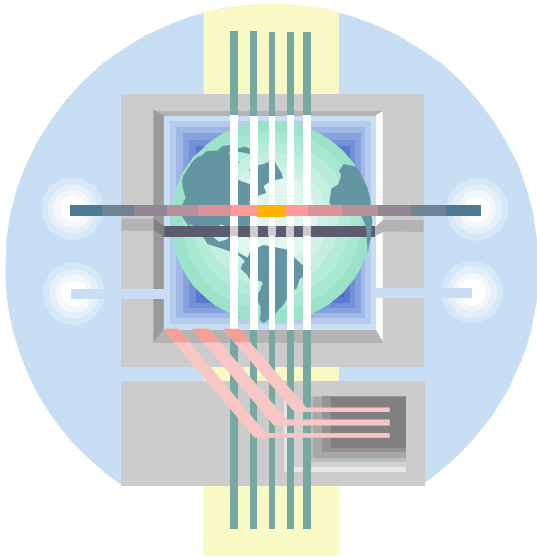




Internet Travel Tips

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This document is from a course we teach of the same name. We'd love your suggestions & feedback – please send email to hornbach@world.std.com and let us know your thoughts. You can check out our travels at <http://blessley.net>. Feel free to distribute this further, but please include this paragraph, acknowledging authorship.

Different Ways to Use the Web for Travel Planning

1. *Finding good deals* – “champagne travel on a beer budget”
2. *Finding, communicating, and booking with small vendors* in distant locations that you'd never be able to find any other way.
3. *Doing research* – where to go, details about attractions, finding travel vendors, what visas/shots are needed...
4. *Getting feedback from real travelers* – what did they like, what do the brochures leave out, what advice do they give?

General Approach to Finding “Good Deals” on the Internet:

Use the web to find the best *price/performance* – not just the cheapest deals, but the best deals available for any class of travel, including high-end. Typically you can find 50-85% off list and 20%-50% off “discounted rates”, if you have enough flexibility in where you go and when you travel.

The general approach to searching for great deals is as follows:

1. *Decide your constraints.* The fewer constraints, the easier it is to find a great deal. How much flexibility do you have around when you travel, where you go, what “style” you travel in?? Are you comfortable dealing with a lesser-known vendor? How much time are you willing to put into the search?
2. *Develop a cost baseline and find out what's available by doing preliminary research on the big websites.* Get your cost baselines at www.expedia.com www.travelocity.com and www.orbitz.com for airlines and hotels (and other types of travel as well); www.vacationstogo.com is a good spot for finding cruise baseline prices.
3. *Check out the specialized discount sites.* Once you know the baseline prices you want to beat, check out the discount sites listed in this document, to see if you can find a better price. If you are going to bid at auction, make sure it really is a better deal than you can get just by booking through a regular site. Keep an eye on fees and service charges.
4. *Search the entire web using Google:* Once you've found what you think is a really good deal, search on the specifics (e.g. hotel name, cruise line and date, resort name) to see if you can turn up sites that offer

an even better price.

5. *Check references.* The general purpose review sites have some travel info, mainly for large vendors: www.epinions.com/trvl?tab=1 and bizrate.com/ratings_guide/listing_cat_id--223.html. Next choice is to check a specialized consumer-centric web site like www.cruisecritic.com; alternately, checking the Google newsgroups (click the "groups" tag on the Google home page) will almost always find feedback on a vendor. In all cases, read the fine print for extra charges; email the vendor if questions remain. Put it on your charge card for protection.

Small Vendors in Distant Locations:

There are tens of thousands of local tour and hotel operators that can not afford to be part of the international travel reservations systems, but are nonetheless outstanding providers, and usually much less expensive. These tips are useful for finding small local hotels, specialty tours, and other things that make a trip special

Finding them:

- References are given in hardcopy guidebooks – look them up online
- Tourist sites for the city or region (find via a Google search, e.g. "Lisbon tourist sightseeing")
- Google search on relevant terms ("Iceland pony treks", "Mumbai city tours")
- Trip reports from other travelers (Google "groups")
- Specialist sites, such as those for birdwatchers, may have developed worldwide lists of vendors in their specialty area

Evaluating them:

