

How to snag the best airfares

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NEW YORK — To snag the best airfares, travelers need to be adventurous and willing to pick up at a moment's notice.

OK, now let's be realistic. Most people making summer travel plans need just that: plans. They get a week off, maybe two, and aren't going to spend hard-earned cash on a last-second whim.

But great deals are still within reach for those who have even a little flexibility in choosing where and when to travel.

The average roundtrip domestic ticket will cost \$431 this summer, an increase of 2.6 percent from last year, according to Kayak.com. But remember: that's an average. One trip might cost \$800 while another can be found for \$200.

"Airfares are high but there are pockets of cheap out there," says Seth Miller, an information technology consultant who writes a blog under the name The Wandering Aramean. Miller does his best to beat the system by connecting in strange cities, flying at off hours and taking advantage of sales often offered when an airline adds a new destination.

Here are some tips from Miller and other expert travelers on how to combat rising airfares.

• **LAST-MINUTE WEEKEND FARES**

When airlines don't fill planes for an upcoming weekend, they slash prices.

Each Tuesday, they email offers for that coming weekend or the following one to fliers who have signed up online for the deal alerts. Travelers have to depart late Friday night or anytime Saturday and



AP photo

Travelers arrive at Orlando International Airport and make their way to baggage claim in Orlando, Fla. Flying this summer doesn't need to be expensive, as search engines, social media, creativity and flexibility can make finding bargain airfares easier.

come back Monday or Tuesday. An added plus: weekend getaways save precious vacation days.

Recent offers include: Houston to Memphis for \$180, Huntsville, Ala. to Chicago for \$174, Washington D.C. to Greenville, S.C. for \$157 and Charlotte, N.C. to West Palm Beach, Fla. for \$240.

• **TWITTER AND FACEBOOK**

Airlines are experimenting with sales on Twitter. At the forefront is JetBlue, which tweets last-second fare sales and vacation package discounts from (@)JetBlueCheeps. Some deals apply to just a few seats and are gone within hours.

"If you find something, jump on it," says John DiScala, who each year flies around 150,000 miles, visits 20 countries and writes about it at JohnnyJet.com.

JetBlue recently tweeted a sale at 3:16 p.m.; it ended at 6 p.m.

Airlines announce special sales to those who "like" their Facebook pages and sites like AirfareWatchdog offer fare alert emails (airfarewatchdog.com/fare-alerts/).

There are also frequent fliers who search for and post cheap flights in online discussion boards.

Two of the better discussion boards are: <http://www.flyertalk.com/forum/mileage-run-deals-372/> and <http://milepoint.com/forums/forum/s/mileage-runs-mattress-runs-travel-hacking.6/>

• **FLEXIBLE DATES**

Looking to go to Paris for a week but don't care when in the next few months? ITA Software's airfare search (matrix.ita-software.com) provides a calendar of the lowest

fares.

Just enter the departure and destination city — nearby airports can even be added — and then how many nights to spend there. It will find the cheapest prices for a month out from a given date. The length of the trip can even be a range, say five to seven days.

• **CHASE THE FARE, NOT THE DESTINATION**

Want to know the cheapest fares from a departure city to anywhere? Check out Kayak's explore tool (kayak.com/explore). It allows travelers to search multiple airlines at once this way. A map pops up with all the destinations under a set budget point.

Searches can be done for a particular month or for all of summer. The query can be narrowed by activity — beach, golf, gambling, skiing — or by

continent.

• **ODD CONNECTIONS**

Fares to Hawaii might be steep. But connecting through another city with a sale to Hawaii, could save a lot of money. Use AirfareWatchdog's "fares to a city search" (airfarewatchdog.com/cheap-flights/to-a-city) to see if there are any less expensive indirect routes to your destination.

Instead of flying from, say, Boston to Honolulu, it could be a lot cheaper to book two separate tickets — the first between Boston and Houston and the second from there to Hawaii.

"If you can save \$1,000 per couple and get two cities for less than the price of one, it's a no brainer," says Georgia Hobbica, founder of AirfareWatchdog.

Revitalizing an area of Norwalk

Summerview Square development built with quality in mind

HOURLY STAFF REPORT

NORWALK — Compact, walkable housing developments in neighborhoods located near transit can increase a community's economic competitiveness, and reduce housing cost for its residents, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Smart Growth Guidelines for Sustainable Design & Development.

Three years ago, Westchester asset management company Seavest Inc. formed Summerview Square LLC and purchased four land parcels in a blighted area of Norwalk. Fairfield County builders Andrew LaSala and Steven Berko of Summerview Development Group were hired to develop and manage the project. LaSala enlisted the help of the West Main Street Neighborhood Association in a neighborhood cleanup.

Today, Summerview Development Group has built 31 of the one-, two- and three-bedroom townhouse apartments in a 63-unit townhouse style rental community known as Summerview Square. Construction is under way on the last phase of 32 units.

"This has been a huge step towards development on the city's north side, an area that has been a question mark for years," Mayor Richard Moccia said.

In November, Summerview Square was recognized as Best Smart Growth Community in Connecticut by the state's leading home building industry association.

"Summerview Square demonstrates that smaller infill sites can enhance the economic and social health of a neighborhood," said Liz Verna, president of the Home Builders Association of Connecticut, which sponsors the HOBI Awards.

The development has revitalized the neighborhood.

"I have owned a home on Jefferson Street for 47 years now," said West Main Street Association



Contributed photo

Summerview Square in Norwalk has revitalized an area of the city.

