



Your Guide to Budget Travel in the US

Brought to You by Free-Ebooks-Canada.com

Disclaimer

Reasonable care has been taken to ensure that the information presented in this book is accurate. However, the reader should understand that the information provided does not constitute legal, medical or professional advice of any kind. No Liability: this product is supplied "as is" and without warranties. All warranties, express or implied, are hereby disclaimed. Use of this product constitutes acceptance of the "No Liability" policy. If you do not agree with this policy, you are not permitted to use or distribute this product. Neither the author, the publisher nor the distributor of this material shall be liable for any losses or damages whatsoever (including, without limitation, consequential loss or damage) directly or indirectly arising from the use of this product. Use at your own risk.

Topics Covered:

- Introduction to Budget Travel
- Getting Ready for a Budget Vacation
- Finding the Best Hotel Deals
- Saving Money with an All Inclusive Resort
- Budget Travel and Getting Around
- Saving Money by Traveling in an RV or Camper

Budget Travel in Our Country's National Parks
Budget Travel and The Summer Ski Resort
Getting the Best Deal on Your Rental Car
The Importance of Packing Light
Budget Backpacking
Budget Eating Tips
Budget Travel in an RV
Free Flights - How to Get Yourself Bumped
Using a Vacation Club to Keep Your Travel Budget Under Control
Camping - The Ultimate Budget Vacation
Budget Adventure Travel
Enjoying a Budget Vacation Through Resale Timeshares
Finding the Best Deals on Lodging
Vacation Tips for Those on a Budget
Use Discount Airlines to Save Money on Your Next Vacation
Important Considerations for the Budget Traveler
The Best Ways to Get the Cheapest Airfares
Enjoying the Country on a Budget - the Work Camper Lifestyle

Travel Info Products

[**Insider Secrets To Cheap Flights - Downsized Agent Reveals All**](#) – Learn to get cheap flights.

[**Vanabode Camp, Travel And Live Forever On \\$20 A Day**](#) - Shows How To Travel All Over The United States And Have All Your Needs Met For \$20 A Day Including Food, Lodging, Transportation And Entertainment. Includes Resources For Earning Money While Camping So You Can Quit Your Day Job And Travel Forever Also.

[**Escape Plan: Ditch The Rat Race, Discover The World**](#) -The Comprehensive Guide To Long-term Travel And Life Abroad.

[**Cancun On The Cheap**](#) - A Revealing "insiders" Guide To How To Experience Cancun On The Cheap.

[**Former Airline Employee Reveals Airline Secrets To Upgrades + Savings**](#) - An Outspoken Online Bestseller That Tells Air Travelers Worldwide How To Upgrade To Business Or First Class And How To Save Big.

[**Moving And Living In Spain**](#) - Everything You Need To Know About Moving And Living In Spain. From Property Buying, Health Care, Immigration, permits, tax, language, finding Work. Expats Guide For Your Life Under The Spanish Sun.

Your Guide to Budget Travel in the US

Introduction to Budget Travel

The world of budget travel is one of the most exciting and interesting, and in today's world traveling on a budget is becoming more and more of a necessity. Keeping costs low while traveling is important, whether you are a solo traveler seeing the world for the first time or a family with a carload full of kids heading for the beach or the theme park.

When it comes to coming up with a travel budget, the first step should be to decide what is important to you and where you can cut back a bit. For instance, some travelers are comfortable spending a bit more for a better class of hotel, while others prefer to save money by using budget accommodations and spend the money they saved on sightseeing or a special meal for the family.

As with other aspects of finance, it is a good idea to create a travel budget. Determine a budget for the various aspects of your vacation, such as hotel, airfare, rental cars, sightseeing, gasoline, etc. Once you have a good idea of what each element of the vacation should cost, it is time to start shopping around for the best deals.

Once you have determined what is most important to you, it is time to start determining how to get the best deals. Often, admission deals on area attractions are the easiest to come by, since many theme parks, museums and other destinations run specials to attract out of town guests.

To score big discounts on area attractions, the best place to start is the web site of the attraction itself. Be sure to check the web site for any specials, such as two for one deals, free admission for children, special reduced admission days, etc.

If you are a member of the military, a senior citizen or a member of an organization such as AAA, there are often additional discounts available. Most AAA offices sell discount admission tickets to theme parks, museums and other popular attractions within driving distance, and most AAA offices sell discounted admissions to popular attractions like Walt Disney World as well. The key to making your travel budget stretch farther is to ask about, and take advantage of, all discounts that may be available.

If you are driving to your destination, one great way to make your travel budget go further is to make sure your car is in tip top shape before embarking on your trip. Small details, such as under-inflated tires or worn spark plugs can really eat into your gas mileage and end up costing you a bundle, especially on a long road trip.

A good map can also be a money saver, since it will keep you from driving around in circles and wasting gas. Finding your way easily to and from the hotel and the surrounding area will make your vacation more pleasant and less costly.

No matter how you save money on your next vacation, having a budget and sticking to it will help you enjoy your vacation more, and worry less about paying for it.

Getting Ready for a Budget Vacation

Most of us work very hard all year just to be able to afford those one or two weeks away. Therefore, it just makes sense to get the very best deal you can on that one or two week getaway. There are a number of ways to make your vacation as pleasant as it can be, yet still affordable enough for you to do it all over again without waiting another entire year.

There are a number of important expenses to going on vacation, and it is important to minimize each one in order to squeeze the largest possible value out of those limited vacation dollars. It is also important to determine where your priorities lie, and to plan your vacation appropriately. For instance, if you absolutely must have a hotel with an indoor pool, you might want to skimp a bit on meals by eating at budget eateries or even cooking in your room, in order to allow yourself the freedom to spend more on a hotel where you can lounge by the pool to your heart's delight.

On the other hand, if fancy meals out are a big part of your vacation dream, why not try saving a few bucks by seeking out a budget hotel? This will provide you with a clean, safe place to stay, while giving you some extra dollars to splurge on great appetizers or a scrumptious dessert.

Just like many other aspects of life, planning a great vacation on a limited budget is a matter of tradeoffs. It is important to determine your own vacation priorities and to plan accordingly. Of course, if the family is traveling together, it is important to take everyone's own priorities and wishes into account. Failing to do so can mean you will end up with a car full of surly children or an irritated spouse.

It is important to plan everything as far ahead as possible, as the best airfare deals, car rental rates and hotel prices are likely to be snapped up pretty quickly. It is a good idea to start shopping for airfares and hotels in your chosen destination at least a couple of months prior to your desired date of departure. If the prices on airfare or hotel seem high, be sure to shop around to see if you can find lower prices on the internet or at your local travel agent. Also be sure to sign up for special low fare alerts or newsletters which detail hot travel deals.

Being the first to know about great deals is a great way to get the best deal on your long awaited vacation.

Finding the Best Hotel Deals

When it comes to hotels, things boil down to a tradeoff between low cost and convenient location. In many cases, especially when traveling to major cities and popular attractions, the closer the hotel to the city or attraction the more you can expect to pay. The best way to save money, particularly in large cities, is often to stay in the suburbs.

Of course, this means that you will spend more time getting to the places you want to visit, and this will mean spending additional money on gasoline, etc. It is important to compute all these costs to make sure that you will really be spending less on a less convenient hotel room.

