



Q: Our travel agent said it would cost another \$50 a night if we booked a cabin with a private balcony. The cruise is 14 days, requiring another \$700. Is it worth the extra cost? *Jeanne L., Birmingham AL*

A: Looking out at the ocean by day and by moonlight is great from your own private balcony. And watching the full panorama of arrivals and departures in harbors are wonderful cruise experiences. If airfare and your two-week cruise already costs \$4,000 or more, consider spending the extra bucks. Think of the selfies and lasting memories!

If you want to save money, here's an idea. Try for a balcony cabin without the extra charge. When booking, and depending on the season, ask your travel agent if you can be bumped up to a balcony cabin free as part of a special promotion. If it doesn't happen on booking, there may still be a chance. When you go aboard, and before you go to your cabin, hit the purser's desk. Ask if there's a deal available for a free or discount upgrade to a balcony cabin. Sometimes, when the cruise isn't all sold out, bumping up is available.

It wouldn't hurt your chances to slip in \$20 or so of balcony bribery bucks.