

# Royal Caribbean Cruise Line Photoshoot Sparks Passenger Chaos

**F** [forbes.com/sites/rogerdooley/2024/03/06/royal-caribbean-cruise-line-photoshoot-sparks-passenger-chaos](https://forbes.com/sites/rogerdooley/2024/03/06/royal-caribbean-cruise-line-photoshoot-sparks-passenger-chaos)

Roger Dooley

March 6, 2024



Passengers aboard the Silversea *Silver Nova* have been informed, more than a week in advance, that their disembarkation time in Fort Lauderdale would be delayed by four hours. The reason offered for this change was a photo opportunity with the Royal Caribbean *Icon of the Seas* and the Celebrity *Ascent* two days before disembarkation.

All ships are from the three brands that are part of the Royal Caribbean Group, and a course change was necessary for the *Silver Nova* to meet the other ships.



Silversea cruise ship Silver Nova  
SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images

The announcement of the change called it a “slight” delay and promised compensation for passengers who incurred additional expenses. Affected guests could submit receipts by email and, if approved, be refunded within 30 days.

PROMOTED

## Four Hours Is Not ‘Slight’

---

Disembarkation times are usually quite precise due to the logistics of preparing the ship for new guests and getting those guests settled prior to sailing. Depending on the port location and its distance from the airport, guests usually feel safe booking flights four to five hours after their planned arrival. This allows for disembarkation, luggage retrieval, customs and immigration if needed, transit to the airport, and passing through airline check-in and security.

The [Royal Caribbean Blog suggests](#) that in the U.S., booking flights at 11AM is possible but suggests noon or later is “absolutely achievable.”

Standard advice is to arrive two hours early for domestic flights and three hours for international. Hence, with an 11:00AM arrival time at the port, it seems likely that the majority of passengers flying out of Fort Lauderdale or Miami airports will find it necessary to reschedule their flights. Only those who booked flights late in the afternoon would be safe. Silversea suggests an earliest flight time of five PM.

CEO: C-suite news, analysis, and advice for top decision makers right to your inbox.

By signing up, you accept and agree to our [Terms of Service](#) (including the class action waiver and arbitration provisions), and [Privacy Statement](#). Forbes is protected by reCAPTCHA, and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply. Those rebooking flights may find that a non-stop flight with a carefully selected aisle seat is no longer an option.

Even those not heading for an airport after arrival might need to adjust times for pickup at the port, pet care arrangements, etc.

Forbes Leadership : ▶ || ▶ 🔊 00:28 01:12





[Netflix Star Of Never Have I Ever, Maitreyi Ramakrishnan, Talks About The Need For Diverse Stories | Forbes 30/50 Summit 2024](#)

With the tight timing to prepare the ship for new guests, it's likely that embarkation time for outbound cruisers will also be delayed for several hours.

## Passengers Not Happy

---

Cruise ship passengers, particularly experienced ones, generally take itinerary changes in stride. Weather is the most common cause for missed or changed ports. There are also less common occurrences like medical emergencies, mechanical issues, and responding to distress calls. Recently, cruise itineraries in the Middle East have been rerouted to avoid areas considered dangerous.

Despite the inevitability of itinerary changes, it's likely that no passenger on the *Silver Nova* has ever had their plans disrupted by a corporate photo shoot. While meeting two other cruise ships while drones buzz around shooting photos and videos might be a unique experience, many passengers don't think it's worth the inconvenience of rebooking long-established flights and changing other plans.

Complaints on message boards like [Cruise Critic](#) show the unrest. One poster affected by the change notes, "This has to be one of the stupidest things I have ever seen a cruise line do! Do they really think all of us should be trying to change flights/trains/drivers at the very last minute... during one of the busiest times of the year in Florida? I am appalled that a so called luxury line would put their passengers through this nonsense for a photo op!"

Comments on private boards were even less generous, with suggestions of concerted action by affected passengers.

## Impact On Brand

---

Silversea is a luxury cruise brand, and its “Credo” begins with, “We make the satisfaction of our guests our first priority...”

Clearly, the *Silver Nova* guests were not the first priority in this decision. Nobody asked them if they minded changing their travel plans to enable the planned meetup of ships. Terming the delay “slight” shows a major lack of empathy with the guests whose travel plans would be disrupted by the change.

Brand leadership expert [Denise Yohn states](#), “Brand power comes from keeping – not only making – promises.” All too often companies that claim to put the customer at the center of all decisions end up acting in ways that are anything but customer-centric.

To be fair to Silversea, it’s likely this decision came down from corporate leaders at RCCL. The Silversea brand is the group’s luxury brand and has little to gain from being associated with the other ships. One can only imagine the reaction of the ship’s captain, hotel manager and other leadership when they learned that their well-orchestrated disembarkation, preparation, and embarkation plans would be thrown into disarray. (Silversea had not responded to a request for comment at time of publication.)

Perhaps inconveniencing a mere 700 passengers (compared to a combined 10,000+) on the other two ships was considered an acceptable risk with comparatively small financial impact.

Because many passengers have already adjusted their plans, it is unlikely that Silversea will reverse course on participating in the photo shoot. At this point, the best they can do is to be especially helpful and accommodating to all affected passengers, even those who made their own travel arrangements.

Follow me on [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#). Check out my [website](#) or some of my other work [here](#).



[Roger Dooley](#)

I write about science-based business strategies. One thing customer experience and corporate culture have in common is that they both involve

...

**One Community. Many Voices. Create a free account to share your thoughts. Read our community guidelines**