

KEEN ON RETIREMENT



Are You Ready to Experience the Cruise of a Lifetime?

Welcome to Keen on Retirement
With Bill Keen and Steve Sanduski

Steve Sanduski: Welcome everybody to this episode of Keen On Retirement. I'm your cohost Steve Sanduski and with me as always is my good buddy, Bill Keen. Bill, how are you today?

Bill Keen: We're doing great Steve. The leaves are starting to turn here in Kansas City and it's just beautiful over here. How about in your neck of the woods?

Steve Sanduski: Yeah, same thing I think we're probably maybe a couple weeks ahead of you since we're farther north but we get some nice color on the leaves here, so that's all looking good. As we both know and our avid listeners know, the name of this podcast is Keen On Retirement. Normally, we're talking about things like Social Security and retirement income. Some of the money things related to retirement but today, we're going to talk about the fun part of retirement. Aren't we, Bill?

Bill Keen: Yes. We are.

One of the things that we've always said is, that we like to bring great ideas and information that is working to our listeners. We've developed a network of friends and professionals that we utilize and that we have faith in. Today, I have a special guest and his name is Mark Wolf and Mark is a close personal friend of mine for nearly 20 years. He's been a mentor. He's like a father to me. He's one of those people that I can rely on and bounce things off of. He's one of those people that helps me see the blind spots that I don't see with the blind spot. If you know what I mean, on certain things in life. I'm very fortunate to have him as a friend. He also has a long history in the travel industry, and he is an expert on cruising, Steve.

Steve Sanduski: Cruising.

Bill Keen: Cruising. Well, you know, you mentioned looking for a river cruise on a few

episodes back. I just returned, Carissa and I just returned from a European cruise just a few weeks ago. It made me think that how nice would it be to have someone come on especially someone as close as Mark. Someone that I trust and have had direct experience with come on and just demystify some of the things that folks hear about cruising. Bring us some tips and pointers and then have him bring literally 50 years of experience in the travel industry to us today and I call it 30-minute podcast.

Steve Sanduski: Exciting.

Bill Keen: What do you say? Yes. Mark, welcome to the show today, sir.

Mark Wolf: Well, thanks Bill. Nice to be here. I appreciate the opportunity to be with you and Steve today. Thank you.

Bill Keen: Well, it's a pleasure to have you. I wanted to share a little bit with you Steve about the ports of call that Carissa and I visited. Would that be okay with you?

Steve Sanduski: Yeah. I know I saw somebody. I know you sent me some of the pictures, so yeah. Tell us a little bit more about it.

Bill Keen: Yes. Well, not trying to rub it in or anything. We took up a plane from Kansas City to Chicago. Now, this isn't me flying, Steve. My plane won't get me to Europe, just so you know.

Steve Sanduski: At least your current one.

Bill Keen: Yeah. That's right. We flew from Chicago into Heathrow. We had a two-hour layover in the Heathrow and then we flew directly from there to Venice. We had been up literally probably a full day and we'll share a little bit about this. I'm sure Mark will, we flew business class. It wasn't first class but it was business class which was very accommodative. We were able to lay down, have several meals. I think they just spend you the whole time and you could shut your eyes and have a nice flight. We landed in Venice. No sleep.

The clocks go forward six or seven hours and we had just a wonderful time there before we boarded the ship the following day. Then, we hit ports such as in Croatia, in Greece, Montenegro. We went around down around the Boot Hill. Sicily and then, ultimately, ended in Rome and stayed in Rome for three days and really did the exploration of Rome before we flew on back to the States. Mark set that up for us and I got to say, it's the first time that we had been to Europe and the learning that we experienced in just the broadening of the horizons was just amazing. Thanks for setting that up for us, Mark.

Mark Wolf: Well, it's our pleasure. I want to hear you had such a good time.

Bill Keen: It was really special. In fact, we got together with Mark after and showed him all

the pictures. We had dinner with this and he had to look at all the pictures. You know, Mark, if I'm thinking about how you would think about ports and some of our listeners have traveled the world. I have engineering clients that have built power plants and other things around the world. I have other folks that haven't traveled a whole lot. This is a retirement planning podcast and most people that are listening are probably in their 50s and 60s. We might have a few people listen and they are younger which I would applaud that. Thinking about that, do you have any device for us on where you would start in the process or is there a specific place to start?

Mark Wolf:

Well, I think the starting point Bill is with each individual and what their past experiences would be. If you worked hard your whole life and saved your money and you're approaching your retirement and you want to take your first cruise. The Caribbean might be a market that's appropriate for you. If you got to travel a little bit more and you're in different time of your life and you want to enjoy things. You know, people like to go to Alaska. There's Alaska cruise tours. There's also the tour part of that where you can take the train between Fairbanks, Denali Anchorage and see some of the, they call it The Last Frontier. That's been an enjoyable, an extremely popular and satisfying to people. For people that have traveled a lot before but they're looking for that trip to Europe.

