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Save Time and Money on Holiday Travel

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With Christmas on its way and New Year's soon after, we bet there's one thing you're in for this season: travel. We had the chance to learn some expert tips from Bob Diener, president of [GetARoom.com](#). Whether you're flying or driving in the weeks to come, these strategies will help make your journey hassle-free now and for the future.

1. When in doubt, over-plan.

Making stops along the way might be necessary, but it doesn't hurt to stock up on supplies beforehand. "Shop for food in advance at your local store. You can get much better prices than trying to pick things up at a convenient store," Diener says. His trick to avoid paying \$3 for water? Pack empty sports bottles to fill up at airports or rest stops.

2. Search for unconventional options.

Don't be afraid to look outside the traditional hotel. "People gravitate toward big name chains, but those have more demand and higher prices," Diener says. You can book vacation rentals for almost the same as a hotel with the bonus of having a kitchen and extra space. Though independent hotels may not seem as glamorous, reading customer reviews can help you find one just as nice as the usual.

3. Take advantage of surprise offers.

Flash sales also exist on travel sites and can offer rates 10 to 60 percent lower. The trick is booking within the sale window, anywhere from 2 to 24 hours. "Most people take a week to make plans, but flash sales require you to make a decision right away because the rate is so good," Diener says. GetARoom.com also has unpublished rates from 30,000 participating hotels; just [give them a call](#) to find deals 20 to 60 percent less than what's listed.

4. Be on the lookout for free stuff.

It's important to consider amenities in your overall cost. Hotels or resort packages that include breakfast or internet can go a long way in saving . One low-cost way to keep kids entertained: Find a place to stay with a pool. "After a rough day of activities, you can take them there for hours," Diener says.

5. Keep things sane with technology.

Yes, adding movies to your tablets prior to leaving guarantees entertainment. But it's also good to download apps that will make your journey smoother. Diener uses the app of his preferred airport to keep track of delays and store boarding passes. His other favorite, [Kayak](#), allows users to search multiple vendors at once to find deals on-the-go. Plus, you'll need a weather app to know when rain or snow might dampen your day, or give you a white Christmas.

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