

how to... beat the school holiday rush

Do you find that destinations are either booked out or too expensive during school holidays? Cherry Picked Travel's **LEANNE MOUSLEY** shares her tips to help you beat the holiday rush.

Time and time again I hear from busy mums and dads who need a family getaway, but who can only take a trip in the school holidays. Taking the family on a vacation during these times is undeniably the most expensive and busiest times. Combined with the lack of flights and accommodation available, it often becomes such a hassle that families end up staying at home.

While we can't change the fact that many families are stuck with holidaying between school terms, we can give you a few pointers to help make it a little easier.



Book early

Trust me, there will be no special offers, last-minute deals or great bargains for school holidays dates. The only way you will not pay more than you should is by booking as early as possible. You'll get the choice of cheaper flights and best hotel rooms. If you are looking to take a trip in December, start booking around March.



Think about a family cruise

Cruising isn't influenced by school holiday dates, so pricing is generally the same all year round. However, cruise departures for school holiday dates book out early. You can book a cruise 12 to 24 months before departure, depending on the cruise line and prices generally include all your meals.



Group tour packages

Tour packages don't usually increase in price for holiday periods either, and they are great for families wanting to enjoy a cultural experience with other kids their age (without all the hard work). Consider taking a tour over the Christmas and New Year period as this offers a wonderful, memory-filled experience. There are several quality tour companies that specialise in family groups.



Try to depart before the public school holidays begin

Often private schools start a week early, and for some destinations this week is a little less expensive, more likely to have availability, and usually less crowded.



Travel while they're young

For those with younger children, try to travel as much as you can before they reach school age and take advantage of being able to travel at less expensive and less busy times of the year.



Think international

Unfortunately, the further afield you go, the less likely you will be affected by school-related demand and pricing. This means that a week on the Gold Coast is sometimes more expensive than a week in Thailand! Think about visiting destinations such as Japan, Thailand or Canada.



Go with a group

Consider travelling with a couple of families and renting a house or large apartment. This can cut down on the accommodation side of the budget, and if you have 10 or more people on the same flight, your travel agent may even be able to negotiate a group discount with the airline and more flexible payment terms.



Ask your travel agent for ideas

They will usually know which destinations are already booked out, and where you can holiday within your budget. ●

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