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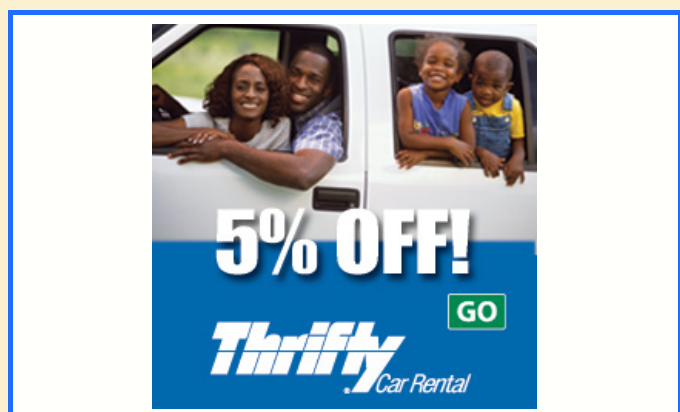


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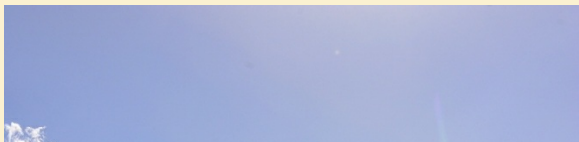
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In This Issue:

- [Fall/Winter Values at CoCo Key Orlando](#)
- [Holiday Inn "Extra Credit" and Resort Giveaway](#)
- [Free Egypt Tour & Cruise with South African Safari](#)
- [Nicaragua Travel Sale](#)
- [Top U.S. and Canadian Speed Traps](#)
- [Napa Valley Lodging Packages](#)
- [25% off at Marriott Vacation Club Resorts](#)



- [Colonial Williamsburg Virginia & Seniors Discount](#)
- [Save \\$1,496 on Italian Cruise/Land Package](#)
- [Yellowstone Frosty Fun Packages](#)
- [Myrtle Beach Fall Golf Deals](#)
- [Viceroy Anguilla Hot Nights, Cool Rates](#)
- [Virgin Atlantic Flying Club Offer](#)
- [\\$300 Bahamas Booking Savings](#)
- [Visit LA Museums Free until Nov. 11, 2012](#)
- [Hawks Cay Resort Romance Package](#)
- [Fresh Tracks Canada Best Offer of the Year](#)
- [Windstar 2-For-1 Cruise Fares](#)
- [10 Tips to Stay Safe While Traveling Abroad](#)
- [PADI Kids Sea Camp Contest](#)



Bikers at Lake Stellisee in Zermatt, Switzerland, with the Matterhorn in the background. Photo credit: Switzerland Tourism

Fall/Winter Values at CoCo Key Orlando

Minutes from Orlando attractions and International Drive shopping, the 391-room CoCo Key Hotel and Water Resort Orlando, offers fall and winter value packages and discounts, valid through Dec. 25, 2012.

The Grand Travel package is offered to grandparents/extended families, Florida and Georgia residents and military families.

Inside a canopy-covered water park, the resort features rooms with WI-FI, fitness center, business center, 14 water slides, three heated pools, three restaurants, poolside entertainment and CoCo the Red Parrot mascot. The package for grandparents provides 25 percent off the best available rate and kids six and under eat free with each adult entree. Proof of age 50 or older required at check-in. Refer to Promo Code GRAND12 when booking.

CoCo Key Hotel and Water Resort Salutes the Military. All active and retired military and their families receive a \$69 per night rate plus tax. Military ID Card required at check-in.

Florida and Georgia residents will save \$15 off the best available rates at CoCo Key. Driver's license or proof of residency required.

[CoCo Key Hotel and Water Resort](#) or 877/875-4681.

Holiday Inn "Extra Credit" and Resort Giveaway

IHG (InterContinental Hotels Group) offers a Holiday Inn Resort "Extra Credit" which gets you a \$50 Resort Credit to use on property when you stay at least two nights through Nov. 30, 2012, when booked at www.holidayinnresorts.com/extracredit starting today.

The "extra credit" can be used toward breakfast, lunch, water ski rentals and bike rentals. For each additional night stayed, you receive another \$25.

