



Your travel4seniors.com editor been on dozens of cruises since retirement 25 years ago, and has suggestions on how to make the best and most satisfying deals.

1. Travel light. After our second or third cruise, we stopped dragging suitcases and being required to check them everywhere we went. We each took a wheeled carry-on bag and knapsack, and never again checked anything.

Suitcases on flights and cruises must be checked, and the waiting and wondering everywhere you have to retrieve them just adds to the stress. On several occasions, fellow passengers lost luggage, and had to buy entirely new outfits from expensive onboard shops. 2. Unless a for-fee shore excursion during the cruise is an absolute must, don't sign up for any. They usually cost \$100 or more per person for a couple of hours circling in a bus to the usual tourist traps.

You can enjoy a more varied and relaxed adventure by riding with another couple in a taxi for a lot less money. Or you could just walk around the tourist town, and hop on and off local transportation.

3. Watch that diet! Many cruises offer 24-7 food, always much too rich and overloaded for most older people. Your body won't be happy if you go suddenly from 1,500 calories a day at home to 5,000 while stuffing yourself day and night on a cruise. Often what some not-to-smart passengers call mal de mar is just results of gross overeating.

4. When ashore in tourist towns, don't eat food sold from open stands. If you didn't get sick from overeating aboard ship, your chances of having a gut rebellion from bad native food ashore are at least as high.

5. Booking is always a tricky proposition. Travel agencies constantly run ads offering super bargains, discounts and attractive amenities. By shopping around, we've made some great deals. Additionally, we've found that contacting the cruise lines directly by phone or online has also been an excellent source of getting the best bargains, as well as unadvertised incentives like last-minute bookings and upgrades to roomier staterooms on upper decks.

Of course, there are many ways to get the best deals and good onboard programs. If you prefer the quiet company of older people, book one that is not full of young high school or college party animals or families with overactive little kids. Check out cruise offers carefully to make sure to book the absolute right one for you.