

"I gotta get away!"



Vacation destinations are becoming more adventurous than ever before. Great river vacations are available in England and Ireland.



Planning the perfect vacation requires a lot of preparation to ensure that once your trip begins, you can enjoy your destination without worrying about the details.

Spontaneity is a common desire when it comes to vacation, but if you aren't careful, you could end up spending much more money and missing out on local attractions and cultural nuances.



Destination Ahead

Selecting the right vacation destination is about personal preference. Return to nature by traveling to state and national parks in the United States or the jungles of Central and South America. Tourists seeking to discover the Old World will enjoy a trip to popular European countries like England, France and Italy. More adventurous travelers may want to book a safari to Tanzania, Africa, or perhaps plan an Australian walkabout.

Try Something New

Southeast Asia, China, Japan and India are among the trendy new choices for North American tourists. Experts attribute the cultural diversity and high value of the dollar for the boom in visits to Asia. A spin on a more common vacation spot can be found in Europe in the form of river cruises. Travelers are able to visit different inland countries in a more intimate fashion than traditional ocean liners.



Plot Out Your Course

Once you decide where you are going, it is time to make all the accommodations. Generally, airlines will accept reservations for up to a year from the present date. The growing popularity of travel websites makes comparing hotels overseas and booking a reservation a snap. Pick up a guidebook for the country you will be going to, which will include information about the area's notable landmarks, the best eateries and local customs. It's also important to start planning out your finances so you have time to save up for your big trip.

Passport, Please

Due to recent legislation that requires a U.S. passport when returning stateside from a trip to Canada, Mexico or the Caribbean, the demand for passports has resulted in major delays in the processing center. If you are planning any international travel and don't have a passport or your previous one has expired, apply at least four months in advance to ensure that you receive it in time. The average passport application now takes 10-12 weeks to process.

Show Fido the World

Including canines as traveling companions is becoming increasingly popular. Most airlines can accommodate dogs, but be prepared to pay extra. You will also need to get your pet the proper vaccinations and have the paperwork to prove it. Don't forget to bring identification tags and a recent photo in case Fido gets lost. Finally, make sure you introduce your pooch to his travel crate long before the trip so he becomes comfortable in his temporary home. You want him to consider his kennel a sanctuary, not a prison.



Bring my ID!

Don't forget to explore the unexpected places along the way. Often, the most memorable moments are spent off the beaten path.



The Top Vacation Spots



Hot Tips for Cool Savings

Travel during the off-season. The popular destinations will be the most crowded and expensive during the peak seasons like summer. Beat the crowd and save some money by traveling in winter or early spring. Don't be locked into thinking that you can find the climate you want only at certain times of the year. As winter comes upon us, why not think about traveling south and enjoy summer all over again. Researching climates worldwide is a great way of seeking that perfect getaway.

Enroll in customer advantage programs. Many people are familiar with frequent flyer programs, but there are also similar programs with most major hotel chains that will save you loads in the future. Your credit card company may also have a beneficial travel program.

Check for money-saving amenities. Unless they are on a cross-country road trip, most tourists will spend an average of three nights at the same lodging. Selecting one with features such as complimentary breakfast or Internet access will ring up the savings.

Do plenty of homework for airline tickets. Sometimes you will need to check out several different travel websites and airlines to find the best ticket prices. Because things change, bundled flight packages can save big bucks or they can cost a lot more, so do your research.

Resources Online

Popular travel sites will help you compare different prices and outline most of your options:

www.travelocity.com
www.orbitz.com
www.expedia.com
www.priceline.com
www.kayak.com
www.farechase.com

It's a good idea to do your research and look for savings elsewhere, particularly on sites that don't stand to profit from your decision:

www.aaa.com
budgettravel.about.com
www.tripadvisor.com

Most Popular Destinations

London, United Kingdom
Cancún, Mexico
Frankfurt, Germany
Sydney, Australia
Manila, Philippines

Most Popular U.S. Destinations

Las Vegas, Nevada
New York City, New York
Miami, Florida
San Francisco, California
Honolulu, Oahu, Hawaii

Best Value Destinations

Buenos Aires, Argentina
Beijing, China
Prague, Czech Republic
Lisbon, Portugal
San Juan, Puerto Rico

Best Family Destinations

Orlando, Florida
Williamsburg, Virginia
Hershey, Pennsylvania
Southern California
Oahu, Hawaii