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6-Night Pacific Coast — Hosted Solo Group

*Norwegian Encore · 6 Nights, Vancouver to Los Angeles
October 12 – 18, 2026 · Hosted by Allison Fishhead Burbank*



Norwegian Encore approaching Juneau, Alaska, July 2022 — full
broadside profile showing the colorful hull livery and 'NORWEGIAN'

ENCORE' nameplate against the snow-capped Coast Mountains. Photo by Jackhayes1 (CC BY-SA 4.0) via Wikimedia Commons.

A Voyage Pack from **In the Wake**

Hosted by Allison Fishhead Burbank · Booked through **Maulsby Travel Co.**

Welcome

This pack exists to make one specific cruise easier: **Norwegian Encore**, sailing 6 nights from Vancouver to Los Angeles, **October 12 – 18, 2026**, with calls at **Victoria, BC** and **San Francisco**, plus **overnight stays in both Vancouver and San Francisco**. It's a **hosted solo cruisers group cruise** organized on-ship by **Allison Fishhead Burbank**, with the booking handled by **Tina Maulsby** at **Maulsby Travel Co.**

Two people, two roles. Allison is your on-ship host — the one organizing the daily group rhythm, gathering points, and shared dinners once you're aboard. Tina is the travel agent who booked the group rate; she's the source of truth for what's bundled with your fare (drinks packages, Wi-Fi, gratuities, specialty dining credits) and the right person to call if anything goes sideways pre-cruise. Use the right contact for the right question.

A note on what makes this itinerary unusual. Most cruises miss the cities they call at — you arrive at 8 AM, the ship leaves at 5 PM, and downtown is a blur. This sailing flips that: **two full overnights in port**, one in Vancouver and one in San Francisco. You get the cities at night — Vancouver's Granville Island lit up, San Francisco's Embarcadero, Fisherman's Wharf at 9 PM after the day-cruisers have left. That's the whole point.

A note on timing. Mid-October Pacific Coast is the **shoulder season** between NCL's Alaska summer deployment and her Mexican Riviera winter — Encore is repositioning. The weather can be calm and beautiful, or it can be the first big Pacific swell of the season. Plan for cool (50–65°F most days), pack a rain shell for Vancouver, and read **Section 7** on seasickness for the Pacific transit.

It is calm by design. No urgency, no upsell, no countdown timer. The site that produced this pack is independent — no cruise-line affiliations, no shore-excursion commissions, no display ads.

Includes an offline-capable Emergency Contacts section — a fillable family handoff card, cruise-line and consulate numbers tailored to this itinerary, available offline after first load via **In the Wake's** PWA. Designed to share with one trusted person ashore before sailing.

A note on what's first-hand here and what isn't

I haven't sailed this exact itinerary on this ship. **Tina has been on Norwegian Cruise Line ships of this class before** and is your booking agent for the group — she's the one with the contracted relationship to NCL and the working knowledge of what's bundled with this rate. **Allison Fishhead Burbank** is the on-ship host; she runs the daily group rhythm once you're aboard. The pack stitches together NCL's published specifications, the geography of Vancouver / Victoria / San Francisco / Los Angeles, and a careful read of what an October Pacific Coast repositioning sailing actually looks like — so the operational logistics are useful even where I wasn't aboard. Where the writing rests on first-hand observation, I've kept it modest; where it rests on published specification or itinerary structure, the **sources note** at the end of the pack lists what was checked. If something here doesn't match what Tina or Allison know first-hand, defer to them.

At a Glance

Ship	Norwegian Encore (Breakaway Plus class; sisters: Norwegian Escape 2015, Norwegian Joy 2017, Norwegian Bliss 2018)
Cruise line	Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL)
Class	Breakaway Plus — the larger evolution of NCL's Breakaway class
Specifications	169,116 GT · 1,094 ft / 333 m · 20 decks (16 passenger) · ~3,998 lower berths / 4,004 double occupancy · ~2,100 crew
Year built	2019 (Meyer Werft, Papenburg, Germany); Nassau, Bahamas registry
Maiden voyage	November 2, 2019 — transatlantic from Southampton
Christening	November 21, 2019 at PortMiami

Godmother	Kelly Clarkson (Grammy-winning pop singer; performed at the Miami christening)
Departure port	Canada Place cruise terminal, Vancouver, BC
Disembarkation port	World Cruise Center, Los Angeles (San Pedro), California
Itinerary	6 nights / 7 days · Pacific Coast one-way (Vancouver → LA)
Audience	Solo travelers (hosted group)
Group host	Allison Fishhead Burbank — on-ship host; reach her via the group communications Tina sets up
Booking agent	Tina Maulsby, Maulsby Travel Co. — tina@maulsbytravel.com · 910-528-5077
Group rates	Solo Studio \$889 · Ocean View \$1,038 · Balcony \$1,198 (per the group flyer; verify with Tina)
Currency aboard	US Dollar

Ports of call

The verified shape for the October 12 – 18, 2026 sailing (per the flyer and typical NCL Pacific Coast repositioning rhythm):

1. **Vancouver, BC** — embark Mon Oct 12; **overnight in port**
2. **Victoria, BC** — day call (typically Tue Oct 13 or Wed Oct 14)
3. **Cruising at sea** — Pacific coast transit (1–2 days depending on order)
4. **San Francisco, California** — arrive Fri Oct 16 (typical), **overnight in port** Fri–Sat
5. **Los Angeles (World Cruise Center, San Pedro)** — disembark Sun Oct 18

Verify the specific day order in the NCL app — Pacific Coast repositioning itineraries shift more often than fixed Caribbean rotations, and the Vancouver/Victoria sequencing varies between sailings.

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Section 1 — Your Ship: Norwegian Encore

A Breakaway Plus ship now in her seventh year

Norwegian Encore was delivered October 30, 2019 by Meyer Werft at Papenburg, Germany — the **fourth and youngest ship of NCL's Breakaway Plus class** (after **Norwegian Escape** 2015, **Norwegian Joy** 2017, and **Norwegian Bliss** 2018). Her maiden voyage was a November 2, 2019 transatlantic from Southampton. She was christened November 21, 2019 at PortMiami by **Kelly Clarkson**, the Grammy-winning pop singer who performed at the ceremony. By your October 2026 sailing she is a few weeks short of seven years in service: settled, with crew rhythms long established.

Before the Prima class (Prima 2022, Aqua 2025, Luna 2026) became NCL's design statement, the Breakaway Plus ships were the line's flagships. Encore is the apex of that older design language — bigger than Breakaway, smaller than Prima, but with the most refined version of NCL's signature features: the **two-level race track** at the back (Encore's is 1,150 feet long — the longest two-level go-kart track at sea when she launched in 2019 — partly enclosed, distinct from Bliss's open-air version), the **Aqua Park** with slides, the **Galaxy Pavilion** with VR experiences, **Vibe Beach Club** adults-only enclave, the dedicated **Studio cabin solo program** with no-single-supplement Studios + Studio Lounge, and **The Haven** suite enclave.

If you've sailed **Norwegian Bliss** before, **Encore is a near-identical hull and general layout** with a few refinements (different specialty restaurant mix; race track enclosed differently; Galaxy Pavilion more developed). If you're new to Breakaway Plus, the **Ship Size Atlas** shows how she compares against the larger Prima Plus ships you may be considering for future sailings.

