

We have friends who live in the desert Southwest, where summer temperatures can hit 110 degrees for days at a time between May and September. They book extended stays of one or two months every summer at hotels in cool mountain areas of California, Utah and Nevada.

They pay from about \$150 to \$200 a week for small, one- and two-bedroom suites. They say the secret for getting bargain rates is that they choose hotels in towns where there are big universities. The hotels are not busy in summer, and lower their prices ... usually by 50 percent or more ... to entice retirees and others to occupy rooms during slow business months.



If you're considering an extended stay vacation, there are basic considerations for you to work through. First, are you willing to book for a month or more in one location? Is the price OK with you, and/or is it negotiable? Is there adequate security in the hotel and surrounding neighborhood?

Of course, the key word is location, location, location. If near a university, you could take advantage of inexpensive restaurants on or near the campus, summer cultural and entertainment activities, continuing education courses, use of athletic facilities and many other attractive factors. Additionally, if you like such locales, is the hotel near hiking trails, golf courses, mountains, lakes or ocean?

Concerning your living quarters, you should look for the best bang you can get for your bucks. Is there a kitchen, with stove and refrig? Also a grocery within walking distance or short drive. Your vacation can be much more economical if you're able to prepare most of your meals there.

A patio or balcony would be convenient for outside dining, BBQing and sunbathing. Other ways to economize could be laundry facilities in or near the apartment. Of course, not even retirees could survive an entire summer without cable TV and internet access. A nice, quiet neighborhood would be ... well ... nice.

If there's anything negative about extended stays is that you may have to keep the place clean, do the laundry, wash the dishes and other chores. Of course, some motel staffs will do those chores, but usually for extra fees. If you prefer a traditional vacation, such as cruises and excursions, where you do nothing, extended stays may not be for you.

The best way to begin exploring extended stay hotels and motels is to surf the internet. Logging

on to a search engine like Google will give you a whole gaggle of information about the subject. If you prefer an area where you want to spend your extended stay, call the hotels directly, or ask a favorite online or neighborhood travel agency to explore all the possibilities.

And always remember: before you agree to a price, negotiate.