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To: [Kester, Tonykester@aging.sc.gov](mailto:Kester,Tonykester@aging.sc.gov)
Date: 12/10/2015 2:59:23 AM
Subject: Alaska Cruises Selling Fast! plus This Week's Cruise Deals

Dear Mr. Kester,

At Vacations To Go, we like to help our customers stay on top of the best times to book certain destinations. Today's newsletter is for my readers who want to experience the incomparable natural beauty and majesty of **Alaska** on a cruise next summer.

In past years, I've generally recommended waiting until 90 days in advance of departure to book Alaska. That's frequently the time when unsold cabins are marked down for quick sale. Over these last few weeks, however, we've seen that **Alaska cruises and cruise tours are selling out much earlier this year**

If an Alaska cruise is on your travel list for 2016, I recommend that you call us as soon as possible to get the itinerary, ship and departure date you desire -- especially if you require a cabin that accommodates three or more people or a passenger with special needs, or if you need two adjacent or adjoining cabins or more than four cabins on a single sailing.

We want to be sure you get the best possible deal on your Alaska cruise, so we've negotiated the following money-saving offers with leading cruise lines in the region. Click the cruise line name to see departures and rates.

Save up to 78% with [Holland America](#) and get exclusive shipboard credits of up to \$400 per cabin.

Save up to 71% with [Oceania](#) and get shipboard credits of up to \$650 per cabin.

Save up to 71% with [Norwegian](#) and receive an additional perk like free drinks or free Internet minutes.

Save up to 71% with [Royal Caribbean](#) and receive shipboard credits of up to \$500 per cabin.

Save up to 67% with [Carnival](#).

Save up to 65% with [Regent](#) and enjoy shipboard credits of up to \$900 per cabin.

Save up to 63% with [Princess](#) and enjoy shipboard credits of up to \$85 per cabin.

Save up to 62% with [Crystal](#) and get shipboard credits of up to \$400 per cabin.

Save up to 59% with [Celebrity](#), plus pick two amenities like free drinks, free gratuities or up to \$200 in shipboard credits.

Get exclusive **shipboard credits of up to \$50 per cabin** with [Disney](#).

Below, I've organized our Alaska cruise and cruise tour departures by month. For a full list of prices and dates, click any month:

[May cruises in Alaska](#)
[May cruise tours in Alaska](#)

[June cruises in Alaska](#)
[June cruise tours in Alaska](#)

[July cruises in Alaska](#)
[July cruise tours in Alaska](#)

[August cruises in Alaska](#)
[August cruise tours in Alaska](#)

[September cruises in Alaska](#)
[September cruise tours in Alaska](#)

Next, I'll cover four key factors to keep in mind when planning a visit to America's last frontier: itinerary, weather, wildlife and passports.

Itinerary

There are two types of itineraries for Alaska cruises: Inside Passage cruises that sail round trip from Vancouver, Seattle or San Francisco; and Gulf of Alaska cruises that sail one way between Vancouver and Seward or Whittier (gateways to Anchorage and the interior city of Fairbanks). The Gulf of Alaska cruises include several days in the Inside Passage.

The round-trip cruises offer two advantages: 1) There are many flights daily into, and out of, Vancouver, Seattle and San Francisco, and 2) They require less expensive airfare because no long flight to (or from) Anchorage or Fairbanks is involved.

Air into (and out of) Anchorage and Fairbanks is quite limited and flights fill early with cruise and cruise tour passengers, which makes it more risky to wait for a last-minute deal on a one-way Gulf of Alaska cruise.

The biggest advantage of one-way cruises is that they allow the opportunity to explore the interior of Alaska on a pre- or post-cruise land tour. Between one-third and one-half of all Alaska cruisers extend their cruise with a tour of inland Alaska (out of Anchorage or Fairbanks) or British Columbia or the Canadian Rockies (out of Vancouver).

If you are leaning toward one of these cruise tours, keep in mind that tour buses, railcars and lodges in Alaska are very limited in supply and can sell out early. I recommend booking soon to ensure availability.

Weather

Alaska weather is delightfully unpredictable, but in general, you'll find the warmest temperatures in July and August, when average highs are in the low to mid-60s. Precipitation can rise a bit in late August and early September, but I personally would not avoid that time for that reason.

