

Is there as much as a half a Grover Cleveland (\$500) lurking in your final bill that you hadn't expected? Do cruise ships and all-inclusive resorts offer low, low prices and then sneak in high, high extra charges? The answer is: you betcha. There's nothing illegal about it, just a travel industry practice that too often leaves travelers with the bad taste of bait and switch.

First of all, and it isn't the fault of the travel industry, on every product and service, there's inevitably heavy taxation. It can be national, and/or state and/or city and/or dogcatchers' protective association tax. Therefore, no matter what the hotel, resort, cruise ship and airline price quote is in all those enticing ads, you can expect to be hit with an additional 10 to 25 percent or more when you get the bill.

For instance, we saw recent ads from Southwest Airlines on a round trip from our town to Las Vegas for \$175 each person, \$350 total. No, not the real total. With all the add-on taxes and other charges, the actual price was \$500.



There are ways to beat down some hotel and air prices a bit. For instance, the package deal, where the costs include both flights and hotel charges. Simply before you buy each separately, do a price comparison with a package deal for same air and hotel destination. Also, check on special offer ads with online and neighborhood travel agencies.

That kind of savings can be small stuff compared to what you can save at all-inclusive resort

and cruise deals. Beyond the heavy taxes added to your bill, there are many services that are definitely not all-inclusive. Those extra charges are not hidden, so all you have to do is avoid them, or they can make your bill go sky high.

For instance, many cruise ships feature special, extra exclusive dining rooms for passengers who are willing to pay for promised higher-level food and service. On a two-week cruise, dining that posh way every evening could easily add that half a Cleveland (\$500) and more to your bill. There are also the spa treatments. For \$100, you can have coconut and pine oil rubbed into your sagging skin. You can buy a bottle of the same stuff for \$1.50 and slosh it on yourself

Your all-inclusive vacation rarely includes any booze or beer, and on most cruises even Coca Cola ordered from the bar can cost \$2.50 or more each. Guests who order drinks with meals or during entertainment events can find an extra daily \$100 or more added to their bills. If you need champagne to celebrate that special anniversary aboard, expect your wallet to be squeezed a half a Cleveland or more by check-out time.

Also, there's the Las Vegas-ish part of cruises, where you can pay many bucks to try your luck in bingo and/or visit the ship's casino. It's all voluntary, of course, but chances of winning range somewhere between zilch and zero.

And there are the excursions. On an all-paid land vacation, it may include horseback rides, sightseeing boats, scuba diving, playing with the dolphins and other goodies. On cruises, it is trips ashore to exotic ports, where buses take you to famous shrines, historic buildings and a discount shopping center owned by a guy who just happens to be a second cousin of the cruise ship maitre d'.

The matter of tipping adds considerably to your all-inclusive cruise or resort vacation. For instance, on our last cruise, we were given a pile of envelopes and a list of who gets tips and how much each. It cost us at least another \$250. On some cruises, the tips are automatically added to the final bill. In those cases, crew members don't have the incentive to earn tips, so your service may not always add up to the initials: To Insure Promptness.

Although all these extra prices do have a hint of bait and switch, in most cases you can avoid some by just not signing on to them. Do you really need to pay \$500 a week extra just to dine in a snootier dining room? Must you buy an excursion for \$150, when you can go ashore and do the same wandering on your own? Do you really need to spend \$100 just for the thrill of having someone slosh your body with scented oils and cucumber slices?

Have fun on your cruise or all-inclusive resort vacation. Just try to keep your spending within a sensible and reasonable budget.