



A most effective question a senior traveler can utter is: can you do better than that? Or as a definite statement: I'm sure you can do better than that. Not hostile. Not demanding. Just say it with conviction, backed up by an I-know-the-score smile.

For the past decade, because of the steep rise in oil prices, the wars and unchecked inflation, travel costs have skyrocketed. But recent developments indicate there may be happier days ahead for the senior traveler. Oil prices dropped, and travel prices should follow. This may be a most opportune time to find bargains, especially in hotel, resort and cruise ship rates. How can you do it? There are internet travel agencies, such as Travelocity and Expedia, that claim they can cut prices for their customers. If that's the way you want to look for bargains, go for it.

For example, when you call to make reservations at that Las Vegas resort, the quote on the phone may be \$300 a night. Then you say the magic words, and you may be surprised when it drops to \$150, or you're offered the third night free.

Also, when you arrive at the front desk to check in, just say the magic words once more, and you may be surprised all over again. Of course, don't show up during a national convention or when there's a major sports event in town.

If you're planning a cruise, check prices on the internet, and also with your friendly neighborhood travel agency. Your best bet, if you're a frequent traveler, is to form a relationship with a travel agent near you. Knowing that if he/she gets you a good deal, you'll keep coming back to patronize the agency. Of course, never forget to use those magic words in all negotiations: Can you do better?