What's distinctive about Encore

- **The two-level race track** at the aft — Encore's go-kart track is 1,150 feet long, the longest two-level track at sea when she launched in 2019 (the Breakaway Plus designs had the originals at sea; Prima's three-LEVEL track was a later innovation). Paid: ~\$15/race; the right call once.
- **Galaxy Pavilion** — virtual-reality and immersive games arcade. Paid per experience.
- **Aqua Park** with the **Aqua Racer** (twin twisting waterslides) and the **Ocean Loops** — the loop slide that goes UP a loop, free. Aqua Racer races two riders down twin-tube enclosed slides.
- **Observation Lounge** (Deck 15 forward) — wraparound glass-roof lounge; the day's best move on any Pacific Coast sailing, especially the Big Sur coastline.
- **Vibe Beach Club** — adults-only enclave with private pool, two hot tubs, dedicated bar, shaded loungers. ~\$99/day or \$399/week pre-cruise.
- **The Haven** — ship-within-a-ship suite enclave with private restaurant, lounge, pool, butler service.

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- **Atmospheric dining at the included tier** — Encore's main dining rooms (**Manhattan Room**, Taste, Savor) are among the most atmospheric of NCL's included rooms.

What's NOT on Encore

- **No Indulge Food Hall** — that's a Prima-class signature. Encore predates it.
- **No Penrose Atrium** — also Prima class.
- **No Aqua Slidecoaster** — Prima Plus only (Aqua, Luna).
- **No three-LEVEL go-kart track** — Prima distinction; Encore's is two-level (vertical layers), not three-level (separately racing).

Cabin categories — the solo calculus

The group flyer shows three price points: **Solo Studio \$889**, **Ocean View \$1,038**, **Balcony \$1,198**. Honest reads on each:

- **Solo Studio at \$889** — NCL's signature solo offering: roughly 100 sq ft, windowless, with **no single supplement** and **Studio Lounge access** (free coffee, social space, scheduled hosted hours for solo cruisers). The Studio Lounge is the daily social anchor; solos cluster there independent of group meetups. **At \$889, this is the price-leader and the obvious choice if budget matters more than space.**
- **Ocean View at \$1,038** — real upgrade over the Studio: a window cabin, daylight in the morning, the world feeling different. The \$149 differential is small for what you get. **The value pick for most solo cruisers** who'd appreciate a window.
- **Balcony at \$1,198** — a private outdoor space. On a Pacific Coast cruise where there's significant scenic-cruising time (the California coast, the Vancouver-to-Victoria threading), a balcony genuinely matters. **At a \$160 differential over Ocean View, this is the splurge that pencils out** if the math works.

Verify Interior (the lowest standard tier) separately with Tina if you'd rather book windowless and save further over Solo Studio. Standard Interior is typically the cheapest tier on Breakaway Plus ships.

Before you commit, run the stateroom sanity check — give it your ship and cabin number and it tells you whether that cabin sits in a known trouble spot: under the pool deck, over the theater, by the galley or the elevator bank, far forward, behind a lifeboat, or on a connecting door. On most Norwegian ships its cabin list is still partial, and it says so on the result. The Pacific Coast cruise differs from Caribbean in one specific way: scenic-cruising days reward balconies more than Caribbean sea days do. That is a choice about the category; the check is about the cabin you pick within it. Once chosen, the **cabin organization guide** covers small-space pragmatics.

Dining

Encore's dining map:

Included with your fare (no extra charge):

- **Manhattan Room** (Deck 7 aft) — main dining room with a small dance floor and live music most evenings. The most atmospheric of the included rooms.
- **Taste** and **Savor** — paired main dining rooms; same menu, different atmosphere.
- **Garden Café** (Deck 16) — buffet; long hours; upper-deck view earns its keep on scenic cruising days.
- **The Local** — pub food + classics; long hours.
- **Splash Academy Café** — quick service near the kids' club area.

Specialty dining (extra charge or via Specialty Dining Package):

- **Cagney's Steakhouse** — NCL's standard steakhouse; reliably good.
- **Le Bistro** — French; the most romantic specialty room on NCL ships.
- **Teppanyaki** — the showy hibachi room; group-friendly seating.
- **Q Texas Smokehouse** — Texas BBQ.
- **Los Lobos** — modern Mexican.
- **Ocean Blue** — Geoffrey Zakarian-partnered seafood (verify whether still on Encore in 2026).
- **La Cucina** — Italian.
- **Food Republic** — pan-Asian small plates; one of the most distinctive specialty rooms on NCL.

Drinks. NCL's drink-package math: the Premium Beverage Package is commonly included in the **"Free at Sea"** promotional bundle when booking. If your group fare included Free at Sea, drinks may already be covered — **verify what's bundled with Tina**. Otherwise the package runs ~\$109/day per person + 20% gratuity at pre-cruise rates; breaks even at ~5–6 drinks per day. The **drink-calculator** lets you put in your real consumption pattern and see the breakeven. The companion article **Is the drink package worth it?** walks through the breakeven math with worked examples.

The honest first-day mistake to avoid: Don't sign up for an unlimited drink package at the front desk on Day 1 unless you've already done the drink-calculator math. Decide before you board, ideally as part of your Free At Sea bundle. Mid-sail upgrades cost more per day and give you fewer days of usage — and on a 6-night cruise, you have very few days to break even compared to a 7- or 8-night.

Connectivity at sea

NCL's Wi-Fi packages are tier-based and frequently bundled into Free at Sea. The **internet at sea guide** covers cross-line baselines.

For most solo cruisers in this group:

- Use included basic Wi-Fi if your fare bundles any
- Don't try to stream video at sea
- Use port-day cellular when possible — Vancouver and Victoria use Canadian carriers (Rogers, Bell, Telus); San Francisco and LA use US carriers normally; **Vancouver is in Canada — confirm your roaming plan with your US carrier before sailing**
- Keep one trusted person ashore informed via a daily one-line message; see **Section 6**

Section 2 — Day by Day

The day-by-day below uses the typical NCL Encore Pacific Coast repositioning rhythm. **Verify your specific times in the NCL app** — Pacific Coast itineraries shift more often than fixed-rotation Caribbean cruises, and the Vancouver/Victoria sequencing varies.

***This is not your plan.** What follows is one possible shape of the week, not a schedule to keep. Only a few things on it are actually fixed: the muster drill, sailaway, the ship's arrival and all-aboard times in each port, and anything you have already booked. Everything else is a suggestion you are free to ignore, reorder, or sleep through. A day spent entirely on your balcony is not a day wasted, and nothing here is a commitment you have made to anyone.*

Day 1 — Monday, October 12 — Vancouver, BC (embarkation + overnight)

Terminal: Canada Place — the white sail-roofed cruise terminal on Vancouver's downtown waterfront, and a photogenic place to start a cruise. Located on the harbor, walking distance to Gastown, Granville Street, and downtown shopping.

Getting to Vancouver and to Canada Place:

- **Vancouver International (YVR) → Canada Place:** Taxi flat-rate ~CA\$35–45, 30–40 min. **Canada Line SkyTrain** is the cheaper, often-faster option: ~CA\$10, 30 minutes, transfer at Waterfront Station which is a 5-minute walk from Canada Place.
- **From Bellingham (BLI) or Seattle (SEA) via land:** Quick Coach / Quick Shuttle (Seattle ↔ Vancouver) is ~\$60–75 USD one-way, 4 hours. Watch border-crossing congestion on cruise days.
- **If driving from the US:** the Pacific Highway / Peace Arch border crossing can run 30–90 minutes on cruise mornings.
- **Embark window:** Typically 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM. **All-aboard 4:30 PM.** Ship stays overnight in Vancouver.

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- **NCL online check-in via the NCL app** — complete it before arrival to skip a 20-minute queue.

