

The Economic Times

How to Travel on a Shoestring Budget

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How to travel on a shoestring budget

International travel can be an expensive affair. Here are a few ways to make it easier on the pocket.

ARUSHI NAYYAR

Travelling around the world figures on most people's bucket list, but international travel doesn't come cheap. It can take years of planning and saving up, especially if you're a student. Here are a few things you can do to go on that adventure without burning a hole in your pocket.

Home exchanges

If you are open to it, a home exchange could save you a small fortune in hotel charges, restaurant bills and transportation costs, as well as offer a more immersive travel experience than a hotel would. However, keep in mind that enlisting for a home exchange also means opening your home to strangers.

Dedicated portals such as *HomeExchange.com* let you list your home and match you with other members who have the same requirements as you. You can choose property type and location, and establish the specifics of the exchange (details such as swapping of cars, whether or not your guest can smoke or drink in your home, simultaneity of exchange, reimbursement in case there are damage, etc.) through the portal. "The number of properties listed on our site from India has increased by over 80% in the past 18 months," says Debbie Woskow, CEO, *LoveHomeSwap.com*. "We have a wide range of homes available—everything from urban city pads to mountain escapes," she adds.

Volunteering abroad

Many organisations, including British Council, AFS, AIESEC, and SMILE, offer opportunities for students to travel abroad and con-

tribute to fields ranging from photography to social awareness and healthcare. "What makes volunteer programmes so popular among students is that they let them visit and work in exotic destinations at a very low cost," says Tushar Jain, President, AIESEC, in IIT Delhi.

Such programmes provide accommodation, meals and in some cases, even travel expenses. For Abhishek Popli, who visited Japan for three weeks for an internship through AFS and stayed with a host family, everything was paid for, including his flight tickets. "My out-of-pocket expenses only amounted to ₹15,000," says Popli.

Travel credit cards

One of the largest expenses associated with travelling abroad is that of airline tickets. One way to make air travel cheaper is to convince your parents to switch to travel credit cards, which reward users with a specific number of points at the outset, and add more every time the card is swiped. The number of reward points awarded per transaction depends on company policy.

For instance, JetPrivilege HDFC Bank World Credit Card earns you 6 JPMiles for every retail transaction of ₹150, and 18 JPMiles for every ₹150 spent on booking flight tickets on *jetairways.com*. So, if your parents spend ₹3 lakh in a year, you can get ticket to Singapore for free (see table). "The benefits of these cards can be maximised by booking on the weekends or during off season," says Adhil Shetty, CEO, *BankBazaar.com*. These cards also offer access to airport lounges.

However, most travel cards restrict you to using accumulated points to buy tickets only from a specific airline.



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The study route

Scholarships are a great way to travel and learn at the same time. A wide range of scholarships are available for students of varying caliber, many of them specifically for students from developing countries. While they might not cover all expenses, they can make it much more affordable. Sarang Gupta, who went to Germany with

a scholarship from Max Muller Bhavan, says, "Everything was paid for and I ended up spending only €100 (₹7,500) for my two-week stay in Bremen."

Please send your feedback to etwealth@timesgroup.com

EARNING REWARD POINTS CAN FLY YOU TO SINGAPORE

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