There are of course a number of ways to save money on hotels and motels without compromising quality. For one thing, a membership in AAA or a similar auto club also entitles you to discounts on hotel rooms, as does military service and senior citizen status. When inquiring about a hotel room, always inquire about discounts that may be available.

In addition, shopping early for a hotel room can often yield the best deals. That is because hotels often reserve a block of low cost rooms, and when they are gone they are gone. Thus the last room at a hotel may be much more costly than the first. Getting the best hotel room deal is often a matter of timing.

Of course getting a great deal on a hotel will mean nothing if the place is a dump. Shopping for a budget hotel should not mean settling for a hotel that is dirty, poorly run or in an unsafe location.

Fortunately, finding a good budget hotel has been made much easier with the help of the internet. What used to take weeks or even months to research can now be done in a matter of hours or even minutes. Many hotels, even budget properties, feature pictures of the property and the surrounding area, so be sure to research the property you are considering if you have never stayed there before.

It is important to research the area in which the hotel is located as well. Be sure to check out things like restaurants and attractions within walking distance of the hotel. Doing some research on the area will help ensure you do not end up staying in a dangerous neighborhood just to save a couple of bucks.

The internet also provides a number of review sites where those who have stayed in various hotels share their experiences and their impressions of the hotel properties.

These review sites can be very useful for travelers, particularly those traveling to a new location for the first time.

In addition, the internet hosts a number of comparison web sites where travelers can easily find and compare hotel properties for their individual dates of stay and destinations. These web sites offer a number of ways to search, including distance from a particular tourist attraction, price, star level and more. The only caveat to consider when using such a web site is its independence. Some comparison web sites feature only properties that pay an advertising fee, so using a comparison site does not necessarily guarantee the best price. It is best to use a number of such web sites to get a true picture of the lowest prices available.

Saving Money with an All Inclusive Resort

For many travelers dealing with a tight budget, one of the first decisions to be made is whether to book their own travel deals or take advantage of one of the many all inclusive packages that are available.

In most cases, the decision to go with an all inclusive resort will depend on the particular deal being offered. For instance, there are a great many excellent all inclusive resorts that provide considerable discounts in the off season and the shoulder season, so it is definitely worth checking out these options if you get the opportunity.

One of the best ways to decide if an all inclusive resort is really the best deal going is to create a spreadsheet listing all the various costs of a do it yourself vacation. Be sure to include both obvious things like airfare, hotel, rental car, meals and sightseeing excursions, as well as incidentals like tips and gratuities. Then start shopping for the best deal on all these things in the resort location you have chosen. Add it all up, and keep that number in mind as you start searching for all inclusive travel packages.

It is often possible to find all inclusive travel packages that match or beat the costs of a do it yourself vacation. That is because all inclusive tour operators are able to strike deals for substantial discounts with airlines and hotels by guaranteeing them a certain amount of business.

Of course, when booking an all inclusive vacation package, it is important to find out exactly what is – and is not – included in that all inclusive package. For instance, most all inclusive packages do not include alcoholic drinks, while some do include them. If this is a concern, you may want to compare the prices of these two kinds of all inclusive and make the decision appropriate for your needs and lifestyle.

In addition, some all inclusive travel packages do not include airfare, so be sure to determine if airfare is included in order to make an intelligent and informed decision.

Sightseeing excursions are another thing that are often not included in an all inclusive travel package, so be sure to get a list of included and optional sightseeing excursions, along with a price guide for those that are not included in the basic price.

If you are traveling alone, it is also important to consider the dreaded single supplement. The single supplement for all inclusive resorts can vary quite a bit, to as little as \$100 to as much as doubling the advertised price of the vacation. If you are traveling on your own, it is vital to understand how much the single supplement is before booking the trip.

The decision of all inclusive versus do it yourself is rarely an easy one to make. It is important to compare packages carefully in order to make sure you are truly getting the best value for your money.

Budget Travel and Getting Around

One of the biggest parts of a travel and vacation budget is often the cost of getting from one place to another. It is important to budget for this important expense, and to consider some unique options, in order to make your travel dollars stretch as far as possible.

When choosing a rental car, it is important to choose the most economical and fuel efficient car that meets your needs. Obviously, the size of your family will impact the choice of rental car, but compact and even subcompact cars can be great for motoring around cities, particularly when it comes time to park in those tight spots.

In addition, a smaller car will get better gas mileage, which is no small consideration, especially if you plan to do a lot of daily driving. And if you plan to travel far and wide, it may be important to choose a rental deal that provides unlimited miles, since charges for mileage overages can be quite costly.

When it comes to the decision of whether to accept or decline the optional collision coverage on a rental car, always be sure to see if you are already covered elsewhere. For instance, your auto insurance company may already provide insurance coverage for rental cars, as may your credit card company. If you are covered by these policies, there is no need to accept the costly collision insurance offered by the rental car company. And of course you will always want to top off your rental car with gasoline before dropping it off, as refueling charges by rental car companies are generally quite high.

Of course, there is a far less alternative to rental cars that few people take advantage of, but in many cities public transportation can be a far less costly, and far more convenient, alternative to paying to drive, and to park, a rental car.

Of course public transportation does not make sense in every location. Many small towns and even some larger cities have public transportation systems that are infrequent, inefficient, inconvenient or even nonexistent. In other locations, however, using public transportation makes a lot of sense. In New York City, for instance, visitors can buy a pass that is good on all subways, buses and trains. The cost of a weekly pass can be less than what a visitor would pay to rent a car for a single day.

And public transportation provides an additional benefit as well; it frees the tourist from the hassles, and expense, of parking the rental car. Many locations in New York, for instance, charge \$20, \$30 or even more for parking, and other major cities are almost as costly.

Getting around using public transportation is not as difficult as many people imagine either. Many public transportation companies, particularly those located in major tourist destinations, publish guides which give the route numbers to popular destinations, and bus drivers and train conductors in these locations are often quite adept at getting tourists where they need to go.

Saving Money by Traveling in an RV or Camper

For many people, nothing compares to the freedom and versatility of enjoying the open road in a recreational vehicle or camper. There is certainly much to be said for taking your hotel with you wherever you go, and the savings on hotel costs can more than pay for the initial cost of an RV.

One of the things that makes an RV so popular among budget travelers is that it frees travelers from many of the issues typically associated with sticking to a travel budget. For instance, traveling with an RV frees the traveler from having to shop early for the best deals on airfare, hotels and rental cars. That's because the RV serves as the hotel room, and as transportation as well. Many seasoned travelers even buy a trailer which they use to tow their car, or even a pair of motorcycles, along behind them.

Of course, the RV lifestyle does have some considerations for the budget minded traveler, not the least of which is the price of gas to fuel it. Most recreational vehicles hold a lot of gas or diesel fuel, and filling one up can result in sticker shock for many new owners. It is important to weigh the cost of fuel when determining if an RV is the right choice for you.

Traveling in a recreational vehicle or motor home is often a good choice for those who want to travel to different locations, and it may be less suited to those who visit the same location year after year. As a matter of fact, many of those travelers who visit the same location every year find that the thing that suits their budget best is buying a

vacation home. Buying a vacation home, and renting it out when it is not being used, can be a good way to both save money on lodging and build equity for the future.

