

When I was younger, I lived in a cold climate, and winter was a fun time for shoveling snow and trying to keep my car from sliding into a tree or an oncoming truck. I did lots of sledding with my kids on the hill behind our house, but while they enjoyed it, I couldn't wait until I was back in the house to warm my frozen extremities.



I hated snow so much by the time I retired, I immediately moved from snowy Pennsylvania to sunny Arizona, and haven't seen even a flurry since. Therefore, if you're still living in snow country and hate it, how about considering a vacation where the sun shines warm and comfy all winter long?

Do you really want spend all of this winter watching the snow drift up on your roof or fighting the icy highways? Take a week or two off and follow the sunshine. To make your plans, check with online travel agencies such as Priceline and Expedia, or if you have a trusted neighborhood agency, go in and look at all the brochures that offer winter vacations in warm climates. Here are just a few suggestions:

Cruises: No matter where you live, you can board cruise ships almost anywhere after a short flight from your home. Luxury liners are leaving just about every day from Miami, Fort Lauderdale, New Orleans, Galveston, San Diego, Long Beach and San Francisco. If you want a small, inside cabin, a week's cruise could cost as little as \$40 a day; or if you want a master suite on a top deck with a balcony, you can pay \$400 and up a day.

Considering the cost of staying in the average resort hotel rooms is \$300 plus a day with no other goodies, cruises are all-inclusive bargains. You get your cabin, all meals and snacks, swimming, sports, casino, entertainment and a sparkling sea voyage. You unpack your suitcase just one time, and when the ship visits exotic ports, you can enjoy a tropical fun day ashore and return to your luxury (or economy) cabin every night.

For senior singles, cruises are a great way to meet people. Fortunately for senior guys, there are usually about four single senior women for each.

Las Vegas: They don't call it Sin City for nothing, and instead of diving into a snowbank, you can jump into one of the funnest cities in the world. Vegas has some posh resort hotels that match those of New York, London, Paris and Rome. However, instead of paying \$500 a night, you can bask in total luxury for \$150. Besides the great night life, Broadway quality

entertainment and casinos, Vegas serves some great food. You can dine in exclusive restaurants for \$50 and up, or for \$10 to \$25 experience the city's famed all-you-can-eat buffets.

The ratio of single senior males to females in Las Vegas is about one for one, and that should be enough for any single who goes there to make connections. If you feel an uncontrollable urge to wed or rewed your loving spouse, Vegas has dozens of quaint little wedding chapels, and you may get an Elvis look-alike to stand in as best man.

Hawaii: If you'll put down that snow shovel for a moment, we're sure you'll remember than you've always wanted to visit Hawaii. The warm tropical breezes, the gentle surf, the luau festivals and the beautiful natives basking on the beach. Whatever your pleasure, whether it is staying at one of the lush hotels on Waikiki Beach or taking a cruise around the eight beautiful islands, Hawaii has it all for you.

Hotel prices, especially in prime beach areas, are not cheap. If you check with Expedia, Priceline or all the Hawaii hotel internet sites, you can find them as low as \$150 per night.

The Caribbean: Virgin Islands, Bermuda, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico are a sampling of the many island adventures you can find just south of Florida. The southeast coast of Mexico, called the Mexican Riviera, is also attractive to young visitors and those who think young. If snorkeling and the white sandy beaches aren't quite enough for you, and you're a sports fisherperson, you only have to read Hemingway to know some of the best marlin and sailfish adventures are in the Caribbean.

Depending on location and quality, you can find many great resorts and hotels with rates to suit your budget. If you check with Priceline, Expedia or all the Caribbean hotel internet sites, you can find them as low as \$80 and upward per night.

Florida: You know Florida has been the winter destination of seniors since Al Jolson and Al Capone vacationed in Miami in the 1920s. However, the state is much more than just that city. Everywhere up and down the isthmus, from St. Augustine to Orlando, Palm Beach to Tampa, Key West to St. Petersburg, Florida is one big playground for seniors.

Anyhow, if you're just approaching retirement age, you know you'll find most of your older colleagues have already made permanent homes in Florida or other warm spots. They're spending their sunset years golfing, fishing, surfing, hiking, boating or just relaxing on the warm sand and at the bubbling spa.

If you still haven't made up your mind where you'll settle down after your working years are over, drop that snow shovel and spend a winter week or so visiting your old friends. They'll give you all the info you'll need for when the time comes for you to attend that long-anticipated retirement dinner.