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The frugal traveler

Author gives tips on making trips cheaper

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Russell Hannon spent just \$42 to stay at a Las Vegas hotel.

His secret?

He got creative.

He left his luggage with the hotel's front desk. He bought a day pass for its spa and slept all day in its nap room.

And the Canadian author recently traveled to Santa Barbara and other Southern California cities on about \$300. He spent the money on a rental car, non-perishable groceries and a hotel room in Carpinteria. He also stayed with a cousin in Irvine and a friend in Glendale.

"I haven't paid for a flight for an awful long time," Mr. Hannon, 39, told the News-Press by phone from his Calgary, Alberta, home.

Instead, he builds up reward points on credit cards. (He's careful to pay the full balance each month.)

Mr. Hannon avoids spending a penny more than he would at home.

"The average traveler is paying five times the local cost of living," he said. "If a local doesn't have to pay it, there's a way to get around it. You can travel at a fraction of the going rate, and you don't need to skimp on lifestyle."

The author gives detailed advice in his first book, "Stop Dreaming ... Start Traveling: The Ultimate Guide to Traveling More and Spending Less" (self-published, \$18.95). The book will be available in stores nationwide June 23 and can be pre-ordered at Mr. Hannon's website, www.breakthetravelbarrier.com.

The Moncton, New Brunswick, native, who earned a bachelor's degree in commerce in 2002 at the Canadian province's Mount Allison University, has experience in trimming costs. He finds ways to do more with less money and time as an operational excellence manager in the oil and gas division for Aecom, a Los Angeles building and infrastructure company.

The frugal writer, who previously worked in auditing at Coca-Cola and home improvement company Rona in Montreal, travels a lot in his current job. He has gone to 17 countries in North America, Europe and Southeast Asia.

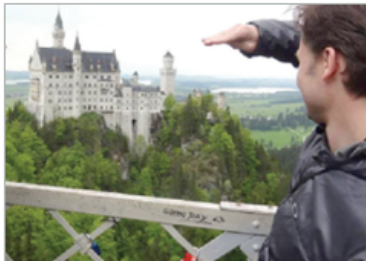
On June 13, 2014, he launched www.breakthetravelbarrier.com; the address contains the name of his travel advice company. Mr. Hannon has also appeared on CBS, NBC, Fox News Radio and other media. He recently talked about how he saves money on "Around the World with Arthur von Wiesenberger," which the News-Press co-publisher hosts at 10 a.m. Thursdays on KZSB AM 1290, the newspaper's radio station.

Credit card reward points help, and Mr. Hannon recommended cards for British Airways and Lufthansa, a German airline, for good deals on flights.

People can also save by booking flights at night or early in the day and avoiding peak months of travel.

For the best airfares, Mr. Hannon suggested www.hipmunk.com, www.skyscanner.com and www.kayak.com. "Some airlines have a best price guarantee. Alaska, Delta, Jet Blue and United all have policies where they will match a better fare that you find elsewhere and give you a \$100 credit for future flights."

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Russell Hannon, author of "Stop Dreaming ... Start Traveling: The Ultimate Guide to Traveling More and Spending Less," right, and his London friend Richard Giles look at Neuschwanstein Castle, the Bavarian castle that inspired Disneyland's Sleeping Beauty Castle. Mr. Hannon said a good social network can lead to financially feasible sightseeing.
PHOTOS COURTESY RUSSELL HANNON



Russell Hannon, author of "Stop Dreaming ... Start Traveling," sits at the Monaco Caf? de Paris. Mr. Hannon has found ways to travel to Paris and elsewhere on a budget.



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Mr. Hannon doesn't pay airline baggage fees. He wears luggage jackets, which have many pockets for storing belongings.

The author also suggested travelers consider less costly alternatives to expensive destinations. For example, instead of skiing in the Swiss Alps, consider the Rockies in Colorado. Instead of the Caribbean, lie on the beaches in Southeast Asia.

Remember, Mr. Hannon said, to take inexpensive trips to see beautiful scenery in your backyard. He has enjoyed the spectacular Lake Louise in Alberta's Banff National Park.

Once at his destination, Mr. Hannon prefers public transit over expensive taxis. He suggested travelers rent bicycles and economy cars. "One time out of three, when I book economy, I get upgraded for free. When I was in Los Angeles, I was supposed to get a Ford Fusion and actually got a nice Ford Mustang."

He also avoids costly hotels and buys groceries - non-perishable ones if his hotel room doesn't have a refrigerator. He dines inexpensively at restaurants by going for dinner just before the lunch specials end in the late afternoon.

Mr. Hannon stays with friends and family whenever possible, but noted travel isn't a one-way street: It pays to be a good host.

"My mother had taken in a French student here in Canada, and his parents had a bed-and-breakfast in Monaco," he said. "Thanks to my mother, they said, 'Whenever you want to stay at a bed-and-breakfast - as long as it's not the peak season - it's there for you.' " The only charge would be for cleaning fees.

"I took advantage of that and was able to go there and pay 225 Euros for 10 days in a nice little apartment," Mr. Hannon said. "That's one example of leveraging my connections so I was able to travel for significantly less money."

What's more, he chatted with the maid, who invited him to stay with her family for free the next time he was in Monaco. "Likewise, I invited them to come out to western Canada and see the Rockies."

Mr. Hannon said travelers can swap homes with families for trips to other cities. He suggested reviewing your home insurance, locking rooms for which you don't want guests to have access, arranging for a friend to check up on them and making computer video calls to your home. For more information, go to www.homeexchange.com, www.homeforswap.com and www.thevacationexchange.com.

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Social connections pay off in ways other than accommodations. Mr. Hannon said a London friend brought him to Neuschwanstein Castle, the Bavarian landmark that inspired Disneyland's Sleeping Beauty Castle.

Travelers can find great attractions simply by walking. Mr. Hannon said that's how he discovered the turtles in the pond at Alice Keck Park Memorial Gardens on Santa Barbara Street.

"I got as much satisfaction out of that as anything I could have a paid a lot of money for."

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FYI

Stop Dreaming ... Start Traveling: The Ultimate Guide to Traveling More and Spending Less? by Russell Hannon (self-published, \$18.95) will be available June 23 in stores nationwide.

It can be pre-ordered at www.breakthetravelbarrier.com. Mr. Hannon said it will become available next week at amazon.com.