

Vacation Budgeting



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When debt is the problem, we are the solution.

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Congratulations on taking this important step to a brighter financial future. Consolidated Credit Counseling Services of Canada, Inc. has been helping Canadians across the country solve their credit and debt problems for years.

Our Educational Team has created over twenty-five publications to help you improve your personal finances. By logging onto www.consolidatedcredit.ca you can access all of our publications free of charge. We have tools to help you become debt free, use your money wisely, plan for the future, and build wealth. The topics Consolidated Credit Counseling Services of Canada addresses range from identity theft to building a better credit rating; from how to buy a home to paying for university. On our website you will also find interactive tools that allow you to calculate your debt and see how much it is costing you.

We are dedicated to personal financial literacy and providing a debt-free life for Canadians. If you are overburdened by high interest rate credit card debt, then I invite you to speak with one of our trained counsellors free of charge by calling 1-800-656-4079 for free professional advice.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Schwartz
Executive Director

Consolidated Credit Counseling Services of Canada, Inc.

Vacation Budgeting

"According to the Tourism Industry Association of Canada, Canadians travelling to destinations outside Canada spent \$5.2 billion in the summer of 2017 (May-September) alone."

Everyone needs a break now and then. But when your holiday leaves you with a stack of bills you can't pay, it's hardly relaxing! This guide is designed to help you plan a holiday that will leave you great memories, not excessive debt.

What Do You Really Want?

First, decide what kind of holiday you really want. Do you prefer to sightsee as much as possible or would you rather have a few days of doing as little as possible on your days off? Take the time to plan your itinerary so you get the most out of your time away and enjoy every minute.

Plan for Savings

Plan in advance so you'll have time to save money for your trip. The better you plan your budget, the better your vacation. You will find our vacation planning worksheet at the end of this guide. Use it to help you develop your vacation spending plan.

If you have kids, make sure they have an opportunity to participate in the planning. Together, you can research destinations and costs. Set target goals for the amount you'd like to spend per day for activities, souvenirs, etc. and total your potential expenses for the trip. Kids may help look for discount coupons and internet specials, and together you can compare the cost and benefit of each aspect of the vacation.

Once you have a clear idea of what you plan to spend, start a vacation savings fund and set aside a specific amount each month or each paycheque. A small amount can go a long way if you plan carefully.

Membership clubs like CAA, Costco Voyages, and Rewards Canada can often save you money on hotel stays, car rentals and complete vacations. The membership fee for one of these clubs is usually offset by the savings you'll achieve.

Consider off-peak travel if possible. Go to a popular winter destination in the summer, or vice versa. If your schedule allows it, avoid traveling during school breaks or holidays. Not only will you likely save money, but your destination will be less crowded and you'll likely get better service and accommodations.

Many Canadian travelers claim shopping to be their first priority.

If shopping is your idea of recreation, create a separate shopping budget and research the types of stores and items you're hoping to find ahead of time. Otherwise your "bargains" may end up being very expensive once you figure in the other costs of your trip.

Lodging

Shop online for discount accommodations, but don't stop there. Call the hotel or resort directly to ask about discounts. Some websites offer discounts you can't get elsewhere, but be careful for offers that are "too good to be true." Check their refund policies in case you aren't satisfied. Only deal with reputable companies with secure websites.

A suite-type hotel or vacation condominium that includes a kitchen can also save money on meals and snacks. When vacationing with children, this can be a big savings.

A home swap can be an affordable way to visit another city or even international locations. A family stays in your home while you stay in theirs. It can be much cheaper than paying for hotel rooms, and you'll often get to know your destination in a way that tourists don't. There are many home exchange networks listed on the Internet, so choose carefully. One of the more established sites is www.ca.intervac-homeexchange.com. To learn more, pick up *Home Exchange Vacationing: Your Guide to Free Accommodations* by Bill and Mary Barbour.