For those who want to travel the country, however, there are few things to compare to doing it in your own RV. Many RV owners come to love the freedom of the open road, and the money they save, so much that they end up hitting the road full time, traveling from RV park to RV park and enjoying the country from coast to coast.

One great budget saving tip that is well known in the RV community, but less well known among the general public is the fact that Wal-Mart's from coast to coast allow RV owners to park for free on their lots. That is why, when you visit your local Wal-Mart, you may have seen a number of RV's parked near the edge of the lot. This situation is a win for both parties – RV owners have a safe, well lighted place to camp for the night, and Wal-Mart receives much needed income from those RV owners who frequent the store in the middle of the night to pick up those little things they either forgot to pack or used up along the way.

Budget Travel in Our Country's National Parks

When it comes to traveling on a budget, few things are as cost effective as pitching a tent in the wilderness of your favorite national park. The tent campsites at national parks and state parks are among the least expensive to be found, and many intrepid travelers spend summer after summer hiking, fishing and enjoying the scenery at our country's magnificent national parks.

Just because you are roughing it in the wilderness, however, does not mean that you will need to do no planning. The least expensive and most desirable tent campgrounds at popular national parks like Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Zion and Yellowstone, often fill up quickly in the popular summer months, so it pays to book as far ahead as possible.

The internet makes the process of both finding and booking a campsite much easier, since most national parks have their own web sites, and their own reservations system. Travel agents can also make reservations, for tent campsites, cabins and national park hotel properties.

And that brings us to our next subject. Not all national park travel involves camping in the wilderness. There are a number of cabins and hotel rooms available in almost every national park, and some of them are quite affordable. As a matter of fact, unless you go far upscale, it is often less expensive to stay within the park than to book a motel or hotel in an adjoining community. And of course staying in the park is more convenient as well.

It is of course important to do plenty of research when booking any type of lodging at a national park, be it the most basic tent site or the most upscale hotel room. One thing that it is a definite must is a knowledge of the weather at the time of the year you plan to visit. When planning a visit to a national park, it is important to remember that such parks are often located in the mountains, and the weather conditions at these elevations can be quite different from that found at sea level.

For example, there are parts of Yosemite national park that never lose snow cover, and autumn and even late summer visitors should not be surprised to encounter a fresh coating of snow in some parts of the park.

The accessibility of the campground is another consideration. Many of the least expensive camp sites at major national parks are quite remote, and considerable hiking and backpacking may be required to reach these locations. It is vital to inquire about such considerations when booking the reservation, and it may be necessary to make some compromises between price and convenience, especially if you are not an accomplished outdoorsman.

There is no doubt that camping or staying in a national park can be a relaxing, exhilarating and magical experience. As with any budget travel, however, it is important to thoroughly research your destination, and to shop around for the best deal you can find.

Budget Travel and The Summer Ski Resort

When most people think of ski resorts, they naturally picture mountains full of fresh fallen snow and people huddled around a roaring fire enjoying a cup of hot cocoa. While this image is certainly accurate, and ski resorts are some of the most popular of all vacation destinations, the prices of these resort getaways can often be beyond the means of the budget traveler.

There is another way, however, to enjoy these upscale resorts for a fraction of their in season costs. Many ski resort locations stay open all year round, and the prices of lodging, meals and local entertainment often drops precipitously after winter has passed.

Visiting a ski resort in the middle of the summer does not mean there will be nothing to do. In fact, many people prefer visiting these resorts in the off season, since their mountain locations provides for a comfortable, activity packed getaway.

For instance, most ski resorts have ample hiking trails through beautiful mountain vistas. All those great cross country ski trails become wonderful hiking and biking trails after

the snow has melted, and the scenery can be even more spectacular, and more comfortable, without the cold and snow of winter.

Besides hiking and biking, there are a great many other activities to be offered as well, including horseback riding, fishing swimming, and other outdoor activities. In addition, many ski resorts use their ski lifts as fun summer sky rides, and open their slopes to such summertime activities as tobogganing down the side of the mountain. The kids in particular love these fun rides.

Another great thing about visiting a ski resort area in summer is that the mountain location often means cooler temperatures. Even when the lowland temperature is stiflingly hot, the temperature in the mountains can be refreshingly cool and comfortable. Of course, it is important to check the monthly weather for your destination and to avoid the rainy season

There are ski resorts in many states around the country, and the northeastern and western parts of the country have a great wealth of these resorts. While many of them stay open year round and offer a host of off season activities, not all do, so it is important to verify the summer activities of the resort you are considering.

It is also a good idea to research the activities that are offered by each resort. With the concentration of ski resorts in some areas of the country, it will be easy to compare the various offerings and choose the one that best suits your individuals needs.

It is also important to research the surrounding area and see what else there is to do when you are not at the resort. While many ski resorts have plenty of activities to keep you busy for days, you will probably want to venture off the property at least a few times. Choosing a ski resort located near a busy, but not expensive, metropolitan area is a great way to enjoy your vacation while still keeping within your budget.

Getting the Best Deal on Your Rental Car

The rental car can be a big vacation expense, and getting the best deal you can on the transportation you need is important to keeping your vacation fun while staying within budget.

One way to keep costs as low as possible, of course, is to choose the smallest, most economical car you and your family are comfortable with. Choosing a compact, subcompact or economy car makes sense on a number of levels. For one thing, such cars are generally less expensive to rent in the first place. The other important consideration, however, is gas mileage. You as the renter of the car will be responsible for keeping it gassed up, including topping off the tank before returning it. Buying a car that gets great mileage will definitely help your travel budget stretch farther.

If you need a larger car or minivan, it is important to shop around for the best deal you can find. While it is important to shop around no matter what type of car you are considering, it is even more important when trying to rent vehicles for which there is a lot of demand, like convertibles, minivans or SUV's. Shopping around at a number of travel related web sites, as well as at the web sites of the rental companies themselves, is usually the best way to land the best deal.

The length of the rental can have a large impact on the cost as well. Weekly rentals are often far less costly than a comparable daily rate spread over a week. So if your vacation plans are for a week or more, be sure to inquire about special rates.

Joining a frequent renter club, or using the same rental car company each time, is a great way to get some special coupons and some very good deals. In addition, most car rental companies partner with at least one airline to provide frequent flyer miles or other types of rewards when you rent a car. In addition, many airlines run bonus programs where you get extra miles or extra credit, so be sure to inquire about these bonuses when making your reservation.

Another great way to save money and keep your rental car budget low is not to buy things you do not need. In most cases, this means waiving the optional collision insurance coverage offered by the rental car company. Many rental car companies really push this insurance, but in most cases you are already covered and can safely decline it.

For instance, most automobile insurance policies already provide collision coverage for rental cars, so be sure to check with your car insurance company before starting to plan your vacation. Even if your insurance company does not cover your rental car, chances are one of your credit card companies does. Many credit cards provide coverage for rental cars paid for with the card, so be sure to check with your credit card company to see if they provide this coverage.

Another method to keep rental car costs to a minimum, and one that many people are unaware of, is renting a used car. There are a number of large national companies, and a number of smaller local companies as well, that rent used cars at a much lower price than comparable new cars. In most cases, these cars are only a few years old, and they provide the same protection, and the same transportation as more costly new cars.

