

Five ways to...

Save on your hotel bill

Spend less than the rest on your room for the night, with **John Malathronas's** top tips

Stay in business

In business hubs such as New York, Paris or Brussels, there are savings to be had if you choose your hotel carefully. Business hotels that are packed during the week are keen to fill rooms when their customers go home, so lower their rates accordingly. At Hilton's Homewood Suites in Manhattan, for instance, doubles cost from £188 midweek, but drop to £148 Friday to Sunday. Look in a city's business district for the best deals.

Think location, location...

Hotels in the most central locations are always expensive. But in cities with cheap, reliable metro lines — say, Lisbon, Athens, Vienna, Budapest or Madrid — a short commute will save you a bundle. Take Vienna: a double at four-star Am Stephansplatz, right opposite central Stephansdom cathedral, will set you back about £182, whereas a similar room at the four-star Kummer in the shopping heaven of Mariahilferstrasse, a mere three metro stops away, costs just £79.

Go direct

We often assume the best prices are found online. But as hotels pay a fee to appear on booking websites, you'll often get a better deal by going direct. Find your chosen accommodation on a booking site, then call the hotel directly, quoting the web price and asking for a 10-15 per cent discount. Given that this is the average percentage websites demand from listed hotels, the owner may be willing to haggle, especially in countries such as Greece and Turkey, where prices are rarely set in stone. We haggled a hotel in Athens down from £72 per night in January to £67. If you don't get a discount — or even if you do! — try pushing for extras: can they throw in free breakfast? Spa treatment? This works best with independent hotels.

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Be site-specific

There are savings to be had online if you go beyond the standard booking sites. If you're flexible, you can bid on 'second-hand' rooms at Cancelon (cancelon.com) or Roomer (roomertravel.com). On these sites, travellers of offload non-refundable bookings they can no longer use at a 50-60 per cent discount, though you'll have to match the dates. Through Cancelon, we bagged a night at Novotel Edinburgh for £49 rather than £69. Also try Just Opened, which has sites for New York (justopenednewyork.com) and London (justopenedlondon.com), listing hotels in their 'soft launch' phase, when rates are usually kept low.

£147

is the cost of a night's stay in New York with Airbnb — £25 less than a two-star hotel in the city, according to goeuro.co.uk. But Airbnb pads aren't always the cheaper option: in Boston you'll pay an average of £14 more per night than you would at a five-star hotel!

Time it right

It's not just where or how you book, it's when. Almost every hotel will give you a discount if you pay well in advance. Millennium & Copthorne Hotels, for instance, offers up to 20 per cent off if you pay in full two weeks ahead. But prices can also plummet for same-day bookings. The time of year matters, too — find the cheapest time to visit a destination using google.co.uk/hotelfinder. Also factor in the length of your stay — if it's more than two nights, ask for an extra one free. This is common practice with safari camps and some hotel groups, including many affiliates of Classic Britain (classicbritain.com).



ENERPLEX JUMPRSTACK 3, FROM £60

Arguing about whose turn it is to use the charger? With its light, stackable batteries, the pocket-sized Enerplex Jumpr Stack 3 can charge three USB or micro-USB devices at once — smartphone, camera, etc — on the go or on a plug in your hotel room. **Verdict: 3/5**



Heading off on a road trip? Earn cash while you're away by renting out your home parking space using justpark.com. In Greater London you can expect to earn £10-25 per day, or in central Manchester or Birmingham from £5 up to £20 a day.