

Travel Time WITH CHASE & BUD

When Bud and I run into folks these days, the conversation often starts with “what trips have you had to cancel”? A villa in Italy, we say...and you? The answers range from Morocco, St. Maarten, Australia and London to complete world cruises, the Galapagos Islands and South Africa.

Many of these were Bucket List trips and many can be rebooked, often with significant incentives. But suppose you hadn't yet nailed down your own trip of a lifetime. Is now a good time to plan that trip to Southeast Asia, Europe, South America or wherever?

The answer is quite possibly yes—with a few caveats.

The two main reasons to go for it are money... and money. First, the initial cost. Many destinations around the world are increasingly desperate for tourist dollars, especially American dollars. This means pandemic-related discounts, promotions and special offers abound almost anywhere you look. I think back to international trips we took in the 2-3 years after 9/11, the Great Recession and the Arab Spring. Prices dropped a good 30-60%. A bonus was the lack of crowds and easy access to iconic attractions and activities like helicoptering in New Zealand's Milford Sound or visiting Luxor.

Finding a reduced basic price is a place to start, but don't forget the value of added incentives like free Wi-Fi, laundry, cocktails, breakfast, day excursions, room upgrades and more.

There are several ways to locate these deals. Begin with the internet. Decide where and how you'd like to travel. African safari? European tour? Pacific Rim?



Our 2009 “Bucket List” road trip through Turkey took us to Cappadocia, known for its moonscape-like rock formations. Hotels and restaurants are carved out of the volcanic ash and provide for unique and surprisingly elegant venues. Booking the trip during the economic downturn saved us 50% and the Turkish people were overwhelmingly welcoming.

anxious for bookings that many of them are allowing free cancellations right up to a day or two before your departure. This does a couple of things. First, it helps with peace of mind. If you need to cancel at the last minute, you might be able to recoup most, if not all, of your cost. Secondly, it just might allow you to forego pricey travel insurance – insurance that often disappoints when you go file a claim. Insuremytrip.com is a great resource with truly current info.

If I've got you drooling and dreaming, great! But, as always, the devil is in the details. Once you find an offer you think you can't refuse, read all—and I do mean all—the fine print. Check especially for exclusions and restrictions (i.e. airline change fees eliminated, but only for higher fares). Also, try and book directly with resort, hotel, cruise line, airline—whatever. Third party booking website like Expedia can add another layer of potential problems between you and your trip. If you find a great deal for a particular destination on such a website, contact the resort or hotel directly and ask if they'll match it. I'll bet they will, and just might throw in an extra perk or two.

Lastly, it's folly to book a trip without checking out travel restrictions imposed by the US government (as well as other countries). Start at travel.state.gov and work through to the official governmental websites of your dream destinations.

Independent travel? Tour company? Cruise? Airline package? Then visit some sites for general tourism as well as specific companies and sign up for their newsletters—you want to hear about promotions as soon as they go on offer. You can also set up some Google alerts by geography, industry, type of travel and more. If you want the personal help of professionals, try Concord's own AAA Travel (603 228-0301) or Laconia's Penny Pitou Travel (603 524-2500).

The second “money” issue is the dramatically improved ability to cancel and/or reschedule without penalty. Hotels, resorts, tour companies, cruise companies and even airlines and some third-party booking sites are so

Travel Talk has a new look! From now on we'll feature an image and information from our past travels. It's a bit of nostalgia for the world of travel that used to be, but perhaps also a bit of inspiration for the world of travel that is surely yet to come.

Next month:
A deep dive into changes in the travel insurance industry.



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