Pre-cruise hotel — strongly recommended. Vancouver is a great pre-cruise city in its own right and the weather in October is unpredictable. A Sunday-night stay puts you walking distance to embarkation Monday and gives you Saturday and Sunday in Vancouver if you arrived earlier. Best neighborhoods for pre-cruise:

- **Downtown / Coal Harbour** — walking distance to Canada Place. Pan Pacific Vancouver is *attached* to the cruise terminal.
- **Yaletown** — converted warehouses, restaurants, ~15-min walk to Canada Place.
- **Gastown** — historic district with restaurants and the steam clock; ~10-min walk to terminal.

The realistic Day 1 timeline:

- **11:00 AM:** Terminal opens for arrivals.
- **12:00 PM:** Aboard. Cabins typically open by 1:30 PM; until then, lunch at Garden Café (Deck 16) or The Local (Deck 7).
- **1:30 PM:** Cabin open. Meet your stateroom steward; drop carry-ons.
- **3:30 PM:** Mandatory muster drill — NCL’s drill is partly app-based (watch the safety video in the NCL app) plus an in-person check-in at your assigned station.
- **4:00 PM:** Allison’s group sailaway gathering — **verify location in her group communications**; the Observation Lounge (Deck 15 forward, panoramic) is the natural NCL spot. Since the ship stays overnight, “sailaway” is more of a “settle-in” gathering than the usual departure event.
- **5:30 – 8:00 PM:** Dinner aboard. Or — since the ship is at the dock all night — **go ashore for dinner in Vancouver**. Gastown is a 10-minute walk; Yaletown is 15. Quick recommendations: Joe Fortes Seafood, Ask For Luigi, Salmon n’ Bannock (Indigenous-owned). **You can stay out until ~midnight on a typical overnight call** — verify all-aboard time in the NCL app, often 11:30 PM or 12:30 AM on overnight nights.

What to pack in your carry-on for Day 1: swimsuit (pools open before checked bags arrive), light jacket (Vancouver evenings can be 50°F in October), all medications, change of clothes, **passport** (required — Canada is a foreign country for US citizens), phone charger, refillable water bottle, embarkation paperwork. Your checked bags may not arrive until 7–9 PM.

Money/card: Your NCL keycard is your ID, room key, and onboard charge. **Currency aboard: US Dollar** (despite embarking in Canada). Canadian dollars (CAD) are local off the ship; USD is widely accepted in Vancouver at a fair exchange but you'll save 3–5% paying in CAD if you have local cash or a no-foreign-fee card.

Day 2 — Tuesday, October 13 — Vancouver departure + transit toward Victoria

Depart Vancouver: Typically morning or early afternoon — verify in the NCL app. The departure passes under the **Lions Gate Bridge** and through **Burrard Inlet** — a scenic departure by any standard. Best viewing from the **Observation Lounge** (Deck 15 forward) or the **bow of Deck 8 Waterfront**.

Transit to Victoria: Vancouver to Victoria is ~75 nautical miles by sea. Depending on departure time, the ship may arrive Victoria the same evening (~6:00 PM) or overnight to a Wednesday-morning Victoria call.

Morning aboard:

- **Observation Lounge** at sunrise — Vancouver's downtown skyline lit up at dawn against the Coast Mountains.
- **Breakfast at Garden Café** — upper-deck view of the Vancouver waterfront.
- **Studio Lounge** if you booked Studio — hosted Day 2 coffee hour is the NCL solo-cruiser tradition.

Afternoon — Lions Gate Bridge passage:

The single most photogenic moment of the week. The ship passes under the Lions Gate Bridge — a suspension bridge completed in 1938 with a 1,552-foot main span and about 200 feet of vertical clearance — and threads First Narrows out of Burrard Inlet to open water. Stanley Park is on the port side as you transit out. **Be on Deck 15 forward (Observation Lounge), Deck 8 Waterfront, or any forward deck for the passage.** Allison may organize a group viewing — check her communications.

Evening: Either dinner in Victoria (if you've docked) or aboard. The Manhattan Room is the atmospheric choice; Cagney's is the celebration meal.

Day 3 — Wednesday, October 14 — Victoria, BC



Norwegian Encore docked at Ogden Point breakwater in Victoria, BC — the exact dock this cruise will use, with the Seaspan Eagle tugboat alongside and the red-and-white Ogden Point lighthouse at the harbor entrance. Photo by Joe Mabel (CC BY-SA 4.0) via Wikimedia Commons, August 2023.

Arrival: Approximately 8:00 AM (varies by sailing — some sailings call Victoria on Day 2 evening into Day 3 morning). **Depart:** typically 6:00 PM. Encore docks at **Ogden Point** breakwater, ~3 km from downtown. Free shuttle buses or a ~\$10 round-trip cab/rideshare run between Ogden Point and the Inner Harbour.

What Victoria is. Provincial capital of British Columbia; unapologetically charming small city — Edwardian architecture, the Empress Hotel, the Parliament Buildings, the famous **Butchart Gardens** 30 minutes outside town. Unlike most cruise stops, you get a full day here (versus the short evening stop that Alaska-itinerary ships make).

Free, walkable from the Inner Harbour:

- **Inner Harbour walk** — Parliament Buildings (free 30-min tours), Empress Hotel exterior, the harbor walking path.

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- **Royal BC Museum** (~\$18–27 CAD adult entry; open daily — verify current hours) — one of the best ethnographic + natural history museums in western Canada. Worth half a day if it's your thing.
 - **Beacon Hill Park** — 30-min walk from downtown; home of the Mile 0 marker (the western terminus of the Trans-Canada Highway); good ocean views.

Paid (decide ahead):

- **Butchart Gardens** — 30 minutes outside town. Open year-round; mid-October has fading-but-still-impressive autumn blooms. Adult admission ~\$45 CAD; transport ~\$60–75 round trip. A 3–4 hour total experience. Worth it if you love gardens.
- **Whale watching** — peak season is May–October; mid-October catches the tail end. Operators run from the Inner Harbour; ~\$130–180 CAD; 3 hours; orcas and minke most commonly sighted.
- **Craigdarroch Castle** — Victorian mansion, 30-min walk from downtown; \$20 CAD entry; ~90 minutes.

Tea at the Empress — the classic Victoria experience. ~\$95 CAD per person; reservations required well in advance; 2-hour experience.

For first-time Victoria: the Inner Harbour walk + Parliament Buildings + Empress Hotel tea is the highest-density “Victoria experience” half-day. If Butchart Gardens is the priority, plan an excursion via ship or pre-booked transport.

Currency: Canadian dollar (CAD) is local. USD widely accepted at the harbor; credit/debit cards everywhere. No need to exchange large amounts.

Pack for Victoria: layers (October Vancouver Island runs 45–60°F, often drizzly), rain shell, comfortable walking shoes, \$40–60 CAD or USD cash for tips and small purchases, sunglasses, sun hat (the harbor sun can surprise you on a clear day).

Worth a look on the way in: the **Victoria BC port page**, its **evening-harbour gallery**, and the **Victoria logbook**. Build your day in the **Port Day Planner**; record what actually happened in the **Port Logbook**.

Wednesday evening: Depart Victoria 6 PM-ish. Pacific Coast transit begins — a full day at sea before San Francisco on Friday morning. The Manhattan Room or Cagney's for dinner.

Day 4 — Thursday, October 15 — Cruising at sea (Pacific Coast)

The first of the two open-Pacific transit legs; the second comes after San Francisco. The ship is heading south along the **Pacific Coast** — Washington / Oregon coast typically out of sight; California coast may appear by late evening or Day 5 morning.