Holiday Inn Resort sweetens the deal for Holiday Inn hotels Twitter followers with their "Resort Stay Giveaway." Prizes range from a one night stay up to an eight night stay at any Holiday Inn Resort in the U.S., Mexico and the Caribbean. The more tweets, the bigger the prizes get.

Here's how the "Resort Stay Giveaway" works:

- Follow @HolidayInn on Twitter
- Tell why you would love to stay at a resort for your next vacation with the #ResortLove hashtag
- Tweet daily for more chances to win

[Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Resort](#) or 800/HOLIDAY.

Advertisement



Free Egypt Tour & Cruise with South African Safari

Experience two different parts of Africa on two different trips for one price. Great Safaris offers a free seven day tour of Egypt and a Nile cruise in 2012 when you book an 11-day South African adventure for anytime in 2012 or 2013.

On your free Egypt tour, you cruise the Nile River for five days, visit the pyramids and Sphinx, the Cairo Museum, city of Cairo, and Aswan with its Philae Temple of Isis.

Great Safaris trips through South Africa highlight Cape Town, tastings through the Winelands, the wildlife viewing in Kruger National Park, and the expansive coast from the Atlantic to Indian Ocean.

[Great Safaris](#) or 800/409-7755.

Nicaragua Travel Sale

The Nicaragua Tourism Board launches its first [Fall Travel sale](#). Through Dec. 15, 2012, there are savings on tours and hotel packages that explore the nature, culture and adventure opportunities in Nicaragua, some with airfare included.

Here are a few specials.

- Pacific Holidays' "Jewels of Nicaragua:" History and culture. Eight days from \$1,399 per person double – airfare included
- Yampu Tours' "Complete Nicaragua:" History, culture plus beach. Eight days from \$2,834 per person double – airfare included
- Solar Tours' "Granada – San Juan Del Sur:" Choose your schedule, private driver. Seven to 10 days from \$851 per person – airfare included
- Solar Tours' "Granada – El Gigante Beach – Managua:" Choose your schedule, private driver, beach resort. Seven to 10 days, from \$847 per person – airfare included
- Latin American Escapes' "Trekking Nicaragua's Volcanoes:" Active travel. Eight days from \$1,350 per person double.
- Latin American Escapes' "Magic of Nicaragua:" Popular sights and activities. Eight days from \$1,395 per person double.
- Sita Tours Nicaragua: Granada & San Juan Del Sur: Sightseeing, culture, beaches. Six days from \$1,190 per person double.
- Maya Tours The Nicaragua Classic Tour: The best of Nicaragua. Eight days from \$950 per person.
- Wildland Tours Nicaragua Adventure Tour: For thrill seekers. Nine days from \$2,850 per person.
- Tara Tours All-inclusive Beach Resort-Montelimar: Seven days from \$628 per person.

[Nicaragua Tourism Board](#).

Top U.S. and Canadian Speed Traps

The National Motorists Association (NMA) conducted a public polling to identify the worst speed trap across the United States and Canada.

Speed traps typically combine arbitrarily low speed limits with heavy traffic enforcement designed to generate ticket revenue. While the intent may be to modify driver behavior long-term, that is rarely the result. Speed traps keep springing up in the same locations, the issuance of tickets flows unabated, and there is no material effect on traffic safety. That is why the NMA advocates for increased speed limits in chronic speed trap areas supported by traffic studies and proven engineering principles.

The NMA analyzed the most recent five years of data from its website, the National Speed Trap Exchange, which lists thousands of chronic speed traps in the United States and Canada. Postings are from the public, and users vote on which locations qualify as speed traps.

To develop the rankings, the NMA calculated the total number of affirmative votes across speed traps in a given community and then indexed the total to the community's population size. A preliminary screening process ensured that only speed traps with high levels of consensus were factored into the rankings.

Worst Speed Trap Cities (population greater than 50,000):

1. Flower Mound, Texas 8.7
2. Livonia, Michigan 8.4
3. Windsor, Ontario 3.6
4. Hamilton, Ontario 1.3
5. Mississauga, Ontario 1.1

"All of Flower Mound is a speed trap," commented one driver on The National Speed Trap Exchange.

