

• How We Save Money On Travel •



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There are so many ways to save money when traveling, but I think the *most* important way we save money on travel is that we long ago developed a personal “travel style” for ourselves just like we have a preferred “housing style,” “dressing style,” and “cooking style,” and then we stick with that overall personalized style *most of the time*. When you do that it’s much easier to budget and plan for trips and it doesn’t matter so much if you’re traveling to Timbuktu or Katmandu because you start with a “travel-style template” and always build your trip around that same overall plan each time.

Admittedly some travel types might call us boring to do this, and I understand that, but since we are not thrill-seekers who want to jump out of a plane over a plain, scuba dive amongst ocean sharks, nor eat our way through Bubba’s Ribs type of diners in Missouri, we are totally fine with our chosen travel style. It has served us well for many years now after our newlywed failed attempt at tent camping in pouring rain in the Smoky Mountains and sleeping on ants in a campsite in Colorado. Those weren’t money-saving travel “experiences” for us; they were a nightmare! But we learned ...

So anyway, what’s *your* preferred travel style?! Start dreaming, write it down, and see where it takes you! (Pun intended.) 😊

Our preferred travel style is not very expensive, (relative to our personal travel budget which is different for everyone, of course), and here's why, in case you want to try to incorporate any of these ideas into your own plans:

1. We travel off-season whenever possible and we have been able to do that because of our particular work, and because we never had children in school that we had to schedule around. Not everyone can do this, of course, but perhaps you can find a way.

2. We *usually* drive vs. fly and we stay in Bed & Breakfast Inns for both economy and enjoyment as so much is included for the rate like evening snacks, wine, and coffee and cookies, plus usually free parking, and we like their cozy-homey feeling. Unlike resorts and sometimes-sterile hotels,

inns seldom add on all the extra "service fees" that seem so common these days so that's a savings too.

3. When on vaca, we are both happy and *content* to just enjoy the "free" and quiet scenery of God's creation rather than schlepping through touristy venues with costly entrance fees and noisy crowds, so simply taking a free scenic drive together is *fun* for us.

4. I used to take books on vaca and now I take my Kindle instead and enjoy having quiet time to read in the evening while Steve uses his iPad. No cost but the books which I download ahead of time. And sitting on a B&B front porch is simply sublime too!

5. Since we don't ski or boat or anything like that while on vacations, we don't spend money on lots of travel/entertainment "gear" either like skis, life-jackets, etc.

6. We usually take our own light healthy snacks and bottled water from home which I prep in our room before we go, avoiding more expensive snacks when out touring.

7. We rest. It's free! We take afternoon naps to rejuvenate and since we don't nap at home, this is a real treat when we're on vaca.

8. We usually eat lunch out vs. dinner as the lunch menu is often the same or similar to dinner, for less. We set an eating out budget \$ amount by day before we leave home to account for one meal out per day, and we prefer that most of the meals be at nice sit-down places vs. chains and we don't eat fast food unless there's no other choice, and we usually *plan ahead to avoid it*. If we are hungry in the evening, a snack and cold drink is enough, and with a fridge in our room, it's *easy*. We usually purposely eat one really nice/romantic dinner out once on a trip and we order whatever we want for that celebratory vacation dinner, not worrying about the price really. It's our "vaca wildcard!" And we like to dress up at least a little for that meal too.

9. We like meandering in and out of little shops and art galleries in small charming towns and just stopping for a sorbet or coffee as we go. If we buy anything in the stores, it's usually an inexpensive art piece/painting to remind us of our trip once we get home. Or we buy each other a small gift to give in the future. The other day when cleaning out my jewelry box I found a note from my hubby with a pair of earrings that said, "*Just a little something to remember our trip to Palm Springs. Love, Steve.*" How fun and lovely to find years later!

10. Most of our trips are by car now, but in the past we have taken air travel trips. To save on airfare we plan ahead and we use our Visa credit card to book the flight so we gain points on our credit card, but we don't do any credit card churning or such to get "free trips." (Ugh!) The rebate money we get back on the credit card because of earning points gets deposited in our travel fund for future trips.

11. When we rent a car, my husband is a member of the National Emerald Club which gives a discount and allows him to choose the car we like. We don't buy car insurance extra at the rental agency anymore as it's covered in our personal car policy now, so that saves us money too.

12. When we are planning a trip, I make sure I have the right travel “supplies” on hand and I especially watch for sales before the trip too.

13. We buy our snack bars and nut snacks etc. in bulk at Costco ahead of time which saves money, and we keep a small cooler for drinks in the car and we load it with water bottles from Costco before we go.

14. On car trips, we have a large picnic bag with dishes, a cutting board, etc. so we can stop and eat anytime on a pull-over picnic area if we want to instead of dining out. We keep melamine trays in our cars all the time so it’s easy to have a laptop “table” at the ready. And we always have wet wipes in large supply too. We wash the dishes in our lodging sink and it’s really no big thing to do that.

15. We start every trip with my travel budget form and use it to plan ahead for costs. So say if we think we want to go to Hawaii, we would go down the form and figure out how much we have to save up in advance. Or, we might decide it’s *not* in our budget for that big of a trip right now and choose something closer and less costly nearer to home.

16. We love driving day trips! They are such a great way to feel like you have had a longer vacation for so little money – gas and snacks and lunch out. My husband says some people call day trips “within a tank of gas trips” so you don’t have to stop and get gas! We love to just explore and meander on a day trip. Some are planned and some we just hit the open road and go.

17. Another fun way to dollarwise travel is to go “resorting.” We live in Arizona now and we have had a great time doing this. Have lunch, usually by a beautiful pool, enjoy the lobby, learn history, walk the gorgeous landscaped grounds. It’s wonderful and such an economical way to entertain yourself.

18. Certain museums etc. offer discounts on certain days of the month so if we are there at that time, we take advantage of that.

19. Another way we save money on travel is to stay fewer days than we might *prefer* and that saves money on more food costs for more days etc. too. *Yet we still got to go!*

I hope you enjoyed our dollarwise travel tips and please sign up to receive my free lifestyle tips newsletter and blog posts at KathrynBechen.com.

Kathryn ☺