

BUDGET *STRETCHING* TRAVEL IDEAS

Understanding Online Travel Sites

(NAPSA)—Experts say you don't have to pay through the nose to give the travel industry a shot in the arm, especially if you're willing to let your PC be your travel agent. Online discount travel services can make it easy to find bargain rates and fares, provided you know how to use them.

Try these tips for finding inexpensive trips:

Understand The System

In most cases, an airline will fly a scheduled flight, whether it sells 25 or 125 reservations. The airline must pay for flight attendants, pilots, gas, and many other fixed expenses, regardless of the passenger load. In order to fill vacancies and offset costs, travel companies often sell their unsold seats, hotel rooms and rental cars at large discounts rather than make no money at all. That's where discount travel sites come in. Sites such as Hotwire (www.hotwire.com) sell airline tickets, hotel rooms and rental cars that would ordinarily go unused at a discount from their normal prices. The site is partnered with most major airlines, hotels, and car rental companies to offload excess inventory. The key is to be flexible for the best discounts.

Use Your Flexibility

Looking for the best possible price? Discount travel sites like Hotwire often sell airline tickets at discounts of up to 50 percent and hotel rooms discounted up to 70 percent with one caveat—you must be flexible. For example, when buying airline tickets with



Knowing how online travel sites work can help you find the best deals.

Hotwire, you choose the dates you want to travel and the origination/destination cities. You won't know the exact flight time or which major airline you're flying until after purchase, however. This is how Hotwire is able to negotiate such deep discounts—by using your flexibility to get better deals from their airline partners.

Not willing to be flexible? Then you may not find the absolute lowest price. If you absolutely must be somewhere at a particular time, you'll probably end up paying for the extra convenience.

Shop Around

One of the great things about the Internet is that it allows you to check several travel Web sites and decide for yourself which offering has the best value. Since most discount sites, like Hotwire, show the price up front, you shouldn't need to go through the hassle of guessing on a bidding site for a low price.

For more information visit www.hotwire.com.