

How to Save Money at Amusement Parks

A trip to an amusement park can cost hundreds of dollars, but smart shopping and crafty hacks can cut your expenses dramatically. Purchase your tickets in advance and schedule your trip at a lower-volume time of the year. See if any...

Method 1 of 3:

Saving Money on Admission

1.



Purchase your tickets in advance. The number one way to save money at amusement parks is to avoid buying your tickets the day of your trip. Some amusement parks offer discounts on any tickets purchased online.^[1]

1. By planning and purchasing in advance, you'll be able to check for flash sales, special discounts, and you can schedule your trip at the most affordable time.

2.



See if your memberships offer special discounts. Organizations like the National Education Association (NEA), American Automobile Association (AAA), and AARP (formerly the American Association of Retired Persons) offer members special discounts. Check with these and other organizations to see if you're eligible for any deals.^[2]

1. Deeper discounts are sometimes offered to members on specific days of the week.
2. Some credit card companies also partner with major amusement parks and offer their cardholders special offers when you purchase tickets with that card.^[3]

3.



Find coupons online and through the park's social media feeds. Online deals are easy to come by, so keep an eye on sites like Groupon, LivingSocial, Undercover Tourist, and RetailMeNot. Some of the best deals can also be found on amusement parks' social media feeds.^[4]

1. If you have a specific park in mind, follow their Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, and download their mobile app.

2. You can also look for coupons offered by an amusement park's partners, like fast food chains or beverage companies.



Get multi-day or annual passes. If you're open to a weekend or week-long trip, research the park's multi-day pass options. Many offer a third day free when you purchase a two day pass. Typically, the more days the pass covers, the deeper the discounts.^[5]

1. Chain amusement parks, like Six Flags, usually honor season passes at all of their locations. Season passes also typically come with extra perks, like parking deals and exclusive ride times, so splurging on them might be worth your while.^[6]



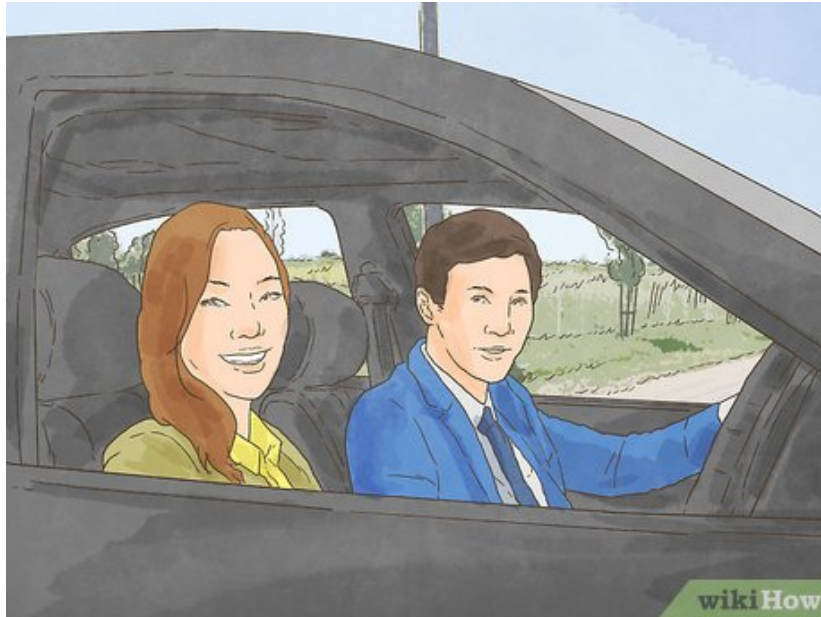
Schedule your visit at a lower-volume time. Amusement parks have become experts at increasing attendance through discounts and special events, so there's not really a true off season anymore. However, you can still find deals and smaller crowds during lower-volume times, which include mid-January through mid-February, late August through September, and early December.^[7]

1. You can find reliable crowd calendars at TouringPlans.com to see how busy a major amusement park usually is on a given day of the year.^[8]
2. If possible, book your trip on weekdays for the deepest discounts.^[9]

Method 2 of 3:

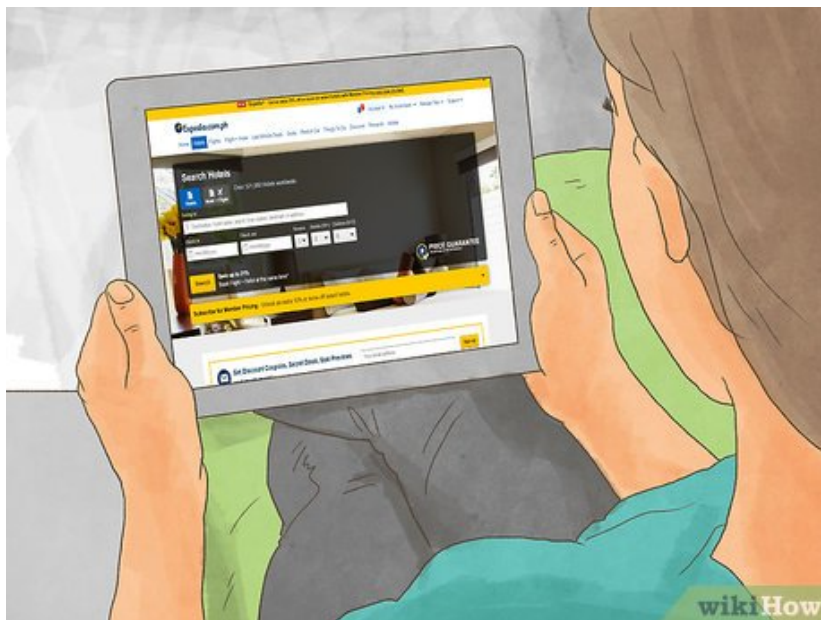
Saving on Travel and Lodging

1.



Carpool or take public transit. If you have lots of people joining your amusement park trip, try to fill up a van instead of taking two cars. That way, you'll cut your parking costs in half. If there's a bus or rail line nearby, use public transit to get out of parking costs altogether.^[10]

2.



Check for hotel deals and packages. If you're planning a weekend or week-long vacation, look for packages and deals before you book a hotel. Some on-site or nearby hotels will offer discounts on tickets, express passes, and other perks.^[11]

1. While usually more expensive, an on-site hotel might offer perks worth the extra cost, plus save you money elsewhere, such as on car rental or parking fees.^[12]



Look for a nearby hotel with a free shuttle. Many hotels located near major amusement parks offer free shuttles to and from the park. If you can use a free shuttle, you'll eliminate the need to rent a car and save a bundle on parking fees.^[13]

1. Check potential hotels' websites or call their office to find out if they offer free shuttles. Even if a shuttle isn't free, see if using it will cost less than parking.



Take advantage of your hotel's amenities. Water rides often cost extra at amusement parks. Instead of paying for an extra pass, head to your hotel's pool after going on all of the park's regular rides. If your

hotel has a fridge, store inexpensive meals and snacks, like sandwiches and fruit, to cut your food budget.
[14]

Method 3 of 3:

Trying Amusement Park Hacks



Bring refillable water bottles. Almost all amusement parks have water fountains or will fill a cup of water for free at concession stands. Instead of forking over two or three dollars for a bottle of water, bring a refillable container to quench your thirst.^[15]

1. To be on the safe side, check the park's policies to make sure they allow outside beverages.



Check the park's outside food policy in advance. Buying food at park concession stands will cost an arm and a leg if you're feeding an entire family. Some parks allow guests to bring outside food, which you can either keep on hand or store in a locker.^[16]

1. Even if you can't bring food into the park, you can store food in a cooler in your car. Just make sure you can re-enter the park (preferably without waiting in line) after you head to the car for a lunch break.



3.

Purchase souvenirs online after your trip. One of the easiest ways to cut your amusement park budget is to skip the souvenirs altogether. If you or your kids really need a knick-knack or tee shirt, try to find your desired items on eBay instead of purchasing them at full retail price at the park's gift shop.^[17]

1. If you do plan on buying souvenirs on-site, give your kids a firm souvenir budget before you enter the park.^[18]

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