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Save Money on Your Vacation

Are you planning to take a family vacation this summer? If so, it could become a pricey proposition. For those Americans with summer vacation plans, 41 percent expect to pay an average of \$3,000 for transportation, lodging, meals, activities, entertainment and pet care, according to a new survey conducted for the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants by Harris Poll. The New Jersey Society of CPAs (NJSCPA) offers some tips on how you can set a budget for and hold down the cost of a family trip while still having an enjoyable break:

Check Out Prices Ahead of Time

There are many online options to help you compare and minimize hotel and airfare spending, but it can be hard to budget when you're not sure how much your everyday needs will cost. To solve that problem, search online for local restaurants that appeal to you and check out the menus to get a sense of meal prices. Visit the sites of museums or any other type of attractions you plan to visit to learn about entrance fees. Don't forget, too, that you may need to rent a car or take taxis or public transportation to get around. Other expenses may include hotel Internet charges, ATM fees and currency exchange costs if you travel abroad. You'll probably find yourself buying at least a couple of souvenirs to remember your trip, so add those to your budget as well.

Read the Fine Print

Are you planning to visit a resort or take a cruise? While you may expect many amenities to be included, it's smart to find out ahead of time what will cost extra. Hotels may charge for daily parking, for use of the pool or other facilities, or for renting bicycles, jet skis or other water craft. On a cruise, there may be added charges for alcoholic or other beverages and even for dining in certain on-board restaurants. Trips outside of your resort or on-shore cruise excursions may also cost extra, and you'll probably have to ante up a little more for massages or other spa services.

Consider Ways to Cut Costs

Once you learn what expenses to expect, how can you keep a lid on them? If your hotel does charge a daily Internet fee, try to plan your usage so that you don't need to get online as often, or search for cafes or other locations with free wireless. If you're flying, find out about baggage or other added fees and try to pack light to avoid them. To lower meal costs, seek out a hotel that offers free breakfast, cocktail hour or other great meal deals.

Get Settled

If you'll be away for a week or more, check out online sites that specialize in short-term apartment rentals. You may find accommodations that are no more expensive than a hotel, but you will be able to make yourself some morning coffee, keep a stash of water bottles or soda, and whip up a quick meal instead of paying for a restaurant.

Think About a “Staycation”

The most effective way to save money is to have some fun right in your own backyard. If you're dreaming of a vacation that will bring the family together, could you have the same fun by spending the day at a local amusement park or taking a day trip to the beach or a state park? If your budget is tight, remember that it may be possible to get a break without leaving home.

Turn to Shapiro Financial Security Group, Inc.

No matter what type of financial questions you're considering, remember that we can help. We can offer the insights and advice you need to make the best decisions.

Please call the Shapiro Financial Security Group at 732-739-8991 for more information on this topic or for assistance with any of your financial concerns.