



These 18 Easy Tips Can Save You a Fortune on Your Next Trip



Getty Images/lechatnoi

Talia Avakian September 30, 2017

Traveling the world doesn't have to mean spending a fortune.

Planning a vacation can often feel like a tremendously expensive endeavor – but travelers interested in cutting down their costs might be surprised at how many opportunities there are to save money on a trip.

From websites that scour the globe for unbooked hotel rooms to insider tips for shaving hidden fees off your restaurant bill, here's the lowdown on how you can save on every aspect of your next trip.

For Accommodations

Try a secret hotel

This tip is especially handy for travelers who are looking to hit multiple destinations during a single trip. Secret hotel rooms are ones that hotels are selling at a discounted price so the room doesn't remain empty — but the catch is you won't know where you're staying until you make the reservation. Savings can be as high as 40 percent on [lastminute.com's Top Secret hotel deals section](#).

Ask about free amenities

Most guests don't realize that hotels often have [complimentary amenities](#) set aside for those who know to ask for them. For example, you can snag night lights, chargers, and even curling irons at both Kimpton Hotels as well as the W Paris Opéra, while the [Hard Rock Hotel Chicago](#) can even lend you a guitar and Nixon headphones for your room.

Let the hotel know you're traveling with children

You can find great amenities if you're traveling with your kids at hotels, according to Barry Goldstein, the chief marketing officer of the Wyndham Hotel Group.

These amenities range from sweet treats to board games and even PlayStations at hotel groups like the [Dorchester Collection](#).

"If you give them their names and ages, most hotels will surprise and delight you with amenities for your kids that range from chocolate chip cookies and milk to a basket of chocolate or small toys," Goldstein told *Travel + Leisure*.

Use last-minute deal apps

Travelers can use apps that let you snag hotel rooms at a steal when making last-minute bookings. [Hotel Tonight](#) lets you search nearby hotels for the same day, or even within a week. Earlier this year, the app launched a new feature that lets users upgrade their room category and score a discount of at least 50 percent on the upgrade.

Other apps include [One Night](#), where you can book same-day rooms starting at 3 p.m. for chic hotels around the globe. The app comes from Standard International, the minds behind the Standard Hotels, and includes a curated list of stylish properties.

Remove hidden fees

Hotels could be charging you for amenities that you are not even using. Ask before you book if there are any additional fees for access to the in-room safe, for example, or the hotel fitness center. (And, if there are, if they can remove them from your bill.) Some hotels also add a service charge of up to 20 percent that's often hidden in the fine print of the receipt — so check to make sure you're not tipping twice.

Even all-inclusive hotels can have these [hidden fees](#), which is why you want to be aware of any asterisk you see, since there can be terms and conditions that vary for these particular items.

Use this parking app

If the hotel you've chosen has a pricey parking fee, consider [SpotHero](#). The app checks for parking in your area to let you find the cheapest option. Savings can be as high as 50 percent.

Find hotels on the road

If you're taking a road trip and are flexible with your accommodation, take a look at [Princeline's free iPhone app](#), where you can grab real-time information on the discounts and deals you'll find at hotels along your route. You'll get automatic updates as you continue on your path, and can make a booking on the spot.

For Getting Around

Track down the best trains

Train travel can be a wonderful way to enjoy a scenic ride — and to save on transportation between cities. Andy Steves, son of famed travel writer Rick Steves (and now a guidebook writer himself), recommends using websites like [Eurolines](#), [Renfe](#), and the [Student Agency Bus](#) if you're interested in crossing Europe on discounted coach lines.

On [SBB](#), some locations will even offer trains you can take overnight, giving you the chance to simultaneously avoid hotel fees.

Use this comparison tool

[Rome2Rio](#) lets you see all of the available transportation options between destinations so you can pick out the cheapest one. Simply enter the name of the location you're trying to reach, and you'll see everything from ferry and driving options to the best availabilities for flights, trains, and buses.

Get your rental car from Costco

You might not think of Costco when vacation planning, but the club store's [Low Price Finder](#) lets you check out an entire array of coupons, codes, and discounts you can use to snag your preferred rental car. Members can also get their driver fee waived in the United States and Canada for rentals made with Alamo and Enterprise, and in the United States for Avis and Budget.

Take advantage of free stopovers with flights

Many airlines offer [free stopover programs](#), giving you the chance to spend days (or, in some cases, weeks) in another city before continuing on to your final destination.

You can pop into Helsinki for up to five days with Finnair, for example, or spend a week in Reykjavík with Icelandair. With TAP Portugal, travelers can spend up to three nights in either Lisbon or Porto, and take a detour in Toronto, Montreal, or Vancouver with Air Canada.

Take a repositioning cruise

These cruises can bring you major savings, since they're basically cruises that occur when ships need to relocate to a new region. The cruises can offer as much as 70 percent off of the price of a regular voyage.

For Dining

Avoid extra charges

In the same way hotels can have fees you might not expect, so can dining establishments in different countries. While it may be typical in the United States to get free bread before a meal, for example, other countries will charge you if you request a pre-dinner bread basket.

Many travelers will be shocked when they spot a surcharge for sitting at a table in Rome (which is why drinking coffee is often done on foot in Italy), while Madrid restaurants will typically charge for water unless you specify that you'd like tap.

Know when to tip

Countries also vary widely in their tipping practices. Tipping is not a part of daily life in countries like China, while in France, tips are typically already included in your restaurant bill.

Before you travel, determine whether or not it's customary to tip waitstaff and, if so, how much. (Check out our guide to tipping in 25 major destinations across the globe.)

Eat with a local

Connect with residents (and score a high-quality meal on a budget), with VizEat: a social dining tool that pairs travelers with local chefs around the world. You'll find a mix of pro chefs and home cooks, but they'll all prepare a fantastic meal for you right in their home.

Time visits to Michelin-starred restaurants

Michelin-starred restaurants are often touted as some of the best in the world, meaning they can also come with a hefty price tag. That being said, you can easily enjoy a meal at these establishments for far less than you would expect. Some Michelin-starred restaurants, like Aldea in New York City, offer a miniature — and affordable — tasting menu with smaller selections (think: \$21 for three dishes).

Stopping by at lunchtime can also help you save, with restaurants like Fiolo in Washington, D.C. serving a lunch that includes the choice of a beverage (either a cocktail or non-alcoholic) and entrees that range from lobster bisque to branzino with leeks for \$20.

For Activities

Check out free museums

Museum entrance fees can get expensive depending on the location, with some museums charging more than \$30 for admission. If you're a lover of art, look for cities that offer museums you can access for free, such as the 19 different Smithsonian museums you'll find in Washington, D.C., or [pretty much every museum in London](#).

Take a free walking tour

Free walking tours are a great way to familiarize yourself with a new location, and to discover some of its lesser-known sights. You'll find free walking tours in a variety of cities, including [Stockholm](#), [Lisbon](#), [Rio de Janeiro](#), [New York City](#), and others. You'll also be able to get recommendations from local guides, who can share their favorite places to eat, go out, and unwind.

Get a city pass

City passes can give you major discounts if you plan on hitting a lot of major tourist attractions. The [Paris Museum Pass](#) gives travelers access to some 60 popular museums and monuments in the city, while Berlin's [WelcomeCard](#) offers discounts on popular sights like the TV Tower and DDR Museum.