

[Meet the Denbigh grandmother whose dream cruise turned into a 'nightmare' because of paperwork; Helen Jones, 69, a grandmother-of-seven, and her husband Ifor's paid around £8,000 for the trip to the Caribbean](#)

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Body

A couple's **dream** Caribbean **turned** to 'torment' because they did not have the necessary **paperwork** to enter American waters.

Helen Jones, 69, a grandmother-of-seven, and her husband Ifor's troubles began when they stepped aboard MV Oriana at Southampton.

P&O officials informed the couple from Denbigh they needed a £9 ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorisation) allowing cruise passengers to enter American waters without a visa.

While staff onboard the cruise in January were able to process Ifor's application successfully, Helen's was declined.

Helen told the Daily Post she "felt like a criminal", when staff broke the news she would have to leave the ship before it sailed into American waters.

She had to leave her husband and fly home alone from Cancun, in Mexico - Ifor could not fly with her as they had too much luggage to return together.

Helen said: "The whole thing has been a torment.

"We were on the cruise for nearly a month going around the Caribbean, but as we'd been told when we boarded the MV Oriana at Southampton that we needed an ESTA application we always had this big cloud hanging over us.

"But P&O officials had reassured us they could sort it out before we got into America.

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"When I was told I had to get off the ship and get a flight home alone from Mexico I was very upset, I felt like a criminal.

"I spent an extremely distressing night at a hotel in Progreso, followed by a three hour \$300 dollar taxi ride to Cancun Airport, at our own expense.

"And we only take cruises because I hate flying.

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The couple booked the 50-day cruise through Thomas Cook in Rhyl and paid around £8,000 for the trip.

They claim they weren't told by the travel agent that they needed an ESTA to get into America, and are now trying to get compensation back from Thomas Cook.

Helen said: "Ifor and I feel that Thomas Cook have failed in their duty of care and are responsible for turning this once in a lifetime holiday into a complete nightmare.

"We feel we've been greatly let down by Thomas Cook, and seek compensation for the trauma and upset we have suffered.

"We would certainly have not paid the full holiday balance before obtaining ESTA'S to allow us to travel."

A spokesman for Thomas Cook UK & Ireland said: "We know how important holidays are for our customers and appreciate how upsetting it must have been for Mrs Jones when US Immigration denied the visa application that she made whilst on her cruise.

"We sympathise with both Mr and Mrs Jones, but neither Thomas Cook nor P&O Cruises can accept responsibility for the application being denied."

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