Sometimes, they've been on land trips or bus tours and they've traveled there for business. There's a lot of opportunities there especially with oceangoing ships. There kind of an overview cruise. You'd be coming to larger cities and larger ports. Because that would be the London, Paris, Rome thing. That kind of thing. You'd go to St. Petersburg Russia. You go to the Athens, trips like that. Something that's really been hot the last five or six years. It's been building a ... it had a steam all the time, it's called river cruises. They offer river cruises in the large part of the Europe. It's a very ... The biggest market that they have are river cruises, but they also have river cruises to Russia and China and they also have to Vietnam and Cambodia.

That's been an expanding area of the market and a little bit different than an aspect. It takes the best elements of a perhaps what a land trip would be in Europe or one of the destinations and yet, it gives you some of the benefits of the cruise. If you're not riding at night on motorcoaches, you're staying in comfortable and plus your accommodations, you're eating up a good food. You're traveling with a small number of shipmates. It's an intimate setting. You're going to places that are kind of the starting point of commerce in Europe in those places. That's along the river ways of Europe. The river used to be used for transportation and to this day, if you were on the Rhine river in the day and you, for example. It's a big commercial waterway. They move all kind of products of all kinds and things. Not only passenger.

There's a lot of talents that are grew up on the river. There's Cologne. In Germany, that goes back to the Roman Empire. That's why it has an English name. An English sounding name instead of a German. There's a lot of cities along the waterway and the borders between for example, France and Germany and there's a long history

there of conflict and there's architecture. There's tradition and there's culture that you can get exposed to on a daily basis. You're not in the large metropolitan areas. You're in secondary places where you get some exposure to more everyday people how they live and what it's like to live in that country. That's what makes it quite pleasant.

Bill Keen: You would be almost possible to get that experience by traveling on land, wouldn't you? Wouldn't able to see all those ports and those amounts of time.

Mark Wolf: You could do it on land but it would be a more laborious process. You're right. You have to travel between the places. You have to take trains. You rent a car. You're on your own. It's an adventurous deal. There's a lot of surprises that happen along the way. What's nice about this, you're traveling in a complete package with the crew. The air fare is arranged. People meet you at the airport. They take you to your hotel if you have that kind of package.

Bill Keen: Yes.

Mark Wolf: What they also do in a lot of these, you can combine stays and some of the great centers in Europe for example. If you're taking the same river cruise for example, you can do three days in Paris before your cruise. They have other cruises where you can go to Prague or Budapest. There's a lot of different options of places you can go. They actually have cruises that on the river side that start in Bulgaria. You go all the way up to Germany. There's a number of experiences you can have at the center where the culture, it was first developed.

Bill Keen: I'm thinking about the timing. You sent me on probably five cruises so far. Several Disney and Royal Caribbean or two and then this last one was Azamara. Which was Steve, a lot more intimate than the bigger ships. Do we have, Mark, 500 people maybe?

Mark Wolf: Yeah. It's slightly more than that. Yeah. You're pushing up like the mid-600 ranger.

Bill Keen: The thing for me on that one was I started to get to know all the other guests and the passengers. It was just fascinating. I met a gentleman and his wife from London who have a franchise they started. They have 100 stores, like a Panda Express in the US. That's a and I see them every night. Another fellow from up in Canada, Italians from up in Canada that spoke Italian which was really came in really handy when we were in Italy with them. Thinking about all these options we talked about, most people choose to do a seven-day which is right off the bat that that's the most common one?

Mark Wolf: Probably to the Caribbean, seven days probably the most popular. Alaska is a seven-day cruise. Canada and New England would be a seven-day cruise. There's other markets that they would be longer. There's a long travel distance to Europe. A lot of times, if you're going to go all the way in seven days, you have to deal with the issues of jet lag and some things. It's better to come in a day or so early. Or

perhaps stay at another place for several days coming back and make a complete vacation of where you'd stay 10 or 11 days maybe. Some people like to stay 14. They could all be arranged.

Bill Keen: Yeah. It seems some of our retired clients might be able to stay the 14, Steve.

Steve Sanduski: I think so.

Bill Keen: We know, of course, we have to run it through the financial plan to make sure the budget works, right?

Steve Sanduski: Right. That's right. Hey, Mark. I got a question here. I have not been on a big ship cruise or even on a river cruise for that matter, so this might be a basic question. Do you find like with these big ships, I'm thinking like the love boat back from the 1970s. Obviously, today's boat I think are a lot bigger than that.

Bill Keen: You're dating yourself, Steve.

