

# USA TODAY THE CRUISE LOG

by Gene Sloan, USA Today – posted January 4, 2007



## Wave season kicks off with deals

It's that time of year again, when millions of Americans stumble back from the holidays, take one look around their dreary offices and promptly decide that . . . it's time to take a cruise.

Yep, "Wave Season," the busiest cruise booking time of the year, officially is here. Between now and March, tens of thousands of Americans a day will lock in their voyages for the rest of the year, a frenzy that will keep travel agents working through weekends.

Thinking of joining the crowd? Here's the good news: There are some extraordinary deals available, particularly if you're thinking of heading to the Caribbean. Major lines such as [Carnival](#) have had a hard time selling cruises in the Caribbean the past year, and their strategy going into Wave Season appears to be to slash prices early to fill up enough of their

space for 2007 that they can play hardball on pricing later.

David Brams, president of [World Wide Cruises](#) in Ft. Lauderdale, says pricing for soon-to-depart Caribbean cruises (January through March) is down 10% to 20% from this time last year. Some sailings in January and February are going for as little as \$399 a week.

Even sailings during the peak summer season are being marked down 15% in some cases, says Mike Driscoll, editor of Cruise Week newsletter. "And these deals are not limited to isolated sailings and cabin categories," he notes.

Driscoll says many of the best bargains are for Caribbean cruises out of New Orleans, "for somewhat obvious reasons." People in the region there still are rebuilding, so cruising is off their radar. For those who can get there to pick up a ship, it's good value.

Pricing also is down for cruises in Hawaii, say industry watchers. Prices for 2007 cruises to Alaska and Europe are about the same or up a bit from last year.

So, should you book now? Or should you hold out for even better deals down the road? Share your strategy for getting the best deal on a 2007 cruise [HERE](#).