

# ESSENCE

109  
GREAT  
GIFTS

FOR EVERY  
BUDGET

Plus  
Stretch  
Your  
Paycheck  
This  
Holiday

**Tasha  
Smith**

How God,  
Family &  
**TYLER  
PERRY**  
Changed  
Her Life

THE  
SECRET  
TO  
**BLACK  
LOVE**  
Real Couples  
Real Solutions

**IYANLA  
VANZANT**  
How To  
Overcome  
Hard Times

**Finally!  
Flawless  
Makeup  
For Every  
Shade**





# Work & Wealth

Save up  
to 45% on  
holiday  
travel

## ESCAPES YOU CAN AFFORD

IF A STAYCATION JUST WON'T SATISFY THIS SEASON, CONSIDER THESE LAST-MINUTE TRAVEL DEALS FULL OF EXCLUSIVE DISCOUNTS JUST FOR YOU. PACK YOUR BAGS!

(BY SANDRA RAMANI)

**L**ast year Shermika Dunner and her sister traveled to Tokyo for the trip of a lifetime. The best part: Their airfare was nearly \$700 off the original price. "I am a fan of setting up deal alerts and checking airline Web sites daily," says Dunner, who spotted the savings on travelocity.com about a month before her trip. "It was truly a blessing for my sister and me to be able to see the world on the cheap." ▸







Receive five-star treatment at Phulay Bay, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve in Thailand.

Conventional wisdom says traveling to a destination during the off-season (think the Caribbean in the summer) is the best way