



How To Stretch Your Vacation Dollar

The affordable vacation is becoming more and more rare. Rising fuel costs have made air and automotive travel considerably more expensive, hamstringing many would-be travelers' budgets before they even begin their search for a hotel or private rental.

While vacations may have become more expensive in recent years, that should not prevent men and women from booking trips to enjoy a little rest and relaxation. In fact, there are many ways to stretch your vacation dollar without sacrificing the quality of your getaway.

* Shake things up with your travel schedule. Flexibility can be your greatest ally with regard to stretching your vacation

dollar, so consider traveling on less popular travel days when planning your vacation. For example, instead of booking your vacation to coincide with a typical work week, consider breaking your vacation up over a two-week period, leaving on a Wednesday and returning the following Tuesday. Both your outgoing and return flights will likely be less expensive than they would be if you were to travel on a weekend, when flights tend to be more expensive, and you will still get to enjoy a full week's worth of vacation.

* Consider booking through a travel website. Many travel websites, including Groupon and LivingSocial, offer travel packages at heavily dis-



Budget-conscious travelers can still visit their favorite resorts without breaking the bank.

counted prices. While some people are understandably skittish about booking trips through such sites, a little research can go a long way toward calming any nerves

you might have about booking your trip. Read previous customer reviews of a deal before booking your trip, shying away from deals that fellow travelers felt fell

short of their expectations. In addition to gauging reaction from past customers, do your own homework on the resorts included in each package you're considering, and then make an educated decision based on your research.

* Book an escorted vacation. If your vacation is going to be less about relaxing poolside and more along the lines of sightseeing and experiencing a different culture, then an escorted vacation might be your most affordable option. On an escorted vacation, your itinerary is prearranged, and that itinerary likely includes many popular tourist attractions and destinations. Such vacations are typically offered at a set price per person, and that price typically

includes the cost of transportation, which can be considerable when traveling abroad.

* Pack light. Anyone who has traveled by air over the last decade is likely aware that baggage costs are another thing to consider when establishing a vacation budget. While men and women flying alone might be able to grin and bear it with regard to baggage fees, parents traveling with kids in tow might be forced to shell out hundreds of dollars in baggage fees alone. When packing for a vacation, pack light so you aren't left paying hefty baggage fees before boarding your outgoing and returning flights.

* Familiarize yourself with

VACATION | PAGE 14

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