One of my fondest Alaska memories is of sipping coffee on our balcony as the scenery melted away and the ship slowed to a crawl in dense fog in the Inside Passage, our foghorn echoing off the mountains on either side, warning fishermen of our approach. On another day, we hiked a trail to an alpine lake for a canoe ride to the face of a glacier, in a driving rain. Invigorating does not begin to describe it. Weather is part of the experience in Alaska.

[Click here](#) for a list of Alaska ports, and then click a port name to see the weather details for that location.

Wildlife

Wildlife is one of the big attractions of Alaska, and different species are active at various times during the cruising season. Humpback and killer whales are seen throughout the summer in large sounds and straits along the coast as they migrate between their winter homes in the south and their summer homes in the north. Brown and black bears can be spotted in grassy tidal flats starting in May and near salmon streams and berry patches in July and August. Moose and caribou begin calving in May, so look for cow moose and their young near thickets along roadsides and rivers in May and June.

Bald eagles are plentiful and can be viewed at the water's edge through the summer, particularly near salmon-spawning streams. Tufted puffins and other seabirds begin nesting colonies on coastal islands in May. Shorebird-watching is popular in August and September as various species begin their migrations south for the winter.

Harbor seals are visible throughout the season and can be seen with their pups on and around the icebergs of Tracy Arm and Glacier Bay during the month of June. Sea lions start to become visible in September.

Fishermen will be happy to know that at least one variety of salmon -- the prized king salmon -- runs from May through August. Late May through June is the best time for saltwater king salmon fishing, and July through August is best for freshwater king salmon fishing. Sockeye (red) salmon fill freshwater streams and rivers on their spawning run from late June through July.

Saltwater fishing for chum and pink salmon is best in July and August, and freshwater fishing for these species is at its peak in August. Coho (silver) salmon can be found in saltwater areas from late July through early September and are abundant in freshwater areas during September and October. Halibut is most plentiful in saltwater areas from late June through August.

Passports

Passports are required for all travelers who enter or re-enter the U.S. by air from any other country, which means that U.S. citizens and residents who fly back to the U.S. from Vancouver or any other Canadian city after an Alaska cruise or cruise tour are required to have a valid passport.

Passports also are required for anyone who enters or re-enters the U.S. by land or by sea. There are a few exceptions to the passport requirement pertaining to land and sea border crossings.

First, U.S. citizens on cruises that begin and end in the same U.S. port and travel to destinations in Canada (and select other countries) are able to re-enter the U.S. with proof of citizenship other than a passport, such as a birth certificate and government-issued photo ID. Passports are required for cruises that begin in one U.S. port and end in another.

So, U.S. citizens on cruises that sail round trip from Seattle or San Francisco are not required to have a passport. U.S. citizens who drive to Vancouver for a round-trip Alaska cruise or who cruise one way between Vancouver and an Alaskan port (such as Whittier or Seward) do need a passport.

Next, children under the age of 16 who are citizens of the U.S. or Canada are exempt from the passport requirement for land and sea border crossings. In lieu of a passport, children are able to use a birth certificate as proof of citizenship for entry into the U.S. by land or by sea. Children entering or re-entering the U.S. by air still are required to have a valid passport.

Finally, a lower-cost alternative to the passport, called a passport card, is acceptable for entries into the U.S. by land or sea. Compared to passports, which cost \$135 for first-time applicants (\$105 for children), passport cards cost just \$55 (\$40 for children). The passport card is not acceptable for air travel.

Even in cases where a passport is not required, Vacations To Go and all cruise lines recommend that passengers have them anyway. This is because, while highly unlikely, an emergency could arise in which a U.S. citizen needed to disembark early and fly home from Canada, and a passport would be required for that flight.

Passports are required for citizens of all other countries for any Alaska cruise or cruise tour.

For those who are not necessarily planning to cruise Alaska in 2016, here are some great deals for departures worldwide. Every cruise has been deeply discounted and many of the deals include shipboard credits, which are as good as cash on the ship and can be used for onboard purchases not covered in your cruise fare, such as shore excursions and spa treatments.

