

## AIRFARES

## On the roads well-traveled

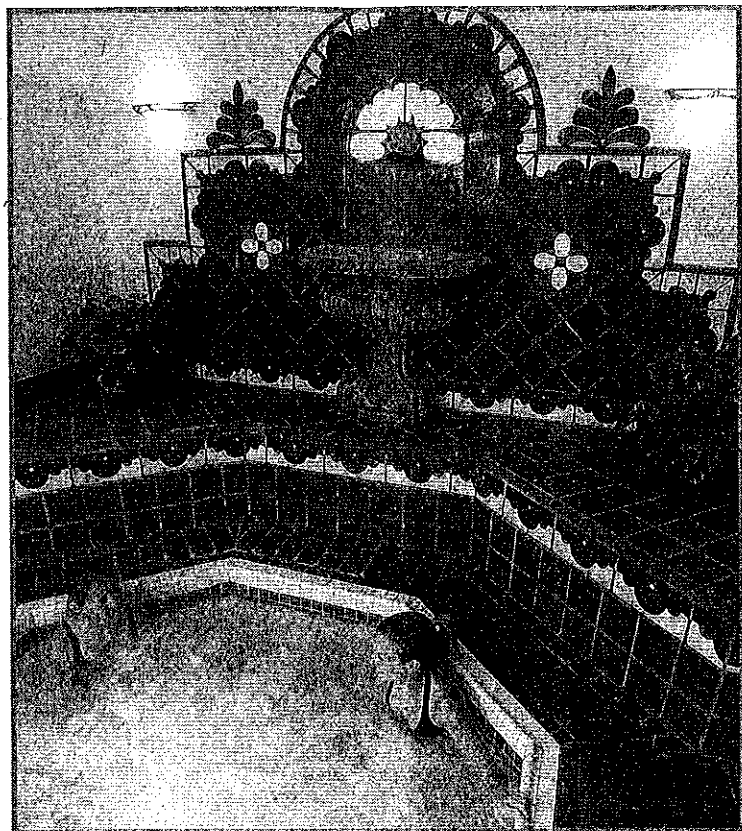
A great drive can rely on water, forests or mountain vistas. There is a little of all that in this list of scenic driving destinations, which includes the lowest fares:

BELLAGIO TO COMO, ITALY (VIA LUGANO, SWITZERLAND, AIRPORT)		
LAX	\$736	American, Swiss
SNA	541	American, United
BUR	941	American
ONT	1,088	American
BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY (ROANOKE, VA.)		
LAX	\$514	Delta, Northwest, United, US Airways
SNA	499	Delta, United
BUR	634	Delta, United, US Airways
ONT	524	Delta, US Airways
CARLISLE, ENGLAND, TO GLASGOW, SCOTLAND (CARLISLE)		
LAX	\$624	British, Continental, KLM, US Airways
SNA	624	Continental
YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK (CODY, WYO.)		
LAX	\$562	Delta, United
SNA	546	Delta, United
BUR	592	Delta, United
LGB	529	Delta
ONT	652	Delta, United
FAIRY TALE ROAD, FRANKFURT TO BREMEN, GERMANY (FRANKFURT)		
LAX	\$678	Air France, American, British, Continental, Delta, KLM, Lufthansa, Northwest, United, US Airways
SNA	678	American, Continental, Delta, United
BUR	678	American, Delta, United
ONT	678	American, Continental, Delta
ROUTE NAPOLEON, GRENOBLE TO CANNES, FRANCE (LYON)		
LAX	\$830	Air France, KLM, Lufthansa
BUR	710	American
ONT	730	Delta, American, Continental, Lufthansa
PASSAU, GERMANY, TO PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC (MUNICH)		
LAX	\$658	Air France, Delta, KLM, Lufthansa, United, US Airways
SNA	658	Delta, United

Restricted round-trip airfares as researched on computer Thursday, the day before the Travel section goes to press. Fares change daily, and availability is not assured. Fares, which may involve a change of planes, are for airlines serving Los Angeles International (LAX), Orange County/John Wayne (SNA), Burbank/Bob Hope (BUR), L.A. Ontario (ONT) and Long Beach (LGB). Domestic fares include sales tax; international airfares do not. There may be additional surcharges on both.

Sources: Sabre reservation system, airlines and Web, Automotive magazine, Dan Neil, Times staff writer

## THE 30%-OFF DEAL



SPENCER WEINER/Los Angeles Times

**MELT AWAY:** Spa treatments are 30% off in October to celebrate the Oaks' 30th year. The fitness spa also offers exercise classes.

## In Ojai, stressing the value of relaxing

By ROSEMARY McCLURE  
Times Staff Writer

Celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Oaks at Ojai with a 30%-off special at the fitness resort's spa.

