

# Men'sHealth

## 8 Holiday Travel Hacks

Stealthy ways to hit the skies—for cheap

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Pack your bags—you're on your way to becoming a better man. According to new research from Northwestern University, **a stamp-filled passport will make you a more trusting person**, especially if you venture out to places unlike your home.

That's good advice: Span the globe, improve your character. But during the travel-crazy holiday season, finding a reasonable flight is easier said than done.

How can you schedule a last-minute trip without beginning 2014 in the red? By getting a little crafty. Here are eight sneaky holiday travel hacks:

**1. Use your funds wisely.** Why pay triple the normal fare for Vegas—\$865 from New York City right now, according to **Kayak**—when it costs almost the same to celebrate the New Year in party-loving Istanbul (\$920), which boasts airfare that's at least 60 percent cheaper than during the summer? For something closer to home, look into Canada.

Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal are all especially traveler-friendly this time of year. And according to Kayak data, you can save almost 25 percent by booking a shorter—3- to 5-day—international itinerary centered around Christmas or New Year’s Eve. Just avoid flying on January 1, since prices can jump 33 percent above average.

**2. Outsmart the airlines.** Since airlines update their inventory and prices overnight, Monday and Tuesday mornings tend to show the lowest fares. “You might even consider checking for flights in the middle of the night as airlines continue to re-price tickets until they are sold out,” says David Donner Chait, co-founder of [Travefy](#), a site that helps organize group travel. When searching on Kayak, pay attention to the price-forecasting widget that uses an algorithm to predict fare prices in the next seven days—waiting a few days can save a few hundred dollars. Keep in mind that smaller airports often advertise better deals than metropolis hubs. And a connecting flight can save you over \$100, according to [Hotwire](#).

**3. Find pleasure in business cities.** “Choose a destination known for business travel,” Chait suggests. “You’re likely to see lower weekend rates compared to leisure places like Miami and Los Angeles.” In the nation’s capital, Kimpton’s [Hotel Monaco D.C.](#) offers 30 percent off to guests who stay Friday through Sunday. Chicago boasts a 60 percent savings with the “Just Chillin’” package for select Hilton properties. “Chicago averages around \$59 a night, where NYC is currently averaging \$150 a night,” says Pierre-Etienne Chartier, vice president of Hotwire. No wonder the Windy City is routinely a top hotel deal destination for Christmas.

**4. Pick up the phone.** Dialing 800-numbers may seem archaic, but it can save you major moolah, especially when it comes to vacation rentals—which are typically about 20 percent lower than hotels anyway, according to Chait. “Some managers offer discounts for stays booked less than a month before arrival,” says John Dirgo, manager of [Hawaii Holiday Vacation Rentals](#). “We don’t advertise them, but if someone contacts us and their dates can fill the gap between two existing reservations, we’ll sometimes offer them 20 to 30 percent off the advertised rate.” Another trick: Inquire about new properties. In order to give newcomers a head start, owners might shave off around \$50 per night in hopes of a positive review. Dial the call center at [Getaroom](#), a hub to 30,000 hotels, and ask for unpublished rates. You can save an additional 10 to 20 percent off the lowest prices. “By keeping the rates opaque, the representatives are able to negotiate with you,” says Bob Diener, the site’s founder.

**5. Bundle up.** Check hotel sites for packaged deals. At [Sandos](#), a resort with properties in Los Cabos, Cancun, and Riviera Maya, you can save as much as 20 percent on air and lodging by booking through their site. (Traveling on December 25 and 31 yields the most savings.) Ski-lovers can save over \$850, thanks to complimentary lift tickets for two when staying at Colorado’s [Park Hyatt Beaver Creek](#) for four nights. Don’t forget to browse the tourism site for your destination for additional savings. If you’re heading to

Utah, [VisitSaltLake](#) offers a Super Pass to four ski resorts, saving you 20 percent on lift tickets and ski rentals, as well as free transportation.

**6. Take a road trip.** With holiday airfare ballooning a few days prior to Christmas and New Year's Eve—24 percent and 21 percent, respectively, according to Kayak—getting behind the wheel might not be a bad idea. Go to [BeFrugal](#) and play with the Fly or Drive Calculator. By inputting specifics like destination, number of passengers, and your car's model, the program compares total driving costs—including potential lodging—to current airfare prices. Next, browse [Roomer](#) for last-minute accommodation. This StubHub-like site for hotel rooms offers incredible deals on canceled bookings to coveted holiday getaways such as Aspen. “Since most ski packages are typically nonrefundable, you can score a room that's about 47 percent cheaper than the listed price,” says Richie Karaburun, managing director of Roomer.

**7. Stick together.** Don't go deal hunting alone. Use [CarryOn](#), an online travel agency that's sort of like Pinterest meets Groupon. It works by generating deals based on the popularity of your dream trip. Say you want to unwrap presents on a beach in Cancun. After creating an itinerary on the site, share it—as other CarryOn members follow your trip, you'll see the price drop. “You can see a \$20 to \$40 savings thanks to just a few additional followers,” says Adam Malcom, president of CarryOn.

**8. Save your vacation for 2014.** “If you can extend your holidays, book a getaway in early January,” recommends Arabella Bowen, Editor in Chief at *Fodor's Travel*. “The weeks before Martin Luther King weekend—January 18-20—can be a real sweet spot for deals. You can find amazing discounts as high as 50 to 75 percent off peak holiday prices.” So instead of going bankrupt on a Caribbean vacation between Christmas and New Year's, wait until the first week of January to snorkel. Take [Capella Marigot Bay](#) in St. Lucia, for instance: Booking between December 20 and January 5 will cost you a minimum of \$2,250 for 5 nights, but if you wait until January 6, you'll soak in paradise for \$239 per night, all-inclusive. The math speaks for itself.

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