

# Family First

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## **Family First: Cruise With The Kids**

*by Cindy Hsu*

NEW YORK (CBS) — If you're planning on taking a cruise with the kids, there's lots you should know before you book that vacation. Stewart Chiron, President of [cruiseGuy.com](#)., explains.

### **1. What are your top tips for parents booking a cruise for kids?**

#### **Planning Is Everything**

"Research the specific ship not just the cruise line to determine if they're truly family friendly. Keep in mind that many of the older cruise ships (15 + years) are not as family friendly as the newer ones. This is especially important when traveling with kids 3-6 years old as the onboard facilities may not have been designed with them in mind."

#### **Choose Your Destinations Wisely**

"Traveling with young children can be a lot of fun. Identify desired destinations and determine the available ships sailing that route. Realize that many cruise lines tout children's programs, but some are nothing more than glorified baby sitting services. Programs may not be available on all ships and sailings and may also have a minimum number of kids for the program to be available. As a parent, you should not leave this extremely important component to chance so ask questions."

### **2. What is the best cruise lines for kids?**

"The most family friendly cruise lines are Disney, Royal Caribbean, Princess and Carnival."

### **3. What questions should a parent ask before booking?**

"Which ships are really best for kids? Are the kids lumped together or in age specific groups? For young kids, what medical facilities are onboard and at the ports-of-call being visited?"

### **4. What are some packing tips?**

"Pack light. Don't bring what you don't intend to wear. When traveling, parents should strongly consider bringing their own portable cribs for infants and toddlers, including fitted bed sheets. This will ensure their safety and your piece of mind."

### **5. What are some money saving idea?**

#### **Be flexible with your dates**

"Cruise prices can vary by sailing date. If possible check a few dates before and after your desired sailing date to ensure maximum savings."

#### **Always use a cruise agent; Never, never book direct!!**

"There isn't one advantage to booking directly with a cruise line. You'll never get the objective, professional advice direct from the lines. A true cruise specialist will be able to match you with the best ship and deal."

#### **Book early. Book now. Don't wait!**

"Try and book your cruise as soon as possible. Booking windows have returned to pre-9/11 patterns and some of the most desired specialty itineraries like Europe and Alaska require you to book in advance to avoid paying higher air and cruise fares. The difference can be thousands of dollars."

#### **Consider travel insurance**

"A cruise is an investment of money and time and should be protected. Besides providing protection for cancellation, policies also cover for interruption and travel delay and is worth serious consideration. Purchasing travel insurance isn't necessary until final payment time as there is no risk up until that point."

#### **Use your credit card to maximize protection**

"When buying any form of travel, consumers should take advantage of their creditcards' security and protection programs. In case you don't receive the product or service you contracted for, the credit card companies may provide recourse."

### **6. Do you have any final thoughts?**

"I thoroughly enjoy cruising with my kids. It's an incredible opportunity for parents to create lifetime memories with their children. Because cruising is so affordable, families can experience the best cities that the world has to offer."

## **Seek An Expert's Advice When Booking**

"Buying a cruise is like buying a car. There really is a ship for everyone. The right ship will yield priceless memories while the wrong one may mean disaster so do your homework. Always seek the objective advice of a true cruise expert, not just an agent regurgitating information from cruise lines' brochures. Ask your agent which ships they've personally sailed on. If they haven't sailed, what advice do they have to offer?"

For expert advice and the best deals, call The Cruise Guy at 1.800.700.3405 or visit [Cruise Guy](#) or [Kiddie Cruise](#)



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