

Let's Go Vámonos Allons nous mes amis

Is it cheaper to book a cruise online through the cruise line or through a travel agent?

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It may or may not be cheaper to book through a travel agent, but it is definitely smarter.

There are different kinds of cruises for different kinds of people, different price ranges, and different kinds of ships. If you go to a cruise line's site, you will not see all of the options available to you. A travel agent will have many options so you can choose the best fit for your needs. An agent should be able to help you get the most for your money, whether it is telling you about a current promotion or getting you upgrades and perks. Also, an agent can



help you book tickets to your gateway destination and arrange overnight stays if necessary, and often at a better rate than that offered by a cruise line.

That being said, be cautious of an agent who does not ask enough questions to learn your specific needs and maybe some "nice to haves". If the agent

immediately tries to tell you that a certain cruise line on a certain date is exactly what you need, be suspicious of the reason for the quick suggestion. Sometimes it is more about a larger commission than your incredible vacation.

- many consumers are fed up with the complicated process
- few travel companies that are really trying to improve
- agents who have closed their brick and mortar agencies and moved their businesses home ... consumer cannot find the agent

Booking Online Can Ruin Your Trip

If you avoid sitting down at your computer to make travel arrangements or feel frustrated by all the time and effort it takes to sort through pages of results for flights and hotels, you are not alone. Far from enjoying the process, many consumers are fed up with the complicated process of planning and booking travel. This is because there are very few travel companies that are really trying to improve the planning and

booking process. Instead of helping consumers, they force customers to understand, on their own, extra fees, the fine print and industry terms. And they are left to educating themselves about destinations, flights and hotels.

A growing number of consumers seem to be interested in using an offline travel agent, if they could find one. This is an issue because of the number of agents who have closed their brick and mortar

agencies and moved their businesses home. This is difficult for both sides. The consumer cannot find the agent and the agent has difficulty making himself known to the consumer. Consumers should ask family and friends for referrals to local agents. Agents must continue to network to make certain that people know they are available to help with travel planning.

Is a Cheap Price the Same as Value for Your Dollar?

A consumer will spend hours on the internet trying to beat the great cruise or tour package rate an agent has found for them. There is a good chance that with enough time you can beat an agent's price. But are you getting the same value for the price, does it include everything that was in the agent's quote? And is

what you get for that price really what you want?

How often do we find ourselves choosing the cheapest option, passing over the better quality choice, because of price and price alone? We know there is a difference between price and value, but we have a quick reaction to the lowest price.

Travel is an emotional purchase. Travel is also one of the most important purchases we make because the experience of traveling lasts a lifetime. It is easy to see how going on the cheap is a mistake.

The airlines have taken note of this gate check pattern ... send the passenger back to the ticket counter ... charge the fee at the gate

Loophole to Checked Bag Fees Rule?

If you are determined not to pay to check your bag and you do not want to deal with the usual carry-on hassle either, you can try gate check.

As airlines continue to raise fees for checked bags, travelers are coming up with creative ways to dodge them. They carefully pack carry-on bags, stuff coat pockets with items usually packed,

or board last so they can check their bags at the gate for free.

These higher fees come at a time when carry-on bags are more closely checked. So the decision is – do I pay the fee or deal with the added security and lack of overhead bin space?

The airlines have taken note of this gate check pattern and say that it is

not standard procedure, though sometimes offered. They now watch for bags that are not the proper carry-on size heading for the gate and either send the passenger back to the ticket counter to check the bag or charge the fee at the gate.

At the moment, Southwest Airlines is the only airline that does not charge for checked bags.

A Few Travel Tips

Make two copies of important travel documents—one set for the trip, and one for friends or family to keep at home.

Pack light.

Avoid expensive-looking baggage and clothing.

Lock all suitcases. TSA approved locks are available at luggage and

department stores.

Only use covered luggage tags with your office address written on it rather than your home.

Carry only one credit card.

Don't keep all your money in one place.

Explore transportation options at your destination ahead of time.

Ask the concierge at the hotel about where—and, more importantly, where not—to go.

Americans Do Not Take Vacations

It is estimated that 31% of U.S. workers do not use all of their vacation time. We leave, on average, three days of vacation time unused per year. American workers get and use much less vacation time than Europeans. Responsibilities at work are one of the biggest reasons we do not take vacation time. U.S. adults admit to canceling or

postponing vacation plans because of work and say they have trouble coping with stress from work at some point while on vacation. Some even check work email or voicemail while away. Canadians and Europeans have an average of 17 – 37 vacation days each year, while American workers average 14 days per year.

It seems that other countries understand the benefit of time away from work on an employees overall productivity. The current economic and job climate in the U.S. also enters into this unsettling picture. Many workers are afraid to take time off for fear of losing their jobs while they are taking some well deserved time off.



Traveling Solo Is the Norm for One Third of Us

There remain many cases of single supplements added to the cost of a trip. Solo travelers usually think they have no choice but to pay this additional cost or stay home. A few places have begun catering to solo travelers, treating them almost like “regular” travelers. One resort in the Caribbean had so many solo travelers that, several years ago, they built a

new wing with 29 rooms for singles, all with queen beds. There is an organization which arranges singles events and puts together vacations for singles. The prices are per person. Guests who share can get a discount. Some travel companies make no concessions at all. Cruise lines have some of the highest penalties for traveling

alone, sometimes as much as 200%. During off-season, these fees can become more flexible. There is one company that has reduced or waived the single supplement on many cruise and tour itineraries in the US, Europe and Canada. The average savings is more than \$1,200.

“... one company has reduced or waived the single supplement on many cruise and tour itineraries”

Tips To Have a Luxury Hawaiian Vacation on a Budget

1. **S**tay at a “sister” property to a deluxe hotel where you have privileges at the deluxe hotel.
2. **C**onsider the least expensive room at a top resort.

3. **T**ake one of the free magazines in baggage claim or at your hotel. Some have coupons that you can use for things you were planning to do anyway, or for restaurants you were already planning to try.

4. **S**ome of the best things about Hawaii are very inexpensive. Two of these are Maui style potato chips and shave ice.

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All-Ways Traveling, Inc. began in 1992 with the owner "testing the waters" as an independent contractor with an established agency. In 1994 the "INC" was established and the rest, as they say, is history. We are not a chain agency, which means that we can do business in the best interest of our clients, not the way someone else thinks it should be done. We are affiliated with marketing groups that allow us to offer special promotions not publicly available.

Our focus is on groups and cruises. We facilitate events and destination weddings, executive retreats and sales meetings.

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Places To Find Pictures You Can Use For Free

Most of these sites allow you to use the images on your website, PowerPoint presentations and blogs at no cost, but you need to read the disclosure for each image you wish to use. Some images are allowed to be used as is with no editing at all. With others you may need to give credit to the photographer. Consider sharing your photos with any of the sites listed below. This way, the galleries of photos will grow for all of us to use:

<http://www.flickr.com/commons/>: Click on "try a search" next to the phrase "A Common Sampler" on the home page. You can either search by general groups or tags.
<http://www.morguefile.com/>
This is a gallery of images that have been retired.
<http://freerangestock.com/>
You will need to become a member (free) and the images are free to use for personal or commercial use.
<http://sunipix.com/>: Their motto is "Inspire, Imagine,

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This site not only offers photos but texture images that you can use for backgrounds. There are over 20,000 photos, and you must register to use.