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Personal Finance: Deal of the Day: Hotels Offering Gas Incentives to Lure Guests

DEAL OF THE DAY

Hotels Offering Gas Incentives to Lure Guests

By [Kelli B. Grant](#) | [Kelli B. Grant Archive](#) | Published: April 14, 2008

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SKYROCKETING PRICES ON everything from gas to food will force many families to look no further than their own backyard when it comes to planning their vacation this summer.

With flight cancellations, exorbitant fuel costs and bankruptcies crippling the [airline industry](#), airfare is getting even pricier and planes more overcrowded. While on the road, gas prices have hit a national average of \$3.37 — and they're only expected to go higher. By summer, drivers could pay as much as \$3.60 a gallon, with many regions topping \$4, according to the Energy Information Administration's Short-Term Energy and Summer Fuels Outlook.

Oddly enough, the pain at the pump may help some summer travelers actually *save* on their getaways. From big-name hotels to tiny bed & breakfasts, the lodging industry has started rolling out incentives that help guests offset some of the costs of hitting the road. While some properties are offering prepaid gas cards (ranging from \$10 to \$50), others are extending cash bonuses or reduced room rates to guests who drive a hybrid vehicle, or take a train or bus to their destination.

Subsidizing the price of gas to lure in cost-conscious guests is nothing new for the lodging industry. It's long been used as a marketing tactic to entice travelers to extend the distance they're willing to travel and hopefully prod them into considering pricier room rates. However, in the past these promotions were few and far between until prices at the pump started jumping, says Bjorn Hanson, a hospitality consultant for PricewaterhouseCoopers. Now, hundreds of properties across the country have jumped on board.

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"Hotel managers uniformly have incentive to put heads in beds," says Mark Eble, regional vice president for PKF Hospitality Research, an Indianapolis-based industry consulting group. "Hotel rooms are the ultimate perishable commodity — they make eggs look sturdy. If you don't sell the rooms tonight, they're gone forever." Hoteliers' biggest concern is that, should gas hit a nationwide average of \$3.50, guests will start cancelling reservation en masse. (A price of \$3.50 a gallon is considered the psychological tipping point for consumers. At this price, most drivers will decide to drive less rather than cut back on other expenses, says Troy Green, a spokesman for AAA.)

Hanson and Eble project that, as gas prices climb higher, even more travel incentives will be rolled out.

For consumers who are tempted by gas promotions, a smart strategy is to shop around and consider just how much that \$50 prepaid gas card will take off of the final bill. Fees like parking, for example, could potentially offset the discount. "When you get right down to it, a \$50 gas card is \$50," points out Anne Banas, executive editor for [SmarterTravel.com](#), a travel advice site. "There might be another hotel nearby that's cheaper to begin with, which would give you more to spend on gas and other parts of your vacation." It's also important to call the property directly to confirm details of the offer, including which brand of stations its prepaid card is good at, and whether they require proof of mileage or the amount of gas used during your trip.

Here are a few current deals that can help make your summer road trip more affordable:

Location	Details
C.W. Worth House , Wilmington, N.C.	Guests who bring a gas receipt dated with the day of arrival will be reimbursed the total — up to \$30 — at checkout. Offer good through July 2, 2008.
High Haven House Bed & Breakfast Inn , Vineyard Haven, Mass.	Visitors from New England get a \$75 gas card. Those traveling from New York or farther get a \$150 gas card. Offer good through Oct. 31, 2009.
Stevenswood Lodge , Little River, Calif.	Stay for two nights and get a \$50 gas card. Show up in a hybrid vehicle, and earn an additional \$100 cash rebate. Offer good through June 19, 2008.
The Wallingford Victorian , Wallingford, Conn.	Guests who travel to this B&B by train (the station is five blocks away), get a 10% discount off the room rate. Regular rates start at \$129. Offer good through Dec. 31, 2008.



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DJTA	4837.04	▲	23.18
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* Data from individual properties.

(For more deals, check the gas promotion sections on BedandBreakfast.com and BnBFinder.com.)

Hotel Promotions	
Chain	Details
Hilton Hotels	Select locations are offering gas cards with any stay. At the Hilton Santa Fe, for example, guests receive a \$20 gas card for each night they stay. Offer good through March 1, 2009.
Holiday Inn	Select locations offering gas cards with any stay. At the Holiday Inn San Francisco Fisherman's Wharf, guests receive a \$25 gas card. Offer good through Dec. 31, 2008.
Marriott	Select locations offering gas cards with any stay. At the Renaissance Portsmouth Hotel & Waterfront Conference Center in Portsmouth, Va., use promotion code P53 for a gas package including a \$25 gas card and free in-room movie. Offer good through Dec. 31, 2008.

* Data from individual properties.

Tourism Board Promotions	
City/County	Details
Branson , Mo.	Save 20 cents a gallon at the Branson 1st Stop Travel-Plex when you show your gas coupon validated by an area hotel. Coupon is valid for seven days after check-in. Offer good through Dec. 31, 2008.
Lancaster County , Pa.	Stay a night at one of more than 30 participating hotels, and earn a \$10 gas card. Stay two or more nights, and get a \$25 card. Offer good through June 30, 2008.

* Data from individual properties.

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