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How to Save on Fabulous Winter Vacations

Are January's gray skies and dreary days getting you down? A winter vacation is the perfect antidote for the winter blues. Putting aside the workday grind and slipping away from everyday responsibilities for a long weekend or, better yet, a relaxing week or two, is rejuvenating. Whether you like to play in the snow or frolic on the beach, you'll find plenty of fun at these North American winter vacation hotspots:

- Paradise Island, Bahamas
- Lake Tahoe
- Playa del Carmen, Mexico
- San Diego, California
- Maui, Hawaii
- Steamboat Springs, Colorado
- Wisconsin Dells
- Captiva Island, Florida
- Showshoe Mountain, West Virginia
- Chena Hot Springs, Alaska

Internet travel sites [<http://www.couponcactus.com/category/Travel-Coupons>] offer vacation opportunities for every interest and every budget, but sifting through the endless number of choices can be a bit daunting. To whittle vacation planning down to size, travel experts recommend following five easy steps:

1. Determine your vacation budget.
2. Decide whether you want to go.
3. Figure out when you can get away and for how long.
4. Start checking online travel sites for coupons and special deals.
5. Book your reservations online to get the best prices and start packing!

The easiest way to plan a vacation is to let someone else do it for you. Internet sites like Apple Vacations, Trip Mama and Spirit Vacations offer travel packages to popular vacation resorts all over the world. Volume business allows these sites to offer heavily discounted package deals. You pick the date, place and price (dependent on hotel selection from budget to luxury); and they handle all the travel arrangements, including air fare, hotel [<http://www.couponcactus.com/category/Hotel-Coupons>] and ground transportation. An onsite travel concierge is usually provided to assist vacationers during their stay.

If you prefer to handle your own travel arrangements, many online travel discounters allow you to create your own travel packages. These travel sites let you book your flight, hotel and car rental [<http://www.couponcactus.com/category/Rental-Car-Coupons>] separately but offer extra savings if you book them together as a package. On many sites you can add discounted tickets to popular area attractions [<http://www.couponcactus.com/category/Tourism-&-Attractions-Coupons>] to your package. If you'll be staying with friends and only need airline tickets [<http://www.couponcactus.com/category/Airline-Ticket-Coupons>], you'll still find the cheapest prices online.

With dozens of online travel discounters available, comparing prices can be a time-consuming chore. To save time, start your search on Orbitz or Travelocity. Both online travel sites allow you to enter your travel information once, then quickly access and compare prices on multiple discount travel sites without hopping

from site to site. If your travel plans are flexible, consider these additional tips for maximizing your savings:

- Travel mid-week. Airline rates to vacation hot spots are generally cheaper from Tuesday to Thursday.
- Name your own price on Priceline. On this travel auction site, you set basic travel parameters (date, destination, hotel brand and number of rooms) and name your price. Priceline quickly tells you whether your bid has been accepted. The only drawback is that once you submit your bid, you're locked in. You won't be told your flight times, airline carrier or hotel location until *after* your bid is accepted. Priceline has begun offering pre-priced travel deals, but the discounts aren't as deep.
- Take advantage of last-minute internet travel deals offered by airlines, hotels and resorts. To fill vacancies, travel venues often offer huge discounts for those who can travel on the spur of the moment. Check internet travel discounters for special weekly deals.
- Search internet coupon sites for big savings on everything from air travel, hotel rooms and rental cars to local attractions, gear rental and restaurants.