



Monday, May. 25, 2009

Oceanside Luxury Made Affordable (Think Mexico)

By Deirdre Van Dyk

Travel news, deals and updates for the week of May 25, 2009

AIRLINES & AIRPORTS

Pack Light. Starting in July, [US Airways](#) will increase its fee for the first checked bag from \$15 to \$20; the second-bag fee rises from \$25 to \$30. But if your bags should exceed 50 lbs., you'll be hit with a whopping \$70 fee for the first checked bag and \$80 for the second.

South American Way. [Continental](#) begins daily service from Houston to Rio de Janeiro on August 1. Flights depart at 9:15 p.m. from Houston and arrive at 9:15 a.m. Rio time.

Wired High. [Virgin America](#) has expanded Wi-Fi service to its entire fleet. You can now log on for \$12.95 on flights longer than three hours, or for \$9.95 on flights under three hours long. Wi-Fi on red-eye flights costs \$5.95. And if you just want to use your handheld device, like a BlackBerry, iPhone or cell phone, on any flight, it will cost you \$7.95.

A Shuttle Worth Flying. The [Delta Shuttle](#), which connects New York City, Boston and Washington, D.C., has lowered fares by 60% on walk-up ticket purchases. Fares between New York's LaGuardia and Boston's Logan are \$129; from LaGuardia to Reagan National Airport, it costs \$169.

Beach Bargain. [Air Tahiti Nui](#) is offering L.A. to Tahiti tickets for \$732 round-trip, if you stay four nights. Or you could try the airline's Tahiti Lover's Escape package, which includes a room at the Hilton Hotel Tahiti for \$898 round-trip from Los Angeles, including breakfast. Book by June 5 for travel through Sept. 12.

HOTELS & PACKAGES

Now that summer has unofficially kicked off, it's time to get to the shore. We've scoped out seaside destinations from California to the Caribbean, where you can catch cooling ocean breezes and — since peak summer-travel season is still a few weeks away — some good shoulder-season deals.

Wine'd Down. At [Timber Cove Inn](#), located on an outcropping above the crashing waves of the Pacific, about two hours north of San Francisco, you can luxuriate in your own private hot tub, then lounge by your in-room fireplace. The inn's Savor Sonoma Package, which includes a room and a six-course tasting

menu, costs \$229 for two guests. What's more, the local wineries will come to you with their wares: the guided tasting each weekend costs \$15 to \$20 for four glasses. If you buy one of the wines, you can drink it in the hotel's restaurant, which will waive its usual corkage fee. *21780 North Coast Highway 1, Jenner, CA; 800-987-8319*

President's Retreat. You might catch a glimpse of the former First Family chilling out in Kennebunkport, Maine. But a better reason to come here is the [Beach House Inn](#). The 34-room, antiques-filled B&B across from Kennebunk Beach feels just like Ye Olde New England house, except with better bathrooms. Bicycles, beach chairs and canoes are available for use, as is a wraparound porch, where you can feel free to nap or read. Rates start at \$209 per night, including breakfast, afternoon tea, and evening port and sherry. If you stay three nights, you'll get the fourth night free through June 30. *211 Beach Avenue, Kennebunk, ME; 207-967-3850*

Lobster Tales. Rockland, Maine, where the Maine Lobster Festival is held each summer, is the self-appointed lobster capital of the world. To that end, four Rockland inns have banded together to offer a Lighthouses, Lobster and Luxury package through June 30: you'll get a tour of the local lighthouse museum, a trip aboard Captain Jack's lobster boat and a \$50 certificate to a local restaurant to sample that day's catch. Innkeepers will also arrange a sunset lobster dinner aboard a windjammer, a private plane ride to see remote lighthouses, or a beach picnic. Depending on which inn you choose, packages start at \$365 for two nights. [Click here for info](#). *877-762-4667*

Crab Heaven. If you've never cracked open a Chesapeake Bay blue crab, pick up a hammer. The [Five Gables Inn and Spa](#) in St. Michaels, Md., is offering a Spa and Sail package that includes a two-hour sail, a one-hour massage for two and a certificate for a dozen blue crabs and a pitcher of beer at a local restaurant. If you can go midweek (Sunday through Thursday), the rate is \$570 for two nights including continental breakfast; on weekends, the rate goes up to \$770 for two nights. *209 North Talbot Street, St. Michaels, MD; 877-466-0100*

Sun and Salutes. The all-inclusive [Holiday Inn SunSpree Resort](#) in Montego Bay, Jamaica, is offering a 55% discount to all active-duty and retired U.S. military service members. Book your trip with promotional code 155MIL and stay by Dec. 23. *888-288-6006*

Rainy Day Guarantees. The [Montauk Yacht Club](#) hotel, on the east end of New York's Long Island, is offering a Sunshine Bailout incentive to come check out its 107 newly renovated rooms. If you encounter wet weather — defined as 6 hours of rain during the day — during your stay, you'll get a certificate redeemable for a free night before Nov. 1. Rooms start at \$229 per night. (If it does rain, you could always check out the full-service spa.) *32 Star Island Road, Montauk, NY; 888-692-8668*

