

**KIP TIP:** Attending a local community college for a year or two before transferring to a four-year university can save tens of thousands of dollars. So can graduating in three years by combining high school AP classes with extra college courses. ROTC scholarships can wipe out tuition costs even at some elite private institutions.

### BANK ONE SALARY

EVERY MORNING I load my two kids on the school bus at 8:15, allowing me to get to work by 9 o'clock and leave by 3 P.M. By working around their school schedule, I don't pay for child care. We live on my

husband's salary and bank all of my income, dividing it between our savings and their two college-savings plans. —*Andrea Hall, Alexandria, Va.*

### CUT THE FEES

I ORIGINALLY set up 529 college-savings plans for my two children through a broker, but then realized the fees were too high. I'm planning to switch to a direct plan targeted to New Jersey residents like myself. It has lower fees than the broker-sold plan. The added sweetener of a scholarship of up to \$1,500 to each beneficiary is enough to make me switch. —*Bob Murdoch, Brielle, N.J.*

## TRAVEL AND CARS

Europe for less, credit-card bonuses, Web-site bargains, off-lease vehicles

### REAP REWARDS

I EARN POINTS ON my Bank of America WorldPoints credit card for every dollar I spend. For a trip I'm planning to Asia, I saw that it would have cost me 85,000 points plus \$250 in taxes and fees—the equivalent of more than \$1,000. I wouldn't have earned frequent-flier miles on my flight, and I couldn't find a great one anyway. So I decided to cash out the 100,000 points for \$1,000 and buy the ticket myself. While looking for the right flight, I stashed the money in my ING Direct savings

account, which earns 4.5%. When I charge the flight to my card, I'll earn points on my card and miles with whichever airline I fly. —*Mim King, Lexington, Ky.*

**KIP TIP:** Visa and MasterCard charge a 1% fee for purchases made in a foreign currency. Most major credit-card issuers pass along that fee, plus an additional 2% when a purchase must be converted into dollars. Capital One's no-fee Platinum Prestige MasterCard (877-304-2066; www.capitalone.com) charges neither fee and has a low, 7.9% variable rate.

### SWAP HOMES

OUR FAMILY VACATION to Europe proves that being financially astute doesn't necessarily translate into pinching pennies. We used frequent-flier miles and saved about \$2,200 on airfare. Then we exchanged homes for a month's stay in



Europe. That saved us another \$3,200, for a grand total of \$5,400. —*Kim Allen, Sarasota, Fla.*

**KIP TIP:** To join a home exchange, check out HomeLink International (www.swapnow.com; \$90 per year for a Web-only membership) or Intervac (www.intervac.com; \$79 per year for the Web only). The Caretaker Gazette (www.caretaker.org; \$30 per year) has online ads for house-sitting gigs, or you can subscribe to a bimonthly print version for \$29.95 a year.

### AIRFARE BARGAINS

AS A YOUNG newlywed couple short on cash, my husband and I have saved hundreds of dollars a year by flying from Houston instead of from Austin



or San Antonio, both of which are closer to our home. —*Melody and Deonte Thompson, Pflugerville, Tex.*

**KIP TIP:** To find low-cost airfares, go to Kayak.com. It will search more than 120 sources for the best fares on flights leaving up to three days before and after your ideal travel date. In a rush? Site59.com puts together last-minute weekend packages.

### 'BE MY HOUSEMATE'

WHEN I GO on extended travel, I often sublet my home. I post an ad on Craigslist.com saying "Be my housemate for a week and then have the entire home to yourself." By living with the person, I put my mind at ease that he or she is trustworthy, and then I have someone to look after the house. The rent helps offset the cost of my travel. —*Felix Wong, Fort Collins, Colo.*

### TIMESHARE TRAVEL

I BOUGHT A one-bedroom timeshare for \$1,500 through an ad in the paper ten years ago. By purchasing a membership with RCI, a timeshare exchange, I can trade the unit for others worldwide. I've gone to Disney World twice, Mexico, the Cayman Islands, the Bahamas and tons of other places. I have two small children and would never have been able to afford these vacations otherwise. —*Robin Gonzalez, Atlantic Highlands, N.J.*