

Detroit Free Press

Freep.com

December 17, 2012

1,835,129 Unique Visitors Per Month

Ellen Creager: There's still time to book a holiday travel bargain

Recommend 0

Tweet 0

+1 0

Print & Share

Font Size A A +

careerbuilder.com



The McNamara Terminal at Detroit Metro Airport, bustling with people, is a busy gateway for travelers throughout the year. / Eric Seals/Detroit Free Press

FILED UNDER

[Commentary And Criticism](#)
[Ellen Creager](#)
[Royal Oak](#)

Deliver your loved ones a Christmas surprise -- a visit from you.

Despite the constant drumbeat of advice that travelers should plan ahead and book early, the truth is that procrastinators can still score last-minute travel bargains that won't break the bank.

"If you travel Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, you can still get some deals," said Mark Drusch, chief supplier relations officer for Cheap-O-Air, a discount travel website.

Last-minute travelers looking for vacation spots should avoid warm-weather havens and "look for places people don't normally go this time of year, like Seattle or Portland, which are pleasant and without tourists," he said.

Related Links

[How to power down, protect your house when going on vacation](#)

He also likes Europe, especially Vienna, Rome, Amsterdam and Paris, which, he notes are "great places to spend New Year's Eve." Airfare to these destinations is about \$1,100 round-trip for the last two weeks of December.

For ski spots, try Michigan resorts, which still had some limited availability as of Sunday. Boyne Highlands, for example, still had room some days Christmas week, but Boyne Mountain was nearing capacity, reservations clerks said.

About 2.9 million Michiganders are planning to travel more than 50 miles away from home between Dec. 22 and Jan. 1, according to AAA Michigan.

• **RELATED:** [How to power down, protect your house when going on vacation](#)



BRIAN TODD/DETROIT FREE PRESS ZOOM

ADS BY PULSE 360

AdChoices 

Mom Lost 27 lbs With 1 Rule!

I Cut Down 27 lbs of Stomach Fat By Obeying This 1 Old Rule
Read more...

Hot New iPad Accessory

Apple iOS product innovations skyrocketing with new stock offering.
www.MassiveDynamicsCorp.com

New York Mom Makes Botox Doctors Angry

Mom Reveals Clever \$5 Wrinkle Therapy That Makes Botox Doctors Furious
SmartConsumerLiving.com

A Free Press look at prices reveals some other trends:

- Nonstop flights *from* Detroit on Christmas Eve are cheaper than nonstop flights *to* Detroit. That means that a lot of people are flying into Michigan -- coming home for the holidays. So, it's likely cheaper if you fly out to visit them instead. For example, flying nonstop from Detroit to New York LaGuardia Dec. 24-27 is \$230 round-trip, but flying the opposite direction on the exact same dates is \$776.

- Best airfares on Christmas Eve? Fly from Detroit to Baltimore, Chicago Midway or St.

Louis for round-trip fares under \$300.

- Think alternate transportation. Take the Megabus from Detroit to Cleveland early on Dec. 24 for just \$15. Take Amtrak from Detroit to Chicago for \$33. Or, you can rent a car at Budget/Avis in Royal Oak Christmas Eve morning through Dec. 27 for \$158 and drive as far as you can get in three days.

- Last-minute cruise deals exist, said Scott Hunter, owner of Cruise Holidays in Rochester. One is a seven-day cruise out of San Juan on Royal Caribbean Adventure of the Seas leaving Dec. 30. It costs \$899 plus tax.

- What's the quickest route to a last-minute vacation? Call a travel agent, who will quickly know what's realistic at this point and what to forgo. Or check last-minute travel sites like www.expedia.com/p/multi-deal/last-minute.htm. Find last-minute vacation rentals in Michigan or around the world at sites like www.vrbo.com.

- When flying over the holidays, book nonstops, if possible. If not, fly through warm-weather airports like Phoenix; avoid Denver and Chicago O'Hare when you can. "You don't want to be the person sleeping on a bench at the airport on Christmas," Drusch said.

- If you desperately want to go to the Caribbean or Mexico and absolutely cannot find anything affordable in the next three weeks, try for mid-January. There's a lull between Christmas and the winter tourist season.

In the next 10 days, prices likely will fluctuate as travel suppliers make last-minute adjustments to fill their planes, ships, trains and resorts. So keep tabs.

And get yourself home or away for the holidays.

Contact Ellen Creager: 313-222-6498 or ecreager@freepress.com.
Follow her on Twitter @ellencreager

More Details: Holiday travel 2012 by the numbers

- 46% of us will travel, up 3% from last year.
- 2% increase in flying, but a 2% decline in airline capacity. It means we'll be packed like sardines.
- 25% jump in car rental reservations at neighborhood locations, indicating more of us renting cars instead of driving our own.
- 5% of us still stubbornly waiting for airfare prices to drop before booking holiday flights.
- 49% of us will stay with family or friends once we reach our destinations.