

The Ultimate Spring Break Get-A-Ways

Contributed by Diana Bocco

Beer or Career: Spring Break Alternatives Away From the Beach

By Diana Bocco

Who said beach resorts are your only choice when it comes to Spring break destinations? There's a lot more out there than meets the eye, and definitely a lot to do besides drinking your way to a suntan.

If You Rather Freeze Than Melt

Head to: Taos Ski Valley, New Mexico, for some fun in the... well, snow

Why: Taos isn't corporate. It's not big and flashy and it doesn't cater to the dressed-to-impress crowds that flock to places like Vail and Aspen.

How: Taos Ski Valley boasts some of the best conditions in the country with an average of 305 inches of snow and the same number of days of sunshine every year. The 2008-2009 season will also be the first full season that snowboarding is allowed on the mountain.

What it will cost you: The resort offers decidedly lower lift ticket prices than other mountains, with fantastic spring skiing deals March 30-April 5 when adults ski for just \$40 per day.

If You Want to Get Your Boots Dirty

Head to: Radisson Fort McDowell Resort & Casino in Scottsdale, AZ

Why: Because experts are calling the area "THE place to go if you're looking for a Wild, Wild West experience."

How: Hop into a plane and get ready for a desert oasis tucked among spectacular mountain ranges. In addition to offering several pools and whirlpools, the resort also partners with nearby Fort McDowell Adventures to offer authentic cowboy cookouts, horseback riding, jeep/Hummer tours and hiking, kayak and mountain biking tours.

What it will cost you: Packages start at \$250 and include everything from hotel room to half-day guided tours, amenities and drinks and food.

If You're Feeling the Volunteer Bug

Head to: Wherever people are in need (which can be as close as your own city)

Why you should try it: Because you're worried about poverty, hunger, homelessness, conservation, housing, literacy, and racism. And you're ready to see new places and learn new skills.

How to do it: From mentoring inner city youth in New York to working on land ethic issues in Nicaragua, the choices are limited only by your imagination. You don't have to do it on your own either. Non-profit organizations such as Break Away® and Habitat for Humanity International offer all-inclusive programs geared to high school and university students ready to pack it up and get their hands dirty.

What it will cost you: Depending on the destination, you're looking at some token expense of a few hundred dollars, plus the cost of transportation. Housing and food are usually provided by the organizers.

If You Want a Look Into the Future

Head to: Work!

Why you should try it: Peg Hendershot, Director of CareerVision.com, recommends trying this kind of trips as a way to "sneak-preview dream jobs and uncover opportunities for summer jobs, internships or full-time jobs that are related to your desired career direction or career change."

How to do it: Look for an internship at a local firm or organization specializing in your chosen field. Or contact Vocation Vacations for a complete arrangement with a specific company. Don't want to spend your whole break slaving away in an office? Try "job shadowing," where you're basically allowed to follow a professional around while they go about their normal day.

What it will cost you: If you do it on your own, you'll end up earning, rather than spending, any money. If you go through a firm such as VV, you're looking at \$1000 or more of expenses.

If the Beach Is Still Calling Your Name

Head to: Mexico or the Bahamas

Why: While a tidal wave of 500,000 uninhibited college students heads to Myrtle Beach and South Beach Miami each Spring Break, beach resort destinations such as Paradise Island (Bahamas) and Cabo San Lucas (Mexico) also offer good night life and great weather, plus a variety of cultural and outdoorsy activities if you want to venture away from the sand. The best part? The number of screaming college students is certainly lower.

How: Just get on a plane and head south!

What it will cost you: Certainly more than going to Myrtle Beach, but you should be able to get a good deal if you book

well in advance (not later than November/December).

If Money Is Not An Issue

Head to: Australia

Why: According to Kayak's survey of nearly 600 college students, most respondents would rather head Down Under, with Australia ranking as the top dream destination for 1-in-5 students.

How: Book a hotel on the Gold Coast, Australia's top beach destination for young people. No visa required, great surfing and the drinking age is just 18.

What it will cost you: Nearly a thousand dollars for a plane ticket, plus hotel and entertainment.

If You're Absolutely Broke

Head to: Chicago (or another college town)

Why: There are currently more than 52,000 students who live and go to school in downtown Chicago, making it the largest college town in Illinois. It's a great place to go shopping, see entertainment (including great live music), dine and have an urban adventure.

How: Chicago is a great value for travelers on a budget. The city has two major airports and is a hub for bus and train travel, making it easy and cheap to get here from almost anywhere. Plus, there are hotels for every budget, including a student hostel located within walking distance of downtown.

What it will cost you: Totally up to you. Bring friends along to split costs and save even more!

If You Want Good Music (rather than blasting beach speakers)

Head to: Ultra Music Festival in Miami, Florida

Why: 80,000 music lovers head to the three-day festival, held sometime in late March. Expect magnificent laser light shows, over 100 live bands and DJs, and lots of well-known names.

How: Greyhound buses will take you right to the Bicentennial Park in South Beach Miami. Plan on staying the whole weekend to make the most of the festival, and book a hotel in the Art Deco District (within walking distance of the park).

What it will cost you: A two-day pass will set you back \$150; \$350 for VIP passes that allow you access to no-wait entrance lines, seating and special viewing decks.