The Importance of Packing Light

Many people do not realize how important packing light is to budget travel, but I can tell you from personal experience that it is very important. Trust me – if you over pack, you are much more likely to drop extra money on porters, luggage carts, taxis and all those

other little costs that could be avoided if you just packed more sensibly. Even though those costs can seem insignificant, they can really add up, especially on a long, multiple city trip.

Think of it this way – while a traveler with just a backpack or small carryon will be comfortable taking the inexpensive city bus into town, the traveler loaded up with several suitcases will need to opt for a much more expensive taxi ride. It is easy to see the impact proper packing can have for the budget traveler, so we present some light packing tips borne of personal experience.

- Try to avoid checking bags whenever possible. If you can live out of your carryon, you will be much better off. Not checking a bag means no wait at the baggage carousel, and that means you can get into town and start having fun while everyone else is still waiting for their bag.
- Airlines have gotten much more strict lately with carryon limits, with most major carriers now allowing only one carryon plus a purse or other personal item. To make the most of this policy, carry a large purse and pack it with extra items, like toiletries or cosmetics, that would otherwise take up valuable luggage space.
- Wear your largest shoes and bulkiest clothing on the plane to preserve space in the suitcase. For instance, a pair of hiking boots or sneakers can take up valuable luggage space, so pack your smaller dress shoes and wear your boots or sneakers on the plane. In addition, you will appreciate having comfortable shoes as you make your way through the airport.
- Plan your outfits carefully to minimize the pieces needed. A stylish black skirt or pair of pants can easily be made into several outfits with some creative accessories and a couple of nice shirts. Pack small items like a scarf, a tie or favorite pieces of jewelry to give your outfits a new look without taking up a lot of room.
- Try packing a large oversized t-shirt in place of a bulky bathrobe. An oversized shirt can be great for wearing right out of the shower, and it can double as quick cover up after a visit to the hotel pool.
- Invest in a quality pair of stylish yet comfortable walking shoes. Shoes that are comfortable and attractive can be paired with a variety of outfits for a different look. Since shoes take up more space in the suitcase than many other items, it is best to choose versatile footwear when traveling.
- Try rolling clothes instead of folding them. Rolling clothes allows you to pack more clothes into a smaller space, and helps keep clothes wrinkle free as well.
- Stock up on small sample sized products like shampoo, conditioner, toothpaste deodorant. Many seasoned travelers keep a bag of such tiny soaps, shampoos

and conditioners (gathered from hotels during previous journeys) in a bag at home for quick packing.

- Pack a large but foldable extra bag in your suitcase, and use this bag to carry the purchases and souvenirs you buy on the return trip.

Budget Backpacking

One of the least expensive, yet most fulfilling, types of vacations is the camping and backpacking trip. Hiking through the back country at one of the nation's magnificent national parks, or just wandering around the wilderness of a state park closer to home, can be a great way to commune with nature, and a wonderful way for families to get away and enjoy being together.

One of the things that makes backpacking so attractive to budget minded travelers is the low cost it takes to get started. Little is needed other than a good quality backpack, a top quality tent and maybe a camp stove or similar appliance. Other than that, the main thing to pack is your sense of spirit and adventure. This article provides some valuable tips for the first time backpacker on a budget.

- Invest in a good quality hiking map or guide and get to know the area you will be traveling to. Pay careful attention to the notes and precautions and try your best to match the terrain to your level of ability and experience. When estimating the time it will take to hike to your destination, always overestimate.
- Be sure to obtain all necessary permits, and reserve the campsite you want, in advance of your trip. It is not unusual for campsites to sell out, particularly in popular national park destinations.
- Always check local regulations regarding campfires, smoking, cleanup, etc. to avoid paying fines.
- Research the weather patterns of the area and always be prepared for the worst weather. Always pack some sort of rain gear.
- Dress appropriately, in layered clothing, no matter what time of year. Be sure to pack clothing that will allow you to be prepared for sudden changes in temperature or weather. It is best to wear breathable materials, such as polypropylene or wool, to allow perspiration and moisture to be wicked away quickly.
- Learn how to operate your equipment before you hit the trail. It is important, for instance, to set up your tent at least once or twice at home. Get familiar with

- how everything goes together. Learn how to operate your camp stove before you leave home.
- Determine how much weight you can comfortably carry, and pack appropriately. Many first time backpackers try to take too much gear, and end up unable to carry that gear during the trip. The weight of the backpack should be no more than one quarter of your weight, and it is best to take only what you need.
 - Pack more food than you think you will need. Hikers and backpackers burn far more calories than the average person, so be sure to eat sufficient amounts of high quality foods while on your journey. The best foods to pack are those that are high in carbohydrates, proteins and fats. These high quality backpacking foods include peanut butter, instant oatmeal, trail mix, pasta and dried fruit.
 - Learn where the water sources are on the trail and be sure to keep your water bottles filled in case the next source of water is farther away than anticipated. It is important to drink plenty of water when backpacking, even when the weather is cool.
 - Always cook your evening meal before it gets too dark. Extra food should always be stored in a bag and hung from a tree limb at night to protect it from local wildlife. Raccoons, skunks and bears have learned to look at backpackers, hikers and campers as easy sources of free meals.
 - Always pack a first aid kit and be prepared with some basic first aid training. Carry a GPS system or satellite phone if you will be traveling far into the back country, and leave a schedule with the local trail ranger and with friends at home.

Budget Eating Tips

The budget for food can be one of the most expensive parts of any vacation, and many travelers underestimate how much they will spend on food while traveling and end up busting their budget as a result. There are a number of ways to keep the food budget under control while still enjoying delicious, satisfying and healthy meals.

For many people, good food is a large part of the travel experience, and sampling the local cuisine should be a goal of every traveler to a foreign location. Saving money on food does not mean skimping or missing out on the special food that makes many regions of the United States, Europe, Asia and other destinations so special.

It is important to eat a healthy and hearty breakfast every day while traveling. Many hotels include a daily breakfast in their room rate, and if this is available it is important to take advantage of the perk. Starting each morning with a healthy breakfast will give

you the energy you need for walking around and seeing the sights, and it will help deter you from splurging on expensive and unhealthy snacks before it is time for lunch.

Lunch can be a very important meal when traveling, and it is the best time to get the most value from some of the finest restaurants in your destination city. While lunches in the working world are often rushed affairs eaten quickly, or even in the car on the way back to work, vacation lunches can be long, restful, relaxing and delicious. If there is an expensive restaurant you've been itching to splurge at, why not head there for lunch instead of dinner? You get the same great food, often at a significantly lower price.

One great way to sample the local cuisine and save money at the same time is to eat where the local people do. Ask the staff at your hotel for recommendations of restaurants *they* eat at. Restaurants with a large concentration of locals are usually high quality and low priced destinations.

Eating dinner or lunch in ethnic neighborhoods is another way to sample the local cuisine and culture while saving lots of money. Sampling the food in the local Chinatown, Korea town, Little Italy, Little Saigon or similar neighborhood is a great way to meet local people and enjoy some great food.

For a quick pick me up or snack, try packing a few granola bars, a bag of trail mix or a few pieces of fruit in your backpack or purse before you head out for the day. These items can be bought inexpensively at local markets or grocery stores.