- Good reviews from guidebooks or fellow travelers
- Professionalism of web site
- Number of mentions/pointers to them (does it keep coming up in your searches?)
- How quickly and professionally they respond to your initial query

Booking them:

- Credit cards are generally a safe way to book/hold a reservation; a surprising number of them require no credit card to hold a reservation (Better to use a secured web site or fax to transmit credit card, rather than sending by email)
- Be sure to bring all the paperwork with their rate quote & contact info.
- Ask, "Is there a lower rate available?". It works surprisingly often
- Confirm which currency is being quoted; whether charge is per person or per tour/room; what is/isn't included (breakfast? pickup? tips?) and what taxes and fees are extra
- Send a reminder to them shortly before you are to arrive, if possible
- Alternatively, you can find out all the information you need, but not book until you are there in person (at the risk that it might not be available)

Finding Reference Info and Feedback from Other Travellers

- <http://www-2.cs.cmu.edu/afs/cs/user/mkant/Public/Travel/airfare.html> and www.johnnyjet.com, are good broad based index sites to all kinds of travel information.
- <http://www.bootsnall.com/> and <http://www.gonomad.com/> are resources for independent travels to distant locations
- www.about.com has detailed information on a gazillion topics, including travel and destinations, maintained by fanatical volunteers. <http://budgettravel.about.com/> is specifically about budget travel
- For general destination information, www.frommers.com is our favorite travel info site; Fodor's mini-guides www.fodors.com/miniguides/index.cfm are also good.
- <http://kclibrary.nhmccd.edu/travel-guides.html> rates the various Guidebook series; use Amazon.com to check the usefulness of a specific guidebook.
- Typing relevant keywords into Google works pretty well. You can usually find city or country sponsored web sites this way, "Puerto Vallarta tourist information"
- www.transitionsabroad.com is a central site for finding alternative travel (volunteering, studying, working) and budget travel
- <http://www.igougo.com/> has travel journals and ratings from actual travelers
- www.flyertalk.com – News group for frequent flyer fanatics. Check here for the latest gab on dirt cheap fares, ways to earn more points, etc.

US Domestic Round Trip Airfares

Find Your Cost Baseline:

- Check www.Travelocity.com, www.Expedia.com and www.Orbitz.com and maybe a preferred airline site using your ideal travel dates to find your baseline fare to beat. Surprisingly often, you'll come up with different fares from each. No site is better than the other – the best price can come from any of them.
- See all flights available on the day you're flying: www.smarterliving.com/bin/flightsearch.cgi

Try to Find Greater Discounts:

- *Find the lowest published fare* that is currently being sold for your route: on Expedia choose the *flights* tab then the *fare calendar* tab (US travel) or *airline fare list* tab (int'l travel). Travelocity: check the box "my dates are flexible". You will get a list of all published fares; each airline may have a dozen or more. Choose a given airline/fare, and it will show a calendar when the fares are valid; click on specific dates to check availability. Be sure to read the fare rules. www.bestfares.com includes lowest published fare as well as some consolidator fares.
- *Add some flexibility by expanding the dates* you're willing to travel and the cities you are willing to fly out of/into. Most flight searches will let you add these search options. At the current time, Orbitz currently has the most flexible search. Check out two or three of the big sites.
- *Check out Southwest Air's fares*; you must go directly to their web site to look up their fares.
- *Look for Senior Citizen discounts*. Most of the coupon books have been discontinued, but some airlines still have programs; and Southwest still runs specials.

If prices are still too high: Usually the above steps are enough to find a great fare. If you still can't get a good deal:

- *Check what www.Hotwire.com is offering*. Hotwire will give you a fare, but you won't know airline or flight times until you book, and it is totally non-refundable and non-changeable.
- Consider using *frequent flyer miles*
- *Call the airline reservation agents*; they can often find deals that aren't pulled up by the big sites. Ask the agent to try alternate routings if the lowest fares aren't available on the usual routing (for example, try going Boston-Chicago-Miami instead of Boston-Washington DC-Miami on United) Tell them longer connections and double-connects are OK. If you find an agent that isn't helpful, hang up and try again with a different one.
- *Make a bid using www.Priceline.com*. You make a bid for travel between two cities on a specific date; they tell you whether they'll accept the bid. You're only allowed to bid once every 72 hours. There's no fee unless your bid is accepted (once accepted, it is totally non-changeable & non-refundable). Check Hotwire first; don't bid more than Hotwire's price.
- *Wait for published fares to drop*. If you have enough time, watch for seasonal sales & fare wars. Use Travelocity or Expedia's "Fare Watcher" capability, which will keep you posted of changes in published fares on routes you specify.
- *Wait for a desired fare class to open up*. The airlines are continually adjusting the number of seats available at different fares. If seats for a low fare aren't available today, they may be tomorrow.
- *Check the weekend web fare specials*. Go to each airline's site; www.SmarterLiving.com has a roll-up of web fares for all airlines. (You can also request they send this to you weekly, by email, for a particular departure city)
- *Watch for price drops AFTER you purchase* – if the fare drops for the exact class of fare (e.g. V, M Q) you are booked in, the airline will give you a refund of the difference on request
- *Check www.bestfares.com*. They are part information provider, part consolidator. You have to join (\$60/year) to get full access to everything, but a lot of it is available without joining.
- *Check out domestic consolidators* such as www.bestfares.com, www.onetravel.com, more listed at <http://www.msnbc.com/news/790709.asp>

Maximize the value of the flight Assuming you have several flight options at very low fares, try to increase the value of the flight in other ways:

- *Maximize frequent flyer points* Check airline web sites to see if they are running bonus offers (you usually need to register for the bonuses); check also www.webflyer.com and www.flyertalk.com
- *Leverage FF elite status*: If you have elite status already, you will be eligible for extra-legroom seating, preferential check-in and boarding, and the chance to upgrade to first-class at little/no cost. If you're not elite level but fly over actual 25,000 miles/year, you can reach elite status by focusing on flying on a particular airline.
- *Use FF points to upgrade to first class on long flights*. All but the very lowest fares (web specials in particular) can be upgraded with FF points – generally 10k miles in each direction
- *Find the best seats on the plane*: Look for exit rows, (some) bulkheads, any other rows that seem to have

extra room, then call and request them. www.seatguru.com and <http://www.mileagerunner.com/content/flying/seatmaps.htm> will help pick them out.

- *Be ready to be bumped.* Go www.smarterliving.com/bin/flightsearch.cgi to get a list of all flights alternatives available. Do it also for the connecting cities. Carry these alternatives with you, they are handy if you are delayed, or if they need to bump someone. Try to get first in the “volunteer line”, either by asking at check-in, or by dashing to the counter when they announce they need volunteers.

US Airfares – Non-Round-Trip Travel

One-way fares

- Do your baseline check. Travelocity has a fare calendar for one way fares; Expedia does not.
- Check www.Southwest.com, and other low-cost airlines who offer discounted one way fares
- Buy a deeply discounted roundtrip fare, and throw the return ticket away
- Do an open jaw trip, using the return ticket for something entirely different (this works for both purchased and FF tickets)

Open-jaw trips (where you fly into one city and out of another; or depart from one city and return to another). This is a classic problem for cruise passengers.

- Do your baseline check. Often you can get it for the half-way fare for each city pair (you can check the lowest roundtrip fare for each leg & divide by 2 for a benchmark) Then check actual prices - all the major sites let you price multi-stop trips.
- Try the standard date/city flexibility tricks.
- Most of the advanced airfare search tools won't work on multi-stop itineraries. You can substitute manual checking, however, trying out different options and see how they price (dates, cities, etc).
- Change the order of the legs – flying out to the one you were going to return from.
- Use a FF ticket. Most limit the size of the open jaw. Continental is very lenient – handy for cruises.
- Book two round-trip tickets, and throw half of each away (this is technically against airline rules. To be extra safe, book on different airlines)

Multi-stop trips:

- Use the techniques above
- Break it into two (or more) different tickets trying to get each to price on a round-trip fare basis, even though they are open jaw.
- Look for low-cost “shuttle flights” (esp on west coast).
- Change the order of the cities you are visiting.
- Use FF tickets for the long-haul legs.
- See if you can find a fare that allows stopovers (the ability to spend time in a city that your flight connects in). Many FF tickets allow this.
- Look for unusual routings where you can leverage a fare war or airline special discount. www.air-fare.com and Travelocity DreamMaps list the cheapest fares for major cities across the country, from your particular destination. Use that cheapest fares as cities to route through or use as a hub. (Find DreamMaps by clicking the flights tab, then the “dream maps” item in blue underneath the tab bar)
- Get help from an experienced travel agent or airline reservation agent.

