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# Holiday cruise shipwrecked

**Itineraries can change with no warning. It's enough to make you seasick**

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J. Pat Carter / Ap File / AP

The Navigator of the Sea sits in port at Georgetown, Grand Cayman, June 14, 2005 during a seven day cruise in the western Caribbean.

By **Anita Dunham-Potter**

Travel columnist




Updated: 12:51 a.m. ET Jan 23, 2006

Retired college professor Bobbie Deemer had the perfect Christmas cruise planned, but eight months after she booked her reservation, things started falling apart. Imagine her surprise when she received her cruise documents and discovered the itinerary had changed. Neither her agent nor the cruise line had notified her of the change, and now it was too late for a full refund.

Last March, Deemer and her husband booked a five-day cruise aboard [Royal Caribbean Cruise Line's Sovereign of the Seas](#), sailing from Port Canaveral. The cruise had the two things the Deemers were looking for: a Key West port stop

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and Christmas Day at sea. But when Deemer received her cruise documents the last week in November, she was dismayed to discover that the port stop would now be in Miami and that Christmas Day would be spent on Royal Caribbean's private Bahamian island, Coco Cay.

"Miami has no appeal to us as we live two hours away," says Deemer. "And we really wanted the day at sea on Christmas for a more formal atmosphere. Now it was just a beach day."

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**Fax, lies and audiotape**

The Deemers had booked their cruise through [Cruise Value Center](#) (also known as My Cruise Value) in East Brunswick, N.J. When Bobbie Deemer contacted Cruise Value Center to ask about the itinerary change, the agent said it was the first she had heard of it. The agent then contacted Royal Caribbean and was told a fax had been transmitted to the agency on October 3.

"Had we known this, we would have immediately canceled the cruise," says Deemer. At that point, more than 60 days from sailing, the Deemers would have received a full refund. Now, less than 30 days from sailing, the Deemers could recover only 50 percent of the fare.

Upset, Deemer called Royal Caribbean to find out why the cruise itinerary had been changed. After being informed that the cruise line reserves the right to change the itinerary, Deemer pressed for the actual reason. She was told that Hurricane Wilma had damaged the docks at Key West.

The next day, Deemer ran into a friend who had just returned from a cruise that had stopped in Key West. The friend reported that there was no dock damage, a fact subsequently confirmed by two other

sources: Gary Hansen, a port operations official with the Key West Port Office, and Caribe Nautical, Royal Caribbean's own shipping agent for Key West.

Hoping to get the real story, Deemer again called Royal Caribbean. This time she got excuses ranging from "port congestion" to "operation constraints" to "immigration delays." When the agent added "berthing conflicts" to the list, Deemer got mad. This, she knew, was untrue, because Hansen, the Port Office official, had told her that only one vessel was scheduled for Key West on December 24.

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Deemer demanded to speak to someone higher up and was transferred to Royal Caribbean's resolution specialist, Jennie Martinez, who informed Deemer that their conversation would be recorded. After going over the details of her complaint, Deemer asked if the Key West port stop could be reinstated. According to Deemer, Martinez became agitated, accused Deemer of not listening, and reiterated the company's right to change the itinerary.

Deemer had gotten nowhere, so she asked Tripso to help.

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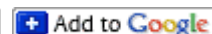
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