

“Money Saving Tips for the Gay Traveler”

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Introduction – most popular gay destinations

- Large urban centers – Why?
 - Attractive because they have a large gay community, institutions and events
 - San Francisco (Castro), LA (West Hollywood and Silver Lake), Chicago (Boystown), New York (Chelsea), London (Soho), Paris (Le Marais)
- Comprehensive gay cruises & tours (we have all fantasized what it would be like, when viewing their ads, to cruise with these companies) (*hold up Atlantis brochure*)
 - Atlantis, RSVP, The R Family Vacations (gay families organized by Rosie O’Donnell and her partner)

Focus of Presentation – Money saving approach to gay travel

- Offer some cost saving tips
 - So we can afford to go to these gay Mecca’s of the world
- Suggest some alternatives
 - To the costly travel packages
- Propose some trips for PT STL
 - Apply some of the tips presented to coming up with some adventures that we might take together as an organization?

Reduce Costs = Saving Money

- Lodging
 - NYC average hotel price is now \$254 per night (and major cities, not far behind).
 - Are there any alternatives to the overpriced downtown hotel?
- Transportation
 - Gas prices now range from \$2.50 - \$4.00 per gallon.
 - How do we control these costs and minimize our carbon footprint?
- Food
 - On the road, we too often pay more and eat worse than we would at home.
 - How can we get control over what we eat and how much we pay for it?
- Surprises
 - What can you do to minimize costs of unexpected events –encounter with a pickpocket, medical emergencies, lost luggage, etc.?

Save on lodging

- Bid low (Priceline) <http://www.priceline.com>
 - Improve chances of getting a low bid accepted
 - bid low at a business hotel for a weekend or during the summer (not unusual to get a \$300 for \$100)
 - bid low at a resort during the week or off season
 - Research that improves your bidding
 - If a two star hotel, check out the neighborhood <http://earth.google.com>
 - Look at bids that have been accepted <http://www.BiddingForTravel.com>
- Bargain directly with the hotel clerk
 - On your day of arrival, ask the clerk if there are any unadvertised specials or if the hotel can do better than a competitor's price.
 - Emphasize whatever assets you have:
 - you will rent several rooms
 - you are a repeat customer
 - Members of your company are frequent guests, etc.
- Stay in small gay B&B
 - **Purple Roofs**: this is the best website for small, less expensive, gay friendly B&B's, subletting small condos, hotel rooms owned by private individuals and apartments. <http://www.purpleroofs.com> (10% discount going through purple roofs).
 - Other websites: for less expensive accommodations not always listed on large commercial directories:
 - **Rainbow Destinations'** B&B; <http://www.guesthouses.net>
 - **Inns Bed and Breakfast** <http://www.gaybandb.com> (global)
- Join gay travel club
 - Examples
 - **Travel Lambda Connections** <http://www.TLCclub.net>
 - **Lesbian & Gay Hospitality Exchange International L/GHEI** <http://www.lghei.org>
 - **Hospigaiety Club** <http://www.hospigaiety.com>
 - Benefits
 - Comfort of a home vs. impersonality of a hotel.
 - Host provides breakfast.
 - Host explains how to get around, where to eat, etc.
 - Host may even personally show you around, invite you to dinner and introduce you to his friends.
 - The experience becomes an opportunity to make a new friend.
 - Costs
 - Annual membership fee (\$40 - \$50).
 - Fee gives you access to the membership directory.
 - TLC - you pay host a \$15 gratuity per night (if traveling alone) \$25 (if you are a couple).
 - LGHEI – free, except you are expected to take the host out to dinner.
 - Your visits are limited to two nights (unless host extends your invitation).
- Join home swapping club

