

How to Scratch Your Travel Itch Without Draining Your Bank Account

 [thepennyhoarder.com/save-money/revenge-travel-budget](https://www.thepennyhoarder.com/save-money/revenge-travel-budget)

September 8, 2021



by Tiffani Sherman

Contributor

After many months without traveling for fun, lots of people are itching to get on a plane, train, or automobile.

The term used to describe this is “revenge travel.” It’s the urge to start traveling again after being home for a long time, and to make up for things we didn’t do during shutdowns, quarantines, health concerns, or all of the above.

The Delta variant of the virus has changed things a bit, with reports that it may be starting to suppress travel demand. But people are still planning for when things get better.

A survey by CreditCards.com found that 66% of respondents planned to treat themselves post-pandemic without knowing how they’d pay for their splurges, and travel was one of the top items on people’s splurge lists.

But unless you’ve been saving up, revenge travel can really ruin your finances.

Here’s some advice to quench your thirst for travel without drowning yourself in debt.

Be Ready for Wait Lists

It’s tempting to want to blow the budget on a great experience. You deserve it, right? And you’re not alone.

An April 2021 survey of 2,000 adults by Discover said 70% of Americans want to travel again and half were planning one or two vacations within six months. Their top reasons for traveling:

- 37% to relax

- 18% visit family and friends
- 10% experience a change of scenery

Travel professionals are certainly noticing this pent-up demand, and in some cases it's leading to wait lists, said Malori Asman, owner of Amazing Journeys, a Pittsburgh-based company that specializes in group travel.

Since 2020, Asman and her team have been in a constant cycle of canceling and rebooking, canceling and rebooking. As they've done so, and as people have waited for tours to be rebooked, wait lists on those tours have grown.

Asman has noticed that some people are willing to spend more than they were before. It's both pent-up demand and rationalizing (as in, hey, we didn't spend anything on travel in 2020).

"That's where you find people a little bit more free and easy with their travel plans and their travel funds."

Don't Go Into Debt Funding Your Revenge Travel

The same CreditCards.com survey that said many adults had no idea how they'd pay for their sprees also showed 44% were willing to go into debt to treat themselves, with one of the top treats being — you guessed it — travel.

Certified financial planner Mary Bell Carlson, also known as the Chief Financial Mom, calls it the "we deserve" mentality, and our ability to get easy credit contributes to it. The Discover survey found that more than half of those surveyed planned to pay for their revenge travel with a credit card.

"That's a horrible idea," Carlson said.

Why? Because while you're vacationing, the interest-rate meter isn't. You may plan to put \$2,000 on your credit card for a vacation, but unless you pay it off right away, interest rates will quickly add to the bill. "By the time you pay it off, you're paying astronomically more than you ever thought of paying for that vacation."

During the early stages of the pandemic, Carlson said, many people began saving more than they had before. But they're starting to return to their old spending habits.

So how do you get out of your house without ruining your financial future?

Try to make your travel plans fit your travel budget, Carlson suggests. See what you can afford before setting your heart on a family trip to Waikiki. Maybe it's Walla Walla Washington, instead, or something just a car ride away.

Or, wait a little while longer and save for what you want.

“I get it, you want to get out. So find something that fits within the money you have or the money you have saved.”

Here's some advice about how to build a travel fund to help pay for future trips and avoid the post-pandemic urge to overspend.

Get the Family Involved in Travel Planning

Finding a vacation you can afford might not be as difficult as it sounds. Carlson suggests getting the family involved.

Case in point: One of her recent family outings with three children under the age of five. They drove three hours to a theme park for a big overnight family adventure. What did her kids love more than anything? The hotel pool.

“We literally could have gone to a hotel down the street and they would have loved it just as much,” she said.

The takeaway? Let it be a family discussion. “Say, hey look, we have 500 bucks, do you guys want to go on vacation? And if so, where do we go?”

Chances are the kids won't opt for the pricey locales and destinations that the adults will. Even better, said Carlson, “Having the kids' input into what matters to them is more meaningful than anything in terms of the dollar amounts. It's the memories you make and the experiences you have.”

A road trip might be a good option, especially with these tips to save money along the way.

If the family decides to do something bigger, Carlson suggests saving a bit each month and in a year, you'll have the amount you need. “Put it away where you don't get tempted to spend it.”

Don't Let Social Media Sway You

After not traveling, it may seem like everyone is out and about. It's easy for FOMO to take over.

Don't be fooled.

Social media “is a perfectionist's worst nightmare because you compare your worst to someone else's best,” Carlson said.

She suggests instead of looking at everyone else's experiences, find your own. That might mean booking a nearby hotel (with a pool!), ordering pizza, and having a family movie night.

Protect Your Investment with Travel Insurance

No matter what you decide to do, protecting the money you invest in travel is important.

That means buying travel insurance, mainly in case you need to cancel or change your plans or if you get sick or injured on your vacation.

According to Squaresmouth, an online tool for quoting, comparing, and buying travel insurance, many destinations and cruise lines are now requiring proof of travel insurance mainly to make sure they're covered if they get sick while traveling. This includes many Caribbean destinations that are popular because of their proximity to the United States and their openness to tourists.

Buying a policy should add about 4% to the cost of the trip, the company says.

Amazing Journeys' Asman recommends that whatever travel insurance you buy it includes cancellation coverage and lists COVID-19 as a covered reason, so if you or a travel companion is diagnosed with COVID-19 prior to departure, you can cancel.

Some policies will cover cancellations for any reason, but those will cost more — up to about 40%. And if you do cancel, you might not get the total amount back, just a percentage.

Asman adds that it's important to look for coverage that will cover medical treatment and/or hospitalization when you're away from home, and to make sure that includes treatment for COVID-19. "I always recommend cancellation insurance," she said.

Now Take That Vacation! Just Make Sure You Can Afford It

There are many things you can do and places you can go, even if it isn't an around-the-world cruise. It will still be fun.

"By now, everyone needs a vacation, and that's totally fine," said Carlson. "But do it within your means."

After many months of going nowhere, Amazing Journeys' first group trip finally hit the road for South Dakota's Mount Rushmore.

"We are just over the moon," Asman said. "People are just so excited to get out and be together."

Tiffani Sherman is a Florida-based freelance reporter with more than 25 years of experience writing about finance, health, travel and other topics.