US Airfares – When You Don't Care About Destination

There are times when you just want to go *somewhere*, doesn't much matter where to. Other times you need to rack up some additional FF miles before the end of the year, in order to make elite status. These are ways to find the destination with the lowest fares

- Check www.smarterliving.com for weekend web fares for all airlines. Some int'l airlines also have web fares (most notably, Air Canada)
- Check Travelocity Dream Maps or www.air-fares.com for lowest fare destinations from your home city
- Look at www.flyertalk.com's *Mileage Run* bulletin board to find that absolutely cheapest way to rack up miles quickly.
- www.bestfares.com lists the big fare sales by city pairs, updated daily

International Airfares

The US & Canadian markets are virtually totally deregulated. International airfares are far less deregulated, and far more arcane. The routing options are more complex, and the number of airlines is much higher. Keep in mind that long haul international flights are a great way to rack up points for FF elite status.

Find the lowest PUBLISHED fares:

- Follow the steps listed under domestic fares as a first step. However, the lowest published fares are often NOT the least expensive fares (see below). Look at www3.travel.com.au/maps/index.cgi for route maps to your destination (handy for figuring out options for reaching out-of-the-way places)

- *Round-the-World and Mileage-Based Fares* in coach may or may not offer a better deal. (Mileage based fares give you a set number of miles to use, say 35,000). Look to the big airline alliances such as Star Alliance (which includes United Airlines) or OneWorld (American Airlines) for the maximum flexibility and city pairs. www.informationlab.com/rtw.htm
- *Time-based fares* – Cathay Pacific and Air Malaysia frequently offer “all-Asia” fares, which fly you to their Asian hub, and allow unlimited flights within Asia for a 30 day period, for under \$1000
- *Check on the national carrier’s web site for your destination country.* Look for any special fares listed – the international airline special fares don’t always come up in search engines. Check both their main web site, and the US-specific sub-site.
- *Check Travelocity’s international Dream Maps*
- *Check www.smarterliving.com* for international web fares from US airlines; a few international airlines also offer these – check their sites. www.icelandair.com has especially good deals – sign up for their weekly “lucky fares” newsletter.
- *Farewatchers:* If you want to go to a specific international location, but are flexible as to when you want to go, set up a fare watcher on Travelocity or Expedia to catch the sales. It will email you when prices drop on routes you specify.
- *Airline Alliances* – if you are traveling to an out-of-the-way location, look to one of the airline alliances (United’s Star Alliance, American’s Oneworld) – the large number of airlines makes it easier to build an itinerary (not just on RTW tickets); this also holds true for FF tickets on Star Alliance, where you can use a combination of airlines
- *Try flying into/out of a nearby country:* Sometimes, you can find another fare by flying through Canada if you are American, or vice versa. For example, Toronto often has inexpensive Caribbean fares. At times, it might make sense to fly to Singapore and catch a local flight to Bangkok, rather than flying to Bangkok directly. London is often cheaper than other European cities; connect to your final destination using one of Europe’s new low-cost carriers.

Find lower prices using other types of fares:

- *Consolidators:* International airline agreements can keep airlines from discounting international fares as heavily as they need to fill the plane. Instead, they offer special commission deals (as high as 30-40%) to certain agencies (consolidators or bucket shops), who then pass some of the commission along to you in the form of discounts off ticket face value. www.bestfares.com www.airtreks.com and www.cheaptickets.com are well-known consolidators; look at <http://www.msnbc.com/news/790709.asp> for other recommendations. For a fascinating explanation of international airfares, get a book called *The Practical Nomad* by Ed Hasbrouck; a shorter version can be found at <http://hasbrouck.org/faq>
- *Group/Tour Fares:* These rates can be very low, and very convenient if you are buying bundled airfare with a vacation/cruise package. Always check to see if you can do better unbundled, though. At times you can find “tour fares” where the tour is minimal – just enough to qualify for tour fare pricing. Most people just dump the tours, using it only for the great airfares. Google search is the best way to find these.
- *Charters:* For well-traveled routes during high season, these can be a great bargain. Check the Sunday paper in your area, or do a Google search such as “Boston Aruba charter flight”
- *Auctions:* www.skyauction.com sells consolidator tickets via auction, and has some excellent deals, but read the fine-print regarding fees/taxes. www.thedailyauction.com sells Lufthansa US-Europe tickets at auction for specific city pairs and dates at very low prices.
- *Ethnic discounters.* The absolute lowest fares often come from agencies specializing in providing home country transport to immigrants. Find them advertised in the big Sunday newspapers or search the web (“discount air tickets turkey”). They are not always used to working with people outside their ethnic group (for example, language may be a problem)
- *Courier travel* You give up your checked baggage allowance to carry international business documents; in exchange you get a greatly reduced airfare. These are legit businesses, but are very inflexible as to when and how long. There are many online sites that will explain more about this.

Domestic/Regional Overseas Travel

- Domestic airfare rules vary by country. However, they are almost always less complicated than US fares. Outside the developed world, domestic fares can be a great deal. The big travel sites usually list these fares, but it doesn’t hurt to try the individual airline sites as well.
- *Air Passes*, which give you a certain number of flight coupons or all flights within a period of time, may or may not be a good deal. They make most sense for larger countries (eg Australia, Indonesia) or when they cover a number of smaller regional countries (ASEAN (SE Asia) air pass). They may require that your overseas flight be on the local carrier in order to qualify. Hard to find info on the airlines own websites – try www.ssr.ch/de/airpasses/airpasslist.htm ,

www.independenttraveler.com/resources/article.cfm?AID=2&category=1 or www.worldtravellers.net/airtravel/airpass.html

- www.europebyair.com/ has an airpass with \$99 airfares between most cities in Europe
- *Star Alliance Regional FF tickets* – the Star Alliance has put together a unified FF ticket schedule that greatly expands the range and ease of booking free tickets in other areas of the world.
- *Local Discounters*: Depending on the market, there can be great deals available to the local market, often to popular tourist destinations in the region. Check the local paper when you arrive; or find one on the web.

International Business Class Travel

Flying in coach is OK if you're going to Cleveland, but it is torture to fly in a cramped seat to someplace like Singapore. Unfortunately, international first and business class travel is seldom discounted. Here are ways to travel with more room without paying the outrageous business class fares:

- *Upgrade using FF miles*. This is one of the highest payback ways to use FF miles (in terms of cost savings). Be careful that the fare you are booking allows upgrading, and book as far in advance as possible.
- *Get an American Express Platinum card*. It costs about \$350/year, but you can book 2 for the price of 1 in international business/first class on about a dozen well-known airlines. One of the great travel deals of all time.
- *Turn it into a round-the-world trip*. Coach RTW trips aren't that great a deal. But the RTW business & first class fares are an excellent value, even if you only stop in a couple of cities – price is about \$5000US, last time we checked. It's hard to find information about RTW airfares on airline web sites; check <http://www.solutions.net/rec-travel/rtw/html/faq.html>, look on the www.flyertalk.com bulletin boards, call the airline directly, or do a Google search
- *Check www.bestfares.com* under international business travel. Business/first class travel is very seldom discounted through consolidators, but you might get lucky. www.skyauction.com also sometimes has discounted business class to Europe. www.icelandair.com sometimes offers highly discounted biz class fares
- *Fly an airline with "coach plus"* – more legroom than coach, but not all the other amenities of business class. But, at a much lower price. Virgin Atlantic, EVA (Asia), and British Air have this available at a slightly higher price. United has it for elite fliers. See which airlines offer the most legroom in coach – it varies significantly: www.geocities.com/profemery/entertainment/legroom.html
- *Find an near-empty flight* where you can stretch out across several seats. Register for the airline search engine www.itn.com, go to "my account" and choose "expert" under display preferences. Flights displays will include the number of open seats in each class of service (up to 9). Look for flights with all fare classes at 9, such as "F9 A9 Y9 B9 M9 H9 Q9 K9 L9 U9 T9"
- *Check international airline websi/es for 2-for-1 promotions*. In particular, Cathay Pacific often offers 2-for-1 in business/first.
- *Check www.flyertalk.com*. This is a set of bulletin boards where very frequent flyers swap tips. Elite flyers are given transferable, confirmable international upgrades as a reward for their business. They will at times give these away to fellow travelers as the expiration date nears (often February/March). It is against program rules to *purchase* these upgrades, but there are usually some for sale on Ebay. **Caveat emptor.**