A quick trip to the local grocery store for supplies can be a great way to save money while traveling. For instance, many travelers will spend a half hour at the local grocery store, stocking up on bottled water, cereal and other low cost foods. Keeping those foods and water on hand in the hotel room is a great way to save money on eating.

Having your own picnic is another great way to both have a great time and save money on food while traveling. Try packing a picnic lunch and enjoy the spectacular views as you hike to your favorite spot in the mountains. Or pack a romantic dinner for two and head for the local outdoor concert. Picnics are great, and very memorable ways to enhance any vacation experience.

Budget Travel in an RV

The sales of recreational vehicles have really been on fire lately, as more and more people discover the high level of freedom, and low level of cost, that an RV vacation can provide. As air travel becomes more of a hassle, and the cost of hotel stays continues to rise, many people are discovering the convenience of taking their hotel room with them wherever they go.

The attraction of a recreational vehicle, of course, is that it provides the budget traveler with the freedom to go where he or she wants, whenever they want to go there. An RV frees the traveler on a budget from rigid schedules, lines at airport security, restrictions on luggage, and so much more. And with over 15,000 RV parks and campgrounds dotting the country, there is bound to be one wherever you want to go.

And many RV's have all the amenities of home, including living rooms, bedrooms, kitchens and bathrooms. Many RV's also have rooms that slide out to provide even more living space when the vehicle is parked.

There are some important tips for first time RV'ers to follow to get the biggest bang for their travel buck. Some of our favorite tips for a low cost and hassle free RV trip include:

- Try renting an RV before you buy one. The purchase of a recreational vehicle is a big decision, and one that is likely to have a major impact on your lifestyle, especially on how you vacation. With the average RV costing as much as the average house did a couple of decades ago, it is important to know that an RV is the right decision before taking the plunge. There are a number of places that rent RV's, and these rental agencies can provide a low cost alternative to RV ownership, or a way to "try it before you buy it".
- Hit the web for tons of free information on living the RV lifestyle and keeping costs under control. There are a great many web sites and newsgroups dedicated to recreational vehicles, and they can provide valuable tips for those newcomers.
- Do your research. If you do decide to buy an RV, be sure to research the buyer's guides, and read the reviews on the internet. Doing so will allow you to get the most RV for your money.
- Visit a couple of RV dealers, and attend an RV show. RV shows are great ways to see a wide range of models quickly, and it is often possible to strike some very good deals at these events.
- Do the math to be sure an RV is right for you. An RV makes sense for a great many people, particularly families traveling together. RV travel can be significantly less costly than travel by car or plane. Fees for campgrounds are considerably lower than hotel room rates, and this can really trim the travel budget.
- Be sure to inset in a quality guide to RV campgrounds. Knowing where the campgrounds are, and having good directions for getting there, will save you lots of hassle, as well as gas money.

Free Flights – How to Get Yourself Bumped

One of the most popular strategies for budget traveling is to make what is traditionally one of the most expensive parts of travel – the airfare – free. One great way to score free flights without tediously collecting frequent flier miles is to get yourself bumped off of the flight on which you are booked. While getting bumped won't make your current flight free, it will traditionally score you a free ticket you can use at a later date of your choosing.

Getting bumped is such a popular money saving strategy that there is a definite art and science behind it. Remember that you may not be the only person on your flight hoping to get bumped. It is important to follow the guidelines listed below to increase your chances.

- Book your flight with the intention of getting bumped. For instance, you may want to choose one of the first flights of the day, knowing that you will be able to get on a later flight after you are bumped and still reach your destination.
- Always ask if the flight is overbooked. It may be a good idea to call your travel agent the night before the scheduled flight to inquire. Always ask the gate agent if the flight is overbooked as soon as you arrive and let him or her know you will volunteer to be bumped.
- Always back a flight schedule for your departure and destination airport. Be sure to get a schedule that includes all airlines, not just the one on which you are booked.
- Always arrive at the airport at least 90 minutes prior to scheduled departure. Try to be the first one in the check in line. Being the first in line will ensure that you are the first on the list of volunteers to be bumped.
- Before you agree to be bumped, be sure that the airline will offer a free ticket or other significant compensation. Individual airline policies vary, so be sure you know what is being offered. Some airlines offer vouchers in \$100 increments, according to the time you must wait for another flight. For instance, a one hour wait entitles you to a \$100 voucher, two hours means you get \$200, etc.
- Before accepting your free ticket or travel voucher, let the gate agent know that you need to be sure of your arrangements for your current flight. Always make sure you are holding a confirmed reservation and boarding pass for a later flight before signing the agreement and accepting the free ticket.
- Tell the gate agent that you want a guaranteed, confirmed reservation on the next flight to your destination.
- If there are no guaranteed seats available on the next flight, inform the agent that you want a guaranteed seat on another airline.

- Use the flight schedule you packed to choose an alternative flight and airline.
- If the wait for the next flight exceeds two hours, ask the gate agent for meal vouchers. Most airlines make these vouchers available, but they do not always offer them without being asked.
- If you get bumped from your next flight, you could score another free ticket. It pays to be flexible any time you are flying on a budget.
- Remember there are no hard and fast rules everyone must follow. There are some regulations, but each airline sets its own policy with regard to bumping policy and compensation.
- The bumping rules are generally different for international flights, so be sure to ask the airline about their policies before volunteering.

Using a Vacation Club to Keep Your Travel Budget Under Control

One of the very best ways to both build your saving discipline and enjoy a great vacation is to start a vacation club, and fund it on a regular basis. A vacation club can be a great way to save money throughout the year and can prevent your long awaited vacation from being a budget buster.

Unfortunately, many people fail to take this approach, and as a result they end up paying for that one or two weeks of vacation through the entire rest of the year. It is far better to do the budgeting and planning ahead of time than to be stuck with a bunch of bills that need to be paid long after your vacation tan has faded.

The first thing to do, of course, is to come up with a realistic budget for your next vacation. This step is not as easy as it sounds, since many of the incidental costs associated with a vacation can be difficult to remember, and few people take the time to keep every receipt from meals, hotels, souvenirs and other travel purchases.

Even though you may not be able to capture every vacation expense, it is still a good idea to take the time to at least record the major expenditures from your last vacation. This list obviously should include things like airfare, hotel bills, and the cost of the rental car. It is fine to use estimates for things for which you do not have accurate figures, but be sure to make them realistic. After all, it is best to budget too much money and have funds left over than to budget too little and be left scrambling.

After you have your vacation budget in hand, it is time to add up the number of weeks until your next planned vacation. If you just returned, you may have almost a year to save, but if your vacation is coming up soon you may need to save some money right away.

Determining how much you need to save each week or each month is a simple matter of dividing the number of weeks or months you have to save into the amount you need to save. Of course, the easiest and most painless way to save for anything, whether it is a new house, retirement, education, or just your next vacation, is to make the savings automatic.

If you can get your employer to do it, the best way to fund a vacation fund is to have the money deducted directly from your paycheck and sent to your bank, before you ever lay eyes on it. The second best way to fund the vacation club is to have the money deducted directly from your checking account and sent to the vacation fund on a monthly, biweekly or weekly basis. However you do it, it is important that the money be transferred consistently, week after week and month after month.

