

## The summer's best deals are stateside

■ Many U.S. cities flood the Internet with discounts to counter tough economic times

By MICHELLE HIGGINS  
NEW YORK TIMES

**T**HE best travel deals this summer may be right at home. The weak dollar is making many Americans cross Europe off their list. Rising airfares are making it hard to justify a trip to many far-flung places. And even Canada isn't the bargain it used to be.

But stateside, things are different. In light of rising fuel costs, tightening travelers' wallets and the overall economy, many cities are flooding the Internet with discounts and promotions.

Destination DC, a marketing organization for the nation's capital, is offering three-night weekend stays for 30 percent off at [www.washington.org](http://www.washington.org). Philadelphia is promoting two-night packages at [www.gophila.com/summerfun](http://www.gophila.com/summerfun) through Sept. 7 that come with a \$50 American Express gift card. Even ritzy Aspen, Colo., is offering visitors who book two or more nights at a participating hotel a \$50 gas voucher and two free bike rentals. See [www.aspenchamber.org](http://www.aspenchamber.org) for information.

Travelocity.com has been touting "All-American Offers," including U.S. national park trips from \$729 and \$100 off five-night Colorado vacations, through promotional e-mail.

And Expedia is advertising up to 30 percent off U.S. destinations at [www.expedia.com/summersale](http://www.expedia.com/summersale).

Travel companies hope such deals will spur vacationers into action. "They're trying to get ahead of the game," said

Gabe Saglie, senior editor at Travelzoo.com. If the industry "can attract travelers before they get too much into money-saving mode, it will benefit them," he said.

The big challenge for summer travelers this year is finding cheap airfares. Domestic fares continue to increase. But rather than hold out for a fare sale, travelers may do better by heading to destinations with deep discounts, which can help offset rising airfare prices.

For example, a slowdown in visitors combined with a rise in new hotel rooms is turning

Las Vegas into a bargain-hunters' dream. Sure it's the desert in the summer, but travelers can find rooms as low as \$69 per night at Bally's or \$75 a night at Harrah's. Looking for luxury? The Bellagio is offering Web specials for \$179 a night. The Mirage has rates as low as \$81 per night.

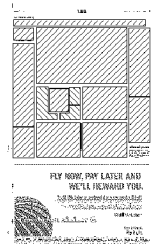
Want a vacation deal without the heat? Think counter-intuitively. Winter resorts in Vermont and Colorado offer discounts galore during the slower summer months. And the high altitude and low humidity of mountain towns are perfect

for outdoor enthusiasts or travelers who simply want to sit on a porch in the evening and sip some good wine.

Searching winter-oriented Web sites such as Ski.com for summer promotions can turn up some real gems. For summer, the site is offering two nights in a one-bedroom residence, daily cooked-to-order breakfast, a \$200 dinner credit and two spa treatments for \$478 a person this summer at the Sky Lodge in Park City, Utah. For the Aspen Music Festival, it's offering four nights in a two-bedroom condo at Aspen Square and a three-event festival pass from \$613 a person, based on four people sharing. During the winter holiday season four nights in the same two-bedroom would cost \$1,085 a person.

It's not just off-season destinations that are slashing rates. Take Myrtle Beach, S.C. This family hot spot used to fill up months in advance for summer. But in the past five years, the Myrtle Beach area, including Little River and Pawleys Island, has added nearly 12,000 rooms, mostly oceanfront condominiums. The growth has kept prices down as hotels and rental units compete for guests.

This summer, a family of four can stay for three nights at the Compass Cove Resort for \$597, including daily buffet breakfast, by booking the Family Value package. The Beach Cove Resort, where rates start at \$149 a night in June, is offering 20 percent off stays of seven nights or longer. And Sea



Watch Resort, where oceanfront studios start at \$125 a night, is offering 15 percent off July 6-31.

Many theme-park destinations have been offering deals, too. Compared with last summer, hotel rates have dropped 7 percent in Orlando and 12 percent in Anaheim, Calif., home of Disneyland, according to Expedia.com. Under its Red Hot Deals section, Hotels.com has been featuring rates from \$69 per night at Knott's Berry Farm Resort Hotel and \$132 a night at the Sheraton Anaheim Hotel, both near Disneyland. Near Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, Fla., Hotels.com is advertising rooms at the Hotel Royal Plaza from \$99.

Concerned about the impact of rising gas prices on day-trippers and other vacationers, many drive-to destinations are offering gas rebates and other deals to keep travelers coming.

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— GABE SAGLIE,

Senior editor, Travelzoo.com



CHUCK KENNEDY

**DEALING IN D.C.:** Vacationers in the nation's capital can get a three-night weekend stay for 30 percent less through the marketing firm Destination DC.



KRISTIN JACKSON : SEATTLE TIMES

**ON THE RIGHT TRACK:** Ride the train at Knott's Berry Farm in Buena Park, Calif. You also can get room rates from \$69 per night at Knott's Berry Farm Resort Hotel.



MYRTLE BEACH SUN-NEWS

**BIG BEACH SAVINGS:** Myrtle Beach, S.C., has always been a popular summer destination for families, but the area's growth is keeping hotel prices and the costs of renting condos down.



ISAAC BREKKEN : ASSOCIATED PRESS

**HIT IT LUCKY:** A slowdown in tourism in Las Vegas means it could be your lucky day. There are rooms as low as \$69 per night at Bally's or \$75 a night at Harrah's.