

Travelwise seniors should consider recent remarks by Ben Stein, quiz show host, TV eyewitness pitchman/news commentator, college economics prof and former Nixon speechwriter. Stein, age 64, insists that the best way for the economy to recover from the financial disasters of 2008 is for all consumers to get out and spend more in 2009.



He claims that part of the problem is that everyone scaled back their buying when Wall Street, banks, automakers and Fanny Mae collapsed. That only made things worse, says Stein, because it caused further panic, huge retail store losses, and more bankruptcies and foreclosures.

Therefore, if you agree with Stein's theories, get out your wallet, scrape out your bank account, get out there and spend yourself out. Well, maybe your rush to spend need not be that OUTrageous.

For an economic jump start, book your senior self into one of those now half-empty cruise ships. You may find you'll get a penthouse stateroom with balcony and a week of ocean views for \$400 that would have cost you \$1,500 in 2008. And when you fly from your home town to the port city, your airline tickets could be half as expensive as they were last year.

Have pity on those New York City, Paris, Tokyo and London hotels that have been forced to reduce their rates for their dumpy little rooms from robbery rates of \$500 to less thievery rates of \$200 a night. Patronize them before they'll be forced to go condo. And don't forget to dine in those snooty restaurants, where astounding prices for dinner were \$100 last year, and could be only half-astounding in 2009.

Make plans to patronize casinos again, where the dealers are now sadly standing in empty loneliness and the slot machines are deadly quiet. When you book yourself into one of the posh resorts in Las Vegas, you may find the buffet prices have dropped from \$40 to the 99 cents they used to cost when the Mob ruled Sin City.

And where in 2008, you had to pay \$150 a seat to see Bette Midler at Caesars Palace, the ticket price may again be a total of \$10 it once cost you to eat a steak dinner while watching Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis and Dean Martin perform on stage. Well, not really, but worth a

wish.

OK, Ben, we'd like to take your advice and do more senior traveling this year. However, maybe we're too wise and old not to be realistic about our price-dropping dreams.