Camping – The Ultimate Budget Vacation

When it comes to enjoying a vacation on a limited budget, it is difficult to beat the appeal of the good old camping trip. After all, it costs next to nothing to pitch your tent in the back country wilderness of your favorite state or national park. A week long camping trip can often cost less than a day or two in a big city or tourist hot spot, while giving the entire family time to bond and enjoy being together.

As a matter of fact, camping is one of the most popular family activities, and many families enjoy camping together, sharing stories around a roaring fire, roasting marshmallows, swimming, fishing and all the other great things that come with a camping trip.

For many, camping brings back memories from childhood, and many parents want to give their children a taste of what their own childhood was like, back when things were so much simpler.

Another great thing about camping is that once the initial expenses are paid, there is little in the way of ongoing expenses. Unlike a traditional vacation, in which the money you spend on that great hotel is gone for good, with camping you buy your hotel room (also known as your tent) outright, and you own it forever.

After you have bought all the essential items, like the tent, a couple of good camping lanterns, a good camp stove, sleeping bags and the like, your only expenses may be the food for the trip and the gas it takes to get there.

And camping provides plenty for all members of the family to do. Dad may enjoy fishing in his favorite spot, or boating around the lake, while mom and the kids may enjoy a beautiful hike and bird watching trip. There are even campgrounds that feature movies,

swimming pools and other amenities for those who prefer a level of comfort to their journey.

As a matter of fact, there are many ways to camp, from rough camping in the back country to cabins at campgrounds to even RV camping. The level is entirely up to you, and that is one thing that makes camping so attractive to budget travelers and families alike.

There is nothing quite like vacationing in the great outdoors to get back in touch with nature. From watching the wildlife to watching the stars, there is plenty to do on the average camping trip. Stargazing is particularly popular with city dwellers, who may never have seen the Milky Way in all its glory before. Getting away from the glare of city lights and see nature as it truly is.

We know that camping is one of the least expensive of all vacations, but lets take a quick look at the expenses associated with this type of budget travel. The centerpiece of the camping trip, of course, is the tent. Unless you plan to camp in an RV or rent a cabin, which is more expensive, you will need a sturdy, high quality tent. It is important that the tent be waterproof and that it close easily. Be sure the tent features a high quality zipper or other closure that is easy for every member of the family to operate. Test the zipper several times, and be sure you know how to set up the tent before you get to the woods.

Most campers will also want to invest in a few high quality sleeping bags. It is a good idea to choose a sleeping bag that is insulated, and to pick one that will be good for several seasons. Many sleeping bags are designed with removable liners and insulation. These are a good choice, since they can be used in cold weather and warm.

It is also a good idea to buy a couple of camp lanterns. These portable lights are great for lighting your way around in the dark. A cooler for drinks and food is a good idea as well, as is a portable charcoal grill or camp stove. If you are camping at a campground, however, you may be able to leave the camp stove and grill at home, since many campgrounds provide grills for their guests to use free of charge. It is important to find out what amenities each campground offers before you head out.

Budget Adventure Travel

Adventure travel is one of the fastest growing segments of the travel industry, but it is often difficult to find good bargains when booking adventure travel. With so many people itching to go on the adventure of a lifetime, the prices in those travel brochures can lead you to believe that adventure travel is beyond your means.

That does not have to be the case, however. The key to affordable adventure travel is to book directly from the providers of the adventure, instead of going through multiple layers of travel agents, tour operators and tour guides.

Booking a tour directly has many benefits besides monetary ones, including meeting wonderful local people and enjoying the local culture. Often the best way to enjoy a vacation on a budget is to book low cost airfare to the destination of your choice, take the local bus into town, and start asking around about the best adventure guides in town. Local tour operators know the area, they know how to please their clientele, and best of all they are inexpensive. U.S. currency goes quite a long way in many exotic locations in Africa, Asia and elsewhere, so dealing with local tour guides is the best way to make your adventure travel dollar stretch even further.

Many inexperienced adventure travelers are unsure how they can possibly book an adventure tour on their own. For one thing, there is often a language barrier in far off locations, and you may be many thousands of miles from home in an unfamiliar location.

What these first time travelers often don't realize, however, is that finding a tour operator is often the easiest part of the journey. In many cases, the tour operators will find you as soon as you land, without you having to seek them out. And in most places, especially those frequented by American tourists, the guides will speak at least a little bit of English. Listed below are some of the best tips for booking your own budget travel adventure.

- Be sure to ask around before you leave. Get opinions from other travelers who have done the adventure you plan on.
- Refer to your guidebook for references. Guidebook writers are often quite knowledgeable about which tour operators are good and which are more questionable.
- Check on the message boards, both virtual and real. Real message boards are available at hostels and local guest houses, and they can provide excellent information on local tours and tour operators. The staff at local hostels can also provide excellent information about adventure travel. And internet message boards devoted to travel can be great sources of information, both before you leave home and after you arrive in your far off location.
- Interview your potential trip leaders carefully. Ask lots of open ended and probing questions about the equipment used, the experience level of the guides, the lodging the food, and what is and is not included. Be sure to negotiate everything in advance, since you will have little leverage once the adventure trip has begun.
- Finally, if your crew did a great job, be sure to tip them generously after the tour has come to an end. Good tour operators rely on these tips to supplement their

often meager wages, and this helps to keep the best tour guides in business and the best tour operators in operation.

Enjoying a Budget Vacation Through Resale Timeshares

Timeshares can be one of the most valuable resources for the budget minded traveler, but they are also one of the most frequently regretted purchases. Many people get roped into buying overpriced timeshare units through high pressure sales tactics, or they are lured into expensive properties by the promise of a "free" vacation.

No matter what the reason, there are a great many unwanted timeshares on the market at any given time. What that means for the budget travel is the opportunity to pick up some great timeshare properties at prices that are a fraction of the original price.

There are a number of places to look for resale timeshares, including real estate agents, bulletin boards, newspaper classified and even online auctions. Any of these places can be a great place to pick up a quality timeshare at a budget price, but it is important to shop around, and to understand exactly what you are getting before making your purchase.

One of the keys to buying a quality time share at a good price is to buy only in high demand areas, or in areas that are growing in popularity. Remember that a timeshare is primarily a piece of real estate, and we all know that the three most important factors for real estate are location, location and location.

Examples of areas in high demand include places like Hawaii, the California coastline, the coast of Florida, Orlando, Cancun, Myrtle Beach, and the Caribbean.

It is also important to know the maintenance fees of the properties you are considering. The maintenance fees are a large part of any timeshare ownership, and one of the primary reasons that current owners decide to dump their properties. It is important to avoid properties that have very high maintenance fees unless you can buy it at an unbeatable price.

It is always important to get the best price on any timeshare property you buy. It is also important to read any timeshare resale contracts carefully, and perhaps even have a qualified lawyer review the paperwork, before you buy. Remember that a timeshare is a real estate transaction, whether you are buying a brand new unit or a resale.

Of course, it is also vital to make sure that buying a timeshare is the right move for you. A timeshare can be an excellent deal for the budget minded traveler, but it is not right for every traveler. Timeshares are generally suited to those who wish to travel to the

same location every year. Even though many people emphasize the exchangeability of timeshare resorts, the fact is that most timeshare owners spend the majority of their time at their home resort.

