

BEST TRAVEL DEALS IN THIS TROUBLED ECONOMY

Mark Orwoll, senior consulting editor of Travel + Leisure magazine (www.travelandleisure.com) outlined several on The Early Show on Friday, March 20, 2009, to get the most bang for your buck:

Extreme Airfares

What is latest news on airfare?

- Travelocity, an online booking service, estimates that airfares for the 100 most popular domestic and international routes have fallen to 24-month lows and are 40% lower than last June, when they peaked.

*It is best to book in advance, but some last minute deals are available.

*Now is a great time to look and book for Spring/Summer.

* Be flexible with your travel dates to find the lowest fares but don't hold out for better deals.

These are the best we've seen in decades.

What is the reason behind these incredible deals?

- Lower gas prices mean the airlines can afford to lower their prices

- Lower demand means that airlines are desperate to fill seats on their planes and have reason to tempt consumers with deals.

DEALS

Cruise Deals

*4-Night Bahamas Cruise from \$149 on NCL

*Celebrity Cruises - Exclusive Offer: Receive \$50 to \$300 Onboard Credit if you book a select sailing by March 22 - Average Daily Price is around \$100 per night, per person

Flights

Europe

*Flights to Europe are cheaper than they have ever been

*Open Skies agreement has cleared the way for more flights between the US and Europe and carriers are taking advantage of this.

*Newark to Dublin on Continental for around \$303 round trip

*Fly to Spain this fall from \$159/each way - It's hot in Spain. Avoid the summer crowds and go in the fall when temperatures drop. Air Europa, Spain's second largest airline, is offering sale fares this fall from October 29 through December 13. The airline flies nonstop between New York's JFK and Madrid, but can get you to 43 other cities from there.

US

United - Chicago to LA starting at \$219 roundtrip

Short Hops - Atlanta to Charlotte \$39 each way

Vacation Deals

*Caribbean beachfront resorts from \$125 - Divi Resorts have properties on Aruba, St. Croix, Barbados, Bonaire, and St. Maarten, all beachfront, all casual, and chock-a-block with activities. The resort brand is cutting their 2009 prices by up to 60% to help you get to the beach and into the water.

*Spring ski + spa package from Jackson Hole's Snake River Lodge from \$212 a night (normally \$345 a night) - What You Get

The Tram-tastic Ski Package includes: 4 nights' accommodations, 3 full-day ski passes for two, \$100 spa credit per person, Daily breakfast

*European Hotel - \$144 a night at the London Bridge Hotel (normally \$375 a night)

Do you have some tips for bargain hunters?

1. Book directly with the airline.

*Many discount airlines like Southwest in the USA, easyJet in Europe don't sell their seats through all travel agencies or third party websites. You may have to book with these airlines directly.

2. Do your online research

* Predict the ideal moment to buy a ticket farecast.com.

*[Farecast.com](http://farecast.com) uses historic pricing data to anticipate whether or not a fare is likely to fluctuate in the next week, even providing you with a rating.

Get your money back if a fare drops

*yapta.com - If you've booked a flight directly through an airline website, [Yapta](http://Yapta.com) will monitor the fare, alert you if the price drops, and instruct you how to get a refund from the airline for the difference (yes, it's often possible).

*Also, kayak.com & sidestep.com - These two aggregators (now both owned by Kayak) are still the ultimate source for deals on airfare, hotels, and car rentals.

3. Best Time to Book

*To increase your chance of getting a good price on your next flight, keep in mind that carriers must release new airfares to a central clearinghouse (called the Airline Tariff Publishing Company) at certain hours; on weekdays, the best times to look for new fares are just after 2 p.m., 4:30 p.m., and midnight. T+L Tip: Tickets that were reserved but never paid for usually appear after midnight, so the selection is especially rich then. On weekends, fares are updated just once a day, around 5 p.m.