Royal Caribbean is offering our customers fantastic last-minute discounts -- save up to 84%. Plus receive exclusive shipboard credits of up to \$650 per cabin on nearly every voyage from now through the end of March. [See dates and prices.](#)

Celebrity is offering our customers rates reduced by up to 75% and exclusive shipboard credits of up to \$250 per cabin, plus choose one of these amenities: 1) a free Classic Beverage Package, 2) free gratuities or 3) free Internet. Book an Alaska or Europe voyage and pick two of the perks above. Book a suite and get all amenities plus a Premium Beverage Package on all 2016 voyages. [See dates and prices.](#)

Regent is offering Vacations To Go customers savings of up to 82% in a variety of sailing regions. Also

enjoy shipboard credits of up to \$900 per cabin and free Wi-Fi. Regent fares include unlimited shore excursions, gratuities and unlimited beverages including fine wines and premium spirits. [See dates and prices.](#)

As always, these offers are for new bookings only and subject to availability. Restrictions may apply.

Here's a list of specialty cruises, discounts and resources we offer. Some are available only to certain types of travelers, and others are available to all Vacations To Go customers. Click the links below for more information:

[Age 55+ Rates](#)
[EMT Discounts](#)
[Firefighter Discounts](#)
[Grand Voyages](#)
[Hosted Singles Cruises](#)
[Interline Rates](#)
[Military Rates \(U.S. and Canadian\)](#)
[Past Passenger Rates](#)
[Police Discounts](#)
[Regional Deals](#)
[Teachers' Rates](#)
[Travelers with Special Needs](#)

Discount programs like these can be issued or withdrawn at any time by the cruise line, and are not normally combinable with one another. Always tell your Vacations To Go cruise counselor if you qualify for a military or interline discount, are a past passenger of the line you are calling about, or if anyone in the cabin will be 55+, so that he or she can make sure to check for any additional discounts to which you may be entitled.

Here are today's [Top 10 Cruises](#), brand-new specials from the world's best cruise lines. **Click the FastDeal # for details.**

- 1) [Caribbean](#), 7 nights on Carnival, departs Galveston Feb 6, starting at \$469, save 72%, [FastDeal # 30911](#)
- 2) [Mexico](#), 7 nights on Princess, departs Los Angeles Feb 27, starting at \$499, save 33%, [FastDeal # 34030](#)
- 3) [Caribbean](#), 7 nights on Holland America, departs Fort Lauderdale Jan 3, starting at \$489, save 67%, [FastDeal # 16837](#)
- 4) [South America](#), 14 nights on Celebrity, departs Santiago Jan 17, starting at \$949, save 74%, [FastDeal # 12175](#)
- 5) [Caribbean](#), 7 nights on Royal Caribbean, departs San Juan Dec 20, starting at \$869, save 69%, [FastDeal # 31023](#)
- 6) [Bahamas](#), 7 nights on Carnival, departs New Orleans Jan 24, starting at \$589, save 65%, [FastDeal # 26511](#)
- 7) [Caribbean](#), 7 nights on Norwegian, departs Port Canaveral Jan 2, starting at \$599, save 63%, [FastDeal # 34202](#)
- 8) [Middle East](#), 7 nights on Royal Caribbean, departs Dubai Dec 21, starting at \$787, save 54%, [FastDeal # 30348](#)
- 9) [Panama Canal](#), 10 nights on Holland America, departs Fort Lauderdale Feb 5, starting at \$899, save 53%, [FastDeal # 16957](#)

10) **Northern Europe**, 11 nights on Cruise & Maritime Voyages, departs London Mar 1, starting at \$1,109, save 70%, [FastDeal # 12217](#)

For the best last-minute cruise specials in the next 90 days, please visit our world-famous [90-Day Ticker](#). To search for discounts of up to 82% on cruises departing more than 90 days from now, [click here](#).

To save up to 40% with escorted and independent tours, [click here](#).

For river cruises up to 50% off, [click here](#).

For discounts of up to 50% at hotels and all-inclusive resorts, [click here](#).

For the lowest rates on Africa safaris from budget to luxury in quality, [click here](#).

Once you've found a FASTDEAL, call us toll free at 800-338-4962 (US and Canada) and a cruise counselor will attend to your needs. International customers, please email or call us at +1-713-974-2121.

Please email me your comments, suggestions and questions at alanfox@vacationstogo.com and I will respond the same day.

If you enjoy our newsletter, please forward this email to family and friends.

Sincerely,

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