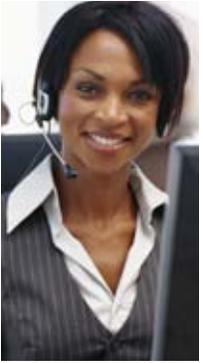




# BalanceWorks® Newsletter

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## Vacation Planning Tips

As the weather gets warmer and spring is in the air, many people begin dreaming of vacation. Some people travel over Spring Break while many others plan summer getaways. While vacations themselves are incredibly fun, planning for them can be quite stressful. Luckily with a few simple tips, you can ensure that your planning and your trip go smoothly.

### *Where, When & Why*

The first step in planning a vacation is deciding where you want to go, when you want to go, and what you want to do while on vacation. It sounds simple, but the world is a big place and there are so many amazing places to visit and things to do. It's helpful to first decide what you want to do on vacation – sightsee, ski, lay on the beach, be pampered, take in some culture, have an adventure, etc and then research which destinations provide the recreation options you are looking for. It's also important to consider how far you want to travel. If you are looking for a tropical getaway and live in New York, but you want to keep your travel time under 4 hours, Hawaii might be off the table, but Florida would be a viable option.

### *Budget*

Determining your budget is a very important step in the vacation planning process. If you are worried about spending money the whole time you will not be able to enjoy yourself. When planning your potential vacation remember to include all the potential fees in your budgeting. Fees can include airfare, accommodations, food and beverages, admission to attractions or events, a passport if you're leaving the country, a car rental or fare for buses, trains or cabs, and other trip specific costs. Also, always remember to bring some extra cash for "emergencies".

There really is a vacation for every budget! You can save up for an extravagant African Safari or a luxurious trip to Fiji, if you have some money set aside, but don't want to break the bank you can take a tropical cruise or spend some time at a ski lodge, even if you don't have much money to spare you can go camping or relax at a bed and breakfast for a long weekend.

Most people only have a few weeks off each year so regardless of your budget; you should still plan a trip that reflects what you want to do. For example, if you

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want to immerse yourself in culture there is a way to do that with or without a lot of extra cash. If you have a good amount of money saved you can take a trip and explore the historic cities of Paris, Crete, or Milan. For a less pricey option, spend a few days in the nearest big city, Washington DC, Miami, NYC, San Francisco, Philadelphia, and Dallas are all extremely culturally rich. Even if you have no money to take a trip, plan a “staycation” where you stay in your home, rent a bunch of foreign films, cook exotic dishes, and even decorate your home to reflect your favorite cultural destination!

### *Safety*

If you plan on vacationing outside of the United States it is important to make sure it's an area that is safe for traveling. Check out the State Departments Travel Website for current travel warnings and alerts. This site places any major warnings or alerts on its homepage. It also allows you to search any country or region for specific information on safety, crime, medical alerts, and more. It is also important to remember that different countries have their own set of standards and etiquette. Certain countries have expectations and rules when it comes to issues such as dress, showing affection in public, littering, and much more. Check out this great website on travel etiquette all over the world to help you stay safe, respect the culture and of course get the most out of your trip!

### *Booking*

In most cases travelers get better rates when planning ahead as last minute airfare and hotel rates can go up when trying to book last minute. Doing research can really pay off in the long run. There are many websites where you can get reviews from real travelers before you book your vacation. If you are computer savvy and your trip consists of only a few moving pieces such as a single flight and hotel, there are a wide variety of websites that allow you to book these items yourself and even compare prices to get the best rates. However, you may want to consider a travel agent if you're planning a vacation that has a lot of different elements such as a tour through Europe. Travel agents also have inside knowledge and may be able to give you some great advice on where to eat or things to check out while on vacation. Finally, to reduce stress, be sure to stay organized throughout the booking process. Keep all of your confirmation numbers, key phone numbers, and make a record of who you corresponded with while planning. Accurate documentation will ensure that you have a smooth trip with no surprises.

Taking the time to carefully plan your trip can take most of the stress out of traveling and allow you to truly enjoy your vacation!

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