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Tips for Getting Travel Bargains from the Experts at Fass Travel

Everyone loves a travel bargain. Here are some tips for finding them and some advice about looking beyond the price tag to be sure you get the service or product you want for that great price.

1) Be flexible

If lower priced flights are what you are after, you may find that just a little flexibility goes a long way to saving you money, especially if you are flying to a popular destination. Simply by changing your travel dates and, for example, flying on less-traveled days like Tuesdays and Wednesdays, instead of the busier Saturday and Sunday, you can save hundreds of dollars.

In addition to planning a midweek to midweek trip, traveling during off-peak hours in the day such as early in the morning or later at night will usually shave money off your ticket. Of course, you can be ultra flexible and, rather than picking your destination first, choose a destination based on the best deal available.

2) Throw aside convention

If you are not set on a particular destination, you might find some real travel bargains by going to destinations that are currently not on the "top 25" list (but are still safe for travel). Some countries simply fall out of favour with the travelling public and are hungry for travelers' business. Or, long after a crisis has passed or civil strife has calmed, travelers still stay away in droves and there are tremendous travel deals for the discerning traveler.

If you're willing to try something a little different in order to save money and have a different travel experience, consider unconventional accommodations. Stay in a convent, a bed and breakfast, a hostel (some are almost like hotels), a country inn, a barge, or a self-catering apartment or cottage. Many travel agents have the inside track about these lesser-known forms of accommodation and can help you reserve with a reputable booking service.

3) Travel off-season

Maybe you're not ready to give up your dream of going to a particular destination. But consider going in the low or shoulder season when it is less busy. The shoulder season—just before and after the high season—can be an ideal time for travel, when hotels and car rental may be

cheaper, the crowds thinner, and the weather still favorable. Low season can offer even better savings, but you might have less favourable weather (too cool in the northern hemisphere and too hot in the south), and some tourist attractions may be closed. On the other hand, if you like to “go local,” off-season is the ideal time to fit in with the natives and see how they live, eat, work and play.

If you dream of cruising but the price gets in the way, consider taking a less expensive repositioning cruise. Twice a year, cruise ships reposition and offer great deals, many on trans-Atlantic trips. Because these long trips consume fuel, the cruiselines want their ships to be full. There may not be many ports of call, but some cruiselines offer special programs geared to the “repo” trip, and you get all the same meals, entertainment and recreation as standard trips for less cost.

4) Book early

Whether you're purchasing airline tickets, booking a hotel or renting a car, the further ahead you book your trip, the better price you are likely to find. Booking a trip six months in advance is usually less expensive than one month in advance, and if you're heading for a popular destination at peak travel time, six weeks in advance is the minimum.

If you give your travel agent advance notice of your travel plans, you might be lucky to catch a very low “price-war” fare for travel as much as a year in advance. Sometimes these deals are only available in a very short time-frame of a few days.

5) Book late

That being said, there can also be bargains if you wait till the last minute. The disadvantage here, of course, is that you cannot plan ahead. Many major airlines publish bargain fares mid-week for travel the coming weekend. Keep your travel agent on alert to notify you about these deals or subscribe to a last-minute airfare newsletter. Many of these newsletters cater to specific groups such as students, seniors, cruisers, and frequent fliers.

6) Search the web – but you won't find everything you need.

Buying travel tickets online, touted as a great way to get cheap fares, often or always costs more than what is advertised and changing the itinerary can sometimes cost more than the ticket itself. Searching endless options, clicking through and comparing web-only fares can take up hours. You need to ask yourself what is your time worth. And also ask yourself, did I get all the information I need?

The website may not have all the information on a destination, provide unbiased recommendations, or be able to answer your questions about safety and security. This is where the knowledge of a professional travel agent is invaluable. For example, you found a great deal on a hotel in Hawaii. Did the website tell you it was due to construction or renovations? Your travel agent will know that.