



***FAMILIES LOVE TRAVEL - ON THE CHEAP***  
***Take a Vacation without Breaking the Bank***  
***-notes from Michele Z, the Family Travel Mom***



Here are some tips to help you put together a trip that they will all enjoy...on a tight budget:

1. **Simplify your lodgings.** Either join a **rewards club** or, if you can, plan to visit areas of the country where you can **stay with friends or relatives**. Another option- **vacation homes and campgrounds** – using a grill or fully equipped kitchen and washer/dryer facility yourself saves money. Of course, the best way to save on hotels is to not use them. Plan **day trips** to sights and attractions within driving distance instead.
2. **Attractions.** Buying **tickets in advance** online can save not only money, but time as well. Go in a group for shows and fee-paid attractions at a **group discount**. **Get more value** from historical places by: re-enactments, history mysteries, state history workbooks.
3. **Babysitting.** When planning a road trip with young children, ask grandparents or another close relative to come along to watch the kids. This allows you and your spouse some time alone without paying for resort babysitting services.
4. **Discount or Membership Card.** Buy a **discount attractions pass** for large cities like Chicago, Orlando, New York – especially if you know you're going to visit four or more sites around town. You can also save up to \$500.00 with free discount cards provided by local CVBs. Some **supermarket chains** offer great discount tickets to major attractions in the area by just signing up for their Customer Card. If you already have family memberships to your local Children's Museum, Science Center, Zoo or Aquarium, find out which places offer **Free or Discounted Reciprocal Admission**.
5. **Economize on meals.** Plan to splurge on one meal, but make the other meals less expensive. Staying at a hotel with a complimentary continental breakfast is our favorite option. Pay attention to three magic words, "Kids Eat Free," especially at hotel and chain restaurants. Look for Extra Value Meals or Early Bird specials, too. Often, historic taverns offer better value deals for lunch vs. dinner menus so maybe consider making lunch your main meal of the day.
6. **Freebies.** (Yes, they still exist!) Keep the little ones entertained without opening the wallet at upscale mall stores like a Lego Store or Discovery Stores. Many upscale hotels now have live, caged animals in their lobby such as exotic birds. Once or twice a day the management offers public programs with a naturalist or you can chance upon a feeding time. Another freebie – free admission special events or festivals. Best of all, though, are the attractions that are still FREE admission. One-quarter to one-third of all Kids Love Travel series guidebooks offer reviews on attractions that never, or hardly ever, charge to get in!
7. **Getting Around.** Dad did all that driving to get there, now he just wants to get out of the van and take a nap, but the family is ready to see the sites. Most every tourist town has a **trolley service** and most every trolley has on/off privileges. To save even more money, opt out of actually visiting the historic museums (probably boring for kids anyway) and just absorb the views and snippets from the trolley guide. **Walking is free, too.** Some historic towns are very walkable (ex. Alexandria, St. Augustine, Fredericksburg, DC, Lexington, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, etc.)
8. **Giving In.** Moms say "yes" to kids more often and to more requests on vacation. So, give in moms, but cheaply. The number one request of kids on vacation: Staying up late and Sleeping in – so let them, no cost here. Next on kids' list was treats. Most "treats" like ice cream cones are little cost compared to sit-down meals so splurge on that cone or candy but save on dinner because the kids won't be that hungry!
9. **Go off season.** Not only will the crowds be reduced, but hotels offer deep discounts and gift shops run clearance sales during off-peak times of year.
10. **Pack to Save.** A last minute purchase or rental of certain items out of necessity can add up quickly. If you have the room, bring your own stroller or bicycles. If you like to theme park or bike/hike, here's what we suggest you pack: *Medium, sturdy Backpack with band-aids, pain reliever, hand sanitizer, bottled water, towel or rain poncho, small flashlight, apples, nuts, gum or candy, small deck of cards, tissue or napkins, small box of colored pencils and a coloring book.*

Kids grow up fast. Enjoy time with them (inexpensively) while they're young. Remember, this year may offer the best travel deals ever! ©2010 – Michele Zavatsky

**BYLINE:**

Want more ideas about how to plan your next family trip - and, maybe learn some tricks on how to get the most value? Michele Z, the Family Travel Mom, has been to 5,000 places and shares her journals in her KIDS LOVE TRAVEL GUIDEBOOKS - Family Travel Guides.

Visit [www.KidsLoveTravel.com](http://www.KidsLoveTravel.com) and let YOUR next family adventure begin!

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