

ACHIEVEments

For Members of the Louisiana Association for Personal Financial Achievement

June 2010

ACHIEVE Members,

There are myriad ways to vacation, so to make the best use of your precious time and dollars — plan ahead. Start by deciding what you can afford, and then figure out what you want from the vacation. Do you want total relaxation? Intense sightseeing? Adventure? Something else?"

Then research likely destinations. You can do your own online research using search engines like Google.com or Yahoo.com, or try one-stop travel sites like [Expedia.com](#), [Travelocity.com](#) or [Orbitz.com](#).

You may consider consulting a professional travel agent. There's no charge to you, and it could save significant time. If you do, make sure the agent is reputable. Ask family and friends for recommendations, and

find out how long the agency's been in business.

After determining your ideal destination, consider these tips to get the most for your money:

- Book your flight and hotel together as a package; the rates often are lower.
- Search for airfare sales on Tuesday evenings when airlines typically release new ones.
- If your dates are flexible, look for last-minute airfare deals.
- Consider all-inclusive resorts or cruises where accommodations and meals are included as a package.
- Avoid peak travel times--summer and holidays--because airfares and hotel rates are generally at a premium then.
- If you have a rental car, you can drive and stay at a hotel outside an

urban center where hotel rates often are lower.

- Hotels that cater to business travelers often are underbooked on weekends and offer discounts, so check those rates.
- When you book any travel arrangements, read the fine print and avoid hidden costs. Most travel agencies and online travel services include airfare and/or hotel taxes and fees in the total price you agree to, but be sure to ask.
- Be aware of extra charges, like fees for hotel telephone or Internet use, or inflated minibar prices.

And, for help financing that special vacation, contact your financial institution.

Ike DeLee III
Executive Director

Have Prepaid Card, Will Travel

When you travel, you want to enjoy exploring new places and meeting new people, not worry about the security of your money. Prepaid travel cards (sometimes called prepaid currency cards) are a safe, convenient solution, although they have costs.

Here's how it works: You load value on the card and then use it to pay for purchases or make ATM withdrawals. The purchase or withdrawal amount gets deducted automatically from the card's value.

Both Visa® and MasterCard® have prepaid travel cards available in U.S. dollars. The Visa TravelMoney card can be loaded for \$250 to \$9,999, and the Mastercard Travel Card value range is \$200 to \$8,500. The MasterCard Cash Passport™ card is available in Euros and British Pounds.

Why not just use traveler's checks? Because it's getting harder to find merchants in the U.S. and abroad who will

accept them. Fake traveler's checks are a huge problem due to today's technology. But prepaid travel cards are accepted at millions of merchants and ATMs worldwide, just like credit and debit cards.

So why not use credit and debit cards? The key advantage of prepaid travel cards over other plastic is that they're not tied to any of your financial accounts. So a thief can't gain access to your checking or charge accounts.

As for costs, you'll pay a fee (typically about \$10) when you get the card, plus a few dollars to reload value. You pay no fee when you use a travel card to make a purchase, but you pay to use it for ATM withdrawals, in addition to whatever the ATM's usual charge may be.

The fees differ among issuers. Be sure to shop around to find the best deal.

Alert Credit Card Companies Before Traveling

Going on vacation? Imagine checking into a hotel only to find out your credit card accounts have been frozen. Be sure to call your credit card issuers ahead of time to let them know you'll be out of town--especially if it's an international trip. That way, you won't be blocked from using your credit cards when you need them most. Card issuers may do that for your protection when unusual activity appears in your account. So just let the issuer know when unusual activity is legit.

Summer Trip on a Budget

For most college students, the fun and freedom of a spring break adventure is a rite of passage. How are you going to go on that dream vacation on a limited budget? The following tips will get you started on pursuing that perfect spring break getaway.

Money saving strategies

First and foremost, shop around. No matter where you're headed, ask for student discounts at rental car agencies, hotels, sightseeing attractions and air/hotel packages. If a hotel doesn't offer a student discount, ask for a group discount--often honored if you rent a block of rooms.

Use common sense. Scrutinize the details, and you won't be fooled into paying hidden costs like extra fees for maid service.

Travel by car

Sure, it takes longer to get from point A to point B by car, but you may be able to save a bundle if you drive to a destination closer to home.

Rental property

Nissa Dell, recent graduate of the University of Colorado at Denver, says, "Four of us saved money on two spring break vacations by renting a condo in Vail, Colo., one year and a small apartment in Aspen, Colo., the next. We saved restaurant costs by eating all meals at home."

Practically free vacations

Bring your bike along if your car or van has the space. When you reach your destination use public transportation (ask for student discounts), or ride your bike to save money.

College students often are targets of unscrupulous travel companies. Here are a few tips that will help you avoid being taken on a glorified ride to "scamsville."

Resist limited offers

If you have to "act now" to get in on a good deal, resist the pressure. It's true, availability of airfare and lodging constantly changes, but reputable companies don't pressure you to make fast decisions.

Get references

Always ask for references before buying a travel package. Talk to people who have "been there, done that," with the same company you're considering.

Get local phone numbers, not "800" numbers, and addresses of specific hotels which are part of your travel package. Call the hotel and ask questions about the tour package director.

Scrutinize the written details

Before you buy, ask to see all the details of the trip, including all costs, in writing. Then read the fine print carefully. Never sign a contract with blank spaces; additional information could be added after you sign. Don't give out your credit card information to anyone you're unfamiliar with.

Talk to a local travel agent

Don't overlook local travel agents, such as the student travel specialists at Student Travel Association (STA, www.statravel.com), often located on college campuses.

Pay by credit card

The best way to pay for a spring break vacation is by credit card--if you'll be able to pay off the bill when it comes. Talk to someone at your financial institution about the credit cards we offer.

Avoid paying for your trip with cash. If you do use cash, insist on getting a receipt for the total cost of your travel package.



5 Tips for Getting Low-Priced Airfare

Many variables go into the price of an airline ticket. The result is that few passengers on the same plane pay the same price.

1. Timing is everything: Twenty-one day and 14-day advance fares usually are the lowest. Search for fares a few minutes after midnight--when reservations previously put "on hold," but not ticketed, are released. Avoid peak travel times including holidays. Travel before 7 a.m. and after 7 p.m. Fly Tuesday through Thursday; include a Saturday night stay.

2. Search the Web: Lower priced fares often are offered online. In fact, the same ticket may be \$25 more if you buy it over the phone.

3. Choose an alternate city: Can't find the airfare you want from Chicago's O'Hare International Airport to La Guardia Airport in New York City? Consider leaving from and arriving in alternate cities.

4. Budget airlines: Smaller airlines are good options if you missed advance purchase deals on major airlines. Budget airlines also offer the best deal if you're flying one-way. Typically major airlines charge hefty prices for one-way fares.

5. Promotions: When an airline begins service to a new city look for introductory discounts good for 30 days or 60 days. Don't book without asking about promotions.

www.Bestfares.com | www.Expedia.com | www.Orbitz.com
www.SmarterTravel.com | www.Travelocity.com
www.TravelNow.com

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