Steve Sanduski: I am. I am. Yeah. When we think about these big cruise ships that are out there today, is the emphasis on the entertainment on the ship, so the onboard ship experiences, the key thing that you're looking for in the ports of call are secondary? Or is it both of them are equally important in terms of what you should be looking for when it comes to a big ship. Meaning, you want to have find one that has a lot of amenities on the ship to keep you entertained and one that also has interesting ports of call. How much time do you spend when you do go to a port of call? How much time you spend off the ship and being able to explore that local area?

Mark Wolf: That's a great question and insightful too. I might say. When you were talking about the love boat, what was funny, they rate ships in tonnage. The love boat was probably 26,000 tons. Today, they have ships in the 160, and 170 thousand ton range. It's a whole different experience. The part that I really thought that was insightful is the fact that the cruise ships, the way they're made today, their destinations. They have a number of restaurants and opportunities. Instead of just a dining hall, they have what they call specialty restaurants, so you can have a complete dining experience. They have extensive spas on board. They have health clubs that maybe accomplish, that covers 10 or 15,000 feet on the ship with the latest equipment trainers. They offer spin classes. They offer pilates, all kinds of classes that you can participate in.

They have rock climbing walls. They have a wave simulators where you can ride a surfboard. You can have private lessons to do those kind of things. They have ice-skating rinks. There's just a myriad of things you could do on board. They have golf simulators. They have golf instructors. They play bridge on board. The ship in itself is a destination. On a seven-day cruise, some of the larger ships, depending on the logistics of the cruise. If they're leaving from the main 48 states, they'll probably hit three ports during that period. Maybe a fourth one, and you have several days at the sea. What's nice about those types of cruises, the itinerary is important

because every person has a desire within them self to go at a certain places. That makes the itinerary important. The reality is though, you're in the port from 10 in the morning 'til 5 at night and the ship leaves and goes to another place.

Even if you're at a port, you're having a great time. The time your life, it has exceeded all your expectations and you come back and you're having a great day. You return to this vessel and there's nightly entertainment. There's casinos. It's a little bit of Las Vegas. The amusement park. Travel the whole thing wrapped in one. If you come to a port that turned out to be less than you did, it's no big deal. You're back on the ship and you're doing somewhere else the next day. It's a good way to over view a lot of itinerary and see a lot of things in a short period of time. Have all the comforts that exceed what you have at home. You have good food. Good entertainment. Good service and good overall experience.

Steve Sanduski: Now, contrast that with a river cruise where the ship is going to be much smaller. On a river cruise, are you spending a lot more time at the port of call? Or is it still ... You dock at 10 and then you leave at 5 in the afternoon or how does that work?

Mark Wolf: Well, on river cruise, they would make all the port call most days. You would go from a number of places. For example, if you took a cruise on the Rhine river, you travel between Basel, Switzerland and Amsterdam for instance. You would be in a port most days with the exception on the middle Rhine, they cruise that, it's called the castle part of cruise where there's a number of castles. They do yet one day at sea. Generally, they would arrive in the morning. What's interesting about river cruises, they would be more like a personal experience and they blend a lot of things. They're like your hotel but it's with this small group of people where it's an intimate type experience. Then, you visit certain places along the river that aren't the London, Paris and Romes of the world but this is where the some of the real people live.

It's like when people when come to America. They said, "Oh, I've been to America." They go, "Where did you go?" Like, "We went to New York, Miami and San Francisco." Well, you saw the overview but we missed out on the big part of what the heart to be in America is. That's what's really brings to that experience. It's an exposure type thing where you see a ... Then, you have a little more inter mix with the local people, and see how live and spend their days. There's a lot of history and stuff there that's good. The ships for example, a lot of them are old, they're 160 to 188 ranges. More personal and intimate. This cruise is set up with the minimum of hassle in terms ... There's not the big numbers check again. Everything is relaxed and comfortable. They offer a number of tours that are included on river cruises.

They have I would call, the eager beaver tour of the day. It gets off first thing in the morning and people go. Then, they have one mid day that's for the late risers. Then, they have for the elder later, for people who just want to relax that they. They have a short tour that maybe leaves at 11:00 and you'll join people in the city center somewhere. Spend the day, have a coffee. Walk around and chat with some people and then return to the ship in late afternoon before you move on to the

next port. They have a lot of variety. One of the things I like that they do I'm sure, excursions too. When you're on a river cruise, everybody is equipped with a private radio and monitor. They have a number of tour guide. It's always a small group of people they're taking. 12 or 15, something like that.

Everybody will sync their radios together. It's really nice that when you're in the Cathedral in Cologne, that goes back to the 10th century. You don't have to stick right next this person to hear what he's saying and be watching him instead of you can wander and see and you can hear everything perfectly that goes on. It brings less disruption and you don't miss out on the experience of seeing and hearing. One good thing about having a tour guide too is that these guys bring a lot of understanding of history, culture, the way things were at the time. Why these things are significant, that you would never pick up on your own. This experience I like it where you can see but still hear. Also, you don't have to worry about getting left behind because we wander off somewhere. She's saying, "Hey, we're going in this direction or we're ready to leave now," or that kind of thing. It works out pretty well. It's really customer friendly type thing.