Have fun and do a good deed when you take a "volunteer vacation." Make no mistake about it – on most of these trips you'll be put to work. But with opportunities such as a rainforest expedition in Costa Rica or elephant conservation in Namibia, there is something for just about any interest. Some trips will be relatively inexpensive, but the accommodations won't be luxurious, which suits some travelers just fine. Others are pricier and will be more like visiting a resort.

Stay at a National Park (www.pc.gc.ca). There are beautiful parks all across the country, many at reasonable prices. Some are more rustic and will require a tent or camper, while others offer cabins and lodges. The most popular destinations fill up fast, so search early for your ideal spot.

Hostels are an inexpensive alternative for the more adventuresome. Rooms are typically dormitory-style and the bathrooms are communal but the cost is low.

Visit www.backpackers.ca to learn more about hostels in Canada or www.hihostels.ca for information on international hostels.

When shopping for accommodations, look for opportunities to redeem and accumulate points or rewards. Many hotels and airlines have points programs. Most are very beneficial to travelers and offer special discounts and programs throughout the year.

Air Travel

If you have frequent flier miles, figure out whether it is worth it to cash them in for a ticket. A frequent flier mile is said to be worth about 1-2 cents, so do the math. Most programs require you use 25,000 miles for a basic restricted ticket. That means if you can purchase a fare for less than \$250 -- \$500, you may be better off buying a ticket and saving the miles for a more expensive route. However, restrictions and fewer seats for reward miles are making it more and more difficult to use your miles on some airlines, so in some cases, it is better just to cash them in when you can.

Travelzoo.ca can be useful for comparing fares because they use several major booking engines, such as Travelocity.ca and Expedia.ca. Other websites, called “aggregators” feature discounted fares and may not charge a booking fee. Visit www.tripsavvy.com for a current list of aggregators.

Keep in mind that some airlines, like Southwest, only allow you to search fares and book tickets directly on their websites. One way to find cheaper airlines is to go to the website of the airport you plan to depart from and look at their list of airlines to see if there are other discount airlines that may offer a better deal.

Also, when shopping online, compare your discount prices to those on the airline’s website. You may be able to book a more direct flight through the airline with a comparable price.

Try an off-the-beaten path airport if your schedule is flexible. For example, Ottawa travelers may find it cheaper to fly out of Montreal which is just over an hour’s drive. If you are in Toronto, flying out of Buffalo, NY may be a better bet.

Consolidators can save you money on flexible travel. These companies offer very cheap seats, generally to international destinations, although they offer some domestic options as well.

They sell last-minute seats that would have otherwise gone unsold. You must be flexible with your dates and times, but if you are, there are real bargains to be had. www.skyscanner.ca and www.ca.kayak.com are a couple of consolidators worth checking out.

Rental Cars

If you must rent a car in your destination, shop carefully. A low rate of \$19 a day, for example, can easily end up costing \$50 or more a day if you are not careful! Here are some money-saving tips:

Determine which size car you really need and do not pay for a more expensive one. An upgrade of “just a few dollars a day” will add up – and you will likely spend more in fuel with a larger car.

Ask about taxes and fees when shopping for an auto rental. These add significantly to the cost. Also ask about airport fees, and whether a fee will be charged if you have a second driver. Don’t allow anyone else to drive the car (including your spouse) unless you clear it with the rental agency.

Check with your auto insurance company ahead of time to find out what coverage you have when you rent a car, and to decide what you need to purchase. Check your credit cards, since many of them also offer a collision damage waiver that will cover deductibles, if you use that card to pay for the vehicle.

Consider fuel costs carefully. Some rental places will encourage you to purchase a tank of fuel ahead of time at a discounted cost. But you will pay for any fuel you don’t use. Similarly, if you don’t buy fuel in advance and return the car without a full tank, you’ll usually pay a hefty price for the rental company to refill the car. Plan accordingly and ask about gas stations closest to the return area. Another tip: Make sure the tank is full before you take the car.

Traveler's Beware!"Too good to be true" deals may be just that. Always check out a company you don't know, and use your credit card to make the reservation for additional protection. Get refund or cancellation policies in writing, and consider buying travel insurance for extra protection. Restrictions apply to travel insurance policies, so read the fine print.

More Money-Saving Tips

If you are traveling overseas, call your credit card companies in advance to find out what fees they charge for overseas purchases. While a 1% fee for overseas purchases is common, some issuers will charge as much as 4%.

Always check the cost of the individual components of a vacation package against the package price, if possible. One may be cheaper than the other, depending on the destination and time of year.

Give your kids an allowance for souvenirs, snacks, etc. and tell them they have to stick to it.

If you travel to a specific city in the U.S on a regular basis for several days or more, buy an Entertainment Book for that city at www.entertainment.com. You'll get a whole book full of discount coupons for restaurants, entertainment and more.

Bring pre-packaged snacks like granola bars, trail mix, jerky, gum, or bottles of water. These items are much more expensive in hotels and airports. If you're driving, pack a small cooler for keeping beverages and snacks handy.

Don't forget to budget for gratuities. Examples include hotel housekeepers (\$2 -\$5/day), bellmen (\$5-\$10 for delivering luggage to room) airport skycaps (\$1/bag), cab drivers (15%), wait staff (15-20%), tour guides (\$1-\$2/day). Tipping on cruises can really add up, so plan ahead! Visit www.whototip.net for guidelines.

Get a cheap long distance phone card before you travel and use it! Avoid hotel phones, which can charge outrageous long distance rates. If you will use your cell phone when you travel, find out whether roaming charges will apply. If you plan to get online at your hotel or on a cruise ship make sure you understand what it will cost you.

More Resources

Budget Travel Advice:
www.tripadvisor.ca

Traveling Within Canada: www.trailcanada.com

Let's Go Travel guides are written for "youthful independent" travelers, and contain lots of off-the-beaten path tips:
www.letsgo.com

Money Saving Travel Topics:
www.lonelyplanet.com offers numerous articles on money-saving travel topics.

Frommer's Guides are well-known for their "Dollar A Day" and "Free and Dirt Cheap" destination guides. www.Frommers.com

Money Saving Tips for Cruises:
www.cruises.ca gives detailed advice for saving money on cruises.

For a Free Consultation with a
Trained Credit Counsellor
call 1-800-656-4079
or visit
www.ConsolidatedCredit.ca

Vacation Spending Planner

| Transportation | Cost per person/ per day | Estimated Total Cost | Total Spent |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Rental Car | | | |
| Airfare | | | |
| Gasoline (driving) | | | |
| Tolls | | | |
| Parking | | | |
| | | | |
| Lodging | | | |
| Tips | | | |
| | | | |
| Food | | | |
| Restaurants | | | |
| Snacks | | | |
| Drinks | | | |
| | | | |
| Activities | | | |
| Green Fees/Lift Tickets, Etc. | | | |
| Admission tickets | | | |
| Sightseeing excursions | | | |
| | | | |
| Vacation Package or Cruise | | | |
| | | | |
| Other: | | | |
| Misc. Tips | | | |
| Travel Insurance | | | |
| Shopping | | | |
| Souvenirs | | | |
| Film/Cameras | | | |
| Photo developing | | | |

About Consolidated Credit Counseling Services of Canada, Inc.

Consolidated Credit Counseling Services of Canada is a consumer oriented, non-profit, registered charity. We are an industry leader in providing credit counselling and debt management services. Our mission is to assist individuals and families in ending financial crises and to help them solve money management problems through education, motivation, and professional counselling. Our organization is funded primarily through voluntary contributions from participating creditors. Our programs are designed to save our clients money and liquidate debts at an excellent rate.

We are dedicated to empowering consumers through educational programs that will influence them to refrain from overspending and abusing credit cards, as well as to encourage them to save and invest. Regardless of whether your financial problems are due to the purchase of a new home, birth of a child, major illness, or any other circumstance, we can help.

* If you are headed for a debt disaster visit www.ConsolidatedCredit.ca or call 1-800-656-4079 for free professional advice by a Trained counsellor.