Through Sept. 27, the [Marriott Harbor Beach Resort and Spa](#) in Ft. Lauderdale is offering a \$50 resort credit every day, plus an extra \$50 credit on any day that Weather.com forecasts by 8 a.m. a 50% or

better chance of rain. Rates start at \$279 per night. Use promotional code SF8. *3030 Holiday Drive, Ft. Lauderdale, FL; 800-222-6543*

La Pura Vida. With its sweeping views of the Pacific, [Hotel La Mariposa](#) in Manuel Antonio, Costa Rica, is a popular destination (guests include Time.com's deputy photo editor), with rooms starting at \$150. You can go zip-lining through the rainforest canopy, sport fishing or whitewater rafting. Not an uber-outdoorsman? Then head down to the beach or order cocktails at the hotel's three pools, or take a free shuttle to the crown jewel of the region: Manuel Antonio National Park, where the jungle is brimming with howler, white-faced and squirrel monkeys. Try a guided hike to get the most out of the rainforest experience, and don't forget to check out the park's beach. *800-549-0157*

Family Freebies. Club Med's [Kids 15 and Under Stay Free](#) offer is pretty much as it sounds: one child under 15 per paying adult gets a free ride at the all-inclusive Club Med resorts in Sandpiper, Fla.; Punta Cana, Dominican Republic; and Cancún and Ixtapa, Mexico. Access to kids clubs, with their circus schools, magic programs and science activities (for ages 4 and up), is included. Meanwhile, adults can keep busy playing tennis, snorkeling and sailing. Depending on the property, rates start at \$145 to \$180 per night. Book by June 30, for stays through Dec. 19. *888-932-2582*

Mexico Beckons. On May 15 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lifted its ban on nonessential travel to Mexico. Now, a month since the height of concern over swine flu outbreak, the country's resorts are on a mission to coax back skittish tourists. Twenty Mexican hotel chains — including Zoëtry Wellness and Spa Resorts, Secrets and Dreams Resorts and Spas, Azul Hotels, El Dorado Spa Resorts and Hotels and Real Resorts — have instituted a "Flu Free Guarantee" that promises guests an H1N1-free vacation. If you do contract the virus, you'll get your next three yearly vacations free. (Almost makes catching swine flu seem worth it.) The guarantee is valid for trips booked before June 30, for stays until Dec. 20. Rates start at \$171 per person per night at El Dorado, all meals included, and range up to \$262 per person per night at Zoëtry Paraiso de la Bonita. [Click here](#) for links to all the properties and rates.

The [Mandarin Oriental Riviera Maya](#), 10 minutes north of Playa del Carmen and 30 minutes south of Cancún, is offering a \$100 nightly credit, which you can use toward dinner, the spa or your room (starting at \$395). Or stay three nights to earn a fourth night free (starting at \$495 per night). *866-526-6567*

The [Four Seasons Resort Punta Mita](#), 45 minutes from Puerto Vallarta, is giving away a free night for every two consecutive nights booked at the hotel. You can use the benefit more than once in a single stay: so, if you stay four nights, you get two nights free. Rates start at \$545 per night through June 30 and drop to \$415 from July 1 through Sept 30. *+52-329-291-6019*

The Tides's two Mexican locations — in [Zihuatanejo](#) on the Pacific coast and on the [Riviera Maya](#), in

Playa del Carmen — are offering a second room free of charge until September. Room rates start at \$355 in Zihuatanejo, and villas at the Riviera Maya resort start at \$585. *866-905-9560 (Zihuatanejo) or 800-578-0281 (Riviera Maya)*

The four-star [ME Hotel](#) in Cancún is lowering its rates with a Party Like It's 99 package: instead of the usual \$149-to-\$169, rooms are going for \$99 if you travel between May 28 and Aug. 16. Book by June 30. *866-436-3542*

RAIL & ROAD

Train Deals. Amtrak is offering [25% off fares in the Northeast U.S.](#) until September. Now you can go from Washington, D.C., or Boston to New York City for \$49. From Philly to Washington, it's just \$33. Fares are good between June 2 and Sept. 3; reservations must be made two weeks in advance.

Fill 'Er Up. Who hasn't searched for a gas station in a mad rush just before returning a rental car? Lest you miss your flight back home, remember that [Enterprise](#), [National](#) and [Alamo](#) charge about \$3 per gallon to fill the tank — compared with \$6 to \$8 at other rental agencies — if you bring the car back empty.

GEAR & GADGETS

Why Rent When You Can Own? If you're skeeved out by the idea of renting snorkeling equipment, check out [Body Glove's Enfold mask and snorkel set](#) (\$30). Made of flexible silicon, the mask folds in half, and the snorkel winds around it, making the gear light, compact and eminently packable.

 Click to Print

Find this article at:

<http://www.time.com/time/travel/article/0,31542,1900827,00.html>

Copyright © 2009 Time Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited.

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Add TIME Headlines to your Site](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Customer Service](#)