Cruise TravelOnly with Ken

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KEN'S MUSINGS...

The Fine Print Has Changed

I remember when getting ready for a trip meant checking your passport and finding your sunglasses. Not anymore. In the last twelve months Europe has rewired its borders, more countries want a form filled in before you even board, and airlines have started policing the humble power bank.

None of it is difficult once you know about it. The trouble is that most people find out at the airport. This issue is my way of making sure that is not you.

It is also the season when the smartest travellers lock in next year, so let's start there.

I would love to help you plan your next one.

STOP OVERPAYING

Stop Overpaying for Your Cruise

Many people believe cruises get cheaper the closer you get to sailing. With premium and luxury lines, it usually works the other way around.

The best fares, the best staterooms and the richest offers appear when an itinerary is first released, and today that can be 18, 24 or even 36 months before sailing. As cabins sell, prices tend to climb, and the last-minute bargain people hope for rarely shows up on these ships. Several of the cruise lines' own offers also only stack together if you are booked before a deadline.

My newest YouTube video, **Stop Overpaying**, walks through ten insider pricing strategies for Viking river, ocean, expedition, and Mississippi cruises, including a real booking where stacking them saved $14,800.

Watch it here: Click Here To Watch Stop Overpaying

If 2027 or 2028 is on your list, now is the time to talk. A quick call is all it takes to see what you could save.

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- **Wonders of Colombia.** Join us on the Magdalena River with AmaWaterways in 2027.

What I Am Advising Every Client Before They Fly

The rules changed a lot this year. Here is what you need to know, in plain English.

EUROPE'S NEW BORDERS

1. Europe's Entry/Exit System (EES) Is Now Live

Since April 10, 2026, visitors from outside the EU entering 29 European countries have their photo taken and fingerprints scanned at the border. Passport stamps are gone, replaced by a digital record of every entry and exit.

Your 90-day allowance (explained below, under Schengen) is now counted automatically from these records.

The catch is time. In the first weeks of full operation some airports reported queues of up to three hours, and travellers missed connections. Passport control in many countries is still taking longer than it used to, **even if you have already registered with EES on an earlier trip.**

There is a second problem. Recent reports describe travellers whose departure from Europe was never recorded by EES. When that happens, the system assumes you never left, so your 90-day clock keeps running after you are back home. The first you hear of it is the next time you arrive, when your file shows you have used up your allowed time.

My Advice for EES

- **Allow a minimum three-hour connection** in the first European or Schengen country you land in. Anything less and you are still risking a missed connecting flight.
- Fly in at least a day before your cruise departs. This almost eliminates the risk that you miss embarkation.
- Keep your boarding passes and receipts for every trip in and out of Europe, as proof of when you left.
- Before your next trip, check your remaining days with the official EU calculator: **Click Here For The Official EES Calculator**. It only counts stays recorded from April 10, 2026, onward. If the numbers look wrong, call me before you go.

2. ETIAS: Now Expected Sometime in 2027

ETIAS is a short online application that Canadians, Americans, and other visa exempt visitors will need before travelling to most of Europe, and, or the Schengen region. The latest intended launch was the last quarter of 2026. That target has now slipped, and ETIAS is expected sometime in 2027. No date has been announced yet, so if you are planning to travel to Europe in 2027, it is worth a call to me.

When it becomes optional, the fee will be €20, free for travellers under 18 and over 70, and it will be valid for three years or until your passport expires. I recommend applying at least 30 days before you travel, although most applications are approved within hours.

This part matters most. Once ETIAS is mandatory, if you have not applied in advance, you will be denied boarding on your first flight to Europe. Your ETIAS is linked digitally to your passport, so airline staff and gate agents can see immediately whether you have one or not. NOTE that as of the date of this Newsletter, ETIAS is NOT operational.

Once it opens, apply only through the official EU website. More on lookalike sites under Forms Before You Fly.

3. The UK ETA Is Already Enforced

Since February 25, 2026, Canadians cannot board a flight to the UK without an Electronic Travel Authorisation. It now costs £20 (up from £16 in April), allows multiple visits of up to six months each, and lasts two years or until your passport expires, whichever comes first. You need one even when you are only connecting through a UK airport and passing through passport control.

My advice: if you are sailing from Southampton or connecting through Heathrow, this one applies to you.

No Paper to Carry

Your UK ETA, your EES record and, once it launches, your ETIAS are all attached digitally to your passport. There is nothing to print and nothing to carry, which also means neither you nor I can see at a glance whether yours is still valid. The ETA and ETIAS each expire on their own schedule, and both end early if you replace your passport. We will need to keep track of renewal dates together, so nothing runs out just before you travel.

By the Numbers

- EES: live in 29 European countries since April 10, 2026
- ETIAS: €20, free for travellers under 18 and over 70, valid for three years, expected sometime in 2027
- UK ETA: £20, valid for two years
- European Union / Schengen limit: 90 days in any 180-day period, now tracked digitally
- A new passport means a new ETA or ETIAS, because both are linked to your passport

4. So What Exactly Is Schengen?

The Schengen Area is a group of European countries that have removed passport checks at their shared borders. You show your passport once, at the first Schengen country you enter, and then travel between the others as if they were one country.

How the 90/180 rule works

As a Canadian or an American, you can spend up to **90 days in any rolling 180-day period** in the Schengen Area. It is not 90 days per trip, it is not 90 days per country, and it does not reset when you go home. On any day you are in Schengen, border officers look back over the previous 180 days and count every day you spent anywhere in the Schengen Area. Your arrival and departure days each count as full days.

