

## The [www.GivingGrinch.com](http://www.GivingGrinch.com) Newsletter

Budget Advice for a Balanced Life

June 2008

Life feeling unbalanced? At GivingGrinch.com we've created a simple system to help you prioritize what is most important in life. By curbing non-value added experiences, emotions and expenses you will improve your lifestyle *for less!*

**May Redux:** The Wall Street Journal recently discussed the book "Bottlemania: The Marketing of Thirst," by Elizabeth Royte. It supports what we discussed in our May Newsletter. Here is the link: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121150124668615945.html>

**Summer Fun:** For the summer newsletters we're going help you off-set the raising costs of travel and transportation and hopefully improve your overall experience. This month we focus on travel tips.

### A Giving Grinch Check List: "Balanced" Travel Tips

1. **Trip Research:** Online or check out travel books from your local library.
2. **Hotels:** Before making a bid, compare notes with other Priceline or Hotwire shoppers at [www.biddingfortravel.com](http://www.biddingfortravel.com) or [www.betterbidding.com](http://www.betterbidding.com)
3. **Consider Renting an apartment at your destination:** More space, a fully functional kitchen and the feeling of being at home away from home...perfect for family or couples.
4. **Passport Photos:** Instead of paying \$15-20 for "professional passport photos," use your digital camera. Take several picks up against a neutral backdrop, select the best 2x2 of your face and print/cut the quantity you need.
5. **Packing for Travel:** Avoid baggage check fees by packing light. Coordinate your outfits and shoes so you can mix and match. For those with children consider (a) buying diapers upon arrival (b) bringing disposable bibs that cover outfits to prevent frequent change and (c) packing disposable toys to occupy your child's attention. Suggested by Kristin in Michigan!
6. **Airport Transport:** Compare the cost of taxi, shuttle, bus services and airport parking before choosing your mode of transportation to and from the airport.
7. **At the Airport:** Bring an empty water bottle; after security fill it up at the food court water/soda fountain. Good for the pocket book and the environment. Suggested by Kanak in Michigan!
8. **Local Transport:** Buy local transportation passes in bulk if you're going to use the service frequently. Consider staying next to a local transport hub for quick and cheap access around town.
9. **Overnight Travel:** In Europe overnight trains with sleeper accommodations more than offset a hotel night, it actually gets you to your destination while you sleep.
10. **Staples:** Instead of room service, visit a local grocery store and stock up on water, foods, snacks and drinks saving time and money. Suggested by Kristin.

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11. **Museums for Less:** If you're not a museum buff, drop right before closing time. Many are free the final 30 minutes.
12. **Communications:** Use internet cafes or public libraries to communicate to avoid over-priced hotel internet services or international calling fees.
13. **Drink for Less:** Beers, not spirits. A local beer carries the pride of a region...unless you're in a vodka producing nation (than drink vodka). For those with children, stock up on libations at the local grocery store so Mom and Dad can have a drink after the kids doze off. Suggested by Kristin.
14. **Less (foreign) Change:** Get rid of extra foreign currency by paying as much of your hotel bill with your remaining local currency before using your credit card.

Please keep your suggestions coming: [advice@givinggrinch.com](mailto:advice@givinggrinch.com):

### Physiological Tips

- ✓ When buying furniture, U-Haul rental costs \$19/day versus \$100 for home delivery. Suggested by Niki in Houston!
- ✓ When looking for an apartment always ask for specials and waived application fees. Also, apartments without "views" tend to cost less. Suggested by Niki.

### Safety Tips

- ✓ Electricity: In many states competing energy companies charge different rates to attract customers. The delivery of energy is regulated so it doesn't matter who you buy from, but the price difference can really add up. Suggested by Niki.

### Social Tips

- ✓ **Gifting Giving** suggestions from Kristin:
  - When you see a good gift idea on sale purchase it and put it in a dedicated area so you can 'grab and go.' Keep good re-gifting items, but post a note so you know where the gift originally came from.
  - Buy \$1 cards for every occasion and keep them in a box (in the gift closet). Write out a full year's worth of birthday cards every January and keep them organized by date.
  - Reuse gift bags



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- ✓ Dining out? Look for BYOB (Bring your own bottle) restaurants. They charge a small corkage fee (for beer or wine), but you'll always come out ahead. Suggested by Niki.

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