Worst Speed Trap Cities (population less than 50,000):

1. Estelline, Texas 12,422
2. Winthrop, Washington 2243
3. Waldo, Florida 551
4. Bellevue, Iowa 301
5. Summersville, West Virginia 158

"There are many speed traps in Texas...this one is the worst. Tiny town, one cop, expensive police car," said a Speed Trap Exchange user about Estelline, Texas.

Worst Speed Trap States and Provinces:

1. Ontario 92.9
2. Nova Scotia 57.7
3. District of Columbia 53.4
4. South Carolina 50.4
5. Michigan 49.6
6. Iowa 42.2
7. Tennessee 41.6
8. West Virginia 40.4
9. Washington 40.1
10. Delaware 38.8

Minnesota, Quebec and New Hampshire fared best with voters.

Several cities surrounding the Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport deserve special mention as operators of an extraordinary cluster of speed traps. Motorists complained overwhelmingly about opportunistic law enforcement tactics in Romulus, Livonia, Allen Park, Redford, Taylor, Northville, and Dearborn Heights. They identified 187 specific locations in those seven cities, voting a staggering 6348 to 842 (88.3 percent) to affirm that each deserved the speed trap label.

To put this in perspective, compare these seven Michigan cities with the American city most comparable in population: Tampa, Florida. You would expect Tampa, as a major tourist destination, to have a heavy dose of speed traps and you would be correct. The speed trap reporting on Tampa pales in comparison to the seven cities in the Detroit metro area. Tampa's five-year speed trap statistics per The National Speed Trap Exchange: 69 speed trap locations and a verification vote of 1133 to 316 (78.2 percent).

One wonders if law enforcement in Romulus, Livonia, Allen Park, Redford, Taylor, Northville, and Dearborn Heights regards unsuspecting visitors to the Detroit area the same way a used car salesperson views a first-time buyer.

The bottom line: If you travel near Detroit, or the other destinations on the list, be watchful of the speed trap locations identified by fellow motorists at the National Motorists Association's National Speed Trap Exchange. It could save you from a ticket that could ruin your business trip or family visit.

[National Motorists Association.](#)



A red and yellow banner for CheapOair. On the left is the CheapOair logo. In the center, it says "Save up to 65% on Vacation Packages!". On the right, there is a yellow button that says "Book Now" with a right-pointing arrow.

Napa Valley Lodging Packages

Flavor! Napa Valley 2012 offers ticket options and accommodations from some of the region's hotels, to create a "stay and play" experience during the Nov. 14 to 18, 2012, food, wine and fun festival.

With more than 30 events in five days, a number of the themed packages allow you to participate in Flavor! activities and the option to stay at one of the valley's accommodations providers.

All guests with confirmed reservations at a Napa Valley hotel or inn during this time automatically receive 20 percent off of Appellation Trail tickets and select ticket packages.

Prices for Flavor! Napa Valley events packages range from \$350 to \$955 per person. Ticket and accommodations combination packages include:

Silverado Resort and Spa (Napa) - a one-bedroom fireplace suite, breakfast for two, a signature culinary welcome gift and tickets to First Taste Napa.

Napa River Inn (Napa) - tickets to Taste Napa are included in all stays over the festival period. Quantities are

limited and on a first-come, first-served basis. Receive 20 percent off room rates during the festival and daily breakfast.

Milliken Creek Inn & Spa (Napa) - stay two nights between Nov. 1 and 24, 2012, and receive a third night at 50 percent off the best available rate. When booking online enter promotional code FESTIVAL. Your stay includes daily breakfast for two, wine and cheese reception, late-night cordial bar and guest passes to Synergy wellness and fitness center.

Auberge du Soleil (Rutherford) - during the festival, save 10 percent on Friday and Saturday night stays, and save 20 percent on Sunday through Thursday room rates. You receive a welcome amenity and a signature culinary keepsake.

Villagio Inn & Spa and Vintage Inn (Yountville) - mention Flavor! Napa Valley when reserving and receive 20 percent off room rates Nov. 14 through Nov. 18, 2012. The offer includes a bottle of wine upon check-in, buffet breakfast, daily afternoon tea and access to the spa.