Important note on Pacific transit: This is real ocean, not protected water. October Pacific can be calm and beautiful, or it can be the year's first big swell. The ship handles it; you might notice it. See **Section 7** for the seasickness backstop.

Morning ideas:

- **Sunrise on the Observation Lounge** — Pacific sunrise off the port side (eastward), Pacific Ocean stretching to the horizon off starboard.
- **Breakfast at Garden Café** — quietest hour is 8:30–9:30 AM after the breakfast rush.
- **Studio Lounge coffee hour** if it's running.

Mid-morning to lunch — pick ONE:

- **The two-level go-kart track (Encore Speedway) at the aft** — Encore's signature attraction. Paid (~\$15/race). Empty in the first hour.
- **Galaxy Pavilion VR** — paid per experience. Several VR titles + immersive games.
- **Mandara Spa thermal-suite day pass** — sea-day intro rates appear.
- **Aqua Racer + Ocean Loops slides** — both free; first hour after opening has shortest lines.

Afternoon:

- **Pool deck or Vibe Beach Club** — if you bought the Vibe pass.
- **Trivia, live music, port talk for San Francisco** — check the NCL app daily program.
- **Specialty dining walk-ups** — 4 PM is when reservation desks see late-day openings.

Evening:

- **Allison's group dinner** — verify venue + time in her communications.

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- **Theater shows** — Encore Theater has rotating productions; check the daily program.
 - **The Cavern Club** (deck 6 mid) — Beatles tribute on most Breakaway Plus ships; verify it's running.

Day 5 — Friday, October 16 — San Francisco arrival + overnight in port

Arrival: Approximately 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM (varies by sailing). Encore typically docks at **Pier 27 (San Francisco Cruise Terminal)** on the Embarcadero — directly between Fisherman's Wharf and the Bay Bridge, walking distance to almost everywhere worth being on foot.

Approach worth waking up for: Most San Francisco cruise arrivals pass under or near the **Golden Gate Bridge** — typically before sunrise on a 9 AM arrival. **Be on the Observation Lounge or the Deck 8 Waterfront before dawn if the Captain announces an approach time.** This is the trip's signature visual moment.

Why this overnight is the trip. This is the highlight of the itinerary. Most cruises miss San Francisco entirely; this one gives you a full day, evening, night, and Saturday morning. Use it.

Walking distance from Pier 27:

- **Fisherman's Wharf / Pier 39** — 10-min walk west along the Embarcadero. The full tourist experience: sea lions at Pier 39, the historic ships, chowder bowls.
- **Ferry Building** — 15-min walk south along the Embarcadero. Saturday morning farmers market is exceptional (and Saturday morning fits perfectly if the ship doesn't depart until evening).
- **Coit Tower / Telegraph Hill** — 20-min uphill walk; panoramic city views; the WPA murals inside.
- **Embarcadero waterfront** — flat, easy walking the entire 2.5 miles from Fisherman's Wharf to Oracle Park.

Short ride from Pier 27:

- **Cable cars** — walk to the Powell-Hyde or Powell-Mason turntable at the foot of Powell Street (15-min walk or quick Uber); ~\$9/ride one-way (Muni has been

raising cable-car fares — budget up to ~\$12); the Powell-Hyde line ends near Ghirardelli Square.

- **Alcatraz Island tour** — \$50/adult; book WAY in advance (months); 2.5-hour total. Departs from Pier 33.
- **Chinatown** — 15-min walk; generally called the oldest Chinatown in North America. Grant Avenue is the touristy spine; Stockton Street is the working market street.
- **Mission District** — Uber/Lyft 15 min; the mural-and-burrito neighborhood. La Taqueria is the burrito stop most people name first.
- **Golden Gate Bridge** — Uber to the south pier ~15 min; walk across the bridge (1.7 miles each way, takes ~2 hours round-trip with photos).

Evening dining recommendations:

- **Tadich Grill** (downtown) — traces its founding to 1849 and calls itself California's oldest restaurant; classic.
- **Boulevard** — fine dining on the Embarcadero.
- **The Ferry Building** — small-plates at Slanted Door (Vietnamese) or Hog Island Oyster Co.
- **Fisherman's Wharf**: Scoma's for crab, Boudin Bakery for sourdough bread bowls.

Saturday morning ideas (before depart): Ferry Building farmers market (8 AM – 2 PM; verify current hours). Ghirardelli Square is a short walk west of the Wharf. **Verify all-aboard time** — typical Saturday evening departure is 5:00–6:30 PM; some sailings depart Saturday morning.

Pack for San Francisco: light jacket (October SF runs 55–68°F; can hit 70 on a clear day or 50 on a foggy one), walking shoes, layered clothing (microclimates within the city), \$60–80 USD cash for cable cars and street food, a credit card with no foreign-transaction fee (San Francisco accepts cards everywhere).

Worth a look: the [San Francisco port page](#), its [gallery](#), and the [San Francisco logbook](#).

Day 6 — Saturday, October 17 — San Francisco departure + Pacific transit

Depart San Francisco: typically 5:00 – 6:30 PM (verify). The departure passes back under or near the **Golden Gate Bridge** if the schedule is right — best viewing from the Observation Lounge or any forward deck. If the departure is later evening, the bridge passes at sunset, which is the trip's most spectacular photograph if you can get it.

Daytime in San Francisco: Full morning + afternoon if your sailing departs evening. Use it for whatever you missed Friday night.

Evening: Pacific coast transit south toward LA. The California coast can be visible to port (eastward) at various points — Half Moon Bay area, Monterey Bay (likely too far inland to see), Big Sur if you're lucky and conditions are right.

Last-night dinner — the traditional group gathering. Allison may organize at one of the specialty rooms; check her communications.

Day 7 — Sunday, October 18 — Los Angeles (San Pedro / World Cruise Center) debarkation

Arrival: Approximately 7:00 AM at the **World Cruise Center, Berth 91-93, San Pedro, California** — Los Angeles's main cruise terminal. NOT in downtown LA; San Pedro is the port community ~25 miles south of LAX.

The realistic timeline:

- **6:00 – 8:00 AM:** Breakfast at Garden Café or The Local. Eat now if your bag is in the hall.
- **6:30 AM:** Customs clearance complete. Self-disembarkation begins.
- **7:00 – 10:00 AM:** Walk-off in waves. **All passengers off the ship by 10:30 AM** per NCL standard.

The bag situation. The night before, NCL asks you to place your checked luggage outside your cabin door by ~11 PM with the color-coded tag indicating your debark group. Bags are taken to the terminal overnight and you collect them in baggage claim before customs.

Carry-on with you on debark morning: change of clothes, all medications, passport, phone charger, valuables.

Getting from San Pedro to LAX (or beyond):

- **Uber/Lyft to LAX:** \$40–55, 30–45 minutes depending on traffic. **LA traffic Sunday morning is moderate; Sunday afternoon can spike.**
- **Karmel Shuttle** (port-to-LAX shared shuttle): ~\$25/person; advance booking recommended.
- **Uber/Lyft to downtown LA:** \$50–70, 35–50 min.
- **Long Beach Airport (LGB):** \$20–30 Uber, 15 min; small airport, fewer flights.

Killing 4–6 hours before an evening flight:

- **Battleship USS Iowa Museum** — 10-min walk from the cruise terminal. World War II battleship preserved as a museum. \$25 entry, ~90 minutes.
- **San Pedro Fish Market** — 15-min Uber; massive seafood market and restaurant.
- **Cabrillo Beach** — 15-min Uber; quiet beach.
- **Manhattan Beach / Hermosa Beach** — 30-min Uber; classic Southern California beach towns.