- Steve Sanduski: Bill, I know that you've been on the river cruise. Have you also been on one of these big boat cruises?
- Bill Keen: Steve, I have not been on a river cruise. The one that I just came off of was called, the line was Azamara, right Mark?
- Mark Wolf: Right.
- Bill Keen: It's not considered a river cruise.
- Mark Wolf: It was an ocean cruise.
- Bill Keen: Yup. It's considered Amalfi coast or what would you call
- Mark Wolf: Steve, what you referred to the large cruise is this would be called, this is like a boutique line or what they would call approaching the luxury end of the market. You have a smaller ship. Instead of holding 5,000 people, it will hold around 700.
- Steve Sanduski: Okay.
- Mark Wolf: You have upscale services. You have a higher level of dining. Well, you've been on several cruises. Do you find the dining levels Bill to be better and ...
- Bill Keen: To me, it seemed like on this last one. That everywhere we went, including the buffets, that everything was more crisp and more refined. Everything. Nothing against the big ... Was it Grandeur of the Seas that you sent us on? Or Oasis? Is that the one ...
- Mark Wolf: Oh, yeah. Oasis of the Seas.

Bill Keen: We took Oasis. I think there was 5 or 6,000. I think they set a crew that was like 8,000 maybe or so. Now, that was ... It would be possible, right? With something that large to maintain the quality. Not that it was bad. I'm just saying.

Mark Wolf: They do an exceptional job with the number of people they have and they have a lot of methodology they use to keep things fresh and nice. It's like the dinner party you have at home. When you have 6 people, it's one thing if you have 12 that's already starting to suffer on some ends. It's just logistics of things. Also, I would call this like boutique cruises. What's nice about them, it's by the size, they have more of the personal ... People will want to know your name. Somebody will serve your dinner the next day and they'll see you on the ship and it's shocking how they try to remember your name. I find the levels of food, it includes alcohol and other amenities. Some of them offer you complimentary shore excursion on your trip, that type of thing. What's nice about this cruise. For example, my kids just got back from a Slovenia and Croatia and they were in Dubrovnik.

The cruise ships come rolling in the big cruise ships and they throw you on a motorcoach and that you have to roll through the city and they bring you up at the front gates and there's 14 buses, and people pile out. When you travel in a company like Azamara, there's this small dock inside and they have access to that. They drive you right up in the Center City. Yes, they drop you off. You go on your tour. You leave. You don't have ... It's just a whole different experience. That's what they do. You could call that the luxury marketer. Like Azamara, it's an affordable luxury. For a light luxury, you get a lot of the amenities, the very expensive cruise has. You get high levels of service and things and just make it comfortable and enjoyable.

Bill Keen: One of the things that we enjoy too with many of the things we enjoyed. One of the things especially was we had a, would you call it a handler or an escort? From the airport in Venice to our hotel. Then, from our hotel to the ship starting out. Then, coming out of Rome, we had ... The driver came to pick us up and then, there was a secondary person that took us into the airport in Rome and there ... It was confusing. The VAT tax, the value added tax. We had made a few purchases while we were there. I'll admit that Steve.

Steve Sanduski: Okay.

Bill Keen: Carissa did a little shopping. Not me though.

Steve Sanduski: That totally shocks me.

Bill Keen: Okay. You know you get your tax back, the value-added tax, you get that back when you leave Europe. Did you know that?

Steve Sanduski: No. I didn't.

Bill Keen: Yeah. It's like 11%. It was worth it for us to have our escort and show us how to go up to the right gate and collect that tax refund.

Mark Wolf: Bill, when he got back, he was looking pretty euro there. I understood that when he arrived, he hit us back for 24 hours so he could go out and buy some clothes Steve. It was really good.

Bill Keen: Either that or Carissa did.

Steve Sanduski: He probably took an empty suitcase with you just so you could fill it up with stuff you bought, right?

Bill Keen: Well, you're going to laugh, Steve, but the folks that we met from London that I said had the franchises, they got to know us pretty well. That fella's wife, she did tell Carissa, that was how she traveled with empty baggage. I hope Carissa doesn't get a, so she can fill it up. I hope she doesn't get that idea. Mark is referring to is, we actually got to the airport in Venice. I thought Carissa was playing a joke on me. Although, I don't know why she would've but I was hoping that's what it was, I think. All the luggage came through. We've been up 24 hours and I looked and there was nothing left. Sure enough, my big bag didn't come. I was there. I was in Venice and get to the cruise the next day with no luggage. We walked up to the lost baggage line and you know, it's interesting. I really enjoyed and appreciated being the outsider.

