

50+ Travel: Tips on choosing the perfect tour or cruise

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(StatePoint) For many baby boomers, travel is their favorite leisure activity. Whether to cross something off their bucket list or to indulge in a passion, the 50 and older crowd is on the go.

Organized tours and cruises are among the top choices for vacation among boomers, and the good news is that there are hundreds of options to choose from with both. Clay Buckley, vice president, lifestyle, at AARP Services, Inc., a taxable subsidiary of AARP, says boomers should consider many factors when deciding on the perfect trip.

"Some travelers over 50 may prefer a relaxing itinerary among people their own age, while others want to be on the go with people of all ages," says Buckley. "Luckily, the options in cruises and tours are vast enough to suit any style, budget and need."

Buckley recommends boomer travelers consider the following when planning a cruise or tour:

- **Trip activity level:** Travelers should determine objectives for their trips. Is it to rest and relax? Learn? Enjoy lots of activities? Tours and cruises often have themes and all have set itineraries, so it's important to know what to expect before you go.
- **Destination:** Some cruises and tours head for far-reaching places and little-known ports of call, while others stick to more mainstream destinations. Others combine the two. Travelers should consider the appeal of all legs of their trip. Some also like to take trips that enable them to add on other destinations or more days to the end or beginning of the trip.
- **Timing and budget:** Prices for tours and cruises may be lower in off seasons such as spring and fall, and may also help travelers avoid weather extremes. Also, single travelers should be aware that some trips charge for lodging based on double occupancy. In addition, the cost to get to and from the trip should be factored into a trip budget. For example, you may have to fly to and from a cruise port.
- **Size:** From intimate, small-group excursions by van or small boat, to large tours via bus or cruise ship, size makes a difference. Travelers should be realistic about their desire to be around large or small groups for extended periods and their need for independent travel or time alone. They should also be aware that some cruises and tours cater specifically to families.

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- Physical limitations: Travelers with physical limitations or special medical needs should assess their ability to engage in the trip itinerary. They should also check whether medical care is readily available or accessible while on the trip.
- Discounts: Vacationers should remember they can save on their trip by seeking out available discounts. For example, from cruises to rental cars, a variety of travel discounts are available to AARP members.

Discount providers are selected only after a rigorous process is performed to ensure AARP members receive a valuable offer they want and the quality service they expect, says Buckley. More information about discounts and limited-time offers on cruises and tours is available to AARP members at www.aarpdiscounts.com.

By taking several factors into consideration, you can make the most of your next vacation.