

Budget Stretching Travel Ideas

Tips For Traveling On A Budget

(NAPSA)—With so many details and hidden expenses involved with planning a vacation, it's easy to lose sight of how much things can cost while you're on the road. Further complicating the process is the daily fluctuation of the U.S. dollar—the value of which recently fell to an all-time low against the euro. As a result, Americans are increasingly looking for creative ways to stretch their vacation budgets.

One perennial favorite for international travel at a value is escorted tour packages. According to the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA), one-quarter (23 percent) of past-year travelers (33.3 million adults) say they have bought a travel package within the past three years. Not surprisingly, travelers enjoy leaving the planning up to the professionals and the pennies in their pockets. Moreover, tour operators are able to negotiate lower group rates with hotels and attractions, and travelers pay for their vacation up front—eliminating some of the “sticker shock” that can occur while on the ground in a foreign country.

With the introduction of its 2008 vacation offerings, the Globus family of brands—the world's leader in escorted travel—has already developed its land-only pricing for next year. That means travelers who book their tour package now are offered the vacation of their dreams at a preset, advertised price. Even if the value of the dollar drastically drops before their departure, travelers will see very little, if any, change in the cost of their vacation. In addition, with its Cosmos brand, the company has been offering value-focused tour packages for 45 years. Select Cosmos European vacations are priced as low as \$65 per day.



However, if planning an escorted vacation isn't an option this year, there are always ways to save money while traveling. Following are a few tips:

1. Cut Costs Ahead of Time

—Do some penny-pinching research before your next vacation and you'll easily save money before you even take off. Cosmos (www.cosmos.com) even offers a vacation cost calculator on its site—enabling you to calculate how many items you could remove from your budget and estimate how long it'll take you to save up. Just think: In a few short months, you could have enough for your dream vacation.

2. Do Your Homework—

Spread out the maps, contact your local travel agent or even talk to your friends to research the least expensive vacation activities. Between free museums and street cart delicacies, there are always places to visit that won't break the bank. By researching your destination ahead of time and taking advantage of available resources, you'll not only save your pennies—you'll experience the destination like a local.

3. Scale Back on the Souvenirs—

Consider limiting the number of take-home treasures that you purchase on vacation. Instead, try taking a special snapshot of a funny memento or mem-

orable scene that you can present to the recipient on your return. Not only will it lighten your load, but you'll have inexpensive yet thoughtful reminders of your trip to share with as many loved ones as you wish.

4. Stay off the Beaten Path

—Of course there's amazing shopping to be done in the high-trafficked areas of a destination. However, it's easy to avoid the chaos and the overcharge if you stick to lesser-known smaller areas that offer just as much of a shopping adventure at a fraction of the cost. Who knows? You might even find that one-of-a-kind scarf you've been searching for in an undiscovered bazaar.

5. Pack a Picnic—

Dining out can certainly add up—especially when you're dealing with foreign currency. Instead, find a local market and purchase some fresh produce, cheese and bread and enjoy your meal with romantic views of the countryside—or even the cityscape—as a backdrop.

6. Take Advantage of Transportation—

Forgo the high prices of taxis and rental cars—one of the least expensive ways to get around town is right at your feet. Many cities offer walking tours that allow you to get up close and personal with its most popular landmarks while saving on the cost of getting there. If walking isn't your thing, opt for public transportation—like buses and trains—which will also keep your wallet full and give you a unique “like a local” perspective of the city you're visiting.

To learn more about escorted vacations from the Globus family of brands, contact your travel agent, call (866) 313-2855 or visit www.globusfamily.com.