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BT HANDBOOK

# How to Spend Your Tax Rebate

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by Liz Webber | Monday, April 28, 2008

In May, the Internal Revenue Service begins mailing out tax rebates of up to \$600 per person to help Americans weather the current economic slump. We can't think of a better way to take advantage of the extra cash—and grease the U.S. economy—than to spend it on a summer getaway. We've priced out seven possible tax-rebate trips, some for couples and others for families of four.

The itineraries are based on the assumption that couples will receive \$1,200, plus \$300 for each qualifying child (so \$1,800 for a family of four). But we've factored in plenty of wriggle room for those who don't end up getting the maximum amount—and there are cheaper hotels and restaurants you can choose, if you don't want to blow the whole rebate.

Read the fine print on the rebate at [irs.ustreas.gov](http://irs.ustreas.gov) and estimate how much you'll receive with the IRS's [Economic Stimulus Payment Calculator](#).

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An elevated train makes its way through Chicago (Glowimages/Getty)

## FOR TWO

### NEW YORK CITY TO D.C., 3 NIGHTS

**Getting There** The new low-fare bus company [BoltBus](#) offers one-way fares between the Big Apple and D.C. for as low as \$1.50, including fees—if you get lucky and book weeks in advance. But even average one-way fares are reasonable: \$7.50-\$20.50, with last minute prices topping out at \$22.50.

**Where to Stay** Three nights at the [Hotel George](#), a hip boutique hotel on Capitol Hill, comes to \$787, for a King Deluxe Room with a plasma TV and leopard-print bathrobes. A weekday wine hour in the lobby, a complimentary daily shoeshine, and in-room spa services (for an additional fee) are added perks.

**Something Extra** With the money you save on transportation, you'll have plenty left over to splurge on a romantic dinner. [Citronelle](#), a James Beard Award winner, is one of D.C.'s ritziest restaurants. The "Dinner à la Carte" three-course prix fixe menu starts at \$95 per person; choose from main courses like veal with steak and sweetbreads or lamb in a white bean and jalapeño sauce.

**Freebie** Watch the cute pandas play on the Asia Trail at the [National Zoo](#), which charges no admission. Tip: Take the [Metro's](#) Red Line to the Cleveland Park stop; it's actually closer to the National Zoo entrance than the Woodley Park-Zoo stop, and getting out there will save you an uphill walk.

**Total: \$983 (\$491.50 per person)**  
4x\$1.50 (2 round-trip tickets) + \$787 (hotel) + 2x\$95 (dinner) = \$983

- [Sleep Tomorrow: Late-Night D.C.](#)

### MILWAUKEE TO CHICAGO, 3 NIGHTS

**Getting There** Like BoltBus, [Megabus](#) offers low-fare bus service: One-way fares between Milwaukee and Chicago start at \$1.50 but will most likely fall between \$3.50 and \$5.50 (last minute fares run as high as \$12.50). Megabus has routes all across the Midwest and a few in the Northeast and the West—the Milwaukee-Chicago leg is among the cheapest.

**Where to Stay** Treat yourself to the [Palmer House Hilton](#), which earned a [Historic Hotels of America](#) designation for preserving its landmark beaux arts architecture and two-story, gold-tinged lobby. Pause on your way in to admire the ceiling's opulent scenes from Greek mythology. The hotel, which has more than 1,600 rooms, is right by Millennium Park and the theater district and costs \$758 for a three-night stay.

**Something Extra** The Chicago Architecture Foundation's two-hour [Modern Skyscrapers walking tour](#)—one of 85 led by experts—includes interior and exterior views of the Richard J. Daley Center and 1 South Dearborn tower (\$15). Make a post-tour stop at [Prairie Avenue Bookshop](#), an independent store specializing in books on architecture and design, where you can read while perched on Le Corbusier and Stanley Tigerman furniture.

**Freebie** The Chicago Gospel Music Festival, held in May, is one of many free events held in downtown's [Millennium Park](#), whose grounds include art installations and a garden. Download a self-guided audio tour [here](#).

Piedmont

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**Total: \$794 (\$397 per person)**  
 4x\$150 (2 round-trip tickets) + \$758 (hotel) + 2x\$15 (architecture tour) = \$794

• [Eat Like a Local: Chicago](#)

**DENVER TO SAN DIEGO, 3 NIGHTS**

**Getting There** Round-trip tickets from Denver to San Diego on [Southwest](#) are \$159 (including taxes and fees) in early June. Fares go up later in the month and stay high throughout the summer, but it's possible to find some special Web-only rates for as low as \$219 in July and August.

**Where to Stay** The [Sofia Hotel](#) is a good bet for mod, earth-toned accommodations in the swinging Gaslamp Quarter. Three nights will set you back \$557 midweek (\$647 Thursday-Sunday). If you prefer to stay on the waterfront—and within walking distance of SeaWorld—try the 10-acre [Dana Hotel](#) on Mission Bay for \$638 midweek (\$750 Thursday-Sunday).

**Something Extra** The lowest price for a four-day economy-size car rental on Kayak is \$75 (Advantage Rent-a-Car). Use your wheels to explore San Diego's [many beaches](#), all of which are free to the public. Watch seals and surfers on the beaches of La Jolla or take a dip at Coronado Municipal Beach. It's right by the iconic [Hotel del Coronado](#), which has hosted European royalty and U.S. presidents and formed the backdrop of Billy Wilder's *Some Like It Hot*.

**Freebie** The [Museum of Contemporary Art](#) has two locations—one on a cliff in La Jolla with breathtaking ocean views, and another in downtown San Diego. Both offer free admission on Thursdays, 5 p.m.-7 p.m., with free tours at 6 p.m. (Members and those ages 25 and under get in free anytime.)

**Total: \$950 (\$475 per person)**  
 2x\$159 (airfare) + \$557 (midweek hotel) + \$75 (car rental) = \$950

• [25 Reasons We Love San Diego](#)

**BOSTON TO BAR HARBOR, 4 NIGHTS**

**Getting There** The five-hour, 280-mile drive from Boston to Bar Harbor, Maine, will cost about \$70 in gas for the round trip in a late model midsize car, according to AAA's [Fuel Cost Calculator](#).

**Where to Stay** The [Love in Bloom package](#) at Bar Harbor's [Mira Monte Inn](#) covers all the romantic-getaway basics. You'll get four nights' accommodations, wine and cheese nightly, fresh flowers in your room, breakfast daily, and three or four activities of your choice. Options include tickets to the Acadia Repertory Theatre, one-day bike rentals, and dinner for two at a local restaurant. The package starts at \$702 (including taxes) for May 25-June 21 and at \$877 for June 22-October 25. You can browse similar deals throughout the U.S. on [BnB Finder.com](#).

**Something Extra** In surrounding [Acadia National Park](#), you'll find opportunities for hikes, picnics, scenic drives, and horse-drawn-carriage rides. A seven-day entry pass costs \$10 per car May 1-June 22, and \$20 June 23-early October.

**Freebie** The [Bar Harbor Brewing Company](#), a microbrewery run by a husband-and-wife team, has daily tastings of its stouts and ales from mid-May to October.

**Total: \$779 (\$389.50 per person)**  
 \$70 (gas) + \$702 (hotel) + \$10 (Acadia park pass) = \$782

• [Road Trip: Maine's Mid-Coast](#)

**FOR FAMILIES OF FOUR**

**DETROIT TO ORLANDO, 4 NIGHTS**

**Getting There** A search on Kayak found a round-trip fare from Detroit to Orlando in early June of \$129 (Northwest), including taxes and fees.

**Where to Stay** A family of four can stay four nights at the strategically located [Best Western MovieLand](#) on International Drive—opposite Wet 'n Wild Water Park and with free scheduled transportation to Universal Orlando and SeaWorld—for \$382 in late June. Weekend rates may be higher, and the base rate goes up slightly in July.

**Something Extra** If you book online at least two days in advance, a two-park, unlimited seven-day pass to [Universal Studios and Islands of Adventure](#) costs \$86. (In comparison, a two-park pass for just one day costs \$90 when purchased at the gate.) The [I-Ride Trolley](#) stops at all the major attractions and hotels along International Drive, including the Best Western MovieLand, so you won't need to rent a car. A single ride is \$1, or you can buy a three-day pass for \$5. Kids under 12 ride free when accompanied by a paying adult.

**Freebie** The March of the Peabody Ducks at the [Peabody Hotel](#), also on International Drive, takes place twice daily. Watch as the hotel's resident waterfowl traipse along the red carpet on their way to and from the lobby fountain.

**Total: \$1,252 (\$313 per person)**  
 4x\$129 (airfare) + \$382 (hotel) + 4x\$86 (4 park passes) + 2x\$5 (three-day adult trolley passes) = \$1,252

• [25 Reasons We Love Orlando](#)

**L.A. TO SEATTLE, 4 NIGHTS**

**Getting There** Round-trip tickets from Los Angeles to Seattle in early June are \$179 (Virgin American or American), and a five-day economy-size car rental is \$72 (Enterprise), according to searches on Kayak.

**Where to Stay** At the 116-room [GuestHouse International Inn & Suites](#) in the suburb of Renton, about 11 miles from downtown Seattle, four nights for a family of four costs \$382, with breakfast daily included. If you'd rather ditch the rental car, consider the [Sixth Avenue Inn](#), a short walk from [Pike Place Market](#) and the [Experience Music Project](#). Four nights are \$620 if you book through the Convention and Visitors Bureau's [Seattle Super Saver program](#). The site is useful for browsing hotels by neighborhood and price range (but the price for budget hotels like the GuestHouse will likely be the same as what you'd find on the hotel's website).

**Something Extra** Rent two double kayaks from the [Aqua Verde Café and Paddle Club](#) on

ex. Las Vegas, Paris  Rooms

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Portage Bay, about a 15-minute drive from downtown. You can fuel up with fish tacos at the café and then paddle in the direction of your choice: toward houseboats or views of the city skyline, or off to Foster Island and the [Arboretum](#). Rates start at \$18 an hour for a double kayak.

**Freebie** The nine-acre [Olympic Sculpture Park](#) opened in 2007 as an outpost of the [Seattle Art Museum](#), about a mile to the northwest. A Z-shaped path snakes through the park from an exhibition pavilion down to Elliott Bay. Works like the geometric forms of Beverly Pepper and Mark di Suvero's sculptures in motion are scattered throughout.

**Total: \$1,219 (\$304.75 per person)**

$4 \times \$179$  (airfare) +  $\$72$  (car rental) +  $\$382$  (hotel) +  $2 \times \$18$  (kayak rentals) =  $\$1,206$

• [Eat Like a Local: Seattle](#)

#### HOUSTON TO NEW ORLEANS, 5 NIGHTS

**Getting There** It's a five-and-a-half hour drive (348 miles) from Houston to the Big Easy.

According to AAA's [Fuel Cost Calculator](#), a late model station wagon will need about \$100 worth of gas for the round-trip journey.

**Where to Stay** Local [Marriott hotels](#) have teamed up to offer the [Big Easy Spirit to Serve Getaway](#). Each participating property will donate \$50 per night's stay to the local chapter of Habitat for Humanity and will also give guests a list of local volunteer opportunities. The package rate comes to \$913 for five nights (\$159 per night) for a family of four at the New Orleans Marriott in the French Quarter, which includes breakfast for two adults. Breakfast for kids under 12 is an additional \$6 per day at the hotel's restaurant, and valet parking is \$30 per night.

**Something Extra** Kids and parents alike will dig [Mardi Gras World](#), an artists' workshop and museum of memorable Mardi Gras floats. Tickets are \$17 for adults and \$10 for kids aged 4-11.

**Freebie** Hourlong tours through the French Quarter into Jackson Square depart twice daily from the French Quarter Visitor Center and are led by rangers from [Jean Lafitte National Historical Park](#).

**Total: \$1,217 (\$304.25 per person)**

$\$100$  (gas) +  $\$913$  (hotel) +  $5 \times \$30$  (parking) +  $2 \times \$17$  (2 adult tickets to Mardi Gras World) +  $2 \times \$10$  (2 kids tickets) =  $\$1,217$

• [Fresh Air: New Orleans by Bicycle](#)

**Note:** *This story was accurate when it was published. Please be sure to confirm all rates and details directly with the companies in question before planning your trip.*

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