



## The Great Debate: Booking Early or Late?

Travelers have debated for years about the best time to book cruise vacations. They are more popular than ever and many ships fill up fast. On the other hand, some of the best cruise deals can be found just before ships are scheduled to sail.

Normally we suggest that our guests select the cruise which they want to sail on (or let us help guide them) and book it. Some cruise lines will protect rates if they drop prior to sailing, but certainly not all. We find that the price is long forgotten when a good vacation has been enjoyed.

We suggest the following booking guidelines when planning a cruise vacation:

Book early if:

You can only travel on specific dates, including pre-planned vacations, holiday vacations, school breaks, weddings, family reunions, corporate meetings and other similar get-togethers.

You want to secure the best price possible on air travel to the port of departure, or when you are using frequent flyer miles to buy an airline ticket. This is especially the case when frequent flyer tickets or long haul flights (Europe, Asia, S. America, etc...) are involved.

You want a specific cabin type. This may include a certain suite or location, adjoining cabins or one that accommodates a third or fourth guests. Persons requiring a handicapped cabin should also book early to assure one is available.

You wait to sail on a ship's inaugural cruise or want to travel to a particular destination with limited availability, such as Antarctica, the Galapagos Islands or a world cruise – these cruises tend to sell out quickly.

You like to eat dinner at a certain time and there are multiple seating times.

You want to put your cruise on vacation lay-away and make manageable monthly payments.

You want to travel with a group. In these situations, it makes sense to book early to assure all guests will be accommodated. Plus, one can hold some cabins without names, allowing time to gather enough people.

You want to take advantage of special early booking savings.

Book last-minute if:

Your job or circumstances dictate spontaneous, last-minute travel decisions.

You are traveling with just one or two couples and everyone is very flexible.

You are very flexible about your cabin type and formal dining times.

You can pay for a cruise in its entirety, rather than in installments.

You want to leave from your own port city or can easily drive to the port of departure.

Your goal is to find a lower price than others may pay, typically offered by cruise lines to fill up a ship just before it sails.