Harvest Inn (St Helena) - two-night package includes accommodations, most with a fireplace, daily breakfast, a basket with wine country treats, a cookbook and wine tasting for two at two wineries.

Mount View Hotel & Spa (Calistoga) - package for two includes one night's accommodations, a couples' mineral mud bath, fixed price three course dinner, winetasting for two at two wineries, admission for two to the Old Faithful Geyser, breakfast in bed and 10 percent off additional nights. Rates per couple start at \$348 for Monday to Thursday and \$398 for Friday to Sunday stays.

[Flavor! Napa Valley.](#)

Fall Travel: 25% off at Marriott Vacation Club Resorts

Marriott Vacation Club offers a limited time deal this fall. Reserve your stay in a villa and take 25 percent off regular room rates at more than 50 Marriott Vacation Club resorts. The offer is for stays of two nights or more through Dec. 21, 2012 and Nov. 5, 2012 through Mar. 29, 2013, at the brand's European resorts.

The offer is valid for travel in the U.S., Caribbean and Asia through Dec. 12, 2012 and valid for travel in Europe through Mar. 29, 2013. You must book by Nov. 30, 2012, for travel in the U.S., Caribbean, and Asia, and by Feb. 28, 2013, for travel in Europe. A limited number of rooms are available for this promotion and a two night minimum stay is required. Tax is additional. The offer does not apply to groups of 10 or more rooms and it cannot be combined with any other promotions. Blackout dates may apply. Advance reservations required. Other restrictions apply.

[Marriott Vacation Club](#) or 800/845-5279.

Colonial Williamsburg Virginia & Seniors Discount

Colonial Williamsburg invites Virginia residents and people 50 years and older to pay for a day and receive unlimited admission to the Revolutionary City and the Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg through 2012.

>With this offer you can experience Colonial Williamsburg's seasonal offerings again and again. This special pass can be purchased for \$39.95 for adults and \$20.95 for children ages six to 12. You must purchase the pass by Oct. 31, 2012.

The pass includes:

- Unlimited access to the Revolutionary City sites including exhibition sites and trade shops
- Tours of the Governor's Palace, Capitol, R. Charlton's Coffeehouse and Great Hopes Plantation
- The new Anderson's Blacksmith Shop and Public Armoury
- The DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum
- The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum
- The Williamsburg home of John D. Rockefeller Jr.

Passes may be purchased online or at the Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center. Proof of residency or age is required.

[Colonial Williamsburg Foundation](#) or 800/HISTORY.

Advertisement



Save \$1,496 on Italian Cruise/Land Package

Book by Dec. 31, 2012 and get Early Bird savings on TourCrafters' 2013 11 night cruise and land package to the Amalfi Coast, Southern Italy, Sicily and Malta.

The trip starts with a private transfer along the Amalfi Drive from the Naples airport to the Salerno harbor, where you board the 36 cabin yacht Variety Voyager. The price of the package depends on the cabin class selected. For a C class cabin in June and September 2013, the price is \$4,809 per person (the Early Bird price for the second person is \$3,313, a \$1,496 per couple savings). Cabin classes B, A and P and the owner's suite cost more, providing greater savings. Prices are lower for October 2013.

The price includes an eight-day cruise; daily breakfasts, lunches, dinners and Captain's dinner; a welcome cocktail and continuous select beverages; use of fishing and snorkeling equipment; and a multilingual cruise escort. Also provided are a transfer from Salerno to Amalfi; four nights' accommodation at the Hotel Luna Convento; four buffet breakfasts; a cooking class with lunch and wine in Cetara; a private tour and tasting of red wines in Campania; and a private transfer from the hotel to the Naples airport.

Among the ports visited are the island of Capri; Lipari; Taormina; Syracuse; the island of Malta and its capital Valletta; Sicily and the Valley of the Temples at Agrigento and Cefalu. On the way back to Salerno and the hotel portion of the package, the yacht passes the island of Stromboli and its continuously active volcano.

