

Saving Money on Your Next Trip to SoCal

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There's nothing quite like abandoning the desert for a week or so at the beach. It's a trek that most of us do at least once a year or so. Unfortunately, in addition to being a great break from the desert dryness and heat, it can also be a terrible drain on the bank account if you aren't careful. SoCal is expensive!



The good news is that with some careful planning and thinking ahead, there are lots of things that you can do to reduce the cost of your annual trip to the beach.

Forego the Hotel

Yes, staying in a luxury hotel is fun, but it is also really expensive. You can choose one of the more affordable hotels or motels but then you run the risk of being surrounded by spring breakers, families with screaming babies and barking dogs, etc.

A better way to go is to check out sites like AirBnB.com. AirBnB will help you find short term rentals in people's homes and other, less traditional, lodging spaces. It's a great way to get a fully equipped house in San Diego for a week or a weekend (or, at the very least, a room in a great and fully equipped house).

Bring the Spa to You

Being pampered at the spa is great but you know what? It can also cost hundreds of dollars--and that's just for a day! Why not save money by setting up an [in home massage](#)? You'll still get pampered but it won't cost nearly as much.

You can also turn your hotel (or AirBnB) into a private spa experience. All you need are some essential oils, some bath salts and a good clean tub. How Stuff Works has a [great tutorial for creating an "at home spa experience"](#) that you can follow for an afternoon.

Lunch Beats Dinner

One of the best things about heading to the beach is getting to eat all of that great and local seafood. Some of the best restaurants in the world are located in San Diego. And you can totally eat at them--but if you're worried about your budget, you should show up earlier in the day. Lunch menus offer a lot of the same things offered at dinner, just either in smaller portions or different configurations. You'll still get fantastic food cooked by fantastic chefs but you'll get it for a fraction of the cost.

Then, for dinner, either save your leftovers from lunch or get some picnic fixings at the grocery store and head out to the beach. [Beach picnics](#) are a great way to ensure you'll get to watch some beautiful sunsets without having to worry about a server trying to turn over your table. Plus, no reservations required!

Pick Two Definites

Here's a trap a lot of us fall into when we head out to the beach: we schedule days at SeaWorld, the Zoo, day trips up to Disney Land or Universal Studios or any of the other [fantastic San Diego \(and adjacent\) attractions](#). Having every minute scheduled does not really help anybody relax. Instead, choose one or two things that you definitely want to do while you're in the area. Then let the other things you usually do, sit in the "back up plan" area of your list. This way you can decide each day what you want to do. If you want to spend the day at the beach, go for it! If you get to the beach and decide you don't want to deal with the crowd, you'll have a great list of backups waiting to entertain you.

There are lots of ways to make your trip to San Diego more affordable and relaxed this year. These are just a few of them. With a little creativity, we're willing to bet you can cut your budget in half and still do twice as much as you usually do!