



Hot Summer Cruise Deals

Cruise Lines Are Offering Some Great Deals This Summer

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Summer is traditionally one of the most expensive times of the year to take a cruise, but this year is an exception.

Stewart Chiron, aka "The Cruise Guy" told ABCNEWS' Good Morning America that summer cruise prices have hit a 10-year low.

Since Sept. 11, travelers have been taking shorter trips, spending less money and staying closer to home, according to the Travel Industry Association of America. So cruise lines are trying to lure people back with irresistible deals.

"There are great deals, whether you're going for a week or just a weekend getaway. Some are under \$300," Chiron said.

The Deals

Carnival Cruise is offering a three to five-night Bahamas or western Caribbean cruise from Miami for about \$279 per person from July through October 2002. That's down from its regular price of \$729, Chiron said. Rates in the fall will drop even more. These type of cruises are good sampler cruises if you do not have time for a full week, or are just testing out a cruise for the first time.

Royal Caribbean Explorer and Voyager of Sea (largest cruise ships in the world) are offering a seven-night eastern or western Caribbean cruise from Miami for only \$849 per person from July through September 2002. That cruise would regularly go for more than \$1,709, Chiron said. The Explorer cruise sails from Miami to Labadee (private island), San Juan, St. John/St. Thomas and Nassau. The Voyager sails from Miami to Labadee, Ocho Rios, Grand Cayman and Cozumel.

"All of the cruise lines are offering lower prices, so it's a good idea to take a look at all of the current deals," Chiron said. "Don't call the cruise lines directly for their fares; you'll end up paying a lot more."

Chiron suggests looking to his Web site, www.cruiseGuy.com, and other outside sources for the best deals.

For those who are worried about security, cruise companies say security is tighter than ever before.

Getting There

If you think you don't have the money to get to a port, you're probably underestimating your options, Chiron said. Beyond the traditional ports of Miami and Fort Lauderdale, cruises take off from New Orleans, Galveston, New York, San Diego and even Baltimore. Whether travelers live in the South, North, East or West, they may be able to drive to a port instead of paying for a flight. This is also a plus for would-be travelers who have been afraid to fly.

Carnival Cruise Lines is offering seven-night cruises to the western Caribbean from New Orleans, or Tampa, Fla., between July and October. Prices were \$1,449, but are now \$649. The Inspiration

sails from New Orleans to Montego Bay, Grand Cayman and Cozumel. The Sensation sails from Tampa to Grand Cayman,

These days a cruise can please the whole family, Chiron said. "Besides the buffets and open decks, you've got some of the best spas in the world. Some ships even have ice skating, rollerblading, 18-hole miniature golf and rock climbing," he said.

A cruise to Hawaii is even an option now for people who thought they could never get there. A seven-night Hawaiian Islands cruise from Honolulu on NCL's Norwegian Star starts at \$799 from July through September 2002. That's down from \$1,659. The Norwegian Star sails from Honolulu to Hilo, Fanning Island, Maui, and Kauai.

For those who would like cruising on a sailing ship, Windstar Cruises' "5-Star" Wind Song sails to exotic parts in French Polynesia. This year's trip is from Papeete, Tahiti to Raiatea, Huahine, Bora Bora and Moorea. It has been called a "floating Four Seasons," but you should leave your tux at home. The ship only holds 140 passengers.

Prices were from \$5,820. For July and August, they are offering all-inclusive prices, with airfare from most major gateways for \$2,495.

Cruises can be an affordable option for families, too, Chiron said. And a lot of cruise lines, such as Disney (which, like ABCNEWS.com, is owned by the Walt Disney Co.), Carnival, Royal Caribbean and Princess, are very kid-friendly. Families who wish to share a cabin should reserve early, because cruise lines sometimes begin to limit the amount of passengers per cabin, and families would have to purchase multiple staterooms to accommodate everyone.

To find out more about the cruise deals Chiron talked about on Good Morning America call, toll free, 1-800-700-3881.

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