



Tips For A Fun Family Vacation That Won't Drain Your Bank Account

Summer can be one of the most expensive times of the year to travel – especially if you are on a tight budget. With gas prices higher than ever and many destinations only offering peak season pricing, many families are struggling with the task of planning a fun vacation without putting a serious financial strain on their bank accounts.

With a little advance planning, creativity, and research, families can enjoy vacations that create a lifetime of memories rather than a lifetime of bills. Family Foundations recommends the following tips for planning summer vacations this year:

- **Plan ahead.** Planning ahead for a vacation is one way to find great savings. Some hotels or resorts will offer discounts well in advance, or if you book a vacation while on vacation. For example, does the family make the same trek to the same beach every year? Take advantage of beneficial travel rates by booking the vacation 10-12 months in advance. Don't have that much time on your side? Be sure to invest time into researching the best airfares, hotel or resort accommodations before booking your vacation.
- **Start a vacation savings plan.** Start a vacation fund and commit to “pay” into it every month. Consider the destination before determining the monthly savings amount. Going to favorite family spot? Try to get an idea of the total cost, but keep in mind that the amount may be much higher than you realize. Making a first-time trip to an extraordinary destination such as Walt Disney World? Conduct some online research to get an accurate portrayal of all of the costs involved – airfare or gas, overnight accommodations, ticket entrance fees, entertainment, etc.
- **Go “the extra mile” in your homework.** Look for accommodations that are outside of the main part of town if that is possible. You can usually find a better deal on a hotel that is not right in the downtown area but still has easy access to the comforts of the town. Many urban areas feature mass transit networks that extend beyond downtown areas.
- **Sign up to become a member of....** Joining a membership club such as the American Automobile Association (AAA), will give you access to big discounts at a number of attractions and destinations. Also, if you are traveling with grandparents, see if they have access to discounts through the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP).
- **Have a meal plan.** One of the biggest expenses on vacation can be the cost of food. Three meals a day plus snacks times four family members can quickly add up. Plan your meals ahead of time. Decide how many nights to eat out versus eating in. When making hotel reservations, try to get a room with a kitchen or at least a refrigerator and microwave so that you can bring along meals and beverages. Can't get a room with a kitchen or kitchen appliances? Consider packing non-perishable snacks, breakfast items, and beverages.
- **Limit souvenir shopping.** Make a list of people for whom you MUST buy souvenirs and put some money aside for small gifts, like the house or pet-sitter. But if you are merely looking for a way to share your vacation experiences, consider taking a family picture and sharing copies with family and friends

Family Foundations stands ready to help. To reach us, call (904) 396-4846 or go online to www.familyfoundations.org.

About Family Foundations

You don't have to solve your financial problems alone. Family Foundations has trained and certified credit counselors who offer financial management and debt reduction services. Family Foundations is a nonprofit, community-based organization and a Member of the National Foundations for Credit Counseling (NFCC). For more information on Family Foundations, call (904) 396-4846 or visit www.familyfoundations.org.