- Gay and lesbian home-exchange clubs (4 in existence)
 - **Digsville Home Exchange:** the most extensive gay home swapping network: <http://www.digsville.com/>
 - 1,500 listings
 - \$44.95 for 1 year membership; (guarantee) no home exchange partner in the first year, next year is free.
 - **Mi Casa Su Casa:** smaller, lower membership fee but longer established network: <http://gayhometrader.com>
 - 200 listings
 - \$60 for 3 year membership
 - In business since 1992
 - **Home Around the World:** UK-based <http://www.homearoundtheworld.com>
 - 350 listings
 - Specializes in European homes
 - Offers travel insurance, flight and hotel discounts, online bulletin boards
 - **One World One Family:** new network with free membership:: <http://www.oneworldonefamily.com>
 - 80 listings
- Larger nongay home exchanges networks that might be worth exploring
 - **Home Exchange:** <http://www.HomeExchange.com>
 - **Home Link International:** <http://www.HomeLink.org>
 - **International Home Exchange Holiday Service** <http://www.Intervac.com>
- **Camp at gay campground**
 - Directories of camping facilities and clubs)
 - Gay campers <http://www.gaycampers.com/>
 - 100 listings in rural getaways.
 - 12 countries where you can tent or stay in a cabin for a nominal fee.
 - Gay camps USA <http://www.campgayusa.com/index.htm>
 - 75 gay and gay friendly campsites across North America.
 - Some offer work in exchange for camping on the property.
 - Rainbow RV <http://www.rainbowrv.com>
 - Membership - \$19.95 per year
 - Membership includes discounts to select gay campgrounds, an online newsletter, a gay campground directory and invitations to gay RV rallies and events
 - Benefits
 - Sleep in a beautiful outdoor setting.
 - Outdoor swimming pool and/or hot tub.
 - Laid back atmosphere of usually rural gay folk with a few city slickers thrown in.
 - The area around the swimming pool and sometimes the entire camp are clothing optional.

- Costs
 - Cost of camping equipment (\$25 two man pup tent to a \$75,000 RV)
 - Whatever other camping supplies you may need.
 - \$20 per night campground fee. (This includes electric hook-up, hot showers, outdoor johns, picnic table and firewood.)

Save on transportation costs

- Conventional wisdom upset
 - The surge in energy prices has turned the conventional wisdom upside down.
- Compare costs – to reduce your transportation costs – takes complex analysis
 - Analyze each leg of your trip
 - Make cost comparisons – costs of flying, driving, taking the train or bus.
 - Make choice – mixed strategy
 - Calculate costs of each leg by each mode of transportation
 - Be flexible – consider a mixed strategy
 - Use a point to point flight on a discount airline between two major hubs.
 - Use point to point train tickets along a high volume corridor.
 - Necessary to rent a car in remote areas where there are no trains and only small local airports.

Save on air fares

- Select one airline
 - Criteria for selection (varies with each individual – my criteria include:
 - Is a major carrier at my home base
 - Has lots of competitively priced flight to where I fly
 - High number of partners
 - Airline partners= cheap flights to where I fly + frequent flyer miles
 - Business partners = partners with car rental, hotel and restaurants I use + bonus miles
 - History of being gay friendly
 - Frequent flyer program that works with my flying and spending patterns – I want to earn at least one flight to Hawaii every year with a two stop over in San Francisco.
 - My choice: American Airlines over Southwest (I always check American fares first – their prices become my basis of comparison).
- Search for the cheapest fare
 - Use meta search engines (that shift through hundreds of travel sites).
 - Kayak: <http://www.kayak.com>
 - Sidestep: <http://www.sidestep.com/>
 - Track the market (so that you can choose the best time to buy your ticket)
 - FareCompare: <http://www.farecompare.com/>
 - Farecast: <http://www.farecast.com/>
 - Check consolidators' fares
 - cFares: <http://www.cfares.com/>

- Fly Europe: <http://www.1800FlyEurope.com>
 - Try a travel agent who works with consolidators (student agents are not limited to booking student passengers)
 - Check Europe's new low fare carriers (Southwest imitators)
 - easyJet <http://easyjet.com/> (London)
 - Ryanair <http://www.ryanair.com/site/EN/> (Dublin)
 - Virgin Atlantic <http://www.virgin-atlantic.com/en/us/index.jsp> (London)
- Fly "open-jaws"(into one city and out of another)
 - Saves time and money avoiding a costly return to your starting point.
 - Save countries with the cheapest shopping and the greatest health risk for the end of your trip.
- Minimize secondary costs
 - **Parking costs:**
 - Avoid high airport parking fees by parking offsite.
 - Reserve offsite parking in advance
<http://www.AirportParkingReservations.com>
 - **Lines:**
 - Avoid wasting time in lines by advance online check-in.
 - Or find self-service kiosks at airport where you can sign up for standby, change seats, check luggage and sometime upgrade cheaply.
 - **Security delays:**
 - Place all gels and liquids (in 3 oz. containers) in a quart-size Ziploc.
 - Wear slip on shoes with socks.
 - Remove everything but your ID and boarding pass from your pockets.
 - Remove your laptop from your bag.
 - **Undesirable seating:**
 - Reserve a good seat when booking a flight or a packaged deal.
 - Avoid seats near the lavatory, middle seats, broken seats.
<http://www.SeatGuru.com>
 - **Transport to city:**
 - If alone, take public transit – train, bus, van.
 - If in a group – taxi is cost effective.
 - **Pick up at home:**
 - Check to see if airport has "cell phone parking lots" where
 - People picking you up can park there until you call.

