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# Cruises are a cheaper way to travel right now: Here's what to know, when to book

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USA TODAY

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Between high travel demand and inflation, taking a trip this summer may be a pricey prospect. But if you are still looking to plan a trip, cruises are a more affordable option – for now.

Stephanie Goldberg-Glazer, owner of the travel agency Live Well, Travel Often, said that while that difference is not necessarily new, this year it is "a little bit more pronounced because hotel prices have gone absolutely insane across the world."

Cruise line capacity and occupancy rates have been ramping up after the pandemic shut the industry down. But while ships are sailing, Goldberg-Glazer said, "I think that the general public has not come back to cruising quite as quickly." When compared with next summer, she said, "The cruise prices for this summer are better because I don't think anyone thinks there's going to be a problem filling ships next summer."

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Here is what passengers need to know about those last-minute deals, including when to book and what to do if you already have.

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## Are cruises cheaper now?

Between July and September, there are 48 sailings available for less than \$60 per day including port fees and taxes, according to Cruise Sheet, which aggregates cheap prices.

Travel app Hopper said in its Summer 2022 Travel Guide that hotels would cost travelers an average of \$154 per night, meanwhile, and domestic airfare was averaging \$383, up 34% compared with the same time in 2019.

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But Goldberg-Glazer said there are a lot of components that constitute a good deal. For instance, a cruise that is slightly more expensive than another but includes Wi-Fi and other amenities may be a better deal depending on the passenger.

"It's really personal, and I think it's actually more than just a numbers game of what the lowest dollar amount is," she said. "You have to make sure the value is there for the client's particular needs."

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## When should I book my next cruise?

For travelers looking to take a cruise this summer, Goldberg-Glazer said, they should book "now."

"Like, this minute. Right now. As soon as they're reading this article, call their travel adviser and book their summer trip," she said. Goldberg-Glazer said her agency is already booking cruises through the end of 2023.

She added that in the short term, fares are still very good as travelers have been booking more last minute this summer, but that prices are "creeping up" for the end of 2022 and into next year.

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## What if I've already booked a cruise?

That depends on the cruise line and their policies, Goldberg-Glazer said.

Celebrity Cruises, for instance, has a Best Price Guarantee, and will match an "available prevailing cruise fare" if a guest requests a lower price on or before the final due date of payment, according to its website.

If the final payment due date has passed and the booking is "within 48 hours from creation," the line will apply an onboard credit for 110% of the price difference.

If you see a lower fare than what you booked, Goldberg-Glazer said, it's always worth asking the cruise line what your options are.

"What's the worst that can happen?" she said. "You're in the same exact situation that you were five minutes ago, and best-case scenario, you get something unexpected, which is a happy surprise."

She said going through a travel adviser can also be helpful, depending on their relationship with a cruise line.