Not included are transatlantic airfare, some beverages, shore excursions during the cruise, gratuities, port charges and city tax, which must be paid directly to the hotel in euros.

[TourCrafters Deal of the Week](#) or 800/482-5995.

Yellowstone Frosty Fun Packages

The best deals for visiting Yellowstone National Park this winter are the two "Frosty Fun" packages from Xanterra Parks & Resorts. The rates represent a savings of 21 percent and 26 percent compared to purchasing package components separately.

The packages include Xanterra's "Snow Card" good for 10 percent off meals, in-park transportation, tours, ski shop services and select retail items. The package based at Old Faithful Snow Lodge also includes roundtrip snowcoach transportation. Rates are per person, double occupancy, plus tax and utility fee.

The two Frosty Fun packages are:

"Frosty Fun at Mammoth" - includes a minimum of two nights in a room with a private bathroom at the Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel, two breakfasts per person, welcome gift, unlimited ice skating and skates and Snow Card. Rates start at \$135 per person for double occupancy and \$226 for single occupancy. Available Jan. 1 to Mar. 4, 2013, rates are 21 percent less than if purchased as individual components.

"Frosty Fun at Old Faithful" - includes a minimum of two nights of lodging at the Old Faithful Snow Lodge, two breakfasts per person, welcome gift, unlimited ice skating and skates, roundtrip snowcoach transportation and Snow Card. Rates start at \$319 per person for double occupancy and \$479 for single occupancy. Available Jan. 1 to Mar. 3, 2012, rates are 26 percent less than if purchased as individual components.

Winter rates for single or double occupancy, plus tax, for individual room nights at Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel start at \$91 for a room with a shared bathroom or \$123 for a standard hotel room with a private bathroom. Rates at the Snow Lodge are \$219 for a lodge room, \$156 for a Western Cabin or \$99 for a Frontier Cabin, all with private bathrooms.

[Yellowstone Winter Getaway packages](#) or 866/439-7375.

Advertisement



Myrtle Beach Fall Golf Deals

Families and golfers can find deals in Myrtle Beach, SC this fall, combining play at more than 100 courses with attractions and rates that make it easy to visit.

Here are three Stay-and-Play packages for Fall "golf buddy" trips

[Inlet Sports Lodge's "Spectacular South End Fall Golf Special"](#) - this stay-and-play includes three nights in a studio and three rounds of golf for \$399 a person, based on double occupancy. Choose one round on TPC Myrtle Beach, Prestwick, River Club, Heritage and Founders. Two round choices are Tradition Club, Wachesaw East, Litchfield Country Club and Blackmoor.

[Anderson Ocean Club's "Grand Classic" Package](#) - starts at \$71 per person, per night for three nights' oceanfront accommodations with daily breakfast and three rounds at your choice of 10 courses.

[Bay Watch Resort's "Fall Tour" Package](#) - for \$69 a night per person, stay three nights with three breakfasts and lunches and three rounds on The Witch, Prestwick, Arrowhead, Man-O-War or The Wizard.

[Myrtle Beach Golf Holiday](#).

Viceroy Anguilla Hot Nights, Cool Rates

Viceroy Anguilla, on the Caribbean island of Anguilla, gives you a chance to keep warm and receive lower room rates with their Hot Nights/Cool Rates promotion. The offer features the third night free during any three-night stay Oct. 5 to Dec. 20, 2012. Rates start at \$395 per night.

On 35 acres, with 3,200 feet of beachfront along Barnes and Meads Bays, Viceroy Anguilla features contemporary beachfront and blufftop villas, townhomes or resort residences. Amenities include fine dining, rooms with private sundecks and plunge pools, villas with full kitchens and access to butler service, and residences with infinity pools.

[Viceroy Anguilla](#) or 800/578-0283.

Virgin Atlantic Flying Club Offer

With Virgin Atlantic Airways' Flying Club offer, you will receive 50 percent additional bonus miles after your first roundtrip flight and a 100 percent additional bonus miles when you fly a second time. You must be a Virgin Atlantic Flying Club member and register for the promotion.