Example: you spend 60 days in Europe in the spring, go home, then return in late summer for a 45 day river cruise with a land stay. If both trips fall inside the same 180 days, that adds up to 105 days, and you would be 15 days over the limit.

Schengen and the European Union are **not** the same thing. Most countries belong to both, but a few belong to only one.

Both EU and Schengen (25)	Schengen, not EU (4)	EU, not Schengen (2)
Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden	Iceland Liechtenstein Norway Switzerland	Cyprus Ireland

EES applies in all 29 Schengen countries. ETIAS, once it launches, will cover those 29 plus Cyprus. Ireland uses neither. Monaco, San Marino and Vatican City have no border checks with their neighbours, so in practice you reach them through Schengen.

5. The UK: Who Is Who

The UK left the European Union in 2020 and was never part of Schengen, so it has its own rules. Here is how ETA, EES and ETIAS sort out across Britain and its neighbours.

Where	UK ETA	EES	ETIAS	What to know
United Kingdom England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland	Yes	No	No	One ETA covers all four.
Jersey, Guernsey, Isle of Man	Yes	No	No	Since April 23, 2026, your UK ETA covers these islands too.
Republic of Ireland	No	No	No	In the EU but not Schengen. But crossing into Northern Ireland, say to the Giant's Causeway, needs a UK ETA even though there is no border check.
Eurostar, Dover ferries, Eurotunnel (leaving the UK for France)	n/a	Yes	Yes, once live	French border control happens on British soil before you leave, so your EES check may take place in London, Dover or Folkestone.
British passport holders (including dual citizens)	No	Yes	Yes, once live	No ETA needed for the UK, but in Europe you are a non EU visitor like everyone else.

FORMS BEFORE YOU FLY

There are now two kinds of paperwork to think about, and people often mix them up.

eVisas and electronic travel authorisations are applied for days or weeks ahead. Canadians need an e-Visa for India, Egypt, Vietnam, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Australia and New Zealand, among others. The one catching South America cruisers off guard is Brazil, which has required an eVisa from Canadians since April 2025.

Digital arrival cards are quicker, usually completed online within 72 hours of arrival, but airlines increasingly check for them at the gate. Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, India, Vietnam and the Philippines all require one, and Japan's Visit Japan Web combines immigration and customs into a single QR code. Colombia has its own, the Check MIG form, which you complete before you arrive and again before you leave.

A cruise can touch four countries with four different sets of rules. I check every port on my clients' itineraries, so nothing gets missed.

Watch Out for Lookalike Websites

Search for any of these forms and the top results are often private websites charging a fee for something that is free, or much cheaper, on the official government site. One has been documented charging about $42 for Colombia's free Check MIG form. Always apply through the government's own website. If you are not sure, send me the link and I will check it for you.

THE POWER BANK CRACKDOWN

After a power bank fire destroyed an Air Busan aircraft in January 2025, airlines around the world started rewriting the rules, and they are not finished. Since March 2026, the international standard limits you to two power banks and prohibits recharging them in flight. Some airlines go further: the Lufthansa Group bans using one to charge anything on board, and Emirates allows only one power bank per passenger. From January 1, 2027, new industry rules are set to bar power banks over 100 Wh altogether.

Whose Rules Apply? The Airline Flying the Plane

This is the detail most people miss. The battery rules that apply on each flight belong to the airline actually operating that flight, not the airline that sold you the ticket.

Say you book an Air Canada ticket from Toronto to Athens, connecting in Frankfurt. Your first flight is on Air Canada, so Air Canada's rules apply. But the Frankfurt to Athens leg is "operated by Lufthansa," so on that flight Lufthansa's stricter rules apply, and you cannot use your power bank at all. The same goes for a leg operated by United, or by any other partner airline.

Look for the words "operated by" on your itinerary or boarding pass, and pack for the strictest airline on your whole trip.

My Simple Power Bank Rule

- No more than two, each under 100 Wh, with the rating clearly printed on it
- In your carry-on bag, never in checked luggage
- Kept within reach, in the seat pocket or under the seat in front of you
- Charge your phone before you board, and plan on not using a power bank in flight

Ken's Pretravel Checklist *(screenshot this one)*

1. Passport valid for at least six months after you return
2. ETA, ETIAS or eVisa approved for every country, including the ports
3. Digital arrival cards completed inside the right window
4. At least three hours for your first connection in Europe
5. Boarding passes saved as proof of every exit from Europe
6. Power banks under 100 Wh, two at most, in your carry-on bag

A Note on All of the Above

The information in this newsletter on the ETA, EES, ETIAS, e-Visas and digital arrival cards is accurate and current as of November 2026. Entry requirements can change at any time, and what is documented here today may no longer apply in six months if a new system or requirement is put in place. As your travel advisor, it is my duty to make you aware of travel and entry requirements, but it is your personal responsibility to make sure you have the necessary identification and documents before you travel. Please call me before any trip so we can make sure you are fully compliant.



The route: Barranquilla to Cartagena along the Magdalena River

Join Us on the Magdalena River

Colombia is the river cruise almost nobody has done yet, and that is exactly why I am so excited about it. Seven nights aboard AmaWaterways' intimate AmaMelodia, sailing between Cartagena and Barranquilla, with colonial towns, Caribbean rhythms, and riverside villages you simply cannot reach any other way.

My husband and I are sailing this one ourselves in 2027, and we would love to have you along. Ships this small fill quickly, and the earlier you book, the better your choice of stateroom, which brings us right back to Stop Overpaying.

Full details: **Click Here For Wonders of Colombia Itinerary and Information**

And yes, I will remind you about the Check MIG form – a requirement arriving in Colombia.

Wishing you a wonderful next adventure,

Ken Graham – TravelOnly With Ken