

Add a Vacation to a Business Trip

Can you remember when business travel was considered a perk of the job rather than a penalty? With all the negative publicity about the hardships of travel these days – it's no surprise that 86 percent of corporate flyers surveyed by Orbitz said they consider business travel "more difficult than it was two years ago."

If your job involves lots of torturous travel, you deserve time off to recover. But you're not getting it: American workers get less vacation time than their counterparts in other first-world countries – an average of 14 days a year, according to an Expedia.com survey, vs. 24 in Britain and 26 in Germany.

A study by Leisure Trends Group found that U.S. workers in mid-career – age 35 to 44 – only use half their allotted vacation days. Managers and professionals are entitled to the most days off – an average of 25 a year – but they only take 13.

Even when they do take time off, white-collar workers increasingly take the job along. An AP-Ipsos poll this year found that 20 percent of Americans brought laptops along on vacation, while 19 percent did some work on vacation and 20 percent checked office voicemails.

If business is increasingly part of your leisure travel, what's wrong with taking some leisure time

during your business travel? If you can't bring yourself to take a whole week, why not tack on a few days when you're traveling on business? Don't expect the company to pay for it, but it would give you a chance to spend some miles and/or hotel points that are burning a hole in your account.

A National Business Travel Association survey found that almost two-thirds of road warriors tack some time off onto at least one business trip a year. And a growing number bring their spouse and/or kids; they did so on 14 percent of all business trips during 2006, according to travel researchers D.K. Shifflet & Associates – up 27 percent from 2000.

"After 9/11, we found that families really wanted to spend more time together as opposed to the typical business travel before that, where travelers were on the road more and seeing their kids less," notes John Lee, VP brand marketing at Embassy Suites.

Plenty of Space for the Family

Rather than squeezing the family into a standard hotel room, consider booking a business hotel with plenty of space and lots of amenities for you, your spouse and children. At

Embassy Suites, a member of the Hilton family, "We have real two-room suites, and in the living room we have queen sleeper sofas where kids have their own space, their own TV and Nintendo," notes John Lee, VP brand marketing.

Most locations have indoor pools and all provide a hot,

cooked-to-order breakfast and a manager's reception every evening at no extra cost, he said.

A real plus for families is Embassy Suites' "Kids-Eye View" program: The company surveyed hundreds of local kids in dozens of cities around its system, so each hotel can give guests information on the most "kid-popular" activities and attractions nearby – everything from kids' favorite museums to preferred venues for pizza. "This has been wildly successful – and it really helps out Mom and Dad," Lee said.

Embassy Suites has almost 200 locations in North America, and expects to have 300 by 2010.

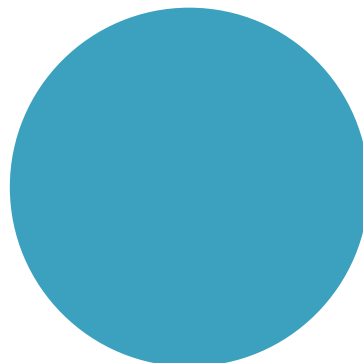
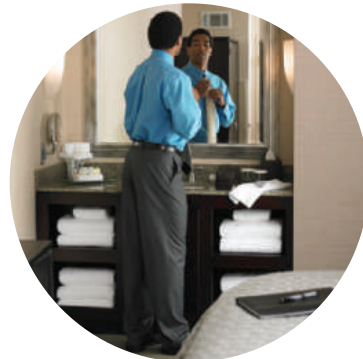
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Here are some tips to consider if you decide that business travel and personal down time don't have to remain mutually exclusive.

Don't worry about staying in touch.

Can't go a day without checking your email? Don't let that deter you. No matter where you go, odds are Internet access will be there – and increasingly, it will be wireless. The last frontier was the cruise ship: For decades, going to sea meant being out of touch,

unless you sprung for \$10 a minute for a ship-to-shore phone call. Today, major lines' ships have computer rooms where passengers can email and surf the Web; many offer in-cabin WiFi connections, too.

Choose your routing with a stopover in mind.

