



Here is what the magazine Consumer Reports has to say...

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Talk to an agent. Cruisers should probably use a travel agent—a trustworthy cruise specialist at a high-volume agency that sells many cruises. (Some agencies sell only cruises, another option to consider.) In addition to advising you about ships, itineraries, and onboard ambience, the agent can also help you make decisions on cabin type, dining-room seating preference, any special airfare offerings from the cruise lines, and more. Be sure that the agency sells the cruise line of your choice. You don't want to call about one line and get a hard sell to switch to another. For the most knowledgeable service, find an agent who has cruised on the line you are interested in sailing.

Sail around the web. But use the Internet as a "looking tool" rather than a booking tool.

Always book as early as possible. Cruise specialists advise reserving at least four to six months in advance to get the cabin of your choice. Early-bird buyers may also find savings: early-booking prices, two-for-one specials, kids-free programs, credit for shipboard purchases, and free hotel accommodations before or after the cruise.