

Money for Life

August 2006

Dear Readers,

A vacation trip is a wonderful opportunity for a family to get away together. What can you do to save money as you travel? Read below for ideas. This month's newsletter also includes precautions when using credit cards for travel expenses. Have a great trip wherever your travels take you.

Saving Money on Travel

Want to have a great vacation? The key is to plan ahead. Whether you want to take a trip across the country or just spend time at a nearby campground, planning ahead will get you there with lower costs and less time spent worrying about how to pay the bills when you get back home. Keep these points in mind as you plan your vacation.

Plan as much in advance as possible. The further in advance you choose your dates, the better your chances are of getting inexpensive travel deals.



Research the peak and off-peak rates for your vacation destination.

Adjust your travel schedule to take advantage of discount travel packages.

Buy your vacation travel package from a business you know and deal with businesses that belong to a professional association such as the American Society of Travel Agents, the National Tour Association, or the United States Tour Operators Association.

Compare low-cost carriers with major carriers that fly to your destination. Remember, the best fares may not be out of the airport closest to you.



Check airline and Internet travel sites for special deals. Be flexible with the days of the week and times of day you fly to get the lowest fare.

Car rental rates can vary greatly. Compare total price (including taxes and surcharge) and take advantage of any special offers and membership discounts.

Plan and pack carefully. It's wise to make a list of travel wants and needs. It is very expensive to buy your necessities at tourist locations.

If you decide to drive on your vacation, check the condition of your vehicle, including tires, fluids, belts, brakes, and battery. Maintenance is always less expensive than emergency road service.

Consider these ideas for additional ways to save on vacation costs:

*Pack simple meals and snacks instead of buying all food from restaurants.

*Buy items for children and souvenirs from discount stores instead of tourist attractions.

*Purchase or borrow a guidebook about the place(s) you are visiting so you know in advance the least expensive times to visit museums and entertainment parks.

Sources: Articles in Money 2000 News, Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service. 66 Ways to Save Money, Consumer Literacy Consortium.

Using Credit Wisely When Traveling



When traveling, credit cards can be used for many expenses from airline tickets to gasoline to souvenirs. Even though credit cards are a convenience, it is important to be careful with those cards to avoid problems.

Below are some travel credit card tips:

- Credit cards offer more protection than cash. If you lose a credit card your maximum liability is \$50 per card if someone uses your card fraudulently.
- Take a list of all credit cards, addresses of the issuers and account numbers with you on the trip in case they are lost or stolen, but do not keep that list in your wallet. If your card is lost, report it immediately and ask for another number. If you call before it is used fraudulently, your liability is zero.
- Lost or stolen credit cards should be reported to the fraud units of the three major credit reporting agencies: Equifax (800-525-6285), Experian (888-397-3742), and Trans Union (800-680-7289). They will place a fraud alert on your file to keep crooks from establishing false accounts in your name, especially if the crook also has your Social Security number.
- Taking too many credit cards on your vacation makes it difficult to keep track of them. If you have a wallet full of plastic, it is easy to lose one and not realize it until it's

too late. Take only the cards you plan to use and leave the rest at home in a safe deposit box or secure place.

- Use only two major credit cards – one for rental cars, hotels and personal expenses, and the other as a backup for emergencies. Remember that hotels and car rental companies usually place a block on your card for anticipated charges. You may be told you are over your credit limit even when you know you are not.

When you check into a hotel or rent a car, ask clerks how much will be blocked, and how the amount is determined. Consider paying hotel, motel, or rental car bills with the same credit card you used at the beginning of the transaction to reduce the amount of time the card is blocked.

- Know the interest rate on your credit cards and use the card with the lowest rate first. Repay them immediately to avoid interest charges.
- Never leave credit cards, cash or other valuable items in a hotel room. Some rooms now offer safes so use them if they are available.

For more information on protecting credit card numbers from fraud, contact your local county ISU Extension office and ask for the free fact sheet, “Protecting Consumer Privacy: Credit Card Numbers” (Pm 1724).

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