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### **Budget-Friendly Travel Tips**

About 99 million Americans traveled at least 50 miles from home during the last holiday season, according to the American Automobile Association (AAA). Whether you're visiting relatives during the holidays, taking a trip to a warm weather location or planning next year's vacation, there are many opportunities to lower your costs and get the most from your travel dollar, says the Tennessee Society of CPAs.

#### **Plan Ahead (But Keep an Open Mind)**

No matter where you're headed, you're more likely to find affordable train or airfare costs or hotel rates if you don't wait until the last minute. And if you start scheduling next year's trips now, you should also be able to find discounted prices even for holiday or high peak periods. At the same time, if you're willing to be flexible, you can find surprisingly inexpensive travel or lodging costs. If possible, try to pick your dream location and check to see when flights or hotels are cheapest and plan your trip around those times. If the timing works, you could save a lot. Flexibility can also work in your favor for peak-period travel. You could save money by planning to fly on Monday rather than the busy Wednesday before Thanksgiving.

## **Go Off Season**

Going skiing in early December can be much less expensive than at the very end of the year or around President's Day, when many families are traveling. For national parks like Yellowstone, lodging is less expensive virtually any time of year other than summer. You'll also find that traveling in Europe tends to be cheaper in the fall. If a peak period is the only time you can travel, don't despair, however. Look into packages that include airfare, lodging and car rental. You could find some significant savings.

## **Don't Miss Out on Discounts**

Can you get a discount on travel based simply on the company you work for? You'll never know if you don't investigate. In fact, many people are not aware of travel discounts for which they're eligible. Large employers, for example, often have employee clubs that offer reductions on travel or other goods and services. Similarly, large national service organizations such as AAA and AARP often provide members with discounts on travel fares or hotels. Check the websites for clubs or organizations to which you belong to see if they can help you cut your costs.

## **Take Smart Precautions**

In addition to lowering costs, you also want to protect your money while you're on the road and ensure you have access to it. Particularly if you're traveling out of the country, be sure to contact your bank and credit card company to let them know your plans so they don't block your transactions because they're seeing unusual activity. Take along no more than a couple of credit or debit cards—just what you need, in other words--and don't leave your Social Security card in your wallet in case it's stolen. Bring bank and credit card contact information so you have them

if your wallet is lost or stolen, as well as copies of key documents such as a passport, but don't keep them in your wallet. And while it's fun to tell friends about your travel ideas on social media, it does alert crooks to the fact that your home will be empty—and easy to burglarize—while you're away. It's better to share your photos later than broadcast your plans now.

### **Your CPA Can Help**

Have questions about making the most of your travel dollars or saving for next year's expenditures? Be sure to consult your local CPA. She or he can offer the advice you need to make smart financial decisions.

### **About Money Management**

Money Management is a column on personal finance that is a joint effort of the AICPA and the Tennessee Society of CPAs, as part of the profession's nationwide 360 Degrees of Financial Literacy program. Members of TSCPA are CPAs residing and practicing primarily in Tennessee in all areas of public accounting, education, government, business and industry. TSCPA offers a speakers bureau for many types of business and educational engagements. For details, visit [www.tscpa.com](http://www.tscpa.com). TSCPA is headquartered in Brentwood, Tenn.