Over a year, in the US, it's different. It is what it is. It's our home, but being out of the country, you're now an outsider. Yes, most people do speak English but you have to work at it and the couple in front of us were from Russia. I'm learning all these things culturally but I guess, the folks from Russia didn't know any Italian. They were having one heck of a time talking about their lost luggage with the Italian that didn't speak Russian. Anyway, we got past that and we did find the luggage and it did show up by the time we left the next day. In the meantime, Carissa had me buy several pair of pants and several cool sweaters and shirts. I could say now that I have clothing from Venice, Italy, for real.

Steve Sanduski: All right.

Bill Keen: Of course, it was probably made in China but that's a whole another story.

Mark Wolf: Bill describe an interesting element of the trip. If you never been to Venice with the canal system, everything is on water. Everything is moved by canals, water taxis. They have gondolas. If do anything when you go to Venice, if you take your wife to Venice, you have to go to St. Mark's Square. You have to go on a gondola ride.

Bill Keen: Yes.

Mark Wolf: That would be a tragedy to miss that. The chaos of that city to try to get around on your own, it's so chaotic and if you are not ... Bill call the minor ... What we actually

arranged for Bill is that, we had a transfer service to meet Bill and Carissa take them directly to their hotel. You wait through the chaos or what's going on. Representatives are there and Carissa let them know that Bill was missing a bag and they were on it working with the airlines and had it deliver the next day before they boarded the ship. Then, the same way after the cruise. When you are at Rome, Italy, and the ship comes in 180 kilometers away from the airport. It's not the time to start trying to figure things out. That's one of the aspects of the trips we were talking about today that I think is important. We're at a time in our life when we want to travel. Whether it's our 50th trip or it's our first trip, that's a lifetime experience, an anniversary trip.

My job would be to insulate you from the surprises and create an environment where your airfare, there's a seamless passage from one aspect you traveled to another. Because to be honest with you, there is some stress with travel. Especially I know this as I get older. Stress bothers me sometimes a little more than it used to. We like to have those things handle that way. There's other aspects of the trip that we help people with. Where there is services available that they can call and talk to while they're on a trip. Let's say, when you're trapped in a situation. That's what we're trying to do, is eliminate surprises.

Bill Keen: I think that's important for people.

Steve Sanduski: Hey, Bill.

Bill Keen: Yes?

Steve Sanduski: Mark is a first-time guest on the podcast. I think maybe, we got to put him on the spot a little bit. What do you think?

Bill Keen: You know, this is good. Because I didn't tell him, so that by definition is put him on the spot, right?

Steve Sanduski: Right. Why don't we just ask him a rapid fire series of questions here. Because I suspect that our listeners, they may ... If they haven't been on a cruise before or even if they have, let's go through a few questions here and see if we can post some good additional info out to Mark. What do you think?

Bill Keen: All right. Do you want to start or you want me to start? Because I definitely have a few for you.

Steve Sanduski: Yeah. Okay. Why don't you go ahead and start?

Bill Keen: Okay, Mark. Number one. What documents do we need to bring?

Mark Wolf: Well, that depends on the type of trip you're taking and that's where I think having just like a financial advisor to help you with your finances and your future. That helps to have a travel adviser. Because if you're going to the Caribbean, you need a

passport and somebody need to remind you, it has 180 days of validity after return. If you travel in a certain aspects of the country, for example, if you're going to Russia or something, you require a travel visas to be able to travel there on your own.

Bill Keen: Not just the passport.

Mark Wolf: No, no. If you're traveling to South America for example. They have \$160 reciprocity tax that you have to purchase online before you arrive. If you go to Australia, they have electronic Visa system, it's kind of ... All these things, there's a lot little nuances at the places you go. The best thing you can do is work with somebody that can help you with those things and eliminate the problems before they start.

Bill Keen: Wow. I love it. It's like our episodes we do on tax planning and IRA rules. Isn't it, Steve? You think it's simple but it just certainly is not.

Steve Sanduski: That's right.

Bill Keen: One time, we talked about room placement on the ship. I wanted to bring that up and I don't ever pay attention to it because I'm trusting what you're setting up for me. You mentioned me some horror stories and that you know about where not to get certain rooms on a ship. Is that right?

Mark Wolf: Well, I think anybody that, yeah. You want to take and consider the itinerary that you're on and what are you doing. For example, if you're making a transatlantic crossing. The best ride in the ships to the mid ship and slightly lower in the deck. All of them were expensive cabins throughout. If you are traveling ...

Steve Sanduski: Hey, Mark. Why is that? Is that because it's not as rocky or what?

