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**Fantastic Cruise Deals Abound at the Last Minute**

**By Lori Wilkerson**

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Fantastic Cruise Deals Abound at the Last Minute

Being a spur of the moment person has its advantages. It means you can "seize the day" and run with it, enjoying an opportunity when it comes your way. So the next time you've lined up your vacation time and decided you're just going to drive to the nearest lake or maybe visit some relatives, keep an open mind and check in on the great online cruise deals that show up as you get closer to your vacation dates.

You may discover that as your vacation rolls around the deals are getting better and better, and you simply can't pass up the opportunity to take advantage of the great offers out there. At first glance you may tell yourself that even with the reduced cost of a cruise you're still paying more to go on a cruise than you are to drive to a popular lake resort or beachfront rental property, but the discounts on last minute cruises are great bargains because they're all inclusive!

**All-inclusive Means Savings on Entertainment and Meals**

A cruise includes your entire trip, the accommodations, all of your meals (and the meals onboard ship are fantastic!), and all of the ship's entertainment, from dancing to Vegas style shows. Compare that to your vacation and you'll discover that by the time you add up your room, transportation, meals and entertainment expenses, the cruise deals that are available at the last minute just don't compare to your routine vacation plans - the cruises are much better!

Think about the total relaxation factor - no trying to find a good restaurant or wondering if there's anything decent in the way of entertainment. On a cruise vacation, everything's right there, every night. Your vacation is filled with every kind of entertainment, relaxation and fine dining imaginable even before you get to your ports of call!

Some of the amenities found on the typical cruise ship - and available with last-minute cruise deals - include:

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- ØFine & casual dining
- Ø24-hour room service
- ØSwimming pool
- ØFitness centers & spa facilities
- ØDay spa and beauty salon
- ØA variety of lounges and stages with world-class entertainment
- ØCasinos
- ØDuty-free gift shops

Is there a vacation anywhere that provides all of this in one location, all within walking distance, with gorgeous vistas of water and moonlight thrown in?

### Finding Sizzling Hot Cruise Deals is Easy

How do you find fantastic cruise deals? The best way is to be flexible - keep in mind that there are several reasons that last minute berths open up on cruise ships. Most commonly, cruise ships simply don't fill every one of their rooms on most cruises, and they understand that it makes more sense to offer these spaces at a discount than it does to leave these rooms empty. The level of service and amenities are exactly the same as that for passengers paying full price!

There are also sometimes last minute cancellations for whatever reason, and the cruise company will try to fill these rooms as well. After all, they had anticipated having these sales and when a cancellation comes through at the last minute, they will want to fill that spot.

### Tips for Getting the Best Cruise Deals

You can compound your cruise savings by booking last minute deals during off-season times when the rates are lower to begin with or cruising to destinations that you find intriguing but have unusual departure dates. A few general guidelines for finding great last minute cruise deals are:

- ØStart watching about two months before your vacation, and check back often - special discounts are snapped up quickly.
- ØBe flexible - if you can shift your travel dates by a few days one way or the other you may be able to save even more.
- ØBe adventurous - if you see a fabulous deal on an exotic cruise to someplace you've never thought of but that sounds intriguing - go for it! This is the time to use the savings to invest in broadening your horizons.
- ØOnline is the best and quickest way to stay informed - the Internet constantly updates information on cruise deals as cruise lines post available openings.
- ØKnow what you're looking for - there are so many kinds of cruises now available with different themes that it can be confusing. If you and your husband are going, don't bother looking at singles cruises - the savings isn't worth being surrounded by singles. But a cruise geared toward honeymooners might put a bit of spark back in your marriage, especially if you're looking for an anniversary getaway!

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### Theme Cruises are the New Trend in Packaged Cruise Deals

You can find some great savings on theme cruises, a new trend for people with special interests or hobbies. Because these cruises cater to very specific tastes, the price of open spots can drop more quickly when they are discounted because they realize the chances of filling the spots may not be as high as for a general cruise.

So if you're interested in a last minute cruise and also happen to be a food and wine connoisseur, you may be able to find a drastically discounted price on a Wine Tasting or Chef's Taste of Cultures cruise, combining two interests and saving money at the same time.

There are also cruises that correspond with times of the year, such as foliage cruises or whale watching cruises that may offer special savings if they have cancellations since these are only offered during small windows in time. If you happen to hit one of these, you can expect some really amazing discounts on unique, once-in-a-lifetime cruise opportunities.

### Trade Up to a Cruise for a Lifetime of Memories

So when that staid vacation is planned and you've already blocked out your vacation days at the office, don't be afraid to periodically check out the last minute cruise deals that can be found at rock bottom prices if you book just a few weeks in advance. Throw caution to the winds and pass on the lakeside fishing trip in favor of an unforgettable cruise to the Bahamas - with last minute bargains and fabulous all-inclusive packages you can turn that ho-hum trip into truly memorable one!

Lori Wilkerson is a full-time freelance writer who loves her job because it gives her the opportunity to learn more about the world every day. Right now, she knows a little bit about almost everything, and a lot about cruise discounts, and cruise deals. Lori once led a Conga line to the tune, "Hot, Hot, Hot," throughout an entire cruise ship sailing to Nassau.

### **Book A Cruise For Less**

#### **By Kirsten Hawkins**

So you've always wanted to take a dream cruise vacation. Maybe it's one of those things that wound up on the back burner, but you've started to believe that you just won't be able to save up the money to take yourself and the spouse, or the whole family, on such a trip. Think again.

The cruise industry is growing faster than ever, and with this huge expansion comes more opportunities to save money on special cruise deals. With more vacationers taking to the seas cruise lines are growing larger and can afford to offer special discounts to customers to get more people hooked on this luxury style of vacationing. Those looking for a cruise vacation can make a few smart decisions and save themselves a lot of cash without much sacrifice.

The first step is to look into theme packages. Many cruises offer special discounts for certain lifestyles

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or age groups. There may be a family discount, a golden years discount, or a honeymoon discount available. Depending on what type of cruise you want and who's going with you, this can be a huge money-saver if you're willing to accept what is offered in the packaged deal.

When it comes time to book your cruise, believe it or not, don't be too hasty. Many cruise lines receive unexpected cancellations at the last minute, and are eager to fill the empty slots. A would-be vacationer can often get extremely good deals if their schedule allows them to wait until the last minute to book. Call a cruise line days before a ship sets sail, and you might be pleasantly surprised by what you hear regarding discount rates for last-minute trips.

If you find a cruise line that you like, consider booking any future cruise vacations with the same line. Many cruise lines give discounts to repeat customers and you will probably receive a good percentage off your rate if you book a cruise at the same time each year with the same company. Talk to a travel agent who specializes in cruises. Often these agents can get you deals as well, especially with cruise lines they book often. By booking through an experienced travel agent you may earn the instant right to be a preferred customer.

Finally, do your research! There are many sites online for discount cruise fares, just as there are for airfares and other types of travel. Some websites specialize in locating cheap cruises for those who wish to vacation on a budget. Make use of a search engine, and don't get discouraged... your cheap cruise is out there somewhere. The trick is using resources and a little brain work to find it.

Kirsten Hawkins is a cruise and travel expert specializing in discount cruises and travel. Visit [Kirsten Hawkins](#) for more information on how to cruise the world for little or no money.



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