

# Guide for First Time GMs

A **GM** is a Gentile (or Gentle or Gracious) Member or guest at a Club Med Village.

By “**Amateur GO**”

## **Packing suggestions:**

Most people will need to check a bag of luggage rather than being able to use a carry-on for a week (or more) trip. Since luggage can get lost, especially when making connecting flights to small Caribbean islands, you should also pack a carry-on with the essential items to last you a day or two without your luggage. I use a gym bag as my carry on and then we use it as a “beach bag” to carry towels and other beach equipment while at the Club Med. We include bathing suits, T-shirts, shorts and anything we might need for a day or two without our luggage. Just remember the airline/security rule about carry-on liquids: no more than 3 ounces of any liquid and pack these liquids into a 1 Qt, plastic bag.

Most people pack more clothes than they will need, especially on their first trip to a Club Med. You will probably be in bathing suits and T-shirt most of the day, so other clothes will last much longer than you might think. In addition to bathing suits (2) and T-shirts (about 3) I bring a lycra “water shirt”, a couple of pairs of shorts (walking/gym), 3 golf/polo shirts, 2 pair of long pants (dockers) and two “sport shirts” (I prefer long sleeve, but short is fine also). In addition I normally wear slacks and long sleeve shirt on the plane. For shoes, a pair of loafers packs easily, and I wear some sneakers on the flight. Then add water shoes for kayaking and windsurfing if so inclined and perhaps some sandals or such for beach walking. (I will not attempt to suggest what ladies should bring, but the above should give some ideas.)

Do pack plenty of sun block! The sun is strong and you’ll need to apply at least twice a day. There is sun block available at the village boutique, but it will be very expensive. Also bring insect repellent; whatever kind works for you. Some times there will be virtually no insects (like mosquitoes). Other times there will be lots of them. In general, if there has been a lot of rain recently, forming puddles and such, there will be lots of mosquitoes. If the mosquitoes are bad the boutique will sell out of insect repellent very quickly.

## **The Dress Code:**

This is something purely optional but can be fun... Each day of the week the GOs have a “dress code” assigned, normally some color combination that they are supposed to wear around the village in the evening. Dress codes might be “all black”, “western”, “Jeans and red”, “black and white” and is determined or set by the CDV (Chef de Village). Many GMs also go by the dress codes. We generally do when we have the appropriate clothes, but don’t go out of our way or pack special. For example, I refuse to wear jeans on a warm Caribbean island. If I’m trying to decide which of a couple of shirts to bring, I might decide in favor of one that fits a dress code better, but that is about as far as I’ll go. For example, one recent week at Turkoise had the following dress code:

Saturday: Black & Bright	Sunday: Red & White
Monday: Jeans & White	Tuesday: Brazil Colors (white, yellow, green)
Wednesday: Coffee Cream	Thursday: All White
Friday: Elegant	

(The current CDV at Turkoise, Flavia, was from Brazil, which is why the Tuesday colors.)

“Elegant” is relative.. nothing real fancy, certainly not coat & ties for men or long dresses for ladies, you’d look very out of place; more like slacks/dockers and a sport shirt (long/short sleeve) and loafers for men and a “little black dress” or simple cocktail dress/outfit for ladies.

For those who plan to **snorkel**... Club Med provides the mask, snorkel, and fins. If you have your own gear that fits you well, I suggest you bring it. Some people bring their own mask and snorkel (since they pack easily) and use the club’s fins. For insurance reasons, Club Med will only let you use the Club’s equipment while under a GO’s supervision. If you want to be able to snorkel on your own, you’ll need to bring your own gear.

For those playing **Tennis**... the club provides racquets and balls, but they are generally “well used”. Serious players will definitely want to bring their own, but beginners will probably be fine with the club equipment.

**Windsurfers** will want to bring their own harness if they have one. The club does have some harnesses, but they are well used and you’ll spend time (re)adjusting the straps every day. At many villages water shoes are recommended for some water sports, such as windsurfing, sailing, and kayaking. The beaches typically have shells and/or rocks and can be rough on tender GM feet. Also for windsurfers, sailors and kayakers, if your hands are not toughened up, you’ll probably want some kind of gloves.

**Divers** should bring as much of their own gear as they feel like carrying, except for tanks and weights, of course. Most divers will bring their own mask, fins, wetsuit (if needed), regulator, and computer, but all of these are available (some for a rental fee) at the village. If in doubt, check with the dive team at the village you are going to.

### **General:**

For everyone, since Caribbean islands do not have the most reliable electrical systems, I try to pack a small flashlight. The new, small LCD flashlights are perfect for this. We try to pack one or two good sized plastic bags that we can use for extra dirty or wet clothes/gear on the return trip.

The club provides shower gel, a small bar of soap, and shampoo. You will be in the sun and salt water a lot and Club Med does not usually provide any hair conditioner, so if your hair is at all sensitive to these conditions, bring some conditioner with you. Or, if you have some favorite type/brand of soap or shampoo, bring it with you. The club also provides hair dryers but ladies with a lot of hair may find it underpowered.

You generally will not need any cash at the village. If you purchase an excursion or anything in the boutique, it will be charged to a credit card. You may wish to leave a tip for your maid and if your air was not booked through Club Med, you may need cash for the taxi between the airport and the village. (If you booked air through Club Med, the transfers are included.) Although we usually leave the maid a tip, we have made some Club Med trips where we literally did not spend a dime the entire week.