Mark Wolf: Yeah. If you look, if you consider the haul of the ships a V and you see how we tip in the water. There's more movement at the top of the V than there is at the bottom. As it rocks back and forth. There were tend to be a little bit and there's less movement in the middle of the ship than there would be in any chance. Now, in most cases, sailing is pretty easy and it's a moot point. You don't have to worry about that but if you are crossing the ocean or something, we try to get the best cabin location we can for you and that would be mid ship. There's also considerations that, remember when we were talking about these new big ships, there are entertainment centers, there's cities, there's discos. You sure don't want to take the trip of your lifetime. You don't want any cabin and find yourself located over the disco that's booming until 4:00 in the morning. That can put a damper on your vacation.

What your agent needs to do. He's looking for things. Where is the location of the ship? What's above? What's below? What does it look for? Is there an obstruction? Is there an ice machine outside. Am I right next to the laundromat? Some of them

have self service laundromat. That's convenient and sometimes, it's problematic. Depending on where you're at. Then, there's other considerations, too. For example, if you're on river cruises. If you're booked in the very first floor in the river cruise and somebody has a mobility problem, there are no elevators to the lower floor. You have to use the staircase. These are important. Or if you're on a biking long ship for example and you wouldn't want your agent to put you in room 217 because the ice machine is on the wall right outside your room. It's just little nuances like that you learned to scope out and try to help people. We try to give them the best physical location we can that would meet their needs. Then, we want to be in a close proximity to an elevator but not on the corridor.

Bill Keen: You can make that happen?

Mark Wolf: Yes. We can. They depends on availability. If you're booked three days before you leave, that's a problem. If you give your agent a little bit of time, he can work those things out for you.

Bill Keen: Tell me about how to ... Steve, I'm sorry to keep butting in. I just had a lot of questions.

Steve Sanduski: No. Please go ahead.

Bill Keen: Okay. Tell me about gratuities. Everybody's confused about gratuities. Even some of the people we met on Azamara cruise last time who are experienced cruise people. They were even talking about our ... It says gratuities are included but then you still feel like you probably should give more gratuities which we did. Then also Mark, there's the other issue of, when you're in the ports, the gratuities and there's culturally are different than in the US. Specifically though on the ship, how do you know exactly know?.

Mark Wolf: There's a couple. If you're on the large ships that Steve was talking about. The Royal Caribbeans, the Holland America. The Princess and stuff like that. There's a certain gratuity policy. As a courtesy, they would ... Depending on your cabin, type of cabin you had. If you had a suite, it's a little bit higher. They generally are in the neighborhood. About 12.50 a day, per person. They put that right on your room charge now, or give the ability to do that, so you don't really have to get envelopes and pass out money anymore. Like compare to the old days. That's something that's pretty much expected that you travel. Now, when you're on other lines and you're in the boutique products like you were on, and for example, in a cruise like that, your gratuities were included.

That means, that's built into the price and that money is taken, put it in the pool and divided it according to their work rules on board the ship. Now, extending a gratuity is always a personal thing. If you like to reward of exceptional service or something like that and you want to make a small enumeration to your waiter on the ship, because I believe that's always appreciated. Occasionally, the waiter will extend a favor to you that you're grateful for. Perhaps, you would extend a gratuity

to him also. Europeans and Australia too, for example. Most places in the world, they don't operate on the minimum wages, tip system. They operate on a living wage. In gratuity, in some cases, it's always a small thing. It's from nothing to 5%, 10% stretch in some case.

Bill Keen: You're talking about when that we're in a port, we're in Italy and we're tipping.

Mark Wolf: Yeah. Exactly like that.

Bill Keen: Because I tipped 20, because I didn't know but I was informed by someone that almost could've been offensive to my waiter. This is amazing. Because over here, it's certainly not offensive to our waiters if you tip 20%. Over there, because they are paid, you call it a living wage. I guess I just think they're paid more.

Mark Wolf: Yeah.

Bill Keen: You give them a big tip and it's almost like you're throwing your power around. It was explained to me that way.

Mark Wolf: If you were in a nice restaurant or something like that, that would be definitely be the case. If you were in a port city where there's American tourist and they know you tip when you're not supposed to. I think they're happy to take you that.

Bill Keen: Yes.

Mark Wolf: I look at the basic nature of people and people are good in general. Especially when they're having a good time and they're at that time in their life and they're on a trip and they want to treat people right and do the right thing. Sometimes, we tip a little bit more than that. I would say, I always liked with the gratuity though, it's your vacation. It's your personal choice and you should do what makes you comfortable. It's always wise and know what the custom is, so you know how to respond properly for you.

Bill Keen: Yes.

Steve Sanduski: Hey, Mark. I got a question related to packing. On these ships, I'd imagine there's not a lot of storage space for luggage. Do you recommend that people travel light or how does that work?

