

## How to save on your 2017 vacation

Posted by [Joy Shrum-Reporter](#) On 12/29/2016

**Hollywood, MD-** With the New Year upon us, you might be thinking about your next vacation. The travel options are endless; cruises, all-inclusive resorts, European vacations, or even a road trip here in the States. You can plan the perfect family vacation, without breaking the bank.

The most expensive time to travel is when children are out of school; summer, spring break, Christmas break. But it doesn't have to be that way. "You can counteract that by planning early. Normally nine months out is when you should start planning. You can book hotels a year in advance and cruises as far as 18 months in advance. The earlier you book, the better the discount is," Lori Wentworth, manager for Travel Leaders in Great Mills, said.

You can also find other discounts based on certain hotels or resorts promotions. Wentworth explained, "there are some hotels that offer discounts for children, like kids 12 and under eat free. Some all-inclusive resorts will allow children to stay for free, they just need to pay for airfare and resort taxes."

Wentworth said it's important to identify what you're looking for in a trip before you start planning and researching. What are your likes or dislikes? What are you hoping to experience from the trip? It's easier to narrow down the selection by pinpointing what you're looking for in a vacation.

Trip Advisor is a great resource when you're looking for reviews on hotels. However, Wentworth reminds travelers it's not regulated. "When it comes to reviews, it's 50/50 because hotels are now paying people to write both good and bad reviews on Trip Advisor. Read the terrible reviews because many times it's someone who expected a 5-star hotel but they paid for a 3-star." Wentworth said people get drawn in by great deals online. It might sound great but the hotel might not meet your expectations, despite the great price. "How much does a bad vacation have to cost for it to be a bad vacation?" Wentworth said that's where travel agents help you weed out those concerns.

She highly recommends going to a reputable travel agent. "We get to go on these trips. We've seen these resorts in person. We literally go basement to attic and we look at everything. So when someone says they're all ultra-exclusive, luxury, 5-star resort and I go there and there's paint chipping or they don't have a kids program, you're not going to know that as a normal consumer. But as an agent, I have 27 years of firsthand knowledge." Wentworth said.

A vacation to the Caribbean at an all-inclusive resort might sound like an expensive, extravagant vacation but you'd be surprised. Wentworth explained, "You're going to spend \$3,000-\$4,000 on a family of four to go to Ocean City, MD for seven days in the summertime, or you'll spend just as much to go to the Caribbean, and you're going to get more. There are amenities that are included."

Many resorts will focus on children ages 4-12 and they'll have kids' camps set up and some even offer babysitting services. There are many hotels who hire true nannies who have been trained, have gone to school and they know first aid and CPR.

If you're looking to stay stateside and avoid air travel or just don't have a large budget for a vacation, Wentworth said there are plenty of trip options. "There are a lot of fun places, even around our area, that aren't that expensive. They can go up to Baltimore and go to the aquarium, stay at a hotel and find one with a pool. Kids don't care where you go, you're just not at home."

Wentworth also recommended thinking outside of the box. "You can drive somewhere like New York City and you can find a hotel that's relatively inexpensive by staying in New Jersey instead of Manhattan. There's even a campground in New Jersey where you can hop on a ferry boat over to the Statue of Liberty. There are also cruises that go from Baltimore and you save money by not paying for airfare."

Repositioning cruises are also a great way to save money. During the early spring and late fall, cruise lines will move ships south for the winter and north for the summer. "Those are phenomenal because sometimes you can get a 10-12 days cruise for \$500 from New York City to Barcelona." Wentworth said.

If you're up for traveling in the winter, you can get great travel rates for Europe in January, February and March. Wentworth said, "You can fly to London right now from Dulles for about \$480."

September and October are also great travel times because kids are back in school and it is still hurricane season and people don't want to risk it. Wentworth said don't let that scare you away. "You can get a great deal and that's why you should also have trip insurance. It's still nice and still hot and it's not as crowded."

If you're a planner and prefer to book your own vacations online, Wentworth encourages you to still reach out to an agency. "A lot of time agents can still get you a better rate with hotels, cruises and cars. It doesn't cost you anything because those companies pay the agent's commission."

If you think you'll find a better deal on airfare by booking on a Tuesday or a Wednesday, Wentworth said that's an old myth. "The computers come up with an algorithm, the computer decides. There's no real rhyme or reason to booking on a Tuesday night compared to a Friday."

Wentworth also encourages travelers to apply for passports as soon as they start planning a trip out of the country. "The rule of thumb is 4 to 8 weeks. But if you know you're going, get your application in."

Finally, there's trip insurance. Wentworth highly recommends the purchase. "Whether your trip gets canceled due to illness or weather, your bags get lost or even if someone becomes ill while overseas, your trip insurance will help you and protect you."

Wentworth believes it's important for families to plan vacations together. "Kids these days are glued to their phones and tablets and they're lacking social interaction. When they travel with their family, they get to re-connect. There's a benefit to exposing children to different cultures, different religions, different types of people, even if it's driving from Maryland to Tennessee. It's an educational experience and your children will be more educated about the world."

Bon Voyage!

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