# Club Med Terminology

## Some terms and general information about Club Med life

**G.O. Gentile/Gracious Organizer:** The young staff that lead most of the activities at the club. They are the Sailing team, the tennis pro, the chefs, the entertainment crew, the SCUBA team, etc. They are generally organized into teams, such as the sailing team, the SCUBA team, the Land Sports team, the entertainment team, etc. GOs are certainly not in it for the money, and they are on duty about around the clock. GOs sign on for six months at a time and they are usually moved to a different village every six months (generally early October and early April). The better the job they do (the happier they keep the GMs (see below)), the more likely they are to get their desired next location. GOs come from countries around the world and speak several languages, most commonly English and French. On a recent Club Med visit we got to know GOs from the US, Canada, Poland, Ethiopia, Brazil, and France.

**G.M. Gentile/Gracious Member:** All visitors to Club Med are club members. So you will be a GM....

### **Some implications of GOs and GMs...**

- Unlike most resorts, Club Meds do not have “staff” and “guests”, they have GOs and GMs, and there is a difference. There is a much more cooperative "everyone is together" feeling. GOs eat at the same tables with GMs and they frequently can be very entertaining and interesting. We generally get to know a couple of GOs pretty well and they really are friends.
- Although the GOs will do everything for you if you wish, the environment just seems to encourage doing things together. After sailing, we make it a point help haul the boats up the beach; we carry our windsurfer sails to the loft, etc. You don't have to, but it just seems natural.

**Chef de Village (CDV):** The head guy, the boss... he/she runs the place. You will find different styles of Chef's... Some play key roles in the entertainment; some mingle a lot with the GMs, some you almost never see... CDVs stay at a village for 1 to 2 years (and there is a minor ceremony when the chefs change). Some experienced GMs decide what village to go too based on who the CDV is.

**Chef of Animations:** Normally 2nd in charge and the main person leading the entertainment (if the CDV does not). Not all villages have a Chef of Animations, in which case the Chef of Sports (see below) will usually take over in the CDV's absence.

**Chef of Sports:** The GO in charge of all the sports. A good GO to know in case you have any problems or questions.

**G.E. Gentile/Gracious Emloyee:** The “normal” staff around the village, mostly local permanent employees. They do the grounds maintenance, housekeeping, non-chef restaurant duties, etc. GEs are the less glamorous but very important people who keep the village running.

**Mealtime Information:** Most clubs have large tables for 6 to 10 in the main restaurant, with mostly smaller tables in the annex restaurants. This group seating is a tradition at CM and is one of our favorite parts of the experience. Its' a little intimidating at first, but once you get used to it, it's really fun. There are usually also smaller tables (2 to 6 seats) on a patio outside the restaurant for “open air” (al fresco) dining, but these are occupied very quickly when the village is very full.

Lunch and dinner meals include beer (on tap) and wine. The wine is what would be considered daily “table wine” in France: drinkable, but not real good (with some exceptions). Better quality wine is available at a reasonable extra cost (about \$15/bottle and up). We usually just drink the table wine but occasionally splurge on the better bottles, especially when visiting the annex restaurant.

The **main restaurant** is completely buffet style, with several serving lines for the various types of food. At lunch and dinner there will usually be a main hot food line with relatively basic dishes, and a number of individual serving stations manned by the chefs who prepared that dish: these are usually the places to focus on. There will be several prepared salads as well as plenty of ingredients for “do-it-yourself” salads. You will probably be amazed at the fresh bread selection but sample the white chocolate bread at your own risk: it is known to be habit forming. The fresh fruits are usually very good and the cheese table offers a very good selection. The coffee offered by the dining room attendants is generally a bit weak and not very hot. (Note: we like “Starbucks style” coffee served very hot.) We usually just go to the coffee machine in the serving area and get good hot coffee/expresso there.

The **annex restaurants** are usually full table service but sometimes use a salad and/or desert buffet table. You will have to make a reservation for the annex restaurants, usually the day before you want to go there and usually at reception, but ask at reception for details or more information. I suggest going to the annex restaurant at least once or twice but, truthfully, the main restaurant is so much fun, we usually just go there.

**Crazy Signs:** Think of this as 'silly' line dancing... think of 'YMCA', Macarena, and the like. CM has choreographed a number of songs (mostly latin beats) with simple movements and the GMs are invited (encouraged) to join in the dancing with the GOs.

**Evening Entertainment:** Every evening, about 9:30 or 10:00, the GOs put on some form of entertainment. The quality varies from "marginal high school talent show" to "almost Las Vegas". It's amazing how different (in quality and entertainment value) the same basic show/script can be, based on the effort and talent that is put into it. If they have a Circus Show put on in the theater by the Circus team, don't miss it: they are usually one of the best shows of the week. There will frequently also be entertainment after the show, like a “beach party” on the beach, live entertainment (guitar/singing) at the bar or beach bar, or other such activities.

**Bar Beads:** Well, it started out as "Bar beads", then went to "bar coupons", which were used to pay for drinks (other than beer and wine at meals) but now most clubs are "all inclusive" and all drinks are included so you don't have to worry about bar beads or coupons, but you may sometimes hear references to the “old days” and bar beads.

**Sports Awards:** For the competitors among the GMs, there are a number of competitive events throughout the week. Some are rather silly "pool games", some are "participation" awards (for the people that go snorkeling every day, for example) and some are truly competitive (sailing regatta, tennis tournament, windsurfing race, volley ball, etc.). On Friday evening an awards ceremony is held, handing out medals on ribbons to the winners. The competition and corresponding awards have been deemphasized in the last couple of years so some weeks there may not be any award ceremony, especially if there are not very many GMs in the village that week.

If you have suggestions for changes or additions to this guide, please email them to me at: [mike@hammocktree.us](mailto:mike@hammocktree.us)

