



Autumn on the coast: Go now for less

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updated 1:56 PM EDT, Sun October 6, 2013

(CNN) -- Curl up for a siesta on a sultry strand in Mexico or the Caribbean. Take a fall trip to Florida's sun-kissed beaches. Kick back in a cottage on the stunning Outer Banks in North Carolina. Or, go for lobster and an autumn bike ride in Cape Cod.

The leaves aren't the only things falling this autumn. So are airfare and hotel room rates in destinations that are between peak and low seasons. The quiet relaxation -- and value -- of coastal destinations this time of year is often worth the gamble of hurricane season.

You might just want to steal away sooner rather than later. "I have seen an increase in bookings this fall," says Becky Veith, a Pennsylvania-based Caribbean travel specialist with Travel Experts. "When a large tropical system impacts the USA or Caribbean early in the season, travelers shy away from booking vacations." But the season has been pretty quiet this year, and "everyone is taking advantage of the low prices and great weather."

Of course, there's always the potential for a hurricane (as travelers who've been keeping an eye on [Tropical Storm Karen](#) know), and you may also find some restaurants and shops shuttered in summer resort destinations. But what you will discover is that the weather is typically still great, the crowds are few and the rates are much more attractive.

Florida. Getaways such as Fort Myers and the Florida Keys are idyllic for beach lovers this time of year. "Travel to areas such as Fort Myers is typically at its highest during the winter," says JetBlue spokeswoman Tamara Young. "Shoulder season travel provides a less expensive option for customers looking to potentially save money. Although fares vary, prices decrease around 20% on average during this trough period."

You can't beat the deals. For example, a stay at the [Sanibel Harbour Marriott Resort & Spa](#) in Fort Myers right now starts at \$129 per night but in high season those rates go up to about \$350. And a fall stay in an oceanfront suite at the [Cheeca Lodge & Spa](#) in Islamorada in the Keys will save you up to 50% off the high season rate of \$899 per night.

The [Crystal Coast](#), southern Outer Banks, North Carolina. You can dig a sandcastle along this 85-mile stretch of sand and surf because although bikini season is officially over, the sun still shines -- and the discounts are deep. For example, a 10-room mansion by the sea in October rents for \$4,200 per week; in high season you'll shell out about \$11,000 for the same property. A more modest beach cottage runs \$2,500 per week right now; in high season it'll cost \$7,000.

Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Mother Nature puts on quite an autumn show in most of New England and hotels fill up with leaf peepers who pay a pretty penny. But on the Cape, when the beach plums darken and wisps of beach grass turn golden at the National Seashore, it's a quiet, magic time. (But keep an eye on the government shutdown before you book; access points and facilities are closed at Cape Cod National Seashore.)

Many Cape resorts offer tempting fall deals.

Packages at [Ocean Edge Resort and Golf Club](#) offer rates at a 25 % discount from peak summer season. The "Falling Leaves, Falling Rates," package includes accommodations, bike rentals and a picnic basket loaded with goodies. Package rates start at \$235 per night in the resort's Villages area or \$335 for Mansion wing guest rooms. During autumn, guests in both areas have access to the resort's private beach.

At [Chatham Bars Inn](#), summer season room rates begin at \$800 per night and no packages are offered, says revenue manager Chris Sellitto. But during the fall, the resort offers the "CBI Your Way" package with room rates beginning at \$435 a night with a \$150 credit toward anything you wish (restaurant, spa, gift shop); after Columbus Day, the package rate drops to \$335 a night through November 30.

The Caribbean. Winter is peak season in this neck of the sea and that means that right now you can snag a great deal at very high-end resorts. A popular seven-night fall package for two adults at Jade Mountain in St. Lucia -- including roundtrip airfare from New York, roundtrip airport transfers and Sky Suite resort accommodations—can be had for \$8,664 from October 26 to November 2 as compared to \$10,904 in high season, according travel specialist Veith.

And remember you can purchase insurance to cover you in the event of a hurricane. "Ninety-five percent of travelers take insurance, but check your insurance to see what is and what is not covered," says Toni Montello, travel consultant with New York-based Network Travel. "Many have a clause that if you cancel your trip a hurricane can be one of the reasons, but not all cover hurricanes, so best to check."

The Mayan Riviera, Mexico. In Mexico, the Mayan Riviera heats up with fall deals. Most properties offer an average discount of 25% to 30% now through Thanksgiving, according to Rick Stiffler, vice president of leisure sales for Preferred Hotel Group. The threat of hurricanes tends to dampen demand in the region, but sunshine -- and bargains -- often win out.

A great deal: [Fiesta Americana Grand Coral Beach Cancun Resort & Spa](#) is offering rates at around \$188 per night in October compared to \$985 per night in January.