

# How to Take a Summer Vacation on the Cheap

**Free apps, smart packing and a bit of preparation can help you save big on your next trip.**



Summer is in full swing, and if you haven't dipped into your vacation time yet, the next few months provide the perfect opportunity. Hesitating because you think you can't get away without dropping thousands of dollars? Think again. There are plenty of money-saving tricks, tips and hacks to make your dream trip (or even a quick weekend getaway) a reality.

**When you're booking:** If you have some flexibility with your destination and travel dates, you can use a number of tools to hunt down the best deal. Google Flights allows you to easily view the cheapest days and times to fly anywhere in the world. You can even set up an alert to notify you when the price drops on your destination. Airfarewatchdog is a website that tracks the prices of airfare and can send you notifications on the lowest fares and last-minute flight deals.

One way to make the most of an international trip is to take advantage of free stopovers. Airlines such as Finnair, Hawaiian Airlines, Icelandair, Japan Airlines and others will offer the option to stop over somewhere for free on the way to their final destination (in the case of Icelandair, it's a

free stopover in Iceland's capital, Reykjavik). Airlines may even provide transportation and help finding fun things to do in the area.

Before you decide on your destination and the dates of your trip, do a quick online search for local events. If there is a major attraction, such as a festival or marathon, happening when you travel, the costs of hotels and flights are probably much higher than normal due to increased demand.

Once you know where you want to travel, make sure to stack your rewards. Use a credit card that earns points or airline miles when you book and click through a cash back website first. Check for coupon codes and promotions for hotels and rental cars to see if there are any other ways you can save.

**When you're packing:** As you prepare to depart on your trip, decide if it's possible to only bring carry-on luggage. You can save money on baggage fees, and you won't have to worry about losing your bag or waiting at the carousel in the airport. Call your hotel ahead of time and see if it has laundry amenities, as this will make it much easier to pack light.

You can save money on the high costs of airport cuisine by bringing along a reusable water bottle and your own snacks. If you have a long flight or several layovers, include protein bars or dry oatmeal that you can make on the plane – just ask your flight attendant for a cup of hot water. Include a few resealable plastic bags, so you can divide up larger snacks to last your entire trip.

Before you travel, call your credit card companies to notify them of your trip. Otherwise, they may temporarily freeze your accounts if they see unfamiliar activity that appears fraudulent.

**When you're on the go:** On your trip, there are still a few ways you can save as you go. It's easy to get caught up in the wonder and discoveries of your destination, but this is a sneaky way to overspend. Check to find out if your credit card has any foreign transaction fees when you use it in a different country, and make sure you understand the conversion rate. OANDA offers a converter that will calculate how far your currency will go in another country.

During your travels, make lunch your big meal out instead of dinner – the prices tend to be less expensive, and often there is a different menu with cheaper specials. Stop by a local market for a few staples to keep in your hotel room, so you don't have to spend money on snacks and beverages that might be marked up in tourist hot spots.

If your flight gets canceled, delayed or overbooked, there are resources to help get your money back. AirHelp is an app that can claim compensation for your flight delay or cancellation.

Plan smart, pack smart and travel smart to save money on your next vacation, and you can focus on enjoying your deserved time off.

<http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/my-money/articles/2017-06-15/how-to-take-a-summer-vacation-on-the-cheap>