



By Mary Gazze, The Canadian Press, thecanadianpress.com, Updated: December 9, 2010 9:13 AM

## All-inclusives cheaper but there's a downside

Share 0

Tweet 1

Share 4



Colin Montgomery looks at a travel brochure at Marlin Travel in Regina, Sask. on Thursday, Dec. 9, 2010. Montgomery is comparing price of pre-packaged vacations as compared to build-your-own packages. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Troy Fleece

TORONTO - Canadians who turn to a travel agent or website to plot their escape from a bitter winter are faced with a choice that could affect how much they shell out to get out: opt for an all-inclusive package or a custom book-it-yourself vacation.

After taking the kids to Disney World, Hawaii and Mexico, Colin Montgomery just wants to go on a sunny winter holiday alone with his wife. Browsing the specials outside a Toronto travel agency, he weighs the all-inclusive vacation against booking plane tickets, a hotel and everything else separately.

"I'm not too concerned about cost, because I want to see everything and do everything and have a good time so I don't try and cut too much out," he says.

But if he wanted to watch his wallet, he says experience with an all-inclusive resort in Mexico and self-designed trips to Norway, Denmark and France has shown him one option works out to cost less.

### today in msn travel

- The top 10 unfriendliest cities in the world
- 101-year-old weather observer still at work
- Jackie Chan enlisted to promote Indonesian tourism
- Your guide to the perfect summer road trip

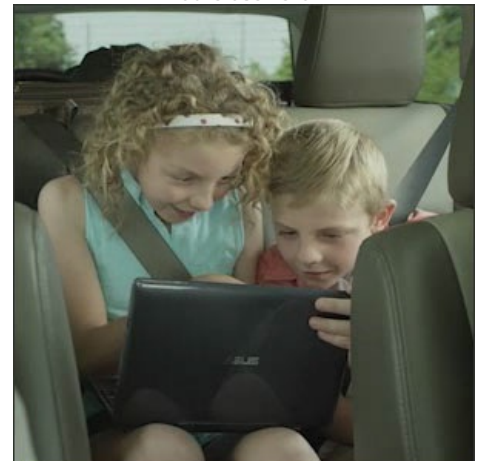
"The all-inclusive is usually cheaper so far," he says, explaining he's saved between 30 and 40 per cent compared to doing everything himself.

"I think it's partially because you tend to stay at the place that you book and the meals are covered. There's usually a pool and a few things to do whereas when you're at a not all-inclusive you'll be out doing tours or shopping (and spending more money than you planned)."

Caribbean resorts aren't the only places that offer all-inclusive packages. Travellers can trek the Australian outback or soak in the culture of Japan with packages that boast one up-front fee that includes a guided tour, food and transportation.

Gary Ralph, a spokesman for the Association of Canadian Travel Agencies says that booking an all-inclusive package generally saves travellers money.

advertisement



**ASUS**

Watch it Transform ▶

Work easy. Play hard. Windows

AdChoices

Search for flights and vacations

Install Microsoft® Silverlight™

### national geographic videos

Please install the latest version of the free Adobe Flash Player. [Download now.](#)

For help with Flash, see Adobe's [Flash Player Support page.](#)

poll

"You're going to spend more on a trip that was put together from scratch, simply because you're looking for a custom tour," he said, explaining that because travel agents book flights and accommodation at a cheaper bulk price months in advance, they can pass on savings to their clients.

"Now you're stuck booking an individual room at the hotel at the individual rate which is probably going to be higher than the block rate that the travel agent or tour operator got a year ago."

One major European tour company offers an eight-day escorted tour across Italy in July, which includes airport transfers, accommodations, and admission to attractions like the Vatican, Leaning Tower of Pisa, museums, and 12 meals for \$2,969 including airfare.

A do-it-yourself trip, staying at identical hotels on the exact same days, and budgeting \$80 per day for meals adds up to \$3,266, and that doesn't include the cost of attractions.