Cruise Planning Using the Internet

Cruises are a much more complicated travel product, and not interchangeable like flights are. Here are some of the ways to use the Internet to help sort through it all.

Finding Cruises You Might Be Interested In

- www.vacationstogo.com has a simple and powerful search engine that allows you to search in many different dimensions (length, quality, ports called on, dates, etc). It's also a good place to find your baseline price. It seems to carry all the major cruise lines. Most of the major online cruise sites, as well as Travelocity, have some sort of database search, if you don't like this one.
- www.smallshipcruises.com has pointers to smaller and more off-beat cruise lines.
- www.travltips.com lists unusual cruise and extra long cruise itineraries

Narrowing Down Your Choices

- Will you like the cruise and the ship? Berlitz Guide to Cruising, a book updated annually, is a good place to start. Travelocity has cruise ship reviews. www.cruisecritic.com and www.cruisereviews.com have passenger reports by both ship and port, as does the Google newsgroup rec.travel.cruises. [http://www.cruise2.com/ PlanningYourCruise-2.html](http://www.cruise2.com/PlanningYourCruise-2.html) gives a profile of the cruise lines, to help decide which line is more your style

Finding a Good Price

- Cruise pricing is complex. A good explanation of cruise pricing strategy is www.cruise2.com/PlanningYourCruise-1.html. Key is to find an agent that specializes in cruises, at a firm

that does high volumes of cruise business. They may or may not be online (many sell both ways), but these are the people who know the ropes and can get the favors.

- www.vacationstogo.com and a cruise line's own site are a good way to get the baseline price.
- Check prices listed at a couple of the large online cruise agencies, such as www.crucon.com, www.bestpricecruises.com, www.mytravelco.com, www.cruise.com, www.travelocity.com, www.cruises-n-more.com/ . There usually isn't much difference. If you decide to book with an online agent, first research to make sure the agency has a good reputation. If you have a cruise specialty agent you work with, check with them as well – they are often competitive with online prices.

Flexible Cruise Plans

- If you have flexibility and are less picky about where/when you go, subscribe to the “hot fares” weekly email newsletters provided by the sites listed above, and also www.cheapluxurycruises.com, www.cruise411.com, www.cruises-n-more.com, www.7blue seas.com, www.icruise.com, www.thecruiseoutlet.com (go to their web sites to sign up)
- www.moments-notice.com sells a limited number highly-discounted cruises (“distressed inventory”)
- Repositioning cruises and shoulder season cruises are often cost-effective, as are cruises in areas where there has been recent strife in the neighborhood.
- Check local papers or local agents in the departure or arrival ports. Last minute fares may be promoted in areas near to these ports. Online yellow pages or Google search (“cruise agency Vancouver”) can help you locate them.
- www.portcompass.com and www.shoretrips.com offer alternatives to the shore excursions offered by the cruiselines.

Cruise Auctions

- www.luxurylink.com occasionally lists high-end cruises at auction
- www.skyauction.com, www.thecruiseauction.com, www.bid4vacations.com have cruises at auction, usually shorter Caribbean cruises on lower-end cruise lines. Make sure you get a good baseline price first and check fees, other charges, and restrictions.