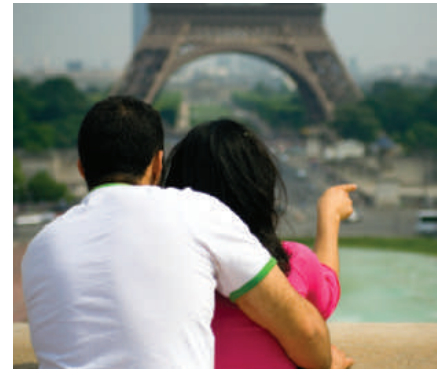
If your business destination offers various connecting possibilities, route yourself through a place you want to visit on the way back. With major U.S. airlines adding extra-long non-

stops to points in Asia and the Middle East, travelers may overlook the fact that many foreign airlines offer low-cost or free stopovers in their hubs. For example, **Air Tahiti Nui** has TiareTahiti Stopover fares that let you spend time in Tahiti on the way to or from Australia or New Zealand; it also has reduced hotel rates, starting as low as \$50 per person per night at top resorts. And keep an eye on your preferred airlines' websites for special promotions that might let you bring someone along – e.g., **British Airways**

currently offers a free roundtrip companion ticket (see sidebar) with certain full-fare purchases.

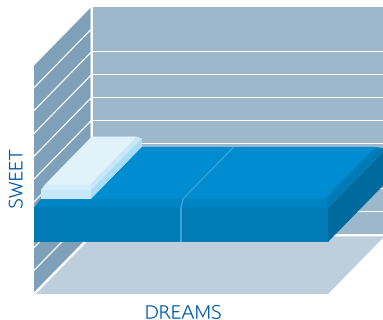
Look for family-friendly deals.

When the kids come along for your leisure extension, try to book lodging that offers special incentives or amenities for family visits. Many resort hotels, especially during school vacation periods, entice guests with offers like a second room for the kids at 50 percent off; free participation in their supervised children's activity programs; and even free meals for kids when they dine at the hotel with parents. Better yet, opt for extra family space by booking an all-suite hotel like Hilton's **Embassy Suites**.



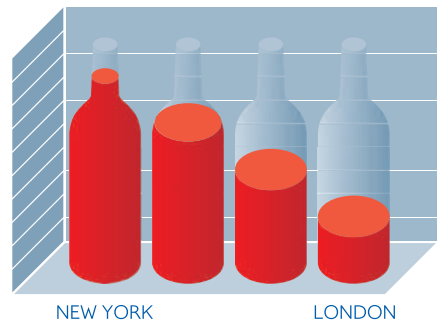
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Extend your hotel stay – or move to a more suitable one.

If business takes you to an urban location, why not stay the weekend instead of going through Friday afternoon rush hour at the airport? Have the spouse come out to join you for a leisurely couple of days enjoying the galleries, museums and restaurants you rushed past on your way to the week's appointments. If you do, be sure to adjust your hotel reservation – city hotels generally offer lower rates Friday through Sunday nights than on weeknights. Or consider new lodging if you've spent the business part of the week in a monolithic corporate/convention hotel.

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Best Deals to the Best Places for Work and Play

Got business in the U.K. or Europe? London is a prime destination for leisure extensions, and **British Airways** has plenty of relevant offers.



“Almost all our fares offer a free stopover in London,” said Ian Davies, VP consumer sales/North America. The airline also has infant and children’s discounts on most fares. Using your miles in British Airways’ Executive Club for your spouse or kids could be tough in summer, but “there are plenty of opportunities in the shoulder and off-peak months,” Davies notes.

The airline has a special offer through December for users of its British Airways Visa card: Buy a full-fare first-class, business-class or premium-economy ticket from the U.S. to any of its destinations, and get a free companion ticket.

British Airways also offers “a great set of packages with business-or first-class air fare included, along with five-star hotel accommodations in London,” Davies adds, if you stay at least three nights. The packages include airport transfers and theater tickets. In fact, British Airways offers deals on London hotels in all categories. “Because London is our home city, we have great bargaining power with the hotels there, so we’ve always got great rates,” he said.

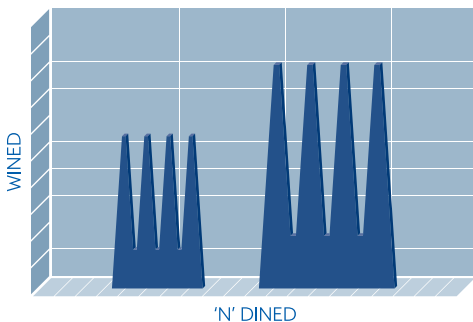


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