Travel light on flights and trips

- "One bag" carry-on/ no lines – saves an hour
 - Light soft bag with wheels – portable & easier to jam in overhead
 - Print boarding pass at home, avoid check-in line altogether
 - Cheaper to ship big items FedEx (golf bags, skis, bike, etc.)
 - (If necessary to check bag), keep bag under 50 lb. limit.
 - Check two bags if you have more than 50 lbs.
 - Take a picture of it in case it gets lost.
 - Mark bag with distinctive belt, sticker or strap
 - Put itinerary and contact info inside.
 - Never check anything fragile.

- Second bag should stack or attach to first bag.
- Use checklists to minimize surprises
 - Create WORD file of what you always pack
 - Customized for different kinds of trips (beach, skiing, city, etc.)
 - Create WORD file for what you must always do before leaving.
 - Put hold on mail, lower thermostats, etc.
- Pack light - wash more
 - Coordinate wardrobe around one basic color (dark better than light)
 - Choose shirts and pants made of wash and ready, wrinkle free material.
 - Wash socks and underwear in sink overnight.
 - Roll wet clothes in towel and then wring dry.
 - Hang garments on travel clothesline.
 - Buy what you forgot when you get there.
- Compress garments using latest tricks
 - “Space bags”, packing cubes, compressible mesh bags
 - Saves space, easier for security, keeps clothes organized.
 - Roll clothes instead of folding
 - Pack dryer sheets – reduces static cling and keeps clothes smelling good.
- “3-1-1” for liquids & gels

Save on the train (Europe)

- Buy discounted ticket online (before leaving the U.S.)
 - Rail Europe <http://www.raileurope.com>
- Take overnight train
 - Saves cost of hotel.
 - Saves a day in your itinerary.
- Try second class (day-time)
 - 1st class ticket is 50% more.
- Rent bike at station
 - Discounts in Northern Europe on bikes rented at the rail station.
 - Possible to return bike to different station.

Save on driving

- Choose the best car rental deal
 - Check price of comprehensive packages (car rental, flight, and hotel).
 - Determine value of frequent flyer bonus miles.
 - Ask for discounts – weekends, weekly rate, AAA or AARP rates.
 - Best location – airport or offsite (avoid paying airport surcharge, if there is convenient transportation to offsite car rental company).
- Save time, avoid lines
 - Join rental company’s free loyalty club – no lines, no sales pitch, no questions.

- **Avoid rip-offs**
 - Redundant insurance ((\$10 to \$20 per day)
 - See if your car insurance covers rentals.
 - See if your credit card (gold or above) covers extra Collision Damage Waiver (CDW).
 - Unwanted upgrades
 - Sales representative will always try to get you to upgrade.
 - Reserve the least expensive model.
 - If none are available, they will have to give you a free upgrade.
 - If inclined, you can always upgrade at the counter.
 - Prepaid gas: Never choose prepaid gas.
 - Extra-driver fee:
 - Avoid the extra driver fee. by
 - Tell the clerk that you are domestic partners..
- **Plan your road trip**
 - Get maps and current traffic information free; now available online from AAA <http://www.aaa.com>
 - Decide where you want to stop for food <http://www.Roadfood.com>
 - Find the cheapest gas – no difference between brand names and the cheapest gas.
 - Gas Price Watch <http://www.GasPriceWatch.com>
 - Gas Buddy <http://www.GasBuddy.com>
 - Locate the speed traps
 - Radar traps on the interstate highway system <http://www.BearTraps.com>
 - Police car haunts by county and state <http://SpeedTrap.org>

Save on local transportation

- **Use public transportation (in large cities)**
 - Rent car only for inter-city travel.
 - You will save the cost of city parking.
 - You will save yourself the stress of driving in the congested traffic of a large and unfamiliar city.
- **Buy transit passes**
 - Daily, weekly, monthly passes are a bargain.
 - Check for senior discounts.
- **Take walking tours**
 - Walking tours are cheaper and generally better than bus tours.
- **Preview plans on Google Earth <http://google.earth.com>**
 - Shows you the distance from your hotel to all points of interest.
 - Locates restaurants and gives you a review of them.
 - Locates parks, hiking trails, golf courses and picnic areas.

Save on food

- **Pre-select potential restaurants**
 - Buy a good guidebook.
 - Get the expected price of a meal from Fodor's restaurant review <http://www.fodors.com/reviews/drevselect.cfm>
- **Avoid hotel food (breakfast, room service, mini bar in room)**

- Take a picnic
 - Save money.
 - Easier to determine if it's healthy or not for you.
- Tips for Europe
 - Know local work for tap water or you will get costly mineral water.
 - Eat with the season and consistent with European tastes.
 - Check the menu – if handwritten in local language, you have an authentic local restaurant and not a tourist trap.
 - Try university cafeterias – they are government subsidized and the cheapest meal in town.
 - Drinks at the bar are cheaper than drinks at the table (Southern Europe).

Save on Money Transactions

- Small purchases – cash
 - Some shops only accept cash
 - Some shops give discount for cash
- Cash – use debit card at ATM
 - Use bank with low fees (free) for ATM withdrawals.
 - Withdraw large amounts (minimize transactions fees), wear money belt.
 - Carry spare debit card in case card is not returned by ATM machine.
 - Gain access to European ATM machine – swiping ATM card in card-sized slot (locked door to lobby will open)
- Larger purchases – use credit card
 - Use Visa or MasterCard in Europe (others often not accepted).
 - Protects you from faulty products or failures to deliver.
 - Saves you from paying the VAT tax.
 - Usually has a lower conversion rate (dollars to foreign currency).
 - Don't use credit card in an ATM machine – counts as “cash advance” with additional fees.
- Traveler's checks – only for emergencies
 - More difficult to convert – not as widely accepted
 - Conversion costs higher than a credit card or ATM withdrawal.
- Avoid duties & taxes
 - \$800 limit on goods brought home for personal use without paying duty.
 - Circumvent limit:
 - Ship goods worth up to \$200 per day to yourself at your home address.
 - Ship gifts worth up to \$100 per day to others.
- Don't be an “easy mark” for pick pockets and scams
 - Avoid looking like a stereotypical American (U.S. backpack, flip-flops, cargo pants, large guidebook)
 - Wear money belt
 - Avoid beggars, commotions in crowds, fake police asking for your wallet.
 - Leave a trail – know how to contact police – don't let your guard down.

Protect your health

- **Leave home healthy and rested**
 - Flight and jet lag are going to make you vulnerable
 - Start strong and healthy
- **Are you covered away from home?**
 - Medicaid and Medicare do not cover you outside the U.S.
 - Plastic health card is useless abroad, pay upfront and file a claim for reimbursement. Itemized receipt required.
 - Some major insurance companies cover overseas emergencies – chest pains, altitude sickness, broken bones, dog bites, heat stroke, etc.
 - Check with your insurance company before you leave.
 - Buy medical travel insurance that includes the cost of medical evacuation.
- **Pack medical papers & extra medicine**
- **Minimize jet lag**
 - No alcohol on the plane.
 - Drink lots of water.
 - Reset watch upon boarding the plane.
 - Upon landing, stay on local time. Don't sleep until it is night.
 - Exercise after landing.
- **Know where to get help**
 - Some insurers provide online directories of prescribed foreign doctors and hospitals.
 - Embassies and consulates can facilitate medical evacuations and help arrange for cash to be wired from home.
 - Stay out of areas that may incur health risks.

Value of comprehensive cruises and tours

- **Easy - "No sweat"** – everything is done for you
 - Don't have to arrange for transportation, lodging or food.
 - Leaders in providing all gay comprehensive packages.
 - Atlantis <http://www.atlantisevents.com/> (appeals to a younger crowd)
 - RSVP <http://www.rsvpvacations.com/>
 - Travel Pride <http://www.travelprideagents.com/>
 - Olivia Cruises and Resorts <http://www.oliviaagents.com/> (lesbian travelers)
 - The R Family Vacations <http://www.rfamilyvacations.com/> (gay families)
- **Compatible companions** and activities catering to gay clientele
 - Companies often cater to specific gay clientele: young vs. older, men vs. women, budget vs. luxury, specific region of the country.
- **Sharply focused** (These companies focus on specific outdoor activities)
 - Ski trip <http://www.gayskiing.org/>
 - Sailing trip <http://www.gaysail.com/>
 - Cycling trip <http://www.gay-bike.com/>
 - Scuba diving and snorkeling <http://underseax.com/>
 - Alyson Adventures more cost conscious outdoor adventures (biking, hiking, skiing, etc) <http://www.alysonadventures.com>

- OutWest Adventures: Montana based tours including skiing, hiking and gay dude ranches <http://www.outwestadventures.com/>
- Toto Tours: <http://www.tototours.com/main/tours/html/tours.htm>
- Undersea Expeditions: <http://www.underseax.com/>

Save on cruises and tours

- Cost conscious operators
 - **Gay Jet:** budget leader on air/hotel packages around the world <http://www.gayjet.com>
 - **Pied Piper Travel:** travel company that organizes relatively expensive all gay cruises (Queen Elizabeth and Queen Mary) as well as less expensive small groups of gays on gay friendly cruises. <http://home.att.net/~gaygroupcruises/index.html>
- No “single supplement”
 - Ask tour operator if you can share a room with another single traveler on the trip.
 - Search for the special package that doesn’t discriminate in this way (they exist)
 - Tauck World Discovery is discounting or waiving single occupancy surcharges on some of its tours and cruises. <http://www.tauck.com>
 - Britain’s Just You offers trips exclusively for solo travelers in Europe and Asia <http://www.justyou.co.uk>
- Prime Timers’ cruise
 - **Historic Boston:** August 16-19 2007 <http://www.primetimersww.org/boston/PTAnniversaryPosting.pdf>
 - **South Padre Island,** Texas (Upper Deck Hotel) saprimetimer049@aol.com
 - New England Fall Colors Cruise: September 15-22, 2007 <http://www.primetimersww.org/CarnivalFallColorflyer.pdf>
 - **Alaska Cruises**
 - Denver Chapter, August 24- 31, 2007: <http://www.primetimersww.org/Denver Alaska Cruise 2007.htm>
 - New Mexico Chapter, September 7–14, 2007 <http://www.primetimersww.org/NMPTcruise.htm>
 - **Panama Canal Cruise:** January 22 – Feb. 1, 2008 http://www.primetimersww.org/VOLENDAM_FLYER.pdf
 - **Mediterranean Cruise:** October 3-13, 2008 http://www.primetimersww.org/Galaxy_Oct_08_Flyer_Res.pdf
- Discounted cruise
 - Shop around for a cruise that is discounting its package 90 days before the cruise. Cruise lines prevent consolidators from advertising their best offers.
 - Ask about unadvertised deals and upgrades from the following:
 - <http://www.vacationstogo.com/>
 - <http://CruisesOnly.com>
 - <http://www.CruiseStar.com>
 - <http://www.Cruise411.com>

- Organize your own cruise
 - Let various cruise brokers bid for your business (especially effective if there are several passengers in your group). Post information on what you want and the number of passengers. There is no obligation to accept the bids offered.
 - <http://CruiseCompete.com>
 - Recruit some of your friends who want to travel with you.
 - Reserve rooms together, ask to be placed at the same table, ask for a meeting space.
 - Announce to all passengers on board “Meeting time and place for the friends of Dorothy”
 - Be aware of the trade offs in booking excursions while on shore through the cruise line versus booking them yourself directly with the excursion operator.
 - Booking directly will save you money but an increased risk.
 - If the excursion is late getting back to the ship, the ship may leave without you.
 - If the booking is through the cruise liner, the ship will wait.
 - Remember that cruise lines automatically add tips to your bill.

Path less taken – “infiltrate” (Organize a group of gay friends to take one of the following trips together)

- Elderhostel trip <http://www.elderhostel.org>
- AARP trip <http://www.aarp.com/travel>
- Work abroad trip
 - a. Transitions Abroad <http://www.transitionsabroad.com>
 - b. Escape Artist <http://www.escapeartist.com>
 - c. Living Abroad <http://www.livingabroadin.com>
 - International Living <http://www.internationalliving.com>

Trips for Prime Timers St. Louis

- LGBT Film Festival – Chicago
 - Date: November 8 – 18, 2007
 - Lodging: homes of Chicago Prime Timers
- Diversity Weekend - Eureka Springs
 - Four times a year (pick one)
 - Lodging: small B&B, gay campground Cactus Canyon
- Lincoln Day – Springfield, IL
 - Date: Anytime
 - Transportation: train Alton to Springfield
- Cruise with other Prime Timers
- Infiltrate Elderhostel