Off-Beat Ways to Cruise

- www.travltips.com and <http://www.geocities.com/freighterman.geo/mainmenu.html> are guides to worldwide freighter travel
- www.semesteratsea.com is a University of Pittsburgh program sponsored ship/university that allows students to spend a year studying in ports around the world. There is a small program for adults to come along, including the ability to take the courses.
- www.residensea.com is a custom cruise ship built with apartments that can be purchased for a few million dollars each; it continually sails the world, spending several days in each port. Rentals of any length are also available. www.luxurylink.com will occasionally sell space for a couple weeks travel on this ship; do a Google search for other outlets

Sparkly Cruise Dresses

- Want a sparkly cruise dress at a big discount? Check out www.evalueville.com, an online outlet for overstocks and returns from Bloomingdale's and other high-end stores - 90% off list is not uncommon. They carry sparkly dresses off-and-on, so you'll have to check over time.

Handy Web Sites

The big travel web sites:

www.expedia.com

www.travelocity.com

www.orbitz.com

www.google.com – really a search engine, but it's great for ferreting out travel information

Auction Links:

www.luxurylink.com auctions – top-end accommodations and cruises at significant discounts. Good reputation.

www.thedailyauction.com – US to Europe tickets on Lufthansa for specific dates and city pairs.

www.skyauction.com -- A big auction site with flights, cruises, and resort vacations. Be careful about fees – sometimes \$50/day or more. Have had mixed feedback on the site, but lots of people use it and it has a huge number of offers, many of them very attractive.

www.ebay.com/travel -- Ebay can have great deals, but there are also lots of questionable offers. Do your homework thoroughly, check the seller's feedback rating, and make sure the offer is legit.

www.thecruiseauction.com – Mostly low-end Caribbean cruises on Carnival.

www.bid4vacations.com – They've been around for a while, which is a good sign. Cruises as well as other vacations. Cruises on auction tend to be N America/Caribbean/Mexico. Watch for port charges and other extras.

www.priceline.com – Flights & hotels. You name the price you're willing to pay between a city pair on a particular date. If an airline accepts the bid, your credit card is immediately charged. You cannot cancel or change the tickets. Airline and connections are not known till after your bid is accepted. Hotel prices can be outstanding.

www.hotwire.com – Flights and hotels. Supply a city pair and date, and you are given a price which you have an hour or so to accept. Once you accept, you are given the airline and connections. No changes or refunds. Hotel prices can be outstanding.

Hotel Consolidators:

www.travelaxe.com – Finds hotel deals, by searching about a dozen major sites, including consolidators, and showing you which site has the best deal on each hotel. You need to download and install a small application first.

www.hotwire.com, www.priceline.com – they have great deals on domestic hotels; you pick the grade and general location of the hotel you want; they reveal the name after you agree to purchase. Typically 50% to 70% off the lowest rate listed on Expedia. These are usually outstanding deals. Hotwire: US, Canada, Mexico.

Priceline: worldwide

www.aaahotels.net – Highly discounted hotels around the world. Have used them twice with excellent results

www.asia-hotels.com – Highly discounted hotels around the world, but especially Asia. Lots of user feedback on each hotel, excellent rates. My favorite discount hotel site. Even if you don't book through them, read the user feedback on the properties.

[country-specific hotel discounters](#) – almost every country will have a couple of discounters focusing on that country alone. Do a search for "country-name discount hotel" on Google for a good start.

Last Minute & High Discount Travel:

www.moments-notice.com – I've booked excellent deals through them, including cruises. \$25 yearly membership fee to book.

www.travelzoo.com – weekly emails with a summary of the best last-minute travel deals from a bunch of sites

www.smarterliving.com – Pointers to best airfare deals, insight into the industry, and general all-around useful site.

www.travelfleamarket.com Best deals from dozens of different agencies, for all types of travel

www.site59.com - last minute weekend getaways

www.valueconsumer.com/Travel/default.htm tips and pointers

About the authors: *Scott & Kathy love to travel well.. They were both in the high-tech industry, near Boston, and built a long term savings plan that would allow them to retire in their mid-40s, which they did in 2001. They now spend about half the year traveling both domestically and internationally. Over the years they have built up a repertoire of tricks and techniques for traveling well but inexpensively – "champagne travel on a beer budget". This material is part of a multi-session course on Internet-Based Travel Planning that Kathy teaches at local adult ed and other venues. She also teaches a course on how to retire young, entitled "Having a Life-Building Your Plan to Leave the Rat Race Behind."* Scott and Kathy can be reached at:

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