**The deal:** During October, the resort's anniversary month, guests pay \$180 per person per night, double occupancy weekdays, for accommodations in a standard room. (Weekends are \$10 more.) Included are three low-calorie meals daily, plus mid-day snacks and access to more than a dozen fitness classes a day, including hiking, power walks, belly dancing, yoga and water aerobics. All spa treatments are 30% off during the month. For example, a one-hour Swedish massage is \$52.50.

**The hotel:** The Oaks at Ojai, founded by fitness maven Sheila Cluff in 1977, was one of the original destination spas. It is known for its 1,000-calorie-a-day diet plan, evening programs and massage, facial and wellness programs.

**Location:** The Oaks is at 122 E. Ojai Ave., Ojai.

**Reservations:** (800) 753-6257, [www.oaksspa.com](http://www.oaksspa.com).

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## MORE FOR YOUR MONEY

## Save yourself sticker shock; avoid the euro

By DIANA DAWSON  
Special to The Times

**B**EFORE 21-year-old Neel Bhuta spent a semester abroad last year, the New York University economics and history major carefully studied the cost of a beer abroad.

In Prague, Czech Republic, \$2 was expensive by his standards, even compared with the \$8 he would pay in Rome. "One of the reasons I chose to go to school in Prague was that it was not tied to the euro and was going to be a lot cheaper," Bhuta said. "I mostly stuck to visiting Central and Eastern European countries because my dollar would go so much further."

The blasted dollar took us so far for so long, but it couldn't — and didn't — last forever. In the last two years, the dollar has wilted against many foreign currencies.

In late July, the beleaguered buck took a beating as the euro reached an all-time high and the pound a 26-year peak against the greenback. The currency story is similar in Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

The outlook isn't much better for next year.

"Over the next few years, the dollar will continue to go down," said Kenneth Rogoff, professor of public policy and economics at Harvard. "Economists are predicting that a 20% further drop is likely in the next three to five years, and a 40% drop is possible."

Blame a faltering American economy, the sub-prime mortgage crisis and the \$800 billion Americans put annually on the nation's credit card. Interest rates are steady here but poised to move higher in Australia, New Zealand and Britain, so foreign investors are chasing higher returns by investing there, not here.

Less demand for the dollar means a lower exchange rate. For Americans, that means higher prices.

So do we just stay home? American travelers who continue to book flights in record numbers from the U.S. say no.

"You can go to Colombia and get a steak dinner for \$10, but you can hardly get a hamburger for \$10 in Europe," said Lauren Vaccarello, director of publishing for GoCurrency.com, a Website that combines currency conversion, exchange-rate information and other financial information for travelers.

"Americans tend to go to places that are ingrained in them, but they can get so much more for their money in other

places, feel as if they've been on vacation and come home with money."

Many people consider only the price of flights and hotels, neglecting to factor in costs they'll face once they arrive, said Bill Ridgers, chief analyst for travel and tourism with the Economist Intelligence Unit in London. "Often, they are shocked."

Travelers unjustly limit their options, however, if they look only at how exchange rates affect their travel budgets, Ridgers said. They need to factor in local labor rates, cost of transportation, infrastructure and availability of natural resources.

Tokyo and New Delhi would be polar opposites in value, Ridgers said. Travelers would find Tokyo costly because it has few natural resources, pays dearly to import food and has a wealthy population that can afford higher-priced goods. Because land is scarce there, any construction is pricey. India is a better value because of the lower cost of labor, abundant natural resources and a relatively small middle class.

U.S. travelers still find great values in Central and South America. For instance, when Holli Hebl's family visited her this spring in Guatemala, where she teaches at a nonprofit school, the group of seven spent only \$1,000, excluding airfare, for eight days of food, good hotels, shuttles and such activities as riding a zip line and touring Lake Atitlán.

Those great, tropical deals, however, don't necessarily translate to the touristy areas of the Caribbean. "The answer is simple supply and demand. Much of the Caribbean is set up to be fairly exclusive, aimed at the upper end of the market," Ridgers said. "Plus, the islands are quite small [limiting supply], and the two things together push the price up."

Countries not yet tied to the euro remain a better value. For example, the Czech Republic has been a member of the European Union since 2004 but won't complete the process of adopting the euro until at least 2009 and, perhaps, as late as 2012, Vaccarello said.

"Once the Czech Republic adopts the euro," she said, "the days of 20 to 25 koruna beers [about \$1] will be gone." And where will Bhuta, the NYU economics major, find the best beer bargain?

He and a group of friends are considering Morocco, Turkey and Egypt.

"When I go to a less-developed country not based on the euro, I just get a lot more bang for my buck," he said.

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