Mark Wolf: Well actually, first of all, we'd look probably at some of the restrictions on the airlines that you get there, you're limited to sometimes one or two bags. They can weigh 50 pounds. Your cabin carry on and a camera back, that type of thing. That's a consideration. It's extremely expensive if you're over in weight on your bag or the number of bags that you have. Usually, with international, they give you one bag. Sometimes, two. That information once we determine who the airline will be, will be provided to you. Packing, you need to consider the trip.

For example, the trip that Bill was on Azamara even though it was an upscale cruise, resort casual was the rule of the day. You might not even need a jacket on board. You might want to take a jacket of one kind for dinner just to wear but those things aren't necessary. You got to have to have some idea what you're doing and then pack accordingly. Now, one of the things Bill did if we would had a conversation about this before. I would say even though it might not be something your wife's too happy about. You should divide up some of your clothes in each thing. Especially the shoes.

Bill Keen: Yes, yes.

Mark Wolf: That way, if one bag is lost. At least, you have some changes of clothing and a pair of shoes and another pair of shoes to wear and that kind of thing. That's a wise thing to do. When you lose baggage, most of it's found within 24 hours. Then usually, it catches you on the ship by the next day or the following day.

Bill Keen: Steve, your ship could take off for the cruise and they will ... When they find your luggage, they'll track you down in the next port and bring your luggage to you. Mark, let me know that.

Steve Sanduski: That's nice.

Mark Wolf: Yeah.

Mark Wolf: Then, when you pack things. You take all the personal items that you need, stuff like that. Hair dryers could take a lot of room. Most ships would have that and your agent would be able to help you understand that. One of the most important things about packing that you want to consider is never ever, ever check your travel documents, your passport. You never put valuables in there. Medication and especially if it's life-threatening type medication. You don't have heart medicine,. If you're diabetic, you want to make sure you have ample supplies with you. That brings up another case too. When you have that type of medication, it's good to have extra scripts from your doctor. That way, you don't have to try to communicate with the doctor locally. Or that, you have scripts. He knows precisely what you're taking and the dosages that makes it much easier to get these things filled. That was another good point.

Steve Sanduski: Yeah.

Bill Keen: Yes. What about insurance? Should you be taking trip insurance on something like this?

Mark Wolf: Well, that's an interesting subject and people have different concepts and risk. Each cruise has cancellation penalties. Generally, what happens is, you put down a deposit. What most of the cruise that deposit would be refundable up until 90 days before. 70 to 90 days. Then as you move closer, they keep your deposit then they keep 25 and then 75, and then they keep your whole amount. To say like 14 to 7

days before. There's nothings refundable. Some people have a high ... They don't worry about it. They travel a lot. Travel insurance, I guess, a commitment. In some cases, it could represent as high as 7 or 8% of your total of your trip, so it's a consideration. It might be something that's worthwhile.

Bill Keen: How many of your clients over time have actually ended up needing it? They bought it and then they get this because they needed it.

Mark Wolf: I would probably say in the last 25 or 6 years, I've been pretty lucky. I've had people who had claims for intermediate expenses and stuff, lost baggage, clothes, stuff like that. The majority of the people who have actually lost their money or had a debt. It's probably be at a 10 or 12 people go over those years. What really happens with insurance, one way to evaluate it would be what's my peace of mind worth and where do I stop my losses? If my insurance cost me \$200 a person, how was that a value to me? Steve, another aspect of insurance though that's important. I would say about half the people get insurance did not but you're factoring in trips like the Caribbean and stuff like that. I would say that tends to step up when the value of your trip comes up. If you have \$6,000 invest in the river cruise, or you have \$20,000 invested in some luxury cruise that might go on for a long time. Those people would tend to buy insurance more.

Steve Sanduski: What all does that insurance cover? If get sick and can't go, does it cover that?

Mark Wolf: Yeah. It sure does. They call trip cancellation and included up to 100% of your trip loss for covered reasons. The covered reasons would be a serious illness, sickness or death if you are traveling companion or a family member. Those are the reasons for that. In addition, it includes trip interruption. It would cover those costs. It has a return air trip interruption, missed connection. It provide some baggage and personal loss, baggage delay. The important thing is medical expenses. A lot of people that are on Medicare, your insurance is technically is not good outside the country. It's a good idea to have some medical insurance. My daughter's father-in-law was on a trip visiting him in Australia. He had to end up having three stents to put in. They want to do a bypass surgery but they offered three. He had to pay that out-of-pocket. His insurance was no good, so that was a surprise too.

They also have a thing called emergency medical evacuation. You seem what the basic policy. They usually include a half a million for that. If you had a serious condition and let's just say you were in Basel, Switzerland. Like with medicine there and stuff and they could stabilize your condition but they have to get you back to America. They would go as far as having a private jet for you, if that's what you're required for your safety. With medical personnel to bring you home. In other cases, they would upgrade your tickets to first class and get you in a reclining position and actually, sometimes let a family member come over to escort you back and pay for that also. It depends on the circumstances all that can happen.