Here's how the Flying Club offer works:

Registration Period: Until Oct. 15, 2012
Travel Period: Through Feb. 28, 2013

After your first roundtrip, you receive 50 percent Bonus Miles and four bonus Tier Points. After your second roundtrip, you receive 100 percent Bonus Miles and eight bonus Tier Points.

For example, a Premium Economy roundtrip flight to London normally earns eight Tier Points. With this offer, you earn 12 Tier Points on your first roundtrip journey, and 16 Tier Points on a second journey, 28 Tier Points in total.

It takes 15 Tier Points to attain Silver status. Once you attain Silver status, you earn 50 percent additional miles every time you fly with Virgin Atlantic, Premium check-in and priority on Virgin Atlantic waitlists.

Earn 40 Tier Points in 12 months and attain Gold status. Then you receive 100 percent additional Bonus Miles on every flight, Upper Class check-in and priority boarding whichever class you're booked in, access to dedicated fast-track security channels in London, an additional piece of luggage, Clubhouse access for you and your party whenever you fly Virgin Atlantic, automatic Silver status for a family member.

For those who hold a black Virgin Atlantic American Express Card from Bank of America, in addition to the bonus Tier Points and mileage mentioned above, card members earn three miles for every dollar spent on Virgin Atlantic travel.

[Virgin Atlantic Flying Club promotion](#) or 800/862-8621.

Advertisement



\$300 Bahamas Booking Savings

Through Oct. 15, 2012, book an air-inclusive package of six nights or longer to participating resorts in The Bahamas on Nassau Paradise Island, Grand Bahama Island, The Abacos, The Exumas and other Out Islands. You then instantly qualify for \$300 in savings. Or save \$200 on four or five night packages. Bookings are valid for travel through Feb. 28, 2013, some blackout dates apply.

The offer is not valid on bookings from Dec. 26 to Dec. 31, 2012, and there is a limit of one instant savings per booked room; up to two rooms allowed per booking. The offer is for double occupancy only, is subject to availability, and includes tax and fees. Not valid for group bookings. Good from all U.S. and Canadian getaways.

The Islands of The Bahamas are accessible on flights from Continental Airlines, JetBlue, Delta, American Airlines, and Bahamasair.

[The Bahamas.](#)

Visit LA Museums Free until Nov. 11, 2012

This fall, the Los Angeles Tourism and Convention Board turns the spotlight on LA's artworks and exhibitions.

Book two nights or more on discoverLosAngeles.com/cultureLA for stays at any participating Los Angeles area hotel through Nov. 11, 2012 and receive two free admissions and museum store discounts at 30 participating museums.

A sample of museum savings include:

- Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) - regularly a \$15 admission fee
- The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens - regularly a \$20 admission fee
- The GRAMMY Museum - regularly a \$13 admission fee
- Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County - regularly a \$12 admission fee

Participating hotels include Hotel Wilshire, Hotel Palomar, JW Marriott Los Angeles L.A. LIVE, Loews Hollywood Hotel, W Hollywood, Custom Hotel, Doubletree by Hilton Hotel San Pedro, Westin Bonaventure Hotel & Suites, Warner Center Marriott Woodland Hills and SLS Hotel at Beverly Hills.

[LA Tourism](#) or 800/ClubMed.

Hawks Cay Resort Romance Package

Hawks Cay Resort, on Duck Key in the Florida Keys, has a Key to Romance package. When booking, use promo code Couple12.

In conjunction with the resort's expansion of the adults-only area, the offer is available through 2013 and includes:

- King Lanai guestroom or Hawks Cay villa (stay two nights and receive a 10 percent discount or 20 percent discount for a four night stay)
- In-room sparkling wine on the night of arrival
- Two-hour bike rental
- 20 percent discount on a couples massage at the Calm Waters Spa

Couples who visit this fall will experience the transformation at the resort's adults-only area, with expanded Tranquility Pool and adults-only oceanfront alfresco dining. All renovations will be complete this winter.

Packages are based on double occupancy. Rates start at \$169 plus tax and daily resort fee.

Alongside the Atlantic Ocean, outdoor activities include offshore, flats and backcountry fishing; diving; kayaking; kiteboarding and standup paddle boarding programs; tennis program; Segway tours and a resort-based Dolphin Connection program.

