

Travel via the Moon

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When putting together a big trip, especially one involving trans-ocean air travel, cruise lines and tour companies will often offer *free airfare*. Whether you're thinking about river cruises, ocean cruises or just a guided vacation, you **may** (not always) find that **free** (or even *reduced*) **air fares** are part of your vacation package. And even if they are NOT included in the cost to you...don't hesitate calling the tour operator and ask for *free OR REDUCED airfare if you sign up...get it in writing* from that company!

The way it works is the company you're signing up with will assign your flights from the airport closest to you to the airport closest to your destination cities. You probably will not receive those flight airline and dates until 60 days prior to the tour departure date overseas. If you're happy with the departure dates/airline/airports and *it is included in the tour price*, you are good to go...but something is not right...do you have other options? You do.

Talking with your tour company you will find that **some** companies will allow you to change the airline, dates and even the airports on your tour...often for a small increase in the original cost. And why do people want to increase their original cost? Well, how about visiting another city or country *before or after* your tour which would require a different date and maybe a different airport. If a different airport would cost more, consider train or bus to that city and maybe there would be no increase in price.

Another reason is going from west coast to Europe, or east coast to Asia...a stop on the opposite coast for one night means a more relaxing flight and arrival/departure times a little more comfortable (going *business or first class* is **MUCH more** comfortable) and usually includes meals. The tour company often schedules your flight at the lowest price to them, which means that if you select some other flight times, the *price goes UP*. And if your scheduled flight has a weather problem or mechanical problem and ends up getting you to that tour destination late, the tour will not wait for you and will leave on time...NO you do not get your money back...get on a train and **catch up** with them somewhere after they started (again, at your cost).

One final item...your *passport*. Be sure it is current **plus 6 months**. Some countries require that expiration date of *expiration + 6* or they won't let you in the country when you get to customs.

Planning for that trip is not always the easy thing to do. And if all goes wrong, the money has been paid, but for any reason you can't get there on schedule, do you just kiss the money good-bye? No...one backup that you can buy when you originally purchase the trip...**TRAVEL insurance**...it will cost you \$3-500 per person, but if for *any reason* you are unable to go, or complete your trip, the travel insurance will insure that you get your money back from the tour company/airline/cruise company.

Go and enjoy...you deserve it.