

Ideas to Reduce Course Costs

1. Be flexible on the days of the week you can travel. This will assist in both airline availability and hotel availability.
2. Midweek travel (Monday-Thursday) is generally less expensive than weekend travel (Friday-Sunday), and airlines are willing to negotiate more midweek.
3. Be flexible on what airline you will use and the amount of connections. Airfare is a huge expense on international courses, and the best place to find significant savings if you are flexible. International carriers (Air France, Virgin Airways, British Airways, Lufthansa, etc.) generally are more willing to negotiate their fares down for groups, especially in the off season. Delta, whom has taken over the bulk of the Minneapolis market overseas and the partnership with KLM, rarely negotiates more than 4-8%. Thus, the probability increases that the non-stop flights are now going to be more expensive than a connecting flight through another US gateway.
4. Choose major cities to fly in and out of. Generally there is more competition in and out of the major cities, thus a better chance at a lower negotiated group rate.
5. Group set meals (pre-ordered menus) are more expensive than if giving money to students for meals to dine out on their own, or having a faculty member use group funds to take out to dinner mini groups of 5-6 students over the duration of the course, so that each student has at least one dinner with faculty. Breakfast is the exception as it is generally included in your room rate.
6. Where group dinners are to be included (welcome and final night are most common), dining at your hotel is oftentimes less expensive than at a local restaurant, especially outside of main cities.
7. If dining outside your hotel, choose a restaurant within walking distance to the hotel.
8. Use public transportation wherever possible.
9. Stay at a hotel off the beaten path away from the city centre, or just outside of the city. Hotel should still be easily accessible to city center by public transportation or walking. A fifteen to twenty minute walk is not unreasonable for students.
10. For a longer transfer, but within 3-8 hours, a private motorcoach is usually less expensive than individual train tickets for a larger group (i.e. Rome to Florence). For a smaller group, individual train tickets can be less than a private coach. Also consider a public coach between two cities, oftentimes the least expensive transportation option.
11. Limit the number of countries you'll visit on one course. The less transportation used, the less expensive the course.
12. When a private motorcoach is necessary due to accessibility, group your tours/visits that require a coach on one day, limiting the amount of coaches needed. Generally, coaches are confirmed on a ½ day (minimum 3 hour usage) or full day basis, not hour-by-hour or point-to-point.
13. Many cities have discounted museum passes that can be used, but often times they are permitted on consecutive days only. Review the museum passes online that are available, and group your visits accordingly.
14. If it is imperative to your course that you visit more than one country, map it out so that they are in geographic order. For example, Germany to Switzerland to France is preferable to Germany, France, and Switzerland. Try not to have a pre-set notion that you must start or end in one individual city, or return to a country once you've left it.
15. If visiting more than one country, for instance England and France, flexibility on the order you visit the countries may help. Airfare may be completely full to London around New Year's, but Paris is completely open, so you'd begin the course in Paris.

16. Avoid major cities around a national holiday, as hotel prices generally increase.
17. Where proper classroom space is not necessary, for instance summarizing daily activities or brief discussion on course subject, it is good to utilize hotel lobbies, hotel bars, restaurants, parks, etc. wherever possible in lieu of traditional classroom/conference space at the hotel to avoid booking fees.
18. Where classroom space is necessary for course objective, the breakfast room used privately will oftentimes suffice. However, the timing of your meeting must be later in the day while the breakfast room is not being used to take advantage of this, or on weekends when meeting space is less like to be busy, therefore offering better rates.
19. Limit the need for A/V if a traditional conference space is used for class. Even flipcharts cost extra to use.
20. Where a guide is not necessary to your course objectives, eliminate. In some cases, a guide is mandatory, but where it is not and you can tour a museum with a faculty member giving oration or using museum-provided audio guides, you'll save on cost.
21. Flexibility on what performance will be included, and on what date, allows for better seats and many times a better discount.
22. Use site guides rather than have one travel all the way from your hotel. In some countries this is not possible and a guide/tour manager is mandatory (Egypt, Morocco, etc.), but for instance going to Bath, England and meeting your guide there (referred to as a site guide or local guide) rather than having a guide travel with you all the way from London is always going to cost less.
23. If an entrance into a palace, town hall, parliament building, etc. is not needed, do not include. If your objective can be obtained from viewing from the outside, include the site as a panoramic visit only.
24. Include a panoramic city tour on your arrival into the city if a motorcoach is already being used for the transfer. Since the motorcoach generally has a minimum time requirement, you're already paying for much of the service anyhow. It is good for the students to familiarize themselves with the city on arrival, and cuts down the need for a full city orientation tour later.
25. If you have contacts in the cities you're visiting, it is sometimes worth asking them to host a dinner. Some organizations offer to do this at a nominal fee, some do free of charge.
26. Most courses will have twin occupancy rooms, but in some countries, it is widely accepted to book triples or quad occupancy rooms for the entire group, generally a good source of savings for the students especially if a kitchen can be included as well. Cairo, Sydney, Oslo and Barcelona are examples of where this is possible.
27. Guest houses and full-service dorm type rooms or hostels can offer savings in some cities (examples are London, Paris, Barcelona, and especially in Scandinavian cities). This is not a strict rule as some actually can be higher than if you stayed in a hotel, and many times the booking terms are not acceptable (strict non-refundable deposits). However, where the terms are acceptable, this type of accommodation should be considered for student groups.
28. Utilize an overnight train/ferry with couchettes/twin bedding in lieu of a hotel room.
29. Minimum number of academic days is 20; maximum stay is to be 26 days. With better planning, deleting hotel nights can be a good savings. For UMAIE 2010 courses, the average stay was nearly three nights more than the minimum with 16 of the courses being at least three nights more than required.
30. Flexibility = savings in almost every aspect of the course.