



## Cool money tips for hot summer time

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By Mark T. Berg

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It's summertime and the livin' is easy. Easy for a few maybe. But for the rest of us, the next three months will be a blur of activities: kids' soccer and baseball games, yard work and perhaps a few days of vacation. What is easy is overspending on all the special activities that make up the summer.

An interview with **Christine Walker**, author of "The Smart Mom's Guide to Staying Home: 65 Simple Ways to Thrive, Not Deprive, on One Income," unearthed loads of ideas on how to make this summer season a little easier on the pocketbook. Here's a few of her favorites:

- The garage sale season is in full swing. Look in the paper for sale notices, especially in the more affluent neighborhoods. Plan ahead and outfit your kids for next year. This is the time to buy those Halloween costumes and winter outfits.
- Check out the local library. Many, like the Wheaton Public Library, offer free summertime activities. (Visit [www.wheaton.lib.il.us](http://www.wheaton.lib.il.us) for an updated schedule.)
- Your local park district offers a menu of program options for young and old alike. (And don't forget the local community college. College of DuPage offers daytime classes: [www.cod.edu](http://www.cod.edu).) These programs are excellent alternatives to more expensive summer camps for the kids.
- Watch for special midweek promotions from local stores. For example, some Shell gas stations offer a nickel off each gallon of gas on Tuesdays. You can also reduce your oil change expense by \$5 on Tuesdays at some Jiffy Lubes.
- For stay-at-home moms and dads, theaters that are part of the Loews Cineplex offer a special program called Reel Moms. These are early matinees that cater to parents with babies. Moms and dads can enjoy the cool comfort of the theater while watching a new release at a discounted price and not worry about their infants bothering other moviegoers. Participating theaters are listed at [www.enjoytheshow.com](http://www.enjoytheshow.com).
- If you are planning a trip with children, look for the hotels that cater to them. Some chains offer meals that are free for kids. Others, such as Howard Johnsons, have created special Crayola suites designed for children with an adjoining room for the adults. Be sure and call the hotel directly when making reservations as they may offer special rates that aren't listed on their Web sites. Travel midweek for the best rates.

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- If your kids are young and don't travel well, don't let that stop you from getting out of town on a shorter trip. Look for destinations that are only three to four hours away from home.
- For last-minute travel packages, check out [www.site59.com](http://www.site59.com) . These are special deals that can't be booked more than two weeks in advance.
- When traveling, find a grocery store and shop there for easy family meals. Buying snacks or deli sandwiches and sodas at the grocery is far less expensive than vending machines, room service or dining out, not to mention saving time. If you are road tripping, just get one of those great new coolers on wheels packed with ice and you're good to go!

With a little bit of planning, even your charge cards could get a break this summer.

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