

Fortunately, high travel prices from the past several years are beginning to slip down to almost reasonable levels, so be on the alert more than ever for bargains. Find ways to save money on the trail without sacrificing any of the enjoyment. Here are a few tips:



1. For air travel, whenever possible fly redeye (late night). The prices are much lower and highway to airports are less crowded. Second best for prices is booking flights that depart between 5 am and 9 am Sunday through Thursday.
2. Airport vans and buses are usually much cheaper than taxis to get you into town. Also, in cities like New York, Paris, London and Las Vegas, cabbies are notorious for taking longer routes to jack up the prices. If you must go by taxi, be sure to tell the driver to take the most direct route, and keep your eyes open to prevent straying off course.
3. If you're a theater goer visiting a big city, check with the two-fer booths before buying your tickets. The general deal is that half-price tickets for that afternoon or night performances go on sale at about 10 am. Be there early and save.
4. Often renting a car is more trouble than taking public transportation, and certainly more expensive. This is particularly true in big, congested cities. Check the transportation systems where you'll be visiting and ask questions of your hotel's staff before you rent a car.
5. Hotel prices are a roulette wheel of confusing rates. Sometimes calling the hotel front desk directly gets you the best deal. Often working with a trusted travel agency can be effective, too, and online travel agencies are great if you know exactly how they operate. You need to check closely with all travel information resources and on your computer to keep up with the ever-changing rates for flights, cruises, hotels and combination packages.
6. Never, never use the inaptly-called honor bar in your hotel room. The prices are ridiculously high for simple items you can get elsewhere much cheaper or do without. Buy your toiletries at a local drug store and edibles at the supermarket. If your room has a free fridge, store your foods and drinks in it for use throughout your stay.
7. Do you need to buy a sit-down breakfast? A roll, bagel or banana, shared bottle of orange juice and coffee are enough to keep most senior travelers going until lunchtime. If your hotel has a free full or continental breakfast, be sure to take advantage of the deal. You're paying for

it anyhow in your room rate.

8. If your hotel has a buffet restaurant, eat a hearty lunch there and make your evening meal a modest one at a sit-down restaurant. Do a bit of buffet thievery by stuffing buns, cookies and bananas in pocket or purse, creating a free breakfast supply for the next day. And don't feel guilty about it, because most other buffet eaters, particularly the hefty, young weight-ignorers with the piled-up plates, consume much more than diet-conscious seniors can ever match.

9. If you eat a sit-down dinner, don't be shy about asking for a doggie bag for your leftovers. Put them in your hotel room refrig until the next day. If you don't have a fridge in your room, fill up your ice bucket and keep the food cold and dry in a sealed plastic bag.

10. Many traveling seniors are shocked when they get huge cell phone bills. When just a relatively few miles out of the US borders, such as in Canada, Mexico or the Caribbean, make sure you know what roaming charges are in effect, and how much it will cost you before calling numbers in the US. On a recent cruise along the Baja, Mexico, just a couple hundred miles from the US coast, two seniors called home. For just four slightly gabby calls, one got a bill for \$350, and for just one three-minute call to Arizona, the other tab was \$44.