Steve Sanduski: What about if I lost my job and I couldn't afford the trip anymore. Or an important business meeting came up and I think I need to take this meeting instead of take

this trip.

Mark Wolf: When you're inquiring about insurance, that's a really good point. You have to bring those specific needs. I usually ask a person, "Why are you buying insurance? Do you have a pre-existing medical condition? Do you have an elderly parent? Do you have some obligations at work?" They would in fact in some cases, even cover that.

Bill Keen: That's a great question.

Steve Sanduski: Hey, Bill. I think we're getting ready to wrap up here. Do you have any other questions you want to ask Mark while we got him here?

Bill Keen: We talk about thriving and retirement. I mean, that's the purpose of our podcast. Is helping folks thrive before and in their retirement years, and having something to look forward to out in the calendar. It's something that's universal. We all are excited to have something fun to look forward to. Whether cruising is your thing or not, I do think it's something that is allowed us to continue to learn and understand other cultures. I could see that being a never ending process.

When we were offline here this morning, Mark and I were talking about what is it about? Do you mind sharing that story about the folks that came in or the several stories you had today.

Mark Wolf: There's several instances of people ... I had a couple come in and visit me one time and they were going to book a trip, and it was going to be their first cruise. They started to share stories that they were recently just married and their former spouses each of them, they were always going to travel and take a trip and do this together and do that together. That time never came for them because he never took any action. We worry about finances and we'll do this next year. Another things. In fact, the thing we should be worried about is the time that we had. It was very poignant being with ... They were the sincerest people ...

It was just a heartfelt thing that they may express this desire to do that with their spouse and didn't have that opportunity. You could see that in their expression in her face. Then, there was a sense of gratitude amongst, although that they had found each other and they'd been able to do some things in the absence of their spouse. I thought it was really interesting, the way they frame that up. It was about their spouse that it never happened with, and they're on plan B to make it happen now. It came from a place of regret.

Bill Keen: Yes.

Mark Wolf: That sometimes what I like to think about. One of the things that formed up something for me. When I first got into travel, the Costa Cruise lines was one of the first cruise lines that ran in Europe and they put a couple of ships over here in the 60s. They had to travel Italian officer at the rail looking out on the sunset. It says,

"Travel begins with anticipation and ends with remembrance." I'm like, "Oh. That was pretty close on the Italian English translation there." Anyway, what it was really saying is that travel begins with anticipation and it continues with the memories. It's an event that last a lifetime. That's right. You hear people, I read obituaries and they talk about in the obituaries if you look in the paper. They talk about trips that it took together and the life they enjoyed together. It's about the experience.

Yes, it's places. It's logistics. It's details. It's stuff that we take. The reality is, it's one-on-one. One person taking a trip and enjoying it. I was sharing with Bill. I had a couple come and see me. They were working people. They were elderly. Maybe in their 70s. They were going to come in and take a four-day trip. He had no credentials because he was born before birth certificates and we had to get him a passport. It was this whole process. What I realize about that couple. This was their whole event. Their life is one four-day trip. Every trip is special to every person and what they do. It's a personal experience. It's something ... It was their trip of a lifetime. I'm glad that wasn't lost on me. It was a joy. It was probably one of the most important trips I've ever handled.

Bill Keen: Wow. You know, that my experience here. It's the folks that I work with. The folks who've worked hard and live within their means. It's not about buying the Lamborghinis or the Ferraris. Really, what I'm seeing people do is enjoying their retirements by having experiences. Exactly what we're talking about today.

Steve Sanduski: Mark, what's the best way for folks to reach you if they want to learn more. If they want you to help them organize one of their trips?

Mark Wolf: Well, if anybody from one of your firms is interested. First of all, would be appreciative to know that when they call. They can reach me out. Let me give you my office phone. It's 913-236-7100.

Steve Sanduski: All right. Hey, Bill. Last word.

Bill Keen: Steve, thank you. Thank you for allowing me to go a little different direction today on the podcast. Non-financial but I think every bit is important. I said earlier, Mark has close to 50 years experience in the travel industry. I didn't get deeply into this with you Steve but starting in 1967 work in the TWA. A place that we had talked about in prior episodes blogs. Back in the day when airlines were airlines, not that they are today. He did 12 years at a company called International Tours and then founded his own firm 26 years ago. Understanding that history and that experience and being able to have him on the show with us today and pick his brain. I'm truly grateful for that. Mark, thank you for being on.

Mark Wolf: Thank you, guys. Pleasure to meet you, Steve.

Steve Sanduski: Yup. Pleasure to meet you too, Mark. Hey, thanks guys. We'll talk to you again soon.

