

Halachos of Going on a Cruise

Frequently Asked Questions

Rabbi Efrem Goldberg

SHABBOS

Q: Does it make a difference what day of the week the cruise begins?

A: There is no concern with a cruise that begins on Sunday – Wednesday. Due to the potential for sea sickness, combined with the possibility of *Shabbos* violation, *Chazal* decreed¹ that it is forbidden to set sail within three days of *Shabbos*.² While a minority opinion³ suggests that today large ships are stable and eliminate the necessity to adjust, most opinions⁴ require us to observe the original decree. Therefore, you should preferably not book a cruise that sets sail Thursday or Friday.⁵

Q: If the cruise docks on *Shabbos*, can I disembark?

A: There is no prohibition in disembarking on *Shabbos*, but there are a few *halachik* considerations you must be careful about. Since there is no *eruv* binding the ship to the dock and its adjacent area, carrying is forbidden. You must check your pockets, etc. before disembarking. Furthermore, there is a limitation in how far you can travel on *shabbos* outside of a residential area. The *techum* (boundary) begins at the dock and extends approximately 7/10 of a mile. Care must be taken not to walk too far.

Q: The ship has a metal detector, can I pass through it when re-boarding the ship on *Shabbos*?

A: You may pass through the detector assuming you are not carrying or wearing anything that may set it off.

Q: My cabin has an electronic door lock, what should I do on *shabbos*?

A: You must leave your key at the front desk or with security and let them know that you will be asking them over *shabbos* to open your door for you.⁶

Q: The doors throughout the ship are electronic and open based on a sensor. What should I do?

A: If there are manual doors available, it is preferable to use them. If not, wait for a non-Jew to trigger the sensor and open the door and follow closely behind them.

Q: Can I carry on the ship; does it need an *eruv* or *eruv chatzeiros*?

A: Carrying on the ship is permissible as it is an inherently closed space. No *eruv chatzeiros* is necessary.⁷

Q: Where should I light *Shabbos* candles? Can I use electric lights?

¹ Shabbos 19a, Shulchan Aruch o.c. 248. The decree is limited to a recreational journey. A journey for a mitzvah is not subject to this limitation.

² According to the Vilna Gaon, the three days include *Shabbos* and therefore, Wednesday is permissible to journey

³ Menuhat Ahava (1:2) by Rabbi Moshe Halevi (1961-2001)

⁴ Tzitz Eliezer 1:21 and Yalkut Yosef Shabbos 1:248:note 1

⁵ If a cruise that begins Thursday or Friday was already booked and is non-refundable, please ask your local Orthodox Rabbi

⁶ Operating the electronic door mechanism is a Rabbinic prohibition thereby rendering asking a non-Jew to open it a *shvus d'shvus b'makom mitzvah* (oneg *Shabbos*). Even if it were prohibited from the Torah, *amirah l'akum* on a *psik reisha* is permissible.

⁷ Igros Moshe o.c.1:141

A: It is preferable to light candles in the dining room within proximity to where the *Shabbos* meals will take place. If that is not possible, they can be lit in the cabin where you will sleep. If candles are not allowed on the ship, the *mitzvah* can be fulfilled by turning on an incandescent light bulb; however a *beracha* should not be recited.⁸

Q: I didn't bring a *Kiddush* cup, what should I use?

A: *Kiddush* requires a dignified cup. If only plastic or paper cups are available, they should preferably be doubled up.⁹

Q: I don't have kosher grape juice or kosher wine, how do I make *Kiddush*?

A: If there is no kosher grape juice or wine, *Kiddush* should be recited over bread.¹⁰

Q: I didn't bring a *havdallah* set, what should I do?

A: Beer or juice can be used in place of wine.¹¹ Any spice that has a fragrance can be used as *besamim*.¹² Two candles held together can be used as the *havdallah* candle. If only one candle is available, the *beracha* may be recited.

Q: Can I eat from the sealed Kosher meals that were heated for me on *Shabbos*?

A: It is prohibited to explicitly ask a non-Jew to heat food for you on *shabbos*. If a non-Jew on their own heated solid foods without liquid, they may be eaten. If the non-Jew heated liquids, they should only be consumed once they have cooled significantly and the benefit of having been heated is gone.¹³

KASHRUS

Q: Can I eat a baked potato that was double wrapped in silver foil and brought to me as such?

A: A raw potato is obviously kosher. It can be cooked in a non-kosher oven by double wrapping it in silver foil. Since *bishul akum* is a consideration, you should arrange to put the potato in the oven yourself.

Q: Can I eat cooked vegetables that were double wrapped in the oven?

A: Vegetables that can be eaten raw and for which there is no issue of bugs or insects can be double wrapped and cooked for you, even in a non-kosher oven.

Q: Can I eat a piece of salmon that was double wrapped in silver foil? What about other fish?

A: It is only permissible to eat fish when you have seen the fins and scales and confirm its kosher status. A clean knife should be used to fillet the fish on clean paper. Salmon is the only fish that is kosher even once filleted since it is distinguished by its color. The fish should be double wrapped in silver foil and you should place it in the oven to avoid *bishul akum*.

Q: Can I eat hard boiled eggs that were prepared in a non-kosher pot?

⁸ Shemirat Shabbat KeHilchata ch. 43 note 22

⁹ Rav Moshe doesn't think plastic cups can be used but the Tzitz Eliezer, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and others allow them.

¹⁰ Shulchan Aruch o.c. 272:9

¹¹ O.c. 296:2

¹² Mishna Berura 297:10

¹³ Biur Halacha 253: d''h dino k'shachach

A: The taste from the non-kosher pot is transferred and the eggs are not kosher.

Q: Can I eat cold cereal and milk in a non-Kosher bowl with a non-kosher spoon?

A: Yes, but care should be taken to confirm that the cutlery and utensils are clean.

Q: Can I order freshly cut up fruit and/or vegetables?

A: Yes, with exception of onions and radishes.¹⁴ Please be aware that some vegetables like broccoli and cauliflower require inspection to make sure there are no insects.

Q: I am scheduled to go to the Mikvah while away on the cruise. Can I go in the ocean?

A: Yes with all the proper preparations. Someone should be present to confirm the immersion was full and complete with no barriers. If there is no woman to serve that function, the husband can.

BIRCHAS HA'GOMEL

Q: When the cruise is complete, is birchas ha'gomel recited?

A: Yes, preferably within three days¹⁵

¹⁴ Taz, Yoreh Deah 91:2

¹⁵ Shulchan Aruch o.c. 219