



**Insider's Guide:
The Four Essential Ways to Save
Money When Booking Your Cruise**

EatSleepCruise.com

Sea the world one port at a time

Insider's Guide: The Four Essential Ways to Save Money When Booking Your Cruise!

Welcome Aboard!



Taking a cruise is one of the best ways to travel to new places, encounter different cultures, and experience areas of the world that are difficult to get to by other means of transportation.

Cruises can be one of the most affordable vacations too as most of the amenities onboard are included in your fare- food, non-alcoholic drinks, entertainment, lodging, and transportation.

Even still, costs for cruises can add up quickly if you count experiences like spa treatments, shore excursions, alcohol, and other optional fees not included in that cruise fare.

To make the most of your cruise, here are four essential ways you can save money when booking your vacation, even if you have never cruised before.

4. Cabin Types

When deciding on your cruise cabin (i.e., room), it is much different than a hotel. Whereas hotels typically offer only a few different room types, cruise ships have many more options, organized into a tiered system.

There is a lot of decision making involved when choosing a cabin type-size, features, and location to name a few. To pick the room that meets all your needs, but does not bust your budget, get familiar with the different cabin categories found on the ships you are considering.



In general, ships typically have the following cabin types.

- Studios (SOME newer ships have smaller rooms reserved for individuals traveling alone)
- Inside Rooms (facing inward toward the ship, so no ocean view)
- Ocean View Rooms (a window to the outside world, but no way to access it)
- Balconies (or Veranda) (you can now exit your room to see, smell, and hear the ocean)
- Mini-Suites/Suites (separate sleeping and living areas, at least one balcony plus better in-cabin furnishings)
- Exclusive Areas – these select cabins are often found on the top decks of the ship offering lush accommodations, superior service, exclusive offerings, and a hefty price tag.

For the most part, as you climb the cabin hierarchy, you are getting more space (both inside and outside), as well as improved views of the ocean.

Balconies and suites will give you more living area and (occasionally) larger bathrooms. Although, anyway you cut it, square footage is usually less than a hotel accommodation, unless you have a large suite.

Some cruise lines also provide select balcony and suite guests special access to reserved pools and deck chairs, priority seating at shows and port disembarkation (i.e., you get off the ship first when at port), special restaurants, private lounges, and other exclusive areas and services for booking these expensive cabin categories.

You have to know your budget and how much you want to reserve exclusively for cruise fare. Keep in mind you will have other costs related to this vacation. It is advised that you do not spend your entire budget getting a junior suite as you may be stuck there all vacation doing nothing!

The type of cabin you choose will be the biggest determinant of the final cruise fare, so you must consider what you are willing to sacrifice (and not sacrifice) when choosing your cabin.

- Do you need to see the ocean from your room?
- Will you basically sleep in your cabin and spend all day on the pool deck?
- Will you go from dinner, to the show, to the dance club, and never go above deck 7?

Our preferences are for higher deck, inside rooms. We are hardly in our room, using it mostly for sleeping quarters and showering/getting ready, so we choose to sacrifice the space and ocean view to spend our money on other elements of the cruise. Spending most of our time on the pool deck or other ship venues, we have all the space and ocean views we need.

But everyone is different. Know your budget and what you expect out of your cabin. This will ensure you pick the correct cabin, but do not waste money on extraneous amenities you really don't really need or want.

3. Location, Location, Location

Just like back on land, when it comes to real estate on a cruise ship, where the cabin is situated dictates its price. Even within your chosen category, the location of your room will affect the final price you pay. Certain areas of the ship are just more valuable than others.

In general rooms closer to the center of the ship (referred to as mid ship) are more expensive than cabins in the front (forward) or cabins in the back (Aft). For the most part, cabins of all different categories are spread throughout the ship. However, that is not always the case.

Be sure to check out deck plans of the ships you are investigating to see where the different room categories are to make sure the location too will meet your needs.

Middle of the ship puts you closer to the elevators and the venues on board and adds more costs to your room. You are also less likely to feel the boat moving. Even though most cruise ships are massive you are still sailing, so the ship's sway and roll will be felt less the closer you are to the center of the ship. Actually, staying on lower decks will also decrease your experience of the ship moving.

Higher decks often command higher prices. This means, your cruise fare is going to be higher depending on your cabin selection and location.

Often, the price of the same cabin type, on different decks, will vary anywhere from \$5-6 dollars a day, per person, to upwards of \$15 to \$20 a day, per person. The prices could be even more money for more expensive suites. The change in a few decks could save a couple traveling anywhere from \$50 to a few hundreds of dollars--Money perhaps better spent at the bar or on shore.

To save the most money, you can stay on lower decks in an inside room that is located either all the way forward or all the way aft. Period. End of the conversation.

