

BUDGET *STRETCHING* TRAVEL IDEAS

Warm Weather Getaways—Make the Most of Your Vacation and Your Money

(NAPSA)—From luggage to sunblock and beach towels to picnic baskets, preparing for the perfect getaway involves smart planning to stretch your vacation dollar. If you save while planning for your much-anticipated escape, then you'll feel better about splurging on the things you really want to do when you get there. Little details, like packing toiletries and your favorite CD or book, can be just as important as the "big" details like purchasing luggage, plane tickets, and securing hotel reservations. Thoughtful purchases such as a travel wallet to keep your money safe, or a light weight wind breaker in case of unexpected (and unwanted) rain will ease your mind and make your trip more enjoyable.

A top summer saving secret is bringing the comforts of home to the hotel. Plan ahead and pack some snacks from home like your own bottled water, some munchies and a treat for that late night sweet tooth to tempt yourself and your family away from that \$8 can of nuts in the hotel bar. The same goes for sunblock, sunglasses, a swimsuit and all the essentials you need to enjoy the long, balmy days of your vacation. You can make the trip there more enjoyable by bringing munchies, games, books, and magazines on the plane with you to keep your family entertained and get your vacation started off right. Making a list of all your creature comforts in advance, so you don't miss anything when packing, is a safe bet. The last thing you'll want to do with your precious vacation time is try to find your way to the nearest department store to get the one thing you forgot, or worse, pay outrageous prices at the hotel gift shop.

To save yourself both time and money while getting ready for your vacation, you might also try shopping online. Great deals can be found on plane and hotel reser-



Online rebate sites like Ebates help you save even more money on your pre-trip purchases with the help of mascot "Moe Money."

ervations if you take the time to use the Internet to your advantage. Since you are able to quickly and easily compare several airlines' prices on sites like economy-travel.com, priceline.com, or hotwire.com, you can take as much time as you need, without being dependent on a travel agent, for hunting down the best deals. The ease of the Internet also allows you to try out several different vacation destinations and itineraries as easily as one.

If you're looking for beauty products to bring on a trip, clothing to wear for the beach or reading materials to help you escape, shopping online is an easy way to guarantee savings. Consumers have access to a quick, crowd-free shopping experience, unlimited selection, prices that are often below retail and select items that are only available on the Web. The selection of stores to choose from is endless. For books, you may want to try popular sites such as BarnesAndNoble.com and Borders.com. For health and beauty supplies, you may like BathAndBody.com or CVS.com. You can find toys to keep the kids entertained (and you relaxed) at stores like Dis-

covery.com, LearningCo.com, or ZanyBrainy.com.

To save even more money on your pre-trip purchases, you may want to consider doing your online shopping through a coupon or rebate site. One of the most popular types of these sites is Ebates. Ebates is simple to use and offers up to 25 percent cash back at over 400 stores, including those mentioned above, plus other popular sites like CD Now, Nordstrom, and JC Penney. This site works by having you sign up (it requires only an e-mail address and a password), and then allows you to shop at all the sites you would normally shop at in the same way. You get a check in the mail with a percentage back on all of your purchases. As an added bonus, Ebates will allow you to use manufacturer's coupons, layering them on top of your rebates for double the savings. By using sites like Ebates you can save time and even more money.

It's easy to enjoy your sun-filled adventures to the fullest by planning ahead and taking advantage of great online savings and specials so you won't get burned by the sun—or your spending. Happy vacationing!