency and was perfectly happy to do my "experiencing" alone, but she wouldn't have it.

Added to that, my daughter's growth spurt had temporarily ceased to exist and, as a result, she didn't want to eat anything... anywhere... ever.

She ate enough to keep her alive, but, seriously, how much nourishment does one need to sit in the cabin and read?

Mom only liked the Lido Deck when she could snag a food item that she could take back to the cabin and "save for later"... as if you couldn't get anything you wanted 24 hours a day.

It was not surprising to see her pull a hard-boiled egg out of her pocket while we did a crossword puzzle in the evening or watch 6 or 7 Sweet N Low packets fall out of her coat during the security checks.

My mom is a very organized person. Almost as soon as we arrived, she pulled everything out of her suitcases and put them

in the appropriate drawers and closets in our cabin. My daughter and I were pretty sure we wouldn't be allowed to stay longer than the 5 days we paid for, so we worked out of our suitcases the entire trip. Mom never said anything, but I'm positive she was thinking, "How can they live like that?"

Packing and unpacking were just two more unnecessary steps that I was unwilling to take on my vacation. If my clothes seemed more rumpled than Mom's, so be it. There was nobody on that boat I needed to impress.

There were a million things to do onboard: swimming, mini golf, gambling, shows, eating. Mom's husband was certain, though he'd never been on a cruise in his life, that the only reason to go on a cruise was to pick up men. We looked everywhere for the sign-up sheet, but we never found it.

We sampled every dessert we could get our hands on. If there was filet mignon or lobster tails, we ordered it. If there was a stray orange on a buffet, it went into my mom's pocket.

My daughter bought a small bag of jelly beans

at the ship store and subsisted primarily on these the entire trip.

She also adopted my mom's penchant for snatching random foodstuffs from the buffet and squirreling it away in her luggage. By the end of the trip, my daughter had an apple, a half pound of jelly beans and a barely touched yogurt cup stashed in there.

Mom's drawer held clean underwear, an extra umbrella, a handful of chocolate-covered raisins and an instant oatmeal packet; all neatly arranged as if the captain might do an inspection.

Stuffed into my tennis shoe, I hoarded a bag of Swedish fish, my stash of little chocolates that they leave on your pillow every night, a package of Dramamine and a banana. Grandma used to say they'll keep you regular.

As far as I can tell, cruising is all about what you bring back with you. In our case, it was about ten extra pounds of body fat.

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7	1	6	2	9	8	5	3	4
9	3	4	1	7	5	8	2	6
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