

Spring Break: Where to Get the Biggest Bang for Your Buck

Uruguay instead of Miami, spring skiing and more money-saving tips.



Tourists visiting a sculpture called La Mano de Punta del Este, depicting five human fingers, in Punta del Este, Uruguay. Tali Kimelman for The New York Times

By Amy Tara Koch

Feb. 25, 2020



If you are searching for a cost-effective spring break, there are two rules of thumb. Avoiding the hot spots like Miami, the Caribbean and popular European cities is crucial, and going all in with all-inclusive packages, a travel holy grail for families in search of getaways that don't break the bank.

We spoke to several experts to weigh in on money-saving tips and less obvious but equally compelling destinations.

Fly South

For many families in winter, escaping the cold is top of mind. Gary Leff, whose blog [View From The Wing](#) focuses on travel deals and maximizing frequent flier miles, encourages people to travel farther afield — whether it's Mexico, Central America or elsewhere in Latin America. His reasoning? It's cheaper to be on the ground there, so airfare gets amortized across several nights, and offset by savings on hotel, meals and activities. He notes that Costa Rica and Belize can be reached with United Airlines miles, flying on their partners Avianca (via Bogotá) and Copa (via Panama City). Delta's new partnership with [LATAM Airlines](#) creates opportunities for

Jack Ezon, the founder of [Embark Beyond](#), is a fan of the white sand beaches and bountiful activities in Punta del Este in Uruguay.

“This is Miami with a side of cowboy for a fraction of the cost,” he said. “Families can swim, surf, snorkel with seals and spend time on a working ranch, or, estancia, for horseback riding and helping the gauchos with a cattle drive.”

Five-star hotels like the [Estancia Vik](#) cost \$468 a night in Uruguay, while a more basic property, [The Grand Hotel](#), is much less at \$176 a night.

Unlock more free articles.
[Create an account or log in](#)

In Mexico, Lindsey Epperly Sulek of [Epperly Travel](#) recommends the new [Palladium Resort at Costa Mujeres](#), 30 minutes north of Cancun’s hyperactive Hotel Zone. Since it’s north of Riviera Maya, this beachfront all-inclusive with a water park, three pools, seven restaurants and teen club, has a lower price point. A junior suite, with nightly rates beginning at \$629, can accommodate a family of four.

On the high end, Shawna Owen of [Huffman Travel](#) books families who want a tropical splurge for a week at [Francis Ford Coppola’s](#) all-inclusive, eco-lodges in Belize.