

Lucky Seven Tips To Create Better Travel Deals

1. It's often likely the best deals you'll find are last-minute offers. If you're not committed to a daily job or other schedule constraints, be totally prepared to seek out these kinds of opportunities. This also requires that you should have your passport up to date, cash and/or travelers' checks handy and your basic bag all packed. In addition to economy, last minute trips can be exciting changes of scenery and routine.

2. Sign up to look over the many last-minute email deals that are constantly being pitched by online travel agencies, such as travelocity.com. Additionally, if you have a trustworthy neighborhood travel agency, get yourself on its phone and email list for the same purpose. Also put your name and contact info on other lists, including airlines, cruise lines and hotel chains, to receive their latest email information on special price cuts and other quick-breaking offers.

3. Join the gang or become the gang leader. Check with your school, church, social club or other organization to find upcoming group travel packages. If a cruise, excursion or theme trip is planned, groups often get deep cost savings that can be passed down to each participant. As a group leader, you plan and conduct the trip. If you can sign up at least ten others, you may get your trip absolutely free.

4. Look into the all-inclusive deals offered by cruise lines and resorts. For instance, we just returned from a five-night Baja cruise from Los Angeles, and it was an off-season, mid-week trip for less than \$400 each. We paid \$80 a day each for a comfy cabin, all meals, swim, spa, entertainment, dancing, snacks, midnight buffet and many other goodies. You can't do that when you pay for each item and service separately. In fact, in most of today's hotels and motels, you can't even get a room only for that price.

5. If you're a retiree or otherwise are free to travel when you choose, be aware of off-season bargains. For instance, in winter the ski areas of Colorado are chock full of young people riding their skis and snowboards through the snowy peaks. At night, they're living it up in the hotel, restaurants and town pubs. And they pay top dollars for all that fun.

However, if you enjoy the cool summer mountain air and hiking the beautiful Colorado trails, you can have a glorious summer vacation without the snow and crowds. Conversely, for cheaper rates, try the Caribbean and Florida in summer months. So, they're hot and humid, but unlike your stuffy city apartment, there are cool ocean breezes, sand and surf nearby. And fewer noisy tourists and college kids to spoil your quiet solitude.

6. Make frequent phone calls 24-7 directly to travel agencies, hotels, cruise lines and airlines. Although online and neighborhood travel agencies are excellent resources for getting good prices, sometimes you can do better by calling at the last minute, such as the night before you leave on your scheduled trip, and ask directly for better rates. For instance, if a resort hotel has many empty rooms or an airline has empty seats when you call, the staff is usually authorized to cut prices.

7. Of course, no one is happy in a severe economic downturn. Many seniors who've depended on investments to provide comfortable retirement income have witnessed steep declines in their values. Big auto makers and banking companies are in terrible financial trouble and laying off thousands of employees.

However, it doesn't mean seniors should just stay home and stew about it. That attitude of fear does no one any good, especially while the travel industry also has serious worries about its financial future. Seniors should absolutely continue to patronize resorts, airlines, cruise ships, restaurants and other areas of the travel industry.

They didn't call us the Greatest Generation because we were timid, overcome with fear and pulled back from challenges. As we've done in other national crises throughout our long lives, maybe now's the time for us to set a positive example of optimism and faith in our economic system.

Submitted by Paul Scofield