

Think Like a Tourist

By Jim and Barbara Twardowski,
Guest Contributors

Prepare yourself to think like a tourist, even while RVing. Thinking like a tourist can help you get the most pleasure and ultimate savings while traveling in your RV. By laying the groundwork, doing a little research in advance and being prepared, savvy RVers plan for activities, take advantage of bargains and are rewarded with lifelong memories.

Guidebooks

Bookstore shelves are lined with guidebooks on every major city and region. Browse for the latest versions. Before you set your heart on a particular attraction, it's prudent to call the area and verify the accuracy of the information since guidebooks are often written long before they go to press.

Newspapers

Many newspapers publish guides for visitors, too. Before setting off for a location, search for its local newspaper online at www.newslink.org. This site has links to every major paper in the U.S., as well as small-town non-dailies. Once you arrive in an unfamiliar town, pick up the alternative newspapers and visitor magazines that can be found at newsstands, coffee shops, bookstores and restaurants. These publications offer the latest news

on regional entertainment.

Convention and Visitors Bureaus

The Internet has thousands of travel-related Websites, but one of the best places to start is with a community's official source, the Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB). The simplest way to find a CVB Website is through www.officialtravelguide.com.

CVBs are eager to provide travelers with information on the historic, cultural and recreational opportunities in their communities. Most offer coupons, maps, detailed descriptions of attractions and itineraries. You may want to request a free visitor packet from the CVB by e-mail, phone or in writing. If you're already in town, call the office to determine when the visitor center is open for in-person assistance.

SeeAmerica.org

Once in a while, RVers find the need for a hotel or an airline flight. The Travel Industry Association of America (TIAA) created the www.SeeAmerica.org site to promote their more than 10,000 links to hotels, airlines, attractions, CVBs, state tourism offices and more. **SeeAmerica.org** is constantly updated. Under "Hot Travel Deals," consumers can search for savings on hotels, cruises and more.

The site is currently promoting America's 388 national parks. Just enter the name of the state(s) you will visit, and a map of the national parks pops up. Use the activity search to locate parks that match your specific interests. Click on



“Traveler Tips and Tools” to calculate the distance from one city to another, find an ATM or check current gas prices. Sign up for free newsletters and e-mail alerts from tourism Websites to keep informed of upcoming events.

City Tours

To get your bearings at a new destination, go on a sightseeing expedition. Ride a Gray Line bus around the city or take a carriage or tram ride. Ride the Ducks. The “Ducks” are amphibious vehicles used in World War II for transporting troops.

Membership Discounts

Saving money is always fashionable. It pays to take advantage of memberships from organizations that give discounts to travelers such as the American Automobile Association (AAA) (www.aaa.com), the American Association of Retired Persons (www.aarp.com) and American Express (www.americanexpress.com). Review your membership packets or visit the organizations’ Websites to learn about current offers that may be available.

Purchase a CityPass


When you are new to an area, an inexpensive way to see some of its most loved attractions is to purchase a CityPass (www.citypass.com) booklet, which can save you nearly 50 percent of your purchases in nine major cities/regions in North America.

CityPass is valid for a minimum of nine days in Atlanta, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Seattle, San Francisco, Hollywood and Southern California. One of the best reasons to buy: The bearer gets to bypass most main entrance ticket lines. CityPass booklets can be purchased in advance through the Website or at any participat-

ing attraction.

Stick to a Budget

Even without the aid of a club membership or special program, you can stick to a budget while making the most of outings. Visit popular attractions during the off-season when crowds and fees are reduced, and save money on fine dining by going to upscale restaurants for lunch instead of dinner. To sample more reasonably priced dishes and find inexpensive gifts, attend local festivals and farmers’ markets. And, if you plan to visit area museums, be sure to ask for specifics in advance; many waive admission on certain days of the week or month.

With a little advanced planning and preparation, you can take advantage of, and enjoy, popular attractions at any destination. Just remember, wherever your travels take you, imitating a tourist can enhance the journey. 

Save Up to 50 Percent with the Entertainment® Book

The Website, www.entertainment.com, offers further options. The company that makes the coupon books school-children sell for fund-raisers enables subscribers to save on everything from dining to movie tickets.

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