Of course, the exchangeability of the timeshare property will be enhanced if you take the advice of buying a unit in a high demand area. For instance, a time share unit in a property next door to Disneyland will obviously be easier to exchange than one a hundred miles away.

Finding the Best Deals on Lodging

There is no doubt that hotel costs are among the biggest part of any vacation budget, and the failure to find affordable lodging has harpooned many an otherwise well planned vacation. One of the keys to enjoying a great vacation without breaking the bank is striking the best possible deal on the roof over your head.

Fortunately, the internet has made the process of finding a great hotel deal much easier. There are some great hotel, motel and bed and breakfast deals out there, and the internet has made them easier to find than ever.

Booking ahead is absolutely essential, as is shopping around. You simply cannot expect to simply show up at a hotel and get a good rate. Most hotel chains reserve their best room rates, and they limit their numbers. Once those low cost rooms are booked, they are simply no longer available.

It is also important to book ahead because it can be difficult to gauge the demand for lodging in a particular area, even if you are familiar with your destination. Special events of which you are unaware could cause a spike in hotel demand, and hotel prices, and leave you either paying an arm and a leg for a place to sleep, or, worse yet, find yourself without a place to stay at all.

It is also important to take advantage of any and all discounts to which you may be entitled, and to not be shy about asking for discounts. Many hotel chains and independent hotels offer discounts to those in the military, senior citizens, and members of travel clubs like AAA. If you think you are entitled to a discount, be sure to ask, and be sure to verify that the discount has been applied when you arrive.

In addition, many hotel chains offer programs that are similar to airline frequent flier programs. These programs reward loyal guests with free nights and other perks. It is important to sign up for these programs whenever you can. Most of these programs are free, so signing up will cost you nothing, and you could end up with a free hotel stay.

When looking for those great hotel deals, there are a number of comparison web sites that let you easily compare available hotels by price, star level, and even proximity to certain tourist attractions. It is always best to search several of these sites, since not all hotel chains participate in every comparison site.

There is no doubt that finding a great hotel rate will take some time and some hard work, but it is very important to keeping your travel budget under control. The cost of lodging often represents at least half, and often much more, of the total cost of a vacation. It is easy to see, then, how getting the best possible deal on your hotel can keep your cost level low and your vacation fun level high.

Vacation Tips for Those on a Budget

Just about every vacationer is interesting in keeping the cost of his or her adventures low. Most people work all year just to be able to enjoy a one or two week vacation from the cares of the world. Unless you are independently wealthy and money is no object, chances are you will be interested in the following tips for squeezing the most value out of your limited vacation dollars.

- When planning for a particular destination, especially a popular one like Orlando, Europe or the Caribbean, it pays to plan ahead. Be sure to spend some time researching the local attractions, and comparing various lodging options. Be sure to look for discounts that are available, and see if it is possible to buy things like theme park tickets or museum admissions prior to arrival. Doing so can save you both time and money.
- Try taking your holiday in the off season or shoulder season. Avoiding the high season can provide many benefits, including lower prices and fewer crowds. Prices on airline tickets, car rentals, hotels and cruises often drop significantly after the high season has gone.
- If you have friends or relatives near your chosen destination, consider asking them for a place to stay. It can be fun for many people to show visitors around their town, and they may enjoy having the company. When taking this approach, however, be sure to chip in by doing chores, paying for groceries, filling the gas tank on the family car, etc.
- Try to plan flying vacations for the times of year when airfares are generally the cheapest. For most destinations, this period runs from February through May and September through December. The one exception to this rule is the week before Thanksgiving and the two weeks leading up to Christmas, when prices shoot back up. If you must fly during the high season, be sure to research the fares on low cost airlines.

- When traveling by car, be sure to pack lots of ready to eat food in the car to avoid expensive restaurant meals.
- When eating in restaurants, try to avoid those that obviously cater to the tourist crowd. Eating where the locals do will allow you to enjoy better food at lower prices.
- When planning your hotel stays, try to strike a balance between a convenient location and a low price. Hotels closer to a given attraction are generally more expensive, while those in suburbs and outlying areas tend to be less costly.
- Compare the amenities of the hotels carefully. Decide what is important to you, and use those priorities as a guide when choosing from among comparably priced hotels.
- For a low cost alternative to expensive hotels, consider renting an RV for your next vacation. There are a number of rental agencies that offer rentals, and an RV can often be a low cost alternative. RV campgrounds are generally much less expensive than traditional hotel rooms.
- When renting a car, choose the smallest, most fuel efficient vehicle you can find. Not only are compact and subcompact cars cheaper to rent, but they are cheaper to operate as well.
- If traveling in your own car, be sure it is up for the trip. A good pre vacation checkup or tune-up can save a lot of problems. Car repairs on the road can be both inconvenient and expensive.
- If the destination you are traveling to has good public transportation options, you may not need your own car, or a rental car, at all. Many large cities in the United States and Europe have such good bus, subway and train systems that a personal car is unnecessary.
- Camping can be an excellent, and very low cost vacation for nature lovers of all ages and interests. Campgrounds are easy to find and inexpensive. In addition, many campgrounds offer great amenities, such as swimming pools, sports and every movie nights.
- Planning activities that do not need a lot of money to enjoy, such as hiking and swimming, is a good way to maximize value and minimize vacation spending. In addition, museums and historical sites generally have very low priced admissions and can be fun for the entire family.

Use Discount Airlines to Save Money on Your Next Vacation

The past few decades have seen an incredible revolution in the world of the airline industry. Low cost and discount airlines took the industry by storm with their focus on

getting their passengers to their chosen destinations with no frills and the least expense possible. Discount airlines like Jet Blue and Southwest have proven that airlines can be successful without offering the frills and first class seats that many of the old line airlines found so indispensable.

As a matter of fact, for the past several years the low cost air carriers have been the only ones able to turn a profit. While many traditional airlines are struggling to make a profit, Southwest and Jet Blue have been profitable almost from their inception.

In addition, low cost airlines have helped to lower prices across the board in the airline industry. When a low cost air carrier starts flying out of a specific destination, the traditional airlines often have little choice but to lower their prices in response to the new competition. This has helped make air travel affordable for a large segment of the population that had never before been able to take advantage of the option of flying.

When low cost airlines first began operations, they kept costs lower primarily by cutting out the extras; anything that did not focus directly on getting passengers where they were going on time was cut back or eliminated. For instance, where traditional air carriers served entire meals, low cost carriers offered bags of peanuts or boxes of snacks. Most low cost carriers also cut out movies and entertainment on their flight, although low cost Jet Blue was the first to offer live television on their planes for a low fee.

The irony in this situation is that traditional airlines have begun to cut back on these very items, with many traditional carriers now offering no meal service at all, or charging fees for the meals they do serve.

What all this means to the budget minded traveler is that airfare costs can be much lower than in the past. While airfares still do fluctuate widely, it is generally possible to find a reasonable price for destinations around the country and around the world.

The key, of course, is to shop early and shop well. The internet provides a great way to search for the lowest airfares. Every low cost and traditional airline has its own web site, and it is important to check these web sites often for prices to your particular destination. There are also a number of comparison web sites where you can simply type in the originating and destination airports and the web site provides the lowest fares on various airlines. In many cases the lowest price will be a low cost carrier, but the increased level of competition means that the lowest price will sometimes be with a traditional carrier as well.