If you are more adventurous, you could do a "room guarantee". This is the Russian roulette of cabin assignments. As you are guaranteed to get a room in your chosen category, but the deck and location is determined at the pier.

Again, we have stayed almost exclusively in mid-ship, large inside rooms on higher decks, like 8, 9, and 10. The costs to stay in these rooms, as opposed to the same category four or five decks lower ends up being about \$50, per person, more for the week. For us, it is the right blend of costs and location that matches our tastes.

2. When You Decide to Cruise (Time of Year)

All vacation destinations have slow times and busy times. When you decide to cruise could make a big impact in your final cruise fare costs.

Forty percent of cruise traffic occurs in the Caribbean and the Bahamas. With this massive amount of cruising, you can find departures from major ports-Miami, Port Canaveral, Ft, Lauderdale, FL-year round.



Interestingly enough, cruise traffic is at highest demand in this area in the summer. Thanks to the increase in families traveling on cruises and those pesky things called “summer breaks”. You can find more ships to choose from during these months as all major cruise lines try to get ships in this region.

Even so, you can still find plenty of ships in the Caribbean during the slow months, which tends to be October to January, minus the holidays which are busy (and very expensive). We almost always travel to the Caribbean in January/early February to escape the winter cold and take advantage of some of the lowest cruise rates.

The Mediterranean has recently become a year round cruising destination. However, very few ships are in the region from December to March. Besides the holidays, if a ship you are interested in is in port, I suggest checking out the winter, as you might be able to get a great deal.

If the dead of winter is not your thing, then try the shoulder months of April and November. There is less traffic, a few more ships, and potentially better weather. Great deals can still be had.

Other regions of the world tend to do seasonal routes, meaning that travel occurs only during select months. Typically, the cheapest rates can be found during the first few weeks or the last few weeks of the season.

For instance, our 2014 Alaskan cruise, (the Alaskan season runs from May to September), is the first week in September, one of the last weeks ships are in the region. We were able to score a great deal due to the time of year as well as a promotion by one of our preferred travel agents.

Booking your cruise when there is less demand will definitely save you some money. While it might take a bit of extra planning, that's where we, at eatsleepcruise.com, can help! Beat the crowds, keep extra cash in your pocket, and sail like a pro during the off season!

1. With Whom You Book Your Cruise

I will admit it--We have booked our travel through the cruise company as well as through online travel agents. In all honesty, you are almost NEVER getting the BEST deal when you book with the cruise company.

It is true that it is very rare to find an advertised price by a travel agent that is lower than a price advertised by the cruise line, but that doesn't matter as cheaper rates IS NOT THE MAIN REASON TO USE A TRAVEL AGENT.

While the right travel agent provides you with a wealth of information and insight, they can also offer you something more valuable, and cost effective, PERKS!

What are PERKS you ask? These are other offers that have a monetary value not tied to the actually cruise fare. They are things like onboard credit-- money put onto your ship's account so you can spend it when at sea on almost anything on the ship, except gambling. Other perks can include free spa treatments, room upgrades, free specialty dinner coupons, free gratuities, kids sail free, and my favorite-- free drink packages!

How do you score the best perks? Planning early is, of course, essential.

Many cruise lines and travel agents often run predictable promotions during parts of the year, especially during the slower months of January through March. Knowing this information, we frequently check to see what promotions our favorite cruise lines are offering and what perks our favorite travel agents are offering on cruises up to two years into the future.

Then bam! For the right cruise, we put down a deposit and have now COMBINED the cruise line's deals with our travel agents additional perks. Played right, you can get close to 50% of your cruise value in perks by using a travel agent. These perks are like money in your pocket, and while they do not directly affect your cruise fare price, they can be applied to costs you would most likely occur on the ship anyway.

Since we tend to book so far out, we always have the option to cancel one reservation and book through another promotion, if a better deal comes up. In our years of cruising and price comparing, we have yet to find a better deal (this includes combination of cruise fare and perks) on a cruise once we have booked.

The other great thing about travel agent and cruise line perk combinations are the choices. Often times, you can even choose which perk(s) you want. Don't have kids that can sail free, well here is a \$100 of onboard credit instead. Not a big drinker, well then here are free gratuities instead. You get the point-- many times you can customize the offers so you will be sure to get some value out of them.



Get Planning

Once you have an idea of the time of year you want to cruise, the region to which you want to cruise, and the ships you are interested in comparing, you can start to dig deeper into room categories, room locations, and those promotions and perks to get the best bang for your buck!

Call some travel agents to ask if they know of any planned promotions and what's the best deal they can give you. Shop around—save the most money you can! This will ensure that you have the cash to spend on onboard amenities, shore excursions, souvenirs, and other vacation fun!

Most importantly, don't let the planning process stress you out. Enjoy it!

You can also check us out at eatsleepcruise.com and ask us!



EatSleepCruise.com

Sea the world one port at a time