

# Adventure Travel On A Budget

By Paul Hata

Adventure travel is one of the fastest growing segments of the travel industry, but it is often difficult to find good bargains when booking adventure travel.

With so many people itching to go on the adventure of a lifetime, the prices in those travel brochures can lead you to believe that adventure travel is beyond your means.

That does not have to be the case, however. The key to affordable adventure travel is to book directly from the providers of the adventure, instead of going through multiple layers of travel agents, tour operators and tour guides.

Booking a tour directly has many benefits besides monetary ones, including meeting wonderful local people and enjoying the local culture.

Often the best way to enjoy a vacation on a budget is to book low cost airfare to the destination of your choice, take the local bus into town, and start asking around about the best adventure guides in town.

Local tour operators know the area, they know how to please their clientele, and best of all they are inexpensive. U.S. currency goes quite a long way in many exotic locations in Africa, Asia and elsewhere, so dealing with local tour guides is the best way to make your adventure travel dollar stretch even further.

Many inexperienced adventure travelers are unsure how they can possibly book an adventure tour on their own. For one thing, there is often a language barrier in far off locations, and you may be many thousands of miles from home in an unfamiliar location.

What these first time travelers often don't realize, however, is that finding a tour operator is often the easiest part of the journey.

In many cases, the tour operators will find you as soon as you land, without you having to seek them out. And in most places, especially those frequented by American tourists, the guides will speak at least a little bit of English.

Listed below are some of the best tips for booking your own budget travel adventure.

- Be sure to ask around before you leave. Get opinions from other travelers who have done the adventure you plan on.
- Refer to your guidebook for references. Guidebook writers are often quite knowledgeable about which tour operators are good and which are more questionable.

- Check on the message boards, both virtual and real. Real message boards are available at hostels and local guest houses, and they can provide excellent information on local tours and tour operators.

- The staff at local hostels can also provide excellent information about adventure travel. And internet message boards devoted to travel can be great sources of information, both before you leave home and after you arrive in your far off location.

- Interview your potential trip leaders carefully. Ask lots of open ended and probing questions about the equipment used, the experience level of the guides, the lodging the food, and what is and is not included. Be sure to negotiate everything in advance, since you will have little leverage once the adventure trip has begun.

- Finally, if your crew did a great job, be sure to tip them generously after the tour has come to an end. Good tour operators rely on these tips to supplement their often meager wages, and this helps to keep the best tour guides in business and the best tour operators in operation.

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