

8 Cheap Beach Vacation Spots



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You could shell out thousands of dollars to stick your toes in the sand for a long weekend. Hotel rooms at prime beach destinations can go for hundreds of dollars a night, bringing the total for just a place to sleep to almost \$2,000.

But you don't have to spend a fortune to get to the sea, sand and sun. There are deals to be had where rooms at beach destinations cost much less, both domestically and internationally.

"Our analysis of Hotels.com and Vrbo data shows that travelers can still find beachfront hotels and beach house rentals under \$300 a night in top destinations across the U.S., Europe, and Southeast Asia for mid-August," Melanie Fish, Hotels.com and Vrbo travel expert, said in an email to NerdWallet.

Here are a few suggestions for cheap beach vacations based on data from Expedia, an online travel booking platform, about some of the best deals out there.

It's still possible to find domestic beach destinations for \$200 or less a night this summer. We looked at the average price for August 15-16.

These prices and locations are just a snapshot and a few suggestions. They might not be available when you look to make a reservation.

And something else to keep in mind: At these prices you might not be able to step foot out of your hotel and be right on the sand.

Panama City Beach has 27 miles of shoreline along the Gulf of Mexico, so there are plenty of different beaches to find the atmosphere you're looking for. There are plenty of beachfront restaurants for a more lively vibe or state parks and an island only accessible by boat for a quiet getaway.

Vacation rentals in Panama City Beach, Florida, average \$160 for the night of Aug. 15.

Over on the Atlantic Ocean coastline of Florida, Expedia found an average nightly rate under \$200 (\$173 to be exact) for hotels in West Palm Beach, Florida, for the night of Aug. 15. West Palm Beach is a city with plenty of waterfront restaurants and views on the Intracoastal Waterway. Plus, it's close to gorgeous beaches on some nearby barrier islands, including Jupiter and Palm Beach.

Outside of Florida, the Outer Banks in North Carolina, also offer some affordable rates under \$200 for vacation rentals. On the night of Aug. 15, the average vacation rental rate is \$185 for the night.

The Outer Banks is perfect for families looking for a quiet place to spend time together and go to the beach, maybe surf the sand dunes and fly kites. There are also some small beach towns and attractions like historic lighthouses and the site of the Wright brothers' first flight.

If you'd prefer an urban beach location, the big cities in Florida might be more affordable than you think. Miami, Fort Lauderdale and Tampa all have average room rates under \$250 per night for the night of Aug. 15.

Alabama might be slightly closer or more affordable for some travelers, depending where they are coming from. Vrbo vacation rental rates average \$190 per night and the beaches have soft white sand and gentle surf since it's on the Gulf of Mexico.

If you'd rather travel internationally in August, check out some of these destinations.

Expedia shows an incredible average rate of \$91 a night for Aug. 15 to Aug. 16 in Pattaya, Thailand, but August is the rainy season in Thailand. September or October is a shoulder season that might give travelers better chances of sunny days.

Pattaya is a lively (and crowded) beach destination that's famous for water sports and a bustling beachfront area of hotels, restaurants and souvenir shops.

You can also get there from Bangkok without taking a ferry or another flight. It's about a 2.5-hour drive from Bangkok without traffic.

Just keep in mind, while the rooms might be cheap, the plane tickets are not. A flight from L.A. to Bangkok starts at about \$800 round-trip and would require at least one stop.

If you don't mind adding another flight, Phuket, Thailand, is another beach city with average hotel rates of \$122 for the night of Aug. 15.

The North Aegean Islands, including islands such as Ikaria, Samos, Limnos and others, can give travelers the Greek island experience at a very affordable rate. The average nightly rate is just \$189 per night. These islands are known for the crystal-clear waters and charming villages. Some beaches are sandy while others are pebbly.

Crete, a much larger island of Greece, also has affordable vacation rentals, with an average daily rate of \$240.

Closer to the U.S., the Dominican Republic has excellent beaches, and it's an easy flight from the East Coast of the U.S. This coastal city is known for its Victorian architecture, which makes it feel more historic than some of the other beach towns on this list. Visitors can stay in the city or at the beachfront hotels or all-inclusive properties outside the city center.