The lowest airfares, both on low cost airlines and traditional ones, are often those that are booked at least a month ahead. Fares for last minute flights are often extraordinarily high, even on the low cost carriers. So the key to getting the best deal is to shop early.

Important Considerations for the Budget Traveler

There are many things for the budget minded traveler to remember, since getting the best deal on a vacation is so important. Most workers spend the entire year working just to be able to afford a one or two week break from their workaday routine, so it is easy to see why finding the best deal is so vital.

The following tips are a great way to get started on making your valuable vacation dollars stretch farther than ever.

- Be sure to shop around, whether you are shopping on the internet or visiting local travel agents. Different web sites, and different travel agencies, often have access to different specials and sales, so be sure to shop around for these hidden deals.
- Consider traveling in the off season or shoulder season. The same hotels that are overbooked and expensive in the high season are often available at excellent prices once the high season has passed. In addition, off season travel offers the advantage of smaller crowds and a more relaxed atmosphere.
- Think about group travel. Many airlines and hotels offer discounts to groups, so if you can travel with your friends and family you may be able to save some money
- Don't forget about last minute travel. Retirees, and those with flexible employment, are often able to take advantage of some spectacular last minute deals. Cruise lines, airlines and hotels often discount their offerings significantly to avoid the expense and lost revenue of an empty cabin, airline seat or hotel bed.
- Look into package deals. For many destinations, especially exotic locations to which airfare tends to be expensive, package deals can be significantly less expensive than making your own arrangements. Many travelers also like the safety and security of traveling with a group.

Being on a tight budget does not mean you have to forgo the excitement and adventure of a great vacation. There are numerous opportunities waiting for budget travelers willing to put in the time and effort to seek them out.

The Best Ways to Get the Cheapest Airfares

Everyone who has ever planned a vacation knows that the airfare is one of the largest expenses of any vacation. The airfare can easily be more costly than the hotel, the sightseeing, the meals, or the rental car, often significantly more expensive. It is important, therefore, for anyone planning a vacation on a budget to pay careful attention to the price of the airfare.

One place to start the search for low cost airfare is with your employer. Corporate discount programs are less common than they once were, but some companies still have discount arrangements with certain airlines. If you think your employer has such an arrangement, be sure to check with your Human Resources department.

In addition, the airlines of some countries, particularly countries in Asia, offer periodic discounts to lure travelers. Be sure to ask your travel agent, or check on the internet, for such special deals.

Another great way to get discounts on airlines is to be a member of certain clubs or groups. For instance, some airlines provide discounts for senior citizens, members of the military and travel club members.

Vacation packages can be another great way to get some significant discounts on airfares and hotels. Many package tour operators buy up large numbers of airline tickets, and in exchange they receive significant discounts on each ticket they buy. They do the same thing with hotels, buying up large blocks of rooms at deeply discounted prices. This economy of scale can often provide travelers with excellent deals compared to what they could get on their own, so be sure to check the availability and value of package deals to your destination.

Of course, when booking a package deal, it is important to be sure the hotel that is included is centrally located. Some package deal operators are better than others at choosing the best and most conveniently located hotels. When choosing from among package deals, be sure to have a map of your destination city handy.

Children and students are often entitled to significant discounts on airlines, so be sure to inquire about the applicable discounts when booking tickets. Children are often entitled to discounted airfare, whether they are traveling on their own or with other family members. It is important to check with the airline for their specific policies on child and student discounts.

The internet also provides a great way to easily comparison shop for the lowest airlines. Most major and discount airlines have their own web sites and online booking services, so it is easy to compare fares and flights easily. In addition to the airlines' own web sites, there are a number of comparison web sites that make it even easier to shop and compare.

Enjoying the Country on a Budget – the Work Camper Lifestyle

One of the most fascinating elements of the RV lifestyle is the work camper. Work campers roam the highways and byways of the country in their RV's and campers,

earning money along the way by working at RV parks, local businesses and the like. The work camper lifestyle may not be for everyone, but many people enjoy the freedom that this lifestyle provides. Doing odd jobs while on the road allows the traveler to enjoy a full time RV lifestyle without having to first retire. This allows them to see the world while they are still young and in good health.

Many people have dreamed of being free to travel the country in an RV, camping at will in many of the most beautiful locations in the country, but been unable to do so for budgetary reasons. For many people, a full time life on the road remains nothing but a dream. There is, however, a small and special group of people who have been able to enjoy RV travel year round and still make a good living along the way.

There are many different kinds of jobs that lend themselves to the lifestyle of the full time RV traveler, and the internet has made working and traveling full time easier than ever. There are, for instance, many information related jobs, such as programming and writing, that can be done from anywhere. Many people have found they were able to cut the cable to their offices and hit the road full time.

There are also many jobs to be had in the RV parks themselves. Most RV parks are always on the lookout for people to fill office positions, maintenance jobs, recreation directors, etc. And best of all the managers of RV parks understand the itinerant nature of these jobs, and they understand that the working RV traveler will work the job for a number of weeks or months, then move on to the next location. In most cases, RV park employees do not need extensive experience in campground work; they simply need to be able to do a good job.

RV parks are not the only place working campers can find employment. There are a number of good jobs in sales, taking care of the properties, guiding tours, construction and many other types of jobs. In addition, there are a number of RV campgrounds that will provide discounts on hookup fees and camping fees in exchange for camp host duties or other jobs. These types of jobs are often available in state parks, county parks and other tourist locations around the country.

If you do not want to quit your day job and hit the road, it may be possible to simply request a transfer to any of your employer's other locations. Many large, multi-site corporations provide easy transfers to other locations around the country, or even telecommuting opportunities. These transfer and work from home options can be a great way to combine your love of the RV lifestyle with the security of a steady paycheck.

- If you want to splurge on a great meal, do so at lunch instead of dinner. Many upscale restaurants offer the same food choices at lunch as they do at dinner, but lunch provides a much better value. You can enjoy the same food for much lower prices by eating a great lunch instead of dinner.

- Take advantage of the free breakfast options offered by your hotel. Many hotels provide a free continental or American breakfast, so be sure to stock up on food for the day by eating a hearty breakfast. Eating a great breakfast will give you the energy you need for a busy day of sightseeing, and help tide you over until lunch.
- Save even more money by stocking up on staples at a local grocery store. Stocking up on bottles of water, fruit and snacks is a great way to provide yourself a great, low cost late night snack while saving you lots of money.
- Try eating in the various ethnic neighborhoods in your destination. Eating in ethnic neighborhoods provides great local color, a chance to meet interesting people, and very low prices as well. In addition, most ethnic restaurants post their menus in their windows or on the door, so it is easy to ensure they have abundant food choices and great prices.

Eating cheap on vacation does not mean sacrificing quality food or great experiences. It just means shopping around and making smart choices when it comes to eating out.

There is no doubt that traveling can sometimes be expensive, but it does not need to be that way. By using a combination of travel savvy, good planning, and some of the tips contained in this report, it should be quite possible to see the parts of the world you have always wanted to see without breaking your budget for the rest of the year.