



One of the most enjoyable aspects of retirement is the freedom to travel anywhere at any time. When making plans, here are a few ideas.

**Pricing:** Seek out the best deals. Prices can vary greatly according to season, destinations and many other factors. As with resort hotels, cruise billings are based during the year on what are called high, shoulder, and low seasons.

For warm destinations like the Caribbean or Hawaii, high season is December thru April. For European cruises, high season is summer. High season cruises are more expensive. Low season is cheaper, but weather is a factor. Any popular vacation period (Christmas, New Year's Eve, Spring Break) brings heavy demand and higher pricing. Shoulder season is the time right before and right after high and low season, often with bargains. For example, consider Mexico from Los Angeles in autumn, when prices are lower and weather warm.

**Springtime Cruises:** Consider a cruise to France, Italy, the Netherlands or Ireland, when trees and flowers are in full blossom. The crisp cool air enhances sightseeing, biking, hiking and other outdoor activities. April may be the best time as the weather warms, but cruise prices usually don't rise until May.

**Winter Cruises:** Low season has the best prices for cruises to cold weather destinations. Consider a repositioning cruise, when ships go to warm climate ports for the winter. It requires a one-way flight, which may or may not be included in the price of the cruise.

**Summer Cruises:** It's the most popular time of year for cruises, when most families take vacations. Seniors may want to avoid them, because of busy decks and dining with kids running around.

**Autumn Cruises:** Shoulder season can be the most relaxing for seniors. Fewer young adults and kids make the ship's recreation and dining facilities less crowded. When planning, note September and October are hurricane season in the Caribbean and surrounding areas, and weather can be a concern.

The best times to cruise depend on costs, personal preferences and many other factors. Whenever you chose to sail, it can be an enjoyable and convenient way to see the world.