

Vacations that won't kill your pocketbook



Traveling the world is a great idea, but it can get a little pricey if you don't travel smart.

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You see the hundreds of travel blogs and websites every day when you're online. You sit at your desk, daydreaming of being in one of those great photos you see on your social media feed, thinking, "That could never be me. I can't afford it." While you may not be traveling in the lap of luxury, it doesn't mean you can't still get out there and [see the world](#) and not have to take out a loan to do it. Travel is affordable when done right, and here are five budget-friendly destinations that you should put on your calendar.

Travel destinations that won't break your wallet

[Denver, Colorado](#) -- The mile-high city has plenty for everyone.

According to the travel site, Kayak, vacationing in Denver is 28 percent cheaper than the average vacation. The burgeoning culinary and arts scene in Denver will thrill your senses as you take in the breathtaking scenery. Travel up to the mountains for an adventurous day of hiking. Be sure to bring your own water and snacks to avoid pricey snacks and restaurants.

Florida -- The land of alligators and pink flamingos has several inexpensive travel ideas for the whole family. For a more relaxed pace, visit Ft. Myers and take in the beautiful scenery and unspoiled beaches. Travel fifteen miles south to Sanibel Island with its miles and miles of beaches. If you're a history buff, stop in at the Edison & Ford Winter Estates for a tour, or you can drive through the J.N.

Two hours north is Tampa, where the average vacation cost is 26% lower than the median vacation cost. From pristine beaches to fun-filled nights, Tampa has it all. If you love to people watch, check out Riverwalk, three smiles of cafes and shops along the beaches.

Further north, visit Orlando for some great family fun. January is the best time to visit as flights will be cheaper, according to Kayak.

Guadalajara, Mexico -- Your dollar will go far with this trip to Mexico that will cost you 41% less than most Mexican vacations. Guadalajara has a fascinating mix of old and new.

You can walk around for hours admiring the beautiful architecture and histories like the Guadalajara Cathedral or the Plaza de la Liberacion. If you're planning to go in the fall, the International Mariachi Festival is held every year in September.

Calgary, Canada -- Outdoor enthusiasts and art lovers will want to add Calgary to their bucket list. Head over to Kensington Village to check out the graffiti murals,

or hit the trails at Fish Creek Provincial Park with over 50 miles of trails. If you love history, check out western Canada's largest museum, the Glenbow Museum. End your Canadian trip at the top of the world, or at least 627 feet high when you visit the Calgary Tower. With the cost of travel 32% lower than the average trip, you'll save some money for your next big adventure!

Raleigh, North Carolina – [Food lovers](#) will want to visit this inexpensive destination for some great BBQ. The downtown area offers dozens of historic buildings that you can tour for free, like the Haywood Hall House and Gardens and the Cary Heritage Museum. After taking a walking tour downtown, stop by The Pit or Ole Time Barbeque for some of the best BBQ in the state. According to Kayak, vacationers will enjoy the 31% lower cost.

A few more cost-saving ideas when traveling

Getting to your destination is one thing, but what about when you're on vacation and surrounded by fellow travelers having the time of their lives? You're surrounded by bars, vendors, and stores that want to take your money and the temptation to give in will be strong.

How do you avoid spending more money during your trip?

Free activities -- Many cities will have free activities that you can enjoy, and not just parks and lakes. Many historical sites will be free to the public and often there will be free outdoor shows during spring and summer. Before your trip, research some free activities that you will enjoy.

Chose a hotel with a mini-fridge or kitchenette -- One of the biggest expenses of traveling is the cost of food. Themed restaurants will charge a higher price for the atmosphere, and who doesn't love trying out a world-renowned chef's latest concoction? Don't eat out for every meal. Before the day begins, fill up with a big breakfast. You can eat pretty cheaply if you visit a local grocery store and fill up the mini-fridge in your room.

Street vendors over restaurants -- Food trucks have become quite the craze lately and you can get high-quality meals for a fraction of the cost. Many well known chefs or restaurants will have their own food trucks that can be found at outdoor festivals or just along popular streets on the weekends. You'll eat well and still have money left over.

Free transportation -- Free transportation does not mean hitchhiking or getting a ride from the nice man or woman you just met. Many cities around the world will have free public transportation available. Ask the hotel for information about public transportation. You may even find that they have free shuttles to certain points of interest. Use some common sense and you'll save a lot by avoiding high-priced taxicabs.

Airline points are not just for flights -- Those points that you earn while traveling are not just for flights. Car rentals, discounted meal tickets, and many other offers are available through your airline website. Check out the dozens of ways to spend your miles other than on airline tickets.

Everyone loves cheap travel and it is becoming easier to find great deals on trips all around the world. Many travel sites will offer discounts when you bundle airfare, hotel, and car. Expedia, Kayak, Travelocity, and Priceline are all great sites for finding great deals. Check out Groupon as well. I've personally found several

vacation packages under \$1,000 to places like Greece, Australia, and New Zealand!