President Christine Abraham. "Summerview finally brought a dream into reality. Everyone thinks the apartments are condos, they look so great, and several of us, including my husband and me, have improved our own homes."

Roger Wechter lives in a two-family home on West Main Street and also owns a neighborhood business, Cross River Lock. He's pleased that Summerview "architecturally fits in with the neighborhood," and he said his business has also benefited.

Michael Church of William Pitt Sothebys handles the rentals at Summerview. He purchased his first home in the neighborhood, a two-family located just behind the development.

"Summerview is having a positive effect on the Main Street commercial district," Tad Diesel, Norwalk's director of marketing and business development, said. "Moderately priced housing like Summerview Square is vital to retaining and attracting businesses. Neighborhood restaurants, like Pashquer's Osteria, Valencia's Luncheria, Taste of Brazil and Blackstone's steak house, are

thriving. I think the Main Street area will continue to experience an uplifting pace of development as the last phase of Summerview is finished."

The colonial and Victorian-style buildings mimic the neighborhood's older two-family homes, including the front porches. Features that are more typically found in ownership housing will allow for the possibility of converting Summerview Square from a rental development to condominiums at some time in the future. Every apartment has a heated private garage, along with a washer and dryer, and closets. Green features include Energy Star appliances, zoned heating and cooling systems, and flooring made from recycled materials.

The completed apartments on Summer and West Main Streets have been rented starting at \$1,500 for a one-bedroom flat in Phase 1 to \$2,500 per month for a three-bedroom, three-floor townhouse in Phase 3. Foundations are in and construction is under way on the last phase of 32 units, which will be located on Jefferson Street. Four of these apartments will be affordable to renters who

have a household income that is 85 percent or less of Norwalk's median.

"Norwalk has become increasingly attractive to young adults priced out of the rental market in Stamford and Greenwich," said Rick Segal, president of Summerview Square LLC and CEO of Seavest Inc.

Summerview has kept green building in mind throughout the process. It created an on-site storm water disposal system, which will avoid burdening the city's waste disposal infrastructure and the environment, Segal said. The buildings exceed Energy Star requirements and incorporate recycled building materials and LOW-VOC products. Carpeting is made from recycled bottles; common area flooring is made from recycled tires; and individually controlled apartment heating and air conditioning systems are designed to promote maximum energy efficiency.

Summerview Square has also been committed to Buying American from the start of construction, Segal said.

"At least 90 percent of the building materials and products we use — from concrete, siding and roofing, to nails and web joists — are made in America," said Summerview Development Group construction manager, Steven Berko. "When we discovered that the hardwood floors were from China, we did some research and found a small South Carolina factory to produce them for us."

According to LaSala, a number of the building products are fabricated locally in Connecticut. The development team also employs local subcontractors and service providers.

"We are proud that this project has been transformative for the neighborhood and the city of Norwalk," Segal said. "Seavest would like to continue to invest in the rejuvenation of Norwalk's north side."

In Brief

Join WBDC for kayaking, networking

WESTPORT — The Women's Business Development Council (WBDC), which offers entrepreneurial and financial training for women in Connecticut, will be holding a kayaking/networking event from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. on Tuesday, June 26, at Down Under Kayaking, at 575 Riverside Ave., in Westport.

The Women's Business Development Council and Kim Beaumont, owner of Down Under Kayaking and WBDC member, are holding the event. Complimentary stand-up paddling and kayaking lessons will be offered. Lessons will begin at 5:30 p.m.

Admission is free for WBDC members and \$10 for guests. Food will be provided by WBDC member, Susan Kane of Susan Kane Catering.

For more information call (203) 353-1750 or email Debra O'Keefe at dokeefe@ctwbdc.org. Register at www.ctwbdc.org

FNEW to meet June 13 in Norwalk

NORWALK — The Fairfield Network of Entrepreneurial Women will hold a networking meeting and board elections at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, June 13, at Norwalk Inn & Conference Center.

There will be no speaking presentation at the meeting. FNEW members will vote on 2012-13 board members.

The cost is \$25 for members, and \$35 for non-members. Walk-in guests are welcome for an additional \$5.

RSVP by Monday, June 11, to fnew.org@gmail.com.

Shiller to speak to investment group

DARIEN — The Connecticut Chapter of AAI — American Association of Individual Investors — will hold a meeting featuring speaker Dr. Robert J. Shiller from 6 to 9:15 p.m. on Thursday, June 21, at The Waters Edge at Giovanni's II at 2748 Post Road in Darien.

Shiller is the co-developer of the Case Shiller Home Price Indices and author of "Irrational Exuberance." He will speak on the topic of "Finance and the Good Society."

The dinner will take place at 7 p.m. and the talk will start at 8 p.m.

The cost is \$45 per person or \$50 at the door. Program only is \$25 per person.

For more information, call (203) 245-1211, or email AAIConnecticut@aol.com. Mail reservation and check to: CT AAI, c/o Peter De Nicola, P.O. Box 83, Thornwood, N.Y., 10594-0083.

Norwalk Chamber sets events

NORWALK — The Chamber's Golf Classic will be held on June 18 at Shorehaven Golf Club.

Also, the 2012 New Member Reception-Business After Hours + Expo will be held at 4:45 p.m. on June 26 at Norwalk Inn & Conference Center.

For more information or to register, call (203) 866-2521 or e-mail info@norwalkchamberofcommerce.com, or visit the chamber's website www.norwalkchamberofcommerce.com.