

Traveling to Boston? Eight tips to save you a boatload of cash.

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By John Williams

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You may be ready for your trip to Boston, but is your bank account? As one of the most expensive cities in the country, Boston can quickly deplete your vacation funds. The average hotel cost per night in 2004 according to the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau is \$187. Now imagine all your other expenses added on top of that.

Here's some ways to hold on to that cash:

1. Consider booking a hotel just outside the city.

Brookline and Cambridge are two nice cities that come to mind. You can easily hop on the "T" for a short ride and take it into Boston and back each day. You can save a large chunk of change depending on how long you are staying on your trip.

2. Check out the prices of flights arriving into Providence.

It is only a 50-minute bus ride to Boston. Southwest Airlines, which can offer significantly lower rates, does not fly directly into Boston so what you'll lose in convenience, you'll gain in savings.

3. Book a package deal.

Websites such as Orbitz.com, Hotels.com, Expedia.com, and Travelocity.com all offer packages that will save you money by purchasing air and hotel together. You may even want to check directly with the hotel to see if they are offering a lower rate

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than advertised online.

4. Stay at a local B&B or rent a furnished apartment.

Normally, they end up being cheaper and give you a better feel of what living in Boston is really like. Two companies that offer many prime Boston locations are The Bed and Breakfast Agency of Boston (<http://www.boston-bnbagency.com/>) and The Bed and Breakfast Associates Bay Colony (<http://www.bnbboston.com/>).

5. Ride the MBTA (also known as the "T").

This is the subway and bus system that covers all of Boston. Driving and parking in Boston can be frustrating and expensive. If you plan on seeing many sights, you can pick up a visitor pass for a flat fee of \$7.50 for one day, \$18 for three days, or \$35 for seven days. Most rides are \$1.25 otherwise.

6. Buy a Boston CityPass (<http://www.citypass.com/>).

This allows you to see six of Boston's most famous attractions for 50% off the price and avoid the ticket lines. You can purchase this pass online or at the first attraction you visit for \$36.75 for adults and \$25.50 for youths. These include the Museum of Science, New England Aquarium, Skywalk Observatory, Museum of Fine Arts, Harvard Museum of Natural History, and the JFK Library & Museum.

7. Spend time at the free attractions.

You can enjoy the street performers and browse the shops at Quincy Market. Go for a walk on the Freedom Trail. Spend time in Boston Common, the oldest US park. Ride its famous swan boats for under three dollars. Go to the Harvard University Art Museums on Saturdays from 10 AM to 12 Noon to receive free admission. Other museums offer specials as well so check their websites.

8. Use coupons.

Check with your travel company or with the hotel you are staying with for specials and coupons. When I booked my trip to Las Vegas through Expedia.com, I was given a booklet at my hotel with numerous discounts throughout the city. If you are a member of AAA, give them a call to see what deals they offer. You can even

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check an attraction's main website.

Follow these tips above and you can save significantly on your upcoming trip to Boston. Enjoy!

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Playing Your Cards Right — Tips for Traveling with Credit Cards

By Gail Corwin

Using credit cards while traveling is a good idea for a number of reasons: You have a record of your expenditures for record-keeping and tax purposes (especially important if you travel for business) You may get a better exchange rate when obtaining foreign currency when using your credit card. Credit card companies can refund disputed charges and may offer extra guarantees, special deals or warranties. Your liability in the case of a stolen credit card is limited to \$50

But, traveling these days is often a juggling act of luggage, boarding passes, identification cards, passports and a gauntlet of security measures. These identification acrobatics can leave you distracted and even a little bit addled, perhaps putting you more at risk of being targeted by an enterprising pickpocket or purse snatcher.

And, even though your liability is limited, costs can quickly add up if multiple cards are involved. Factor in the hassle and increased risk of identity theft, and it is apparent a few preemptive measures can save you from a boatload of heartache.

Consider the following tips as guidelines to traveling safely and affordably with your credit cards....

Plan Ahead:

Anytime you travel you should make photo copies of all of your credit cards airline tickets and documents, both front and back. You should leave these photocopies with a friend or family member.

Be aware that if you make copies of your cards and documents to take with you, you may be giving thieves another opportunity to rip off your personal information. Consider blacking out details such as expiration dates, verification codes and social security numbers.

If you decide not to carry photocopies of your credit cards, be sure to have the card cancellation numbers from the backs of the cards written down and stashed in your luggage.

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Leave a Paper Trail:

Save receipts and keep track of the places you used your card. Make sure receipts are stored in a safe place so they can be checked against your credit card statement to ensure unauthorized charges have not been made and/or gone unnoticed.

His & Hers:

When traveling with other family members, even spouses, bring different credit cards that are on separate accounts. When a card is lost or stolen and must be cancelled, all cards on the account are cancelled as well. Having at least two cards from separate accounts will prevent the situation from leaving you stranded.

Lighten Up:

Carry only the personal information absolutely necessary for vacation, such as a passport or driver's license. The less personal information you have, the better off you will be if your purse or wallet is stolen.

When traveling by air, always keep copies of important documents in a separate part of your luggage, such as a carry-on bag.

Keep cards on your person. Most travel stores carry small bags that you can keep cards, cash, and other items you will need to access while out and about. Consider a money belt or security wallet.

Look out for fees:

When traveling abroad and using a credit card, watch out for the conversion fee that many banks levy to convert charges in foreign currencies to dollars, generally 1% of the purchase amount. Some banks charge a fee and some don't so, if you have several cards, it's worth checking with the issuers to see which one has the best deal. Even with the conversion charge, many times ATM machines will have the best possible exchange rates and the lowest fees.

With proper planning, credit cards are a convenient, secure and cost-effective means of payment when traveling. Just keep these tips in mind, and the next time you're balancing on one foot at the security gate, you'll be glad you did.

Gail Corwin is a successful author and publisher of

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online resource for luggage and travel accessories, travel related information, timely articles and tips.

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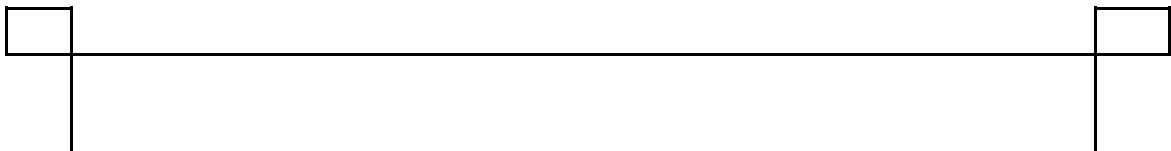
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