

Take a Staycation

Destination: Salt Lake- Spring/Summer 2009

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Make the most of a shoestring budget

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Let's face it: planning a vacation can be complicated. Whether it's outrageous gas or airline prices, conquering crowds, or finding that perfect destination to please every family member, it may seem that cabin fever is the only option. But instead of going global, try going local. Save money without missing the adventure of an all-inclusive travel destination or exotic retreat you've dreamed of. The alternative answer to cure your wanderlust may not be far from home.

Staycation has been a trendy buzzword for close-to-home trips. While traditional vacations require plentiful funds and careful planning, staycations encourage tourists and locals to spend their vacation time exploring what their city (or one nearby) has to offer, without spending a fortune.

Cutting back on the distance traveled can be a way to stretch the value of a vacation dollar while keeping the vacationer just as busy and entertained. But beyond saving money the real key to getting the most out of a local vacation is to take a break from daily routine and discover new ways to unwind and have fun—a lesson that can be learned whether Salt Lake is at your doorstep for a few 100 miles from your home.

Salt Lake holds plenty of exciting possibilities to amuse the world traveler. Depending on which side of the valley you choose to make your base camp, you'll find all the elements of a fabulous vacation within an easy jaunt of your accommodations. Start with these four itineraries, add the hotel, cabin, or vacation rental of your choice, and you've got the perfect staycation.

Downtown—Romantic Escape

What is a vacation without that special someone? Relax together in any of Salt Lake's finest professional spas or salons. There are several locations, many within the city's larger hotels that offer great deals on couple packages. If you're feeling extra romantic, plan an overnight stay at any one of Salt Lake's many bed and breakfasts. Head to pioneer park on Saturday mornings June through October for Utah's largest outdoor farmers' market and pick up fresh ingredients for a breakfast for two. In the evening enjoy a pleasant walk downtown, sampling local artwork during a Salt Lake gallery stroll. Every third Friday of the month, this year-round event opens 25 local galleries, free of charge to patrons of the remarkable art scene. Then, snuggle up to your special someone and take in the sights with one of the many horse-drawn carriage rides that circle Temple Square.

West Valley—Sports Fan

Stay close to the west side of the valley if you're looking to take part in the diverse sports attractions it has to offer. Many of the hotels in this area are relatively affordable and neighbor excellent golf courses, like Johnny Millers 27-hole Stone Bridge Golf Club. If you would rather watch sports than play them, soak in a game of hockey at the E -Center home to the Utah Grizzlies, or a Major League Soccer game with Utah Real Salt Lake at the recently constructed Rio Tinto stadium. For a bigger thrill, take a short drive West and head to the Miller Motorsports Park in Tooele. There you'll find professional and amateur car, motorcycle, and kart racing, and open track days for any driver daring enough to feel top speeds.

Midvalley—Outdoor Buff

The Wasatch range sits east of Salt Lake City. Well known by locals but less explored by visitors, the spectacularly carved canyons offer extraordinary scenery and various activities including rock climbing and hiking. There are dozens of climbing routes up Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons, many within a 15-minute hike from the road. Try the Dogwood climbing area in Big Cottonwood Canyon—good for all levels of climbers, the area includes plenty of picnic space, excellent for a mid- or post-climb snack. Up the same canyon hikers can visit Donut Falls. A trail favorite for locals, it offers a unique cascade that falls through a hole in a rock and into a grotto before pouring down on the rocks below. It's an enjoyable and short hike that even small children can finish.

South Valley—Family Fun

Take the whole clan out for an excursion that includes a little something for each member. Stop at Wheeler Historic Farm where animals, history, and tractor-drawn wagon rides mix it up for some real amusement. Spend the afternoon on the Jordan River Parkway Trail that runs through the middle of the valley. You'll feel like you've escaped the city when you're only blocks away. Ideal for walking, biking, or inline skating, the trail is dotted with parks, benches, and picnic spots. There is even a boat launch for canoes and small boats at Oxbow Park. If being in the water is more your style, try the Salt Lake City Sports Complex and Steiner Aquatic Center. A former training venue for the 2002 Winter Olympics the state-of-the-art facility has two Olympic-sized pools and a huge fitness center.

The Hot Ticket

Want to do it all? The Salt Lake Convention and Visitors Bureau offers three passes to the area's most popular attractions. Pick your pace and your price point and let your visit Salt Lake Pass do the rest! The Visit Salt Lake Connect Pass gets you admitted to 12 of the Salt Lake areas most famous and fascinating attractions. In the summer season, hop on the Salt Lake Connect Pass City Tour—all the included attractions plus select historical sites and door-to-door transportation.

This spring, the Golf Salt Lake Super Pass grants you admission to up to 10 of Salt Lake's finest and most popular golf courses. The pass includes your golf cart, a free bucket of range balls, and a 10 to 20% discount on club rentals. Plus, pass holders may schedule times prior to the regular seven-day advance booking policy.