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## Lynn's Top Five: Planning a Very Memorable, Yet Affordable, Summer Vacation!

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homework before entering into any agreements. For inspiration and some helpful details, go to my Blog at [www.ballouplum.com](http://www.ballouplum.com), June 2010, to read all about how our clients, the Hambergs, who make home swapping not just fun, but an amazing life adventure!

4) **RETURN TO A FAVORITE PLACE RATHER THAN SOMEWHERE NEW:** Similar to the benefits of advance planning, going back to a place you have visited before provides important pre-travel information you can use to keep your expenses in check. You will already have a good idea of the places to eat, to stay, to visit and to shop, and can make cost-effective choices accordingly.

5) **TRY A "STAY" CATION!:** As CFP Board Consumer Advocate Eleanor Blayney, CFP(r) says, "Even if you follow cost-saving advice, you still may not be able to balance your vacations plans with your budget." She suggests an alternative which I can personally endorse as being a whole lot of fun. Remember that getting away can be more a state of mind than a matter of geography! Become a bona fide visitor in our own amazing Bay Area. You can even stay at a local hotel, and plan your days as a tourist, seeing and doing things you assumed you could always do later.

Wishing you all an amazing summer, with a lifetime of family memories made all the more pleasant because they didn't break the family piggy bank! Bon Voyage!

As the weather **FINALLY** begins to heat up, many of us are starting to dream about going away on vacation.

Unfortunately, soaring fuel and airfare costs have a lot of Americans wondering if they can afford to travel this summer. You can keep vacation costs reasonable with a little creativity and a lot of planning. Given that there may be no getting around the higher costs of travel - whether by car, train, or plane - you will probably need to focus on all the other expense items of your vacation for opportunities to truly keep costs in check. Let's explore a few tips so that you summer revelers can still have a relaxing vacation away from home by using creative financial planning to save money and have a great time.

1) **MAKE A PLAN:** So, maybe not the favorite approach for those of us who enjoy some spontaneity in our lives, but you can really keep costs down if you take the time to plan your every move before you start. Map out how you will spend each day of your vacation - where you will eat, what you will do, what you will buy - and approximately what each activity will cost. Knowing your costs beforehand is a powerful budgeting tool, whereas leaving everything to chance, proximity, and hunger pangs can get expensive. What's more, planning can heighten and extend the fun of the actual excursion, as any ten-year old getting ready for a trip to Disneyland can tell you!

2) **GET EVERYONE IN ON THE ACT!** If you are taking a family vacation, give everyone - even school-aged kids - budget responsibility for one aspect of the trip. Have that ten-year old manage the snack or bottled water expenses; a teen can be responsible for lunches or sightseeing expenses. You can even make it a contest: best budget manager each day gets a small "splurge allowance" (which, of course, you have already planned for!).

3) **CONSIDER A HOME SWAP OR HOSPITALITY EXCHANGE:** In the first case, you actually trade homes for a specified time with a person or family living in the area you wish to visit. In the second case, you host travelers in your home, and then are hosted by them in return. These arrangements are generally far less costly than hotels or vacation rentals. The internet has greatly facilitated and broadened the market for home exchanges, particularly in the case of foreign travel. Just exercise caution and do your

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