

Traveling on the Cheap

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By [Dena Landon](#) | Jun 13th, 2019

I love to travel, but like many divorced women, I'm juggling paying off legal bills with my son's swim and piano lessons. But, after a few too many months stuck at home growing crankier at my enforced isolation, I realized that I needed to prioritize getaways for my mental health.

Since December, I've been to Seattle twice and Boston once, both for virtually free. I'll be in Seattle again in July, South Carolina in August, and might fit in another trip to Boston somewhere in there. You'd think I'd come into an inheritance from a wealthy relative, but nope. Most of that travel will be free, cheap, or discounted.

Here's how I'm doing it, and how you can, too.

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Use Points Wisely

In the five years since I've initiated my divorce, I've had a legal bill almost every month. Yes, it's depressing. But around year one I started getting smart and at least earning points for those legal bills.

Even if I can pay them in cash, I charge the bills to a Delta or a Marriott Bonvoy American Express card. I earn miles on the Delta Amex and hotel rooms on the Marriott Bonvoy card. Numerous travel rewards cards exist which can help you plan cheaper escapes, and while you'll have to pay an annual fee, it pays for itself by the time you've taken two trips checking free baggage.

Our last two trips to my hometown, Seattle, I haven't had to pay for hotel or airfare. Plus, since I've spent so much on my Marriott card I'm frequently upgraded and given free perks when I check in. It's turning lemons into lemonade. While I don't have much control over the legal bills, I can get something out of them.

Couch Surf and Housesit

Swallow your pride, which may be telling you that you're not a college student anymore, and put the word out in your network that you're available to housesit. I posted a call for gigs on my Facebook page, and several friends responded.

While, yes, you get free accommodation, you're also doing them a favor. I'll be staying in a friend's house in Seattle in July for free, but I'm taking care of their cats. As a bonus, since I've known her since seventh grade she's also loaning me her car and I just have to buy gas.

Don't be shy about asking friends and family if they know someone willing to put you up. Most people have a spare bedroom or couch and a bottle of wine for the host is far cheaper than a hotel. You could even register as a [professional housesitter](#) with local businesses or organizations.

Get creative about finding places to crash, though use your common sense when it comes to safety. Websites such as [couchsurfing](#) help you find places all over the world, or you can offer to house or [apartment swap](#) on Craigslist and other sites. Lock up any valuables or leave them with a friend, and make sure you follow all the rules on hosting websites to ensure a good result.



Travel with Friends

Another friend of mine is currently going through a crappy divorce of her own down South where there's a one-year waiting period. While it won't be final by August, we still decided to go on an awesome girl's trip to celebrate her freedom. I'll be flying into South Carolina for a fabulous jaunt around her home state.

When you [travel with friends](#), you can split the bills. Even if a hotel charges slightly more for double occupancy, it's still cheaper when split between the two of you. Because she's a local, she knows cheaper places to eat and hang out.

A girl's trip is good for the soul and the wallet, and you could get some much-needed support during your time away. When we're married too often our lives revolve around that relationship. But I firmly believe that no one relationship, including a marriage, is meant to meet all of our emotional needs. Why not reconnect with friends and travel cheaply?

Yes, you can do it!

You can travel for much less than you might have once paid for family vacations. A nice perk of being divorced is that you have more free time, particularly if your children spend chunks of time with your ex-spouse. My week on, week-off custody schedule helps me get away and relax. After divorce, I've developed the skill to be flexible and roll with the punches, and you have, too. Why not use those skills to make your dream of traveling a reality?

[Dena Landon](#)



Dena Landon's bylines have appeared in The Washington Post, Good Housekeeping, Salon and more. The proud mom of a boy, she specializes in parenting and divorce.

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