The 60-acre resort has 177 rooms and 225 two- and three-bedroom villas, a full-service marina, five restaurants, saltwater lagoon, five swimming pools, kid and teen clubs and a spa.

[Hawks Cay Resort](#) or 877/484-9342.

Advertisement



Fresh Tracks Canada Best Offer of the Year

Take advantage of Fresh Tracks Canada's best deal of the year with up to \$1500 per couple in free hotel nights and tours. Book a vacation of six nights or more by Nov. 30, 2012, for qualifying 2013 itineraries.

The 2013 Early Bird Booking offer is valid for bookings of lodge trips, wildlife viewing tours and train tours of six nights or more (or self-drive trips across Canada of 12 nights or more) in spring, summer or fall 2013. This special is based on double occupancy, cannot be combined with another offer or applied to existing bookings. Some restrictions apply and the offer is subject to availability.

Choose from extra free nights at hotels or free guided tours, floatplane rides, wildlife excursions, heli-tours, meals or train rides.

[Fresh Tracks Canada](#) or 800/667-4744.

Windstar 2-For-1 Cruise Fares

Windstar Cruises offers two-for-one cruise fare, plus bonus savings of up to \$1,000 per stateroom on select tropical itineraries. You can sail through the Caribbean islands or the Panama Canal on any of Windstar's three sailing ships from \$1,299 per person, based on double occupancy when booked by Oct. 27, 2012.

Wind Surf's seven-day Flavors of the Caribbean voyages start in St. Maarten and continue to Le Marin, Pigeon Island, Roseau, Les Saintes and St. Kitts.

Wind Surf's seven-day Yachtsman's Caribbean voyages leave from St. Maarten and visits Falmouth, Tortola, Jost Van Dyke (overnight), Virgin Gorda (overnight) and Gustavia.

The third Caribbean voyage in the two-for-one promotion is Wind Spirit's Jewels of the Windward Islands. Leaving from Barbados, the ship visits Bequia, Tobago Cays (overnight), Mayreau, Pigeon Island and St. George's.

Wind Star's seven-day Passage through Panama leaves from Colon and visits San Blas before sailing through the Panama Canal, then Isla De Coiba, Golfito, Bhaia Drake and Puerto Caldera.

The Wind Star Transatlantic Crossing is also available on the special two-for-one pricing.

[Windstar Cruises](#) or 800/258-7245.

10 Tips to Stay Safe While Traveling Abroad by Norm Schriever

I've been fortunate to travel all around the world, but witnessed an unbelievable array of street scams and hustles. From Cairo to Caracas, Amsterdam to Amman, someone was always trying to sell me wolf tickets: the fake drunk, the razor blade slash, the Rio shoe scam, money exchange bait-and-switches, shifting walls, high-speed car chases through barrios, muggers with machetes, riots shrouded in tear gas, clans of pickpocketing gypsies, exotic temptresses who slip something in your drink, being a guest in a Third World jail, and running for my life from the Triads, the Chinese mafia.

I even survived an elaborate and well-orchestrated grift in Bolivia involving fake policemen with a fake police car and a kilo of fake cocaine that had me sweating like a hostage. But please don't let all of this discourage you from grabbing your passport and exploring the beautiful world we live in; you'll find most places to be as safe as your front porch if you exercise some basic rules of caution:

1. **Stay ready and you won't have to get ready.** Before you leave make copies of your passport, medical card, credit cards, and travel itinerary. Give a copy to a friend back home and keep one set with you, separate from the real thing. Email any pertinent information to yourself through a web based email account so you can access it from any hotel or internet café if needed. Check in with the U.S. embassy when you arrive. I even keep \$20 folded under the sole of my shoe for emergencies.
2. **Don't be the ugly American.** Don't draw negative attention to yourself. If you're going to party overseas (which I highly encourage) don't get too drunk and always take a taxi at night. Don't accept an open drink from someone or leave your drink unattended. Most importantly, never mess with drugs while you're in a foreign country. I have a friend serving five years in a Costa Rican prison that can back me up on this!
3. **Keep a schedule like a farmer.** A lot more bad stuff happens at 2 a.m. than at 2 p.m. Starting and ending your day early will keep you out of potentially dangerous situations. A safe, pleasant touristy neighborhood can turn into a breeding ground for crime once the sun goes down.
4. **Don't be easy.** Thieves go for the easiest victims they can find. Show that you're paying attention – head up, eyes looking around, acknowledging people coming and going - and they'll move on to someone easier.
5. **Chaos theory.** Thieves choreograph situations that breed confusion and then strike. So if someone rattles a newspaper in your face, or a drunk stumbles into you, or a pack of prostitutes surround you and start being way too friendly, immediately put one hand in your pocket on your wallet and use your free hand to politely push away and step back from the situation. But the best way to avoid trouble is to cross the street when you see it coming.
6. **Get local.** No matter where you are "make nice" with the locals. Learn a few phrases in their native language and write them down on index cards. Chat with desk clerks, taxi drivers, waiters, and shopkeepers. Ask them their name, where they are from, and inquire about their family. People will see that you're showing respect and making an effort and treat you well in return. If all else fails, ask them what soccer (football) team they're a diehard fan of - before you know it they'll be inviting you over for dinner!

7. **Don't be flashy.** Don't walk around with an expensive camera or fancy jewelry hanging around your neck. Wear a cheap plastic watch, if any. Take it all off before you step out of a bar or restaurant at night. Carry a decoy wallet so if you get held up you can gladly throw them that one. Keep your wallet in your front pocket and when you're on a crowded street shift your backpack to the front.

8. **Poverty or politics.** There are crimes motivated by a disparity in wealth and those based on politics. Avoiding crimes of poverty requires common sense and prudence. However, political crimes, like kidnappings and acts of terrorism, are more nefarious. It's important to avoid countries where there's a problem with political crime; it's not adventurous and it's not a game to travel on the "chicken bus" in the countryside of Mexico or hike near the Iranian border without a map. Check your state department's website and news reports for updates before you book your trip.

9. **Donate to a charity, not on the street.** Beggars are abundant on the streets of most developing countries. The typical tourist walking by makes more money in a week than they do in a year, so it's easy to see why they would hold out a dirty hand for alms. Sometimes beggars can be overly aggressive, use your money for drugs or alcohol, or even fake their condition. Instead of handing out money on the street find a legitimate local charity and make a donation. Your conscience will be clear that you showed love to the local community but you won't be tempted to give money out on the street.

10. **Live to travel another day.** Your goal should always be to get home in one piece. So if something happens, use common sense and keep your cool. If someone pulls a knife on you never put up a fight; give them what they want and get away safely – at least you'll have a wild story to tell!

Norm Schriever is an author, adventurer, and expat who lives in Central America. His recent book, 'Pushups in the Prayer Room,' a memoir about the year he backpacked around the world, is available at his [web site](#) or [Amazon](#).

PADI Kids Sea Camp Contest

PADI (Professional Association of Diving Instructors), a diver training organization, launches its "Kids Sea Camp" contest, a parent-child adventure of exploring the underwater world together through scuba diving. Parents who obtain their PADI Open Water Diver or Junior Open Water Diver certifications during the contest can [nominate themselves and one child](#) for a chance to win a scuba diving trip. The duo will dive at the Kids Sea Camp Family Dive Adventure in Palau, among coral reefs, blue holes, hidden caves and tunnels, and an array of coral, fish and rare sea creatures.

Submit nominations through Nov. 20, 2012, by sharing a photo on PADI's web site that depicts their recent PADI Open Water Diver class, certification card, PADI eCard or any other applicable [photo showing their recent certifications](#). The most creative photo will win a seven-night vacation for one adult and one child to Kids Sea Camp in Palau from June 28 to July 6, 2013. Winners receive food, lodging, on-site diving and activities such as special PADI courses, snorkeling and learning programs. Winners will be announced on Nov. 28, 2012. Airfare is not included in the contest prize package and will be the responsibility of the winning family.

You can qualify for a PADI certification year-round and the certification never expires.

[PADI](#).

Had a good experience on a plane recently? Stumbled across the perfect place to stay, eat or drink? Tell us about it, [email us here](#).

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