

## How not to go credit card crazy, for baby boomers

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Tired? Stressed? Need a break but short on funds? For many boomers, the solution is to charge a vacation now and worry about paying for it later. But that desire for instant gratification can threaten financial security in your golden years, says financial planner Diane McCurdy, author of *How Much Is Enough?: Balancing Today's Needs With Tomorrow's Retirement Goals*.

Convincing the Forever Young generation that an expensive vacation is not a necessity might be a challenge. A 2005 AARP study showed that boomers spend \$157 billion annually on leisure travel, more than any other age group.

So does McCurdy suggest forgoing vacations? "Not at all," she said. "But if you can't pay cash for your dream trip this summer, figure out an inexpensive alternative, and start saving for next year."

Her suggestions for low-cost ways to recharge include planning several long weekends instead of an extended sojourn and staying at a budget hotel or bed-and-breakfast. Consider house swapping, camping or vacationing "at home" by visiting nearby tourist destinations.

Once you do set out on vacation, McCurdy offers the following tips: Use traveler's checks instead of your credit cards. Limit yourself to one souvenir per person traveling. Avoid pricey restaurants and attractions. Don't order room service, don't eat or drink anything from the mini-bar and don't make calls from the hotel room. Most important, don't over-schedule. Allow some down time to sightsee or lounge around the hotel pool. Not only will you save money, you'll actually be able to relax - which is the whole point of the vacation.