But you might not really be saving money with a package. Some tours might drive you to the Louvre, but you have to pay the \$14 museum admission or lunch at a nearby overpriced tourist trap restaurant out of your own pocket.

"Once you start to ask questions about the all-inclusive price you start to learn that it ain't so all-inclusive after all," says Ralph, adding that a travel agent can help flag those fees before you leave to avoid nasty surprises.

While recession sticker prices for all-inclusive Caribbean hotels may make some packages seem like sweet deals, you should also watch out for any extra fees.

These could include taxes, tips, Internet, alcohol, nightclub admission and damage insurance fees for those under age 25. If you don't like the food you've paid for in advance at the resort, you're either stuck eating it or spending more elsewhere. And jet skiing and other water sports may be included in the price you pay, but it might not be worth the money if you spend your vacation waiting in long lines to get access. All-inclusive cruises might offer entertainment on board, but factor in the cost of shoreline excursions into your budget.

And remember that if you want to do anything outside resort property, you'll need to pay. Mayan archeological site Chichen Itza is only a few hours drive from Cancun, but the cost of tour bus fare or a rental car to get there adds to the total cost of your vacation.

"If you plan ahead, if you go to Mexico and they have all the different tours and things to do, if you book them early you'll save some money that way, if you book on the morning you want to go it's probably more expensive," says traveller Montgomery.

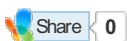
Aside from money, other down sides include having to leave on specific days, not always having the freedom to go where you want, staying at hotels in the suburbs, or being forced to leave an attraction earlier than you would have liked due to bus schedules.

"Let's say I don't like a bus tour where everybody is taken to this crummy restaurant. If you're looking for the cheapest bus tour, that's the sort of thing that could happen to you," Ralph says, explaining that a travel agent can help people customize their trip more to their own tastes.

## related videos

Please install the latest version of the free Adobe Flash Player. [Download now.](#)

For help with Flash, see Adobe's [Flash Player Support page.](#)



0



1



4



Give us 15 seconds... We'll show you the new Windows Live Hotmail.

AdChoices

## When is the best season to travel?

- Winter — I love to escape the cold.
- Summer — it's a great time to take a break from working/studying.
- Fall — tourist destinations are less crowded and scenery can be breathtaking.
- Spring — after the cold winter months, it's a great time to get away.

[Vote](#)

[Skip to results](#)

[Next](#)

## more travel news

### SeaWorld plans bigger killer whale environments

thecanadianpress.com - 2014-08-15 8:52 AM  
NEW YORK, N.Y. - After more than a year of public criticism of its treatment of killer whales, SeaWorld said Friday that it will build new, larger environments at its theme parks and will fund additional research on the animals along with programs to protect ocean health and whales in the wild.

### Thailand ranks No. 1 in beachfront hotels

thecanadianpress.com - 2014-08-15 8:15 AM  
BANGKOK - Experiencing a dramatic surge in tourism, Thailand has surpassed the United States in the number of hotels truly set on its beaches, according to a survey of more than 11,000 hotels in 109 countries released Friday.

### More passengers riding Yarmouth ferry

thecanadianpress.com - 2014-08-15 6:36 AM  
YARMOUTH, N.S. - Nova Star Cruises says the number of passengers riding the Nova Scotia-to-Maine ferry increased in July and is nearing its target numbers.

### Is He Cheating On You?

1) Enter His Email Address 2) See Hidden Pics & Social Profiles Now!  
[Spokeo.com/Is-He-Cheating](#)

### How To Win MegaMillion

Professor Reveals How To Win MegaMillion 2 Times In A Row!  
[www.winning-numbers.us/cn/1.4](#)

### Personal Loan Services

Go To Local.com To Find Financial Services In Your Area!  
[Local.com/](#)

### Brain Training Games

Train memory and attention with scientific brain games.  
[www.lumosity.com](#)

Sponsored Links

## more from msn.ca

## msn travel site map

- Home
- Travel Photos
- Video

Recent travel headlines