Airport-arrival timing for LAX:

Flight	Leave San Pedro by
Domestic, after 3 PM	11:30 AM
International, after 6 PM	1:30 PM

LAX TSA lines run 30–90 min on Sunday afternoons. **LAX is notoriously congested** — give yourself extra margin compared to most US airports.

Section 3 — Pre-Cruise Countdown

6+ months before — booking and big decisions

- **Confirm the booking with Tina.** Cabin category, final price, what's bundled with Free at Sea (drinks tier, Wi-Fi minutes, specialty dining credits, shore-excursion credit, gratuities).
- **Buy travel insurance** if you want it. Pacific Coast weather is generally calmer than Caribbean hurricane season but can have first-of-season Pacific storms in October. A policy with hurricane / weather coverage is worth considering. Specialist providers (Allianz, Travelex, Travel Guard) usually better than your home/auto add-on.
- **Plan flights.** YVR (Vancouver) for arrival; LAX for departure. **The one-way airfare adds up** — a Vancouver → LA one-way often costs more than a round-trip from either city. Worth pricing both directions; sometimes it's cheaper to book separate one-ways with different carriers.
- **Passport** — required for Canada. Renew if it expires before April 2027 (6 months past sailing).

4 months before — soft logistics

- **NCL online check-in** in the NCL app. Health questionnaire close to sailing.
- **Specialty dining reservations.** NCL opens these ~3–4 months pre-cruise in the NCL app. **Cagney's, Le Bistro, and Food Republic fill first.** If you only want one specialty meal, book Le Bistro for the second sea day (Day 4) when you've gotten the ship rhythm down.
- **Excursion bookings.** Ship-sold excursions bookable in the NCL app. Independent Victoria operators (whale watching, Butchart Gardens) often bookable directly via their websites 60–90 days out at lower prices.

2 months before — final commitments

- **Pre-pay gratuities** if not already in your group rate (\$20/day per person at most cabins; \$25/day Suites/Haven).

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- **Drink package upgrades** if Free at Sea didn't include the tier you want.
 - **Confirm pre-cruise hotel in Vancouver.**
 - **Confirm post-cruise hotel in LA / LAX area** if you're not flying out same-day.
 - **Begin packing list.** Reference **Section 4** below.

1 month before — final prep window

- **Photocopy your passport** — keep in your cabin nightstand separate from the passport.
- **Print the emergency handoff card** and share with one trusted person ashore.
- **Confirm Allison's group rhythm** — when's the Day 1 gathering, what's the dinner plan.
- **Currency:** withdraw or order ~\$200 CAD for Vancouver / Victoria spending if you want local cash; USD also widely accepted.

14 days before — soft logistics

- **NCL online check-in** closes typically at 7 days pre-cruise — complete earlier.
- **Print boarding documents** (or save offline in NCL app).
- **Begin physical packing.**

Day before — Vancouver arrival

- **Fly into YVR Sunday Oct 11.**
- **Check into hotel** (downtown / Coal Harbour / Gastown for proximity to terminal).
- **Confirm Monday-morning porter/Uber timing.**

If your flight to YVR is cancelled or delayed

One-way US-to-Vancouver flights in October are vulnerable to fog at YVR and to PNW autumn storms. Build the contingency before you need it:

- **Arrive Saturday, not Sunday, if you can.** A two-day cushion means a Sunday cancellation doesn't put you on the next-morning standby roulette to make Monday embarkation. Vancouver is a real city; a Saturday night there is not punishment.

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- **Know your *latest possible flight*.** Embark window closes at 4:00 PM, all-aboard 4:30 PM. From YVR, allow ~90 minutes door-to-cabin (taxi or SkyTrain + transfer + check-in queue). That puts the last viable arrival at YVR around **noon Monday** — anything later and you’re cutting it dangerously fine.
 - **Know your *backup route*.** SEA-TAC to Vancouver by land is ~4 hours via Quick Shuttle (\$60–75 USD) or Amtrak Cascades (~\$40 USD). If your YVR flight is cancelled at dawn Monday, a SEA-TAC flight + Quick Shuttle can still make embarkation if you start moving by 7 AM.
 - **Tell Tina the moment you know.** The cruise line will not hold the ship; Tina can sometimes arrange a “miss the ship, catch up at Victoria” remedy if you’re stranded and the timing works. Earlier flag = more options.
 - **Travel insurance “trip delay” coverage** kicks in here. If your flight is cancelled and you have to hotel-overnight, policies commonly reimburse a set daily amount for lodging and meals; check your policy’s limit and keep all receipts.
-

Section 4 — Packing List (calibrated for mid-October Pacific Coast)

This list is tuned for: **mid-October Pacific Coast** — varying climates across 6 days. Vancouver and Victoria run 45–60°F with frequent drizzle (Pacific NW autumn). San Francisco runs 55–68°F, often foggy mornings, mild afternoons. LA at debark runs 65–78°F. **At sea:** 50–60°F, potentially windy with real Pacific swells. **Pack for layers and rain**, not for the Caribbean.

Documents and money

- **Passport** (required — Canada is a foreign country)
- Photocopy of passport (separate location)
- Travel insurance policy and emergency phone number (printed)
- Credit card + debit card (separate locations)
- **\$200–300 USD cash** in small bills for tips, US ports, post-cruise transit

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- **\$100–200 CAD cash** for Vancouver, Victoria small purchases (or use no-foreign-fee card)
 - NCL boarding documents (printed + saved offline)
 - Group itinerary from Allison

Carry-on (must arrive on the ship with you)

- All medications in original prescription bottles
- Phone + charger + power bank
- Refillable water bottle
- Light layer (Vancouver evening can be 50°F outdoors but ship runs 70°F)
- Swimsuit (pools open before checked bags arrive)
- A change of clothes (in case checked bag is delayed)
- Sunglasses, sun hat, sunscreen
- Reading material (sea-day reading)
- **Rain jacket / poncho** — expect rain in Vancouver and Victoria in mid-October

Daytime — port and ship

- **2 pairs comfortable jeans or warm pants**
- **3–4 long-sleeve shirts**
- **2–3 short-sleeve shirts or layering tees**
- **1 light wool or fleece sweater**
- **1 medium-weight jacket** (windbreaker over fleece works as a 2-piece system)
- **1 nice top** for evenings ashore (Vancouver / SF dinner out)
- Scarf (for wind on deck + layering)

Evening — ship dining

- **3–4 smart-casual outfits** — sundresses with cardigans, lightweight pants + nicer top, dress slacks + button-down. NCL is American smart casual.
- **1 dressier outfit** for one of NCL's "Norwegian's Night Out" evenings — cocktail dress, dressy jumpsuit, blazer + slacks

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- **Comfortable dress shoes** for long carpeted corridors

Footwear

- **Waterproof walking shoes** — Vancouver / Victoria can be wet; San Francisco hills require grip
- **Comfortable sneakers** — ship corridors and dry port days
- **Dress shoes** — one pair for evenings
- **Flip-flops** (pool deck and cabin only)

Toiletries

- All prescription medications (carried in original bottles, in your carry-on)
- Over-the-counter: Tylenol, Advil, Imodium, Benadryl, **Bonine or Dramamine** (Pacific transit can produce motion)
- Sunscreen (SPF 30+ minimum)
- After-sun aloe gel
- Toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, basic toiletries
- Lip balm (cold and wind on deck chap lips fast)

Accessories and essentials

- Polarized sunglasses
- Sun hat with brim
- **Warm hat (beanie)** — for cool evenings on deck
- **Gloves** — optional but useful for windy deck viewing
- Small daypack for port days
- Waterproof phone case
- Power adapter — NCL cabins have US outlets; Canada uses the same. No adapter needed.
- E-reader or one book
- Binoculars if you have them (Golden Gate, coastline scenery)

Planning around the Pacific Northwest October rain

Vancouver averages roughly 15 rainy days in October; Victoria's pattern is similar.

Don't plan a rainy day as a stay-on-ship day — the cities are at their atmospheric best wet, and the ship gets thin when 4,000 people decide they're cold and bored at once. Plan differently:

- **Vancouver rainy-day route.** Canada Place to Gastown is a 10-minute walk under awnings + arcades on Hastings; the steam clock works in rain. The Vancouver Aquarium in Stanley Park, the Museum of Anthropology at UBC (best in Western Canada), and the Sun Yat-Sen Garden in Chinatown all reward an overcast hour. **Pan Pacific Vancouver is physically connected to Canada Place** — if you book that hotel, you walk to the ship without going outside.
- **Victoria rainy-day route.** Royal BC Museum is the obvious indoor anchor (~\$18–27 CAD, open daily; 3+ hours of substance). Tea at the Empress is technically indoor and quintessentially Victoria — book ahead. The Bay Centre (downtown mall) connects to several office buildings via skywalks; you can move through downtown drier than expected.
- **The waterproof you actually need.** A *waterproof* jacket — Gore-Tex equivalent, sealed seams — not “water-resistant.” PNW rain is steady and persistent, not a five-minute Caribbean squall. Pack pants you don't mind getting wet from the knees down or wear quick-dry hiking pants.
- **Skip the umbrella.** It blows inside out in any real wind; the locals don't carry them. Hood + good jacket is the move.

Skip — what NOT to bring

- **Heavy winter parka** — not needed at any port. Layers handle the full range.
 - **Iron or steamer** — prohibited in cabins; ships provide ironing facilities
 - **Candles** — prohibited (fire hazard)
 - **Beach gear** — none of the ports are beach destinations
 - **Heavy jewelry** — leave high-value pieces home
-

Section 5 — Budget Breakdown

The numbers below are calibrated for this specific sailing and were verified against NCL's published rates in June 2026; gratuity and package rates change once or twice a year, so reconfirm them at booking. For a budget tuned to your own cabin choice, drinking habits, excursion appetite, and tipping pattern, the **cruise-budget-calculator** builds a personalized total.

What's included in your fare

The group rate covers:

- Your cabin (Solo Studio, Ocean View, or Balcony per the flyer)
- All meals at the Manhattan Room, Taste, Savor, Garden Café, and The Local
- Soft drinks, juice, coffee, tea at most venues
- Onboard entertainment in the Encore Theater, The Cavern Club, the atrium
- Pools, fitness center, Aqua Park slides
- Cabin steward and dining-room service
- **If your group rate has Free at Sea attached:** likely includes Premium Beverage Package, Wi-Fi minutes, specialty dining credits (typically 2–4 meals), and shore-excursion credit. **Verify with Tina.**

What's NOT included

Category	Typical cost (per person, week)
Drinks package (if not in Free at Sea)	\$700+ at pre-cruise rates (\$109/day × 6 + 20% gratuity)
Wi-Fi package (if not bundled)	\$100–250 — varies by tier
Auto-gratuity (if not pre-paid)	\$120 — \$20/day × 6; \$25/day in Suites/Haven
Specialty dining (beyond Free at Sea credits)	\$0–250 — Cagney's ~\$55, Le Bistro ~\$50, Food Republic ~\$40 per meal
Speedway / race track	\$0–60 — ~\$15 per race

Category	Typical cost (per person, week)
Galaxy Pavilion VR	\$0–60 — per experience
Shore excursions — Victoria	\$0–180 — Inner Harbour free; whale watching ~\$130–180; Butchart ~\$60 + transport
San Francisco — independent exploration	\$50–200 — cable cars ~\$9–12, Alcatraz \$50, dinner \$40–80, Uber \$20–30 between neighborhoods
Vibe Beach Club	\$99/day or \$399/week
Spa treatments	\$0–500 — massages \$130–200; thermal-suite day pass \$40
Travel insurance (recommended)	\$80–200 per person
One-way airfare premium vs round-trip	\$50–200+ extra depending on routing

A realistic mid-range solo budget (per person, on top of cruise fare)

Item	Cost
Auto-gratuity (\$20 × 6)	\$120
Wi-Fi (if not bundled)	\$100
Drinks (if not bundled — moderate drinker)	\$350
Specialty dining (1 meal beyond Free at Sea credits)	\$55
Victoria: shuttle + lunch + small admission	\$60
San Francisco: cable car, Alcatraz, dinner	\$120
Vancouver pre-cruise dinner ashore	\$50
Travel insurance	\$100
Pre-cruise hotel (Vancouver, 1 night)	\$200
Airport transfers (YVR → port + port → LAX)	\$90
Total above fare	~\$1,245

Frugal version (Free at Sea bundles drinks + Wi-Fi, no specialty dining, walkable cities only, public transit): ~\$400 **above fare**.

Splurge version (Haven cabin, Vibe week pass, Butchart Gardens excursion, multiple specialty meals): \$2,500–4,000 **above fare**.

Section 6 — Emergency Contacts

Every Voyage Pack ships with this section. Fill in the handoff card and share with one trusted person ashore.

The family handoff card

FAMILY HANDOFF – IN THE WAKE VOYAGE PACK

CRUISER: _____
 CABIN: _____
 SHIP: Norwegian Encore
 LINE: Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL)
 SAILING: October 12 – 18, 2026
 FROM: Canada Place cruise terminal,
 Vancouver, BC, Canada
 TO: World Cruise Center,
 San Pedro / Los Angeles, USA
 ITINERARY: Vancouver (overnight) → Victoria, BC
 → at sea → San Francisco (overnight)
 → Los Angeles
 GROUP HOST: Allison Fishhead Burbank
 (contact: ask Tina at Maulsby Travel)
 BOOKING AGENT: Tina Maulsby, Maulsby Travel Co.
 tina@maulsbytravel.com · 910-528-5077

EMERGENCY (24/7):

US Citizens Abroad – State Dept OCS:
 +1 (888) 407-4747 (US/Canada toll-free)
 +1 (202) 501-4444 (from overseas)
 Reach the ship – NCL paid ship-to-shore relay:
 1-888-627-4477 (per-minute charge to caller;
 verify the current number on
 NCL.com before sailing)
 Cruise booking – Tina Maulsby (Maulsby Travel):
 910-528-5077
 tina@maulsbytravel.com

NEAREST CONSULAR HELP BY PORT:

Vancouver, BC – US Consulate General Vancouver:
 Verify current number on
 ca.usembassy.gov before sailing;
 Canada emergency: 911
 Victoria, BC – US Consulate Vancouver covers
 Vancouver Island;
 Canada emergency: 911
 San Francisco, CA – US domestic; call 911
 Los Angeles, CA – US domestic; call 911

CRUISER MEDICAL:

Allergies: _____
 Medications: _____
 Conditions: _____
 Insurance: _____ policy: _____

MOST RECENT KNOWN POSITION:

Track at: /tools/ship-tracker.html
 or marinetraffic.com (search "Norwegian Encore")

What an at-home contact does

If they don't hear from you for 36+ hours:

1. **Don't panic.** Cruise Wi-Fi is unreliable; silence usually means signal, not emergency. Pacific transit days have variable cellular coverage.
2. **Reach Tina first** at Maulsby Travel (910-528-5077, tina@maulsbytravel.com) — she's the booking agent of record and the fastest path to confirm you boarded and connect to Allison aboard.
3. **If Tina is unreachable and concern is rising**, call the State Department's Overseas Citizens Services (+1-888-407-4747) — they handle US citizens at sea anywhere in the world and can coordinate with the cruise line, the Coast Guard, and the consulate.
4. **For an emergency message to be relayed to the ship**, NCL operates a paid ship-to-shore relay (1-888-627-4477, per-minute charges to the caller; verify the current number on NCL.com before sailing).
5. **If an incident is confirmed:** US Coast Guard handles Pacific waters; US Consulate General Vancouver handles BC; LAPD / 911 covers California ports; ship's medical handles health emergencies aboard.
6. **Track the ship's position** at </tools/ship-tracker.html>.

What you should pack for emergencies

- Printed list of medications, allergies, and emergency contacts (in your cabin nightstand)
 - Photocopy of passport (separate from the passport)
 - Travel insurance policy number (printed)
 - This handoff card, in your phone's notes app and shared with one trusted person ashore
-

Section 7 — Seasickness on a Pacific Coast Cruise

This is the section to read most carefully — Pacific Coast cruising differs meaningfully from Alaska's Inside Passage (which is protected water) and Caribbean (which is mostly calm tropical seas). Open Pacific in mid-October can produce real swells.

What the Pacific does in mid-October

Two specific transit segments will produce most of any felt motion:

1. **Day 4 (Thursday Oct 15)** — full sea day in open Pacific between Victoria and San Francisco. Roughly 600 nautical miles. The Washington/Oregon coast is to port; open Pacific to starboard. This is where the first big swell of the season can hit.
2. **Day 6 (Saturday Oct 17)** — depart San Francisco evening, transit south to LA overnight into Sunday morning. Shorter transit (~370 nm), generally calmer in October.

Encore is a large ship built for open-water crossings, and this transit is routine for her. Size does not cancel motion, though, so you may notice the swell.

What to do if you're prone

- **Bonine (meclizine)** — once-daily, less drowsy than Dramamine. Start the morning of Day 4.
- **Sea-bands (acupressure wristbands)** — placebo or not, many find them effective.
- **Ginger** (capsules, tea, candies) — mild, and many find it helps.
- **Scopolamine patches** (prescription, behind-the-ear) — strongest option; 3-day duration.
- **Stay mid-ship and low** in your cabin choice. Mid-ship Deck 9–12 has the least felt motion.

If you get sick onboard: the ship's medical center stocks IV anti-nausea medication. Bring travel insurance — onboard medical care is billed to you, and most US health plans do not cover care at sea; check yours.

Watching the weather

Before sailing, check **buoyweather.com** or **windy.com** for the Pacific transit. NCL doesn't publish sea-state forecasts but will sometimes mention in the daily program. The Pacific in October can be: - 4–6 ft swells: most people barely notice them on a ship this size - 6–10 ft swells: noticeable motion; might affect sensitive people - 10+ ft swells: most people notice and some feel sick; the ship operates normally

Section 8 — Practical Logistics

Cell service and roaming

- **At sea** — ship Wi-Fi only; turn airplane mode ON. Cellular at sea via the ship's own tower bills at cruise-ship roaming rates, typically several dollars a minute; check your carrier's cruise rates before sailing.
- **Vancouver, BC + Victoria, BC** — Canadian carriers (Rogers, Bell, Telus). Some US plans include Canada; others charge a daily pass. **Confirm with your carrier before sailing.**
- **San Francisco + Los Angeles** — domestic US service; your plan works normally.

Currency

- **Aboard:** US Dollar.
- **Vancouver, BC:** Canadian dollar (CAD) is local. USD widely accepted but you'll save 3–5% paying in CAD or with a no-foreign-fee card.
- **Victoria, BC:** Same — CAD local; USD widely accepted.
- **San Francisco, Los Angeles:** USD; cards everywhere.

Tipping ashore

- **Vancouver / Victoria:** Canadian tipping is similar to US — 15–20% on restaurant bills, \$2/person on tours, \$5–10 for a half-day excursion guide.
- **San Francisco / Los Angeles:** US standard — 18–20% on restaurants, \$1–2 per drink at bars, 15–20% on rideshare/taxi, \$5–10 for a half-day guide.

Onboard tipping (gratuities)

NCL's auto-gratuity runs \$20/day per person at most cabins; \$25/day in Suites/Haven.

Verify with Tina whether your group rate has it pre-paid. Additional cash tips:

- Stateroom attendant: \$20–40 cash end of cruise
- Specialty dining waiter: ~10–15% of menu price if outstanding
- Bartender who remembers your name: \$1–2 per drink

The **cruise-tipping-calculator** covers the total auto-grats + cash extras math. For the broader context of why cruise gratuities work the way they do across the major lines in 2026, **Cruise Tipping 2026** is the longer read.

Section 9 — The Group Cruise Rhythm

Allison Fishhead Burbank is your on-ship host. The typical pattern for a Tina-Maulsby-booked, separately-hosted solo group cruise:

- **Day 1 settle-in** — Allison hosts a gathering at a specific lounge during the late afternoon. The Observation Lounge (Deck 15 forward) is the natural NCL spot for sailaway-style events; the Vibe Beach Club or one of the bars could also serve. Watch Allison's communications for the specific location and time.
- **Group dinners** — Allison typically organizes one or more group dinner nights at a specialty venue (Cagney's, Le Bistro, or Food Republic are the natural choices on Encore). RSVP early so the party size can be confirmed.

-
- **Daily meeting point** — some hosts pick one fixed location and time (e.g., 5:00 PM at a specific bar) so anyone who wants to find the group can. Look for Allison's pick.
 - **Studio Lounge** — solo cruisers cluster here regardless of who's hosting. NCL hosts a Studio meet-and-greet on Day 1.
 - **Port days** — most hosted groups don't require a port-day group activity; you're on your own schedule unless a specific excursion is being organized.
 - **Last-night dinner** — Saturday night (after San Francisco) is the traditional last-night-together gathering.

How to find Allison on Day 1. Watch Allison's email or group-message channel for the exact location and time. If you don't see communication before boarding, **reach out to Tina** — she's coordinated the booking and can connect you to Allison.

If you're shy. Group cruises are designed for the shy. You don't have to attend every gathering; you can show up to one dinner, decide you want company, and the group will absorb you naturally. You can also decide you want quiet time and the group won't track you down. The right rhythm is whatever rhythm you set.

What “repositioning cruise” actually means for the week aboard

This sailing is Encore's bridge between her Alaska summer season and her Mexican Riviera winter season. A few things downstream of that:

- **The ship rebrands mid-week.** Onboard shops clear Alaska inventory (gone: the seal plush, the Inside Passage prints; arriving: Baja sun hats, Mexican silver). Specialty menus may shift between the start of the week and the end. If you want a specific Alaska keepsake, buy it Day 1; if you want the Mexican silver, wait until Day 5+.
- **The crew is partly in transition.** Some staff are working their last week of an Alaska contract; some are arriving fresh for the winter season. The service is still NCL-standard but the rhythm is unmistakably mid-handover. Don't read a slightly-distracted bartender as a personality problem — they may be packing.
- **The route is itself the entertainment.** Re-positioning sailings are sold partly to people who *want* the long sea days. The Observation Lounge, the trivia regulars,

the library — these get more use this week than they would on a Caribbean week.
Lean into it.

Section 10 — Solo Cruising Considerations

NCL Encore is one of the strongest ships in the fleet for solo cruising:

- **Studio cabins with no single supplement** — a cabin product built for solos rather than adapted for them.
- **Studio Lounge** — dedicated social space for Studio cabin guests; free coffee, hosted hours, scheduled meet-and-greets. The daily social anchor.
- **Observation Lounge** (Deck 15 forward) — large enough to sit alone with coffee without feeling alone; panoramic windows; a good place for sunrise.
- **Indulge Food Hall** — wait, no, that's Prima class. **Garden Café** (the buffet) serves the same function on Encore: solo dining without a “table for one” ask.

Pacific Coast cruising suits solo travelers particularly well — the long sea days reward independent rhythm, the port days (Vancouver, Victoria, San Francisco) are walkable solo-friendly cities, and the cooler weather means more time in indoor social spaces like the Studio Lounge.

For first-time NCL cruisers:

- The NCL app is the operational hub — daily program, specialty dining bookings, account balance, deck plans. Download and log in before sailing.
- Free at Sea is NCL's promotional bundle; verify with Tina what's in your specific rate.
- “Norwegian's Night Out” is NCL's optional slightly-dressier evening (not formal night) — once or twice per sailing.

Solo cruising stories. Tina's solo cruising hub collects practical, emotional, and social rhythms across multiple sailings. Worth reading before, during, or after this trip.

Solo safety — cabin and after-hours

Cruise ships are, on the whole, safe places, but they are not zero-risk and solos are correctly cautious. The practical kit:

- **The cabin door has two locks.** Use the deadbolt AND the security latch every time you're inside, even for a nap. The room steward has a master key for the regular lock; the latch is yours alone.
 - **The “wait for someone” elevator rule.** Walking back to your cabin alone after 11 PM, in an empty corridor — the moment of mild discomfort is real. If the elevator opens with a stranger inside and your gut says no, let it close and take the next one. Crew won't blink.
 - **The bar exit script.** A friendly conversation that goes long can shade into pressure to keep going somewhere. Solo women have heard “let me walk you back” too many times. The clean exit: “I'm calling it a night — going to find the group on Deck 8 first.” You don't owe an explanation; vague specificity ends a conversation politely.
 - **If someone follows you back to your deck,** walk past your cabin. Take the elevator back down, walk into Guest Services or the casino (open late, always staffed), and tell a crew member. NCL takes this seriously and has staff trained for it.
 - **The Studio Lounge is the safe re-entry.** If a night ashore went sideways or a conversation drained you, the Studio Lounge after 10 PM is usually quiet, lit, and full of cruisers who get it. No questions asked.
-

Section 11 — First Cruise Notes

If this is your first cruise of any kind, the **first-cruise guide** is the deeper read. A few foundational notes:

- **The cabin is small.** Even Balcony cabins are smaller than a budget hotel room. You're not living in the cabin; you're sleeping in it. The ship is your living room.
- **You can't get lost.** Every elevator lobby has a deck map. Every crew member can direct you.

-
- **You don't need to book everything ahead.** Most days unfold with significant unplanned time. That's by design.
 - **Tipping is built in.** Beyond auto-gratuity, you don't need to tip every interaction.
 - **Don't try to do everything.** A week is enough time to do what matters.

The thing nobody tells first-timers: the best moments of a cruise are usually unplanned: a conversation that starts in the Studio Lounge, or half an hour in the Observation Lounge watching San Francisco drop astern as the ship turns south. The **Cruising Duck tradition** is the one piece of cruise culture worth knowing in advance — bring or hide a few rubber ducks if you want a friendly, accidental social ritual. The **cruise-tech and photography guide** is worth a read if you want to capture the Golden Gate, the Lions Gate Bridge passage, or the Victoria Inner Harbour — Pacific Coast scenery rewards thoughtful gear.

Leave room for that.

The first-time-cruiser Day 1 you weren't warned about

If this is your first sailing — solo or otherwise — Day 1 is strange in ways nobody briefs you for. A few notes worth knowing:

- **Most first-timers feel slightly lost for the first three hours.** Nothing is where it seems, the elevator is at the wrong end of the ship, and the bar has an ordering rhythm nobody explained. This is universal, and crew expect it. The deck map by every elevator and the NCL app's deck plan do the rewiring; by Day 3 most people walk to dinner without thinking.
- **The cabin can feel small for an hour.** The usual first reaction on opening the door is “wait, this is it?” Then the closets swallow the suitcases, the cabin turns out to be comfortable, and size stops being a thought until the last night.
- **The first muster drill is mildly performative.** NCL's drill is partly app-based now — watch the safety video on your phone, then check in at your assigned station. It takes ten minutes. You're not the first person on a cruise ship and the ship knows what it's doing.
- **Don't book everything Day 1.** First-time cruisers feel pressure to lock down every dinner reservation, every excursion, every show. Resist it. Book the one or two specialty dinners that matter (Le Bistro is the reliable pick on Encore); leave the rest to the rhythm.

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- **Allison’s first gathering is the easy social on-ramp.** You don’t have to say anything brilliant; you don’t have to have a story ready. Showing up and saying “hi, first cruise” is enough. Solo group cruises are designed for exactly this.

The first cruise rewires what you expected. Most people come off their first one understanding why anyone goes back.

Closing

This pack is the calm read on one specific week — yours.

Soli Deo Gloria. All work on this project is offered as a gift to God. The site that produced it is independent — no affiliate links, no commissions, no upsells. If it helped you, that’s the whole point.

Safe sailing.

Last reviewed | 2026-09-06 (consistency and wording pass; ship facts, prices and contacts as verified June and July 2026) |

How facts here are checked | Ship specifications, christening details, godmother, delivery date, and bridge clearances trace to primary sources (Wikipedia primary cites; NCL published specifications; Lions Gate Bridge official). Port logistics and excursion pricing reflect public-facing terminal and operator information at time of last review. Where a number is contested between sources or moves quickly (drink package per-day rates, taxi rates, US Consulate phone numbers), the pack points you at the live primary source rather than freezing a number that may drift. The internal-research record is preserved in the pack’s .factcheck.json sidecar. |

Accessibility | This pack is designed to read straight through on a screen reader (headings nested, tables small and labeled, links named not “click here”). The print PDF meets WCAG 2.1 AA contrast. If something here is hard to use for you, that’s a bug — tell Tina and she’ll route it back. |

Sources | Ship: **Norwegian Encore**. Ports: **Vancouver, Victoria BC, San Francisco, Los Angeles**. Booking agent: **Tina Maulsby, Maulsby Travel Co.**. On-ship host:

Allison Fishhead Burbank. Onboard venues: **Manhattan Room, Garden Café, The Local, Cagney's Steakhouse, Le Bistro, Teppanyaki, Q Texas Smokehouse, Los Lobos, Ocean Blue, La Cucina, Food Republic, Studio Lounge**. Articles: **stateroom-sanity-check, is-drink-package-worth-it, cruise-tipping-2026, cruise-cabin-organization, cruise-tech-photography-guide, cruise-duck-tradition**. Tools: **drink-calculator, cruise-budget-calculator, cruise-tipping-calculator, port-day-planner, port-tracker, ship-tracker, ship-size-atlas**. Reference: **solo hub, first-cruise, countdown, packing-lists, internet-at-sea, disability-at-sea**. Original research: NCL.com, Wikipedia (Norwegian Encore), Lions Gate Bridge official, Port Metro Vancouver, Port of Los Angeles, The Points Guy (Encore Speedway specifications). |