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TRAVEL TIPS

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GROUND WORK

THE BEST TIME TO BOOK FLIGHTS TO GET THE BEST RATES

FAQs for beating the system

When do tickets go on sale for flights?

Usually, 11 months in advance. Reasons for this are arcane and historical – in the days of printed seat plans, airlines wanted to avoid booking people on to the right plane, on the right day, in the wrong year.

So should you charge in and book almost a year ahead?

Not normally. Airlines can (and often do) update fares every hour using complex algorithms. This is the dark art of yield management – trying to get the fullest planes, with passengers paying as much as possible for every seat.

So when is the best time?

There are certain broad trends: on average the best time is five weeks before travel. If you have time it can pay to watch your route carefully and educate yourself about when cheaper seats are generally available – varying day of departure and time of day can make a big difference.

What about if you're flying at a very busy time, like over Christmas?

This may be the time to book very early: all fare classes will be available, and you should score a price that won't be beatable nearer the time. You'll also ensure you get a seat on the plane you want.

Filip Filipov, Head of B2B, Skyscanner

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