



Don't get us wrong. Cruising is one of the best ways to enjoy a relaxing, exciting vacation. Prices are very reasonable, cabins comfy, food plentiful and onboard activities fun. However, when you go aboard, keep in mind that cruise lines offer the bargain rates because they expect you to spend a lot of money on expensive extras. Here are some suggestions on keeping your bargain cruise a real bargain.

1. Take the smallest, lowest-deck cabin: You may feel you're in the ship's brig, with tight space and no porthole, but ask yourself if you expect to do more than sleep there. Otherwise, if you want to see the ocean, go up on deck or sit on a balcony. Your cost for the cabin will be at least double.
2. If you want entertainment, go to the free stuff, including lectures of cooking, movies, floor shows and music by the pool. If you play bingo and casino games, expect to lose money. On many cruises, there are also big sales on souvenirs, clothing and original art. Wait until the last full day before you go home to buy. That's when prices drop as much as 50 percent.
3. Booze and soft drinks are high priced, often \$10 a serving, plus tip. Stay with free drinks at meals and buffets. On some cruises you can buy a drink or soft drink container for \$25 or so, and refill it at no extra cost as many times as you want throughout the cruise.
4. Cruise lines make a lot of money on their shore excursions. You can pay \$150 per person or more to be hauled around an island in a bus for a couple of hours. Instead, get a local taxi or use feet power, and see the same sights for much less. You'll also have the freedom of choosing your own places to visit, rather than be taken to the usual tourist trap shopping areas.
5. On most cruise ships, the pools, saunas, water slides and whirlpools are free. There's usually an onboard spa club, where you can pay \$150 or more for an hour's rubdown. Unless you like

being pampered and patted for a fee, take advantage of the free stuff.