



Advance planning pays off for travellers

By Kim Darrell, General Manager, Meyer-Franklin Travel

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Bermudians love to travel, and although many people are approaching 2010 with a budget-conscious attitude, travel—for many of us—is considered a necessary luxury. Fortunately, with a few helpful tips, travel plans don't need to be put aside despite today's economy. In fact, there are great opportunities to save on even the most popular travel destinations.

My number one piece of advice for anyone planning a trip is to plan ahead. January and February are the best times to book travel; these months feature deals for the entire year, and the sooner you book, the more likely you are to get the trip you want at a good price. Most of us make decisions about what trips we will take for the year at this time, so why not book now and save money?

For instance, if you know you are heading to New York City in November to shop for Christmas, book now. Chances are that great deals at top hotels will be available, sometimes adding up to hundreds of dollars in savings. If you wait until even the summer, many of those discounts will be gone. This year, even popular destinations like Las Vegas and Disney are offering great hotel packages. Many hotels don't require deposits and if your plans change unexpectedly, many accept cancellations within days of your arrival.

You'll also save on airfares by planning ahead. We are already seeing seat sales for most airlines this month, and if you know your travel dates you can take advantage of these discounts.

If you are arranging a special trip for a group of family or friends, you can save significantly by planning ahead. When working with cruise lines, groups requiring eight or more cabins can take advantage of special group rates; for air travel a minimum of 10 people can cash in on group discounts. Advance planning can guarantee a total cost per person so everyone knows ahead of time what they will be paying. Payment plans are even available through your travel agent so the cost can be spread out across the months prior to departure, rather than in one large sum.

Cruises and tours can cater to every taste and interest. When you know your group's requirements you can book as far as a year in advance, which can make planning much more enjoyable. And this year cruise and tour companies are offering great discounts to fill spots that might otherwise be left empty. Our travel agents know your best options and can help you to get what you want.



Don't have a specific destination, or even a date, in mind? Less popular destinations, shorter stays and avoiding weekends are all ways to cut costs. If you are flexible with timing, take advantage of off-peak rates. But, of course, plan ahead. Use the Vacation Finder function on our web site at www.meyer-franklintravel.bm to do your research, compare options and costs. This is also an opportunity to work with a travel agent to find deals for places you might not consider yourself, for an exciting and economical travel experience.

Your travel agent will also ensure that you have all the information you need, including visa requirements, the newest security restrictions and other surprises that might cost you more money during your trip if you are not prepared.

Once you're booked, relax knowing that you have a great trip to look forward to and got it for the best price possible.

To book your travel plans for 2010, call Meyer-Franklin Travel on 295-4176. We are proud to be named Top Travel Agency by Bermudian Business in recognition of our dedication to excellent customer service. www.meyer-franklintravel.bm.