



On the Road? Hoteliers Say 'Tank You' With Gas Specials

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"No doubt about it," says Thom Puccio, director of sales and marketing of Crystal Gateway (Washington, D.C.) Marriott, "travelers out there are looking at every deal to lessen the gas impact on their wallets."

And Marriott, like many in the tourist industry, is offering incentives to vacationers to alleviate the pain of obscene gas prices. Indeed, one-third of Americans canceled or shortened their recent July 4 weekend getaways, according to travel-industry sources.



Because gas is so expensive, people tend to stay closer to home. So, a \$25 or \$50 gas card certainly helps for those seeking some relief from summer heat, in addition to a well-earned vacation.

Short distances from Philadelphia include the beautiful beaches of New Jersey and Maryland; the enchanting Pocono Mountains; and the beauty, culture and history of Washington, D.C.

The incentives are out there: Just ask!

High on the list of offerings is the gas card available at many (soon it will be most) hotels, motels and B&Bs throughout the United States.

For instance, more than 50 Marriott hotels in downtown Washington, D.C., and in the nearby suburbs in Virginia and Maryland, are offering the "Cars Eat Free!" program.

Available through Sept. 1, Marriott's summer savings package includes deluxe accommodations for two and a \$25 gas card from Chevron. The "Cars Eat Free!" package rates are per room, exclude tax and gratuities, and is available Thursday through Sunday.

For information, go to: www.carseatfree.com

Puccio points out that from the travel industry's point of view, summer for hotel business is a high-demand time of the year for leisure travelers. But this year, those travelers are "being squeezed on multiple levels. So there are many plans out there to lessen the burden at a time when we really need the business," he says.



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The offer seems to be working, reports Puccio. In just a few weeks, "Cars Eat Free" has booked 1,550 rooms.

Marriott, of course, is not the only one offering prepaid gas cards to keep tourists on the road. (Ironically, there's a plan afoot in the old Borscht Belt to add a mega-resort attraction that would lure visitors because gas is so high; it's a short ride for a visit to a region that, they hope, would rival Las Vegas one day in gambling.)

Choice Hotels International, which franchises more than 5,000 hotels in America, is offering a \$50 gas card or other rewards, provided one books three separate stays in the following hotels in the United States, Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean: Comfort Inn, Comfort Suites, Quality, Sleep Inn, Clarion or Cambria Suites. One must be a member of Choice Privileges Rewards.

Check the site at: Choicehotels.com or call 1-800-4-Choice.

The motivation is to keep valued travelers, according to Rocco Loverro, Choice media spokesperson, who added that the consumer is "going to hear more about these plans in the future."

And how's this? If you're traveling south this summer, the Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay, down by the bay in Maryland, (www.chesapeakebay.hyatt.com) is offering not only a gas card for travelers/guests but is getting into the green movement, too, by throwing in an extra \$50 card for anyone arriving the "hip" way, in a hybrid car.

And if you're really in it for the long haul, and a trip to Colorado doesn't seem a bit much, the Sylvan Dale Guest Ranch (www.sylvandale.com) will, with proof of gas purchases provided, reimburse guests up to \$200 for their gas costs.

Destination Hotels & Resorts (www.destinationhotels.com) is getting into the action, too, offering \$25 gas cards when you check in to any of its luxury resorts around the nation. **BnBfinder.com offers ways to beat high gas prices this summer while enjoying a bed-and-breakfast getaway. "One Tank Trips" are B&B destination -- vacations that make it easy to go on holiday without traveling far. Innkeepers are offering gas-saving deals, rebates and promotions, thus giving travelers another great reason to stay at a B&B. Interestingly, urban inns are often accessible by public transportation.**

And who said you have to get in a car and drive to your destination? Remember public transportation. Beacon House Inn in Sea Girt, in Spring Lake, N.J., will hand you a \$50 credit toward public transportation to their inn. All you have to do is show them your bus- or train-ticket receipts and book a minimum three-night stay (weekend or midweek) until Sept. 15.

To find out about this offer, go to: www.beaconhouseinn.com.

At another popular spot in New Jersey, the Web site at Scarboroughinn.com proclaimed an "Ease the Pain at the Pump Special." As long as the price of gas is more than \$3.50 per gallon in Ocean City, N. J., the innkeepers will give you a \$50 gift card for gas for staying three or more nights, midweek.

"Just like everyone else, our clients are feeling the pinch," said Gus Bruno, who says that he will keep this incentive on throughout the summer.

Info? Call 1-800-258-1558.

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