Essential Tips For Planning A Family Vacation On A Budget



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Planning a family vacation takes time, especially if you have to take multiple schedules and unique needs into consideration. It also takes some budgeting skills, since a vacation can quickly become costly even when you’re being careful with money. That’s why it’s important to start preparing as early as possible and to stay organized while you plan so that nothing gets overlooked. The good news is that these days, there are tons of [apps](https://matadornetwork.com/read/9-best-budgeting-apps-travelers/) and websites that can help you stay on track even while you’re away from home, so don’t be afraid to use a little technology.

You’ll also want to take steps to ensure that your children will be happy, safe, healthy, and stimulated during your trip; believe it or not, this *can* be done on a budget. Working some educational activities and sights into the journey will allow everyone to learn something new over the summer regardless of age, and there are many options around the country, from museums to historic sites. You can also get the kids [involved in the planning](https://www.travelingmom.com/travel-tips/kids-help-plan-vacation/), which will help them get excited about the trip.

Here are some essential tips to help get you started.

**Utilize the second-hand economy**

The second-hand economy has many benefits in varying capacities. First, you save money on the items you need; second, the seller earns money on items they no longer want; and finally, the environment benefits from having fewer items ending up in landfills, which is a contributor to climate change. When you’re buying clothing, accessories, and toys for the trip, look at thrift stores, yard and garage sales, and [second-hand apps](https://smallbiztrends.com/2018/05/best-app-to-sell-stuff-locally.html) to find the things you need. Not only will you be saving money, you’ll be doing your part to remain eco-friendly.

**Make it educational**

While theme parks and big attractions are fun ways to spend time during a vacation, they can be pretty costly. Break up the activities over the course of your trip by adding in some [educational sightseeing](https://www.earlychildhoodeducationzone.com/best-educational-family-vacation-ideas/), which is typically much less expensive. Tours of historical homes and landmarks, national parks, museums, and botanical gardens are much more budget-friendly than the bigger attractions and are usually a lot less crowded, and they’ll give your kids the opportunity to learn something new no matter how old they are. Have some downtime but are unsure of where to go? Look for virtual art museum tours, like [these](https://www.bookshark.com/blog/virtual-art-museums/) recommendations from BookShark, that your child can “walk through” on their tablet or other device.

**Prepare for downtime**

After an exhausting day of sightseeing and running around, your kids are likely going to need to relax during the evening. This may be the perfect time to break out a tablet so they can watch their favorite movie, cartoon, or TV show. Some tablets can be pricey, but there are budget-friendly options. For example, you can purchase the iPad 10.2 for around $19/month, and you’ll also [get a year](https://www.verizonwireless.com/tablets/apple-ipad-10-2/) of Apple TV, which has many shows and movies available. Or the Lenovo Tab 4 8 is an affordable, kid-friendly tablet with solid battery life that can be purchased for [under $130](https://www.pcmag.com/review/356426/lenovo-tab-4-8). Whichever tablet you choose, by giving your kids a little downtime, they’ll be well-prepared for the next day’s activities.

**Plan your meals**

Eating while you’re on vacation can get expensive when the whole family is together, so it’s important to plan your meals, right down to the snacks. Look online for coupons and discounts specifically for restaurants in the area you’ll be in, pack healthy snacks that everyone can eat in a cooler, and if possible, book a [hotel room](https://www.gobankingrates.com/saving-money/hotels/book-hotel-less-money/) or condo that has a small kitchen area. Vacation rental homes are a perfect choice for families, because they offer space to keep groceries and [cook your own meals](https://www.familyfuncanada.com/how-to-save-money-eating-out-on-vacation/). Keep in mind that if you’ll be in one place for most of the day--such as a theme park or [the beach](https://diettogo.com/blog/10-beach-snacks-travel-well)--you’ll want to make sure you can bring some snacks and water with you.

**Go during the off-season**

For many of the world’s more touristy areas, there are certain weeks and months that are busier than others. Do some research on the area you’re interested in so you can see when their peak season is, and then try to schedule your vacation around it. Not only will the area be less crowded, you’re more likely to find [discounted rates](https://lifehacker.com/how-to-travel-in-the-off-season-for-great-deals-1677147181) and deals on everything from food to lodging. If you’re limited to a summer vacation, you may still be able to find a deal during a week that’s slower than average, since not all families can get away at the same time due to the differences in school ending dates.

Planning a family vacation on a budget takes some time and careful thought, but with a little creativity and planning, you can ensure that you and your loved ones have a great time. Stay organized as much as possible, and remember to plan for the journey itself as well as the return trip.