



8 Unique Ways to Stretch Your Vacation Dollars

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There are plenty of well-known ways to save money on your vacation, such as booking flights and hotels online, cashing in credit card rewards, or eating the free breakfast in your hotel. But there are also some less obvious ways to save money on your family vacation...many of which you might not have considered.

Below are 8 ways to stretch your vacation dollars.

1) Keep track

Simply keeping track of your outgoing cash flow is a surprisingly effective way to save money. All you have to do is keep a notebook and write down how you spend every dollar immediately after you spend it.

This practice does two things. First, it helps you stay on budget because you will no longer estimate how much money is left in your wallet. Second, you will quickly see how much money you're frittering away on worthless junk.

2) Put the kids (and yourself) on a souvenir budget

You probably enjoy indulging your kids when you're on vacation. But rather than whipping out your wallet every

time the kids ask; give them a budget for souvenirs. It will force them to make better choices, and limit the nick on your budget. Let them "save up" the budget if they want something big on the last day of your trip, or if they'd rather carry the cash home.

3) Look for FREE souvenirs

Completely eliminate the souvenir budget by collecting the countless FREE souvenirs you can find on nearly every vacation. These can be as simple as you want, and are often the things you'll look back on fondly when revisiting your travel memories. Some ideas include: ticket stubs, brochures, drink coasters, hotel room key cards & labels from local foods.

4) Pack a lunch

Yes, when you're on vacation, you're going to eat out. But you don't have to do it for every meal! If you pack sandwiches for just one meal a day, you can cut your food budget by a quarter. Even if you're staying in a hotel room without a refrigerator, pack one daily meal of fruit, granola bars, and other non-perishables. You'll save money, and each restaurant meal will be more special.

5) Save at the restaurant

Consider eating just two meals: a big breakfast and dinner. On vacation you're busy enough, you probably won't even miss lunch. Also consider splitting giant restaurant entrees. Growing teens will clean their plates, but most younger kids and adults will be content with half a meal, especially when they eat the bread and other stuff that precedes the meal.

If you're staying in a hotel, check with the front desk to see if they have coupons for local eateries. Also check [Groupon](#) before picking your restaurant, as hot spots may have discount offers available online.

6) The best things are FREE

What do your kids remember most from your last vacation: the \$250 visit to the run-down amusement park, or the day you spent on the beach for free? How many times have you heard about the kid who remembers the hotel pool way more fondly than the endless museum?

The bottom line: sometimes, the best things about a

vacation cost you nothing. The memories and time spent together are the most important part. If you're in a big city, check out free cultural events such as parades, art festivals, and concerts in the park.

7) Think minor

Major league baseball games are expensive. Minor league games are not, and they can be loads of fun. Similarly, Broadway shows can break your budget, but storefront theaters produce some of the most fascinating, cutting-edge drama anywhere...for way less money.

Skip the big-name reunion concert tour at \$250 a ticket, and hear the best local garage band in an intimate atmosphere for a \$10 cover. Unlike the owners of major sports teams and theaters, the owners of minor league sports teams, small theaters, local music venues, and similar cultural institutions know they need to treat the customers well in order to win their business.

8) Pay in advance

There's no better feeling when you're checking out of the hotel than to hear the clerk say the bill is already covered. And you will almost certainly get a better deal on anything you order if you pay in advance (theme park tickets, for example, are almost always cheaper in advance than at the gate). Best of all, if you pay for your car and hotel room from the comfort of your home six weeks before your trip, you are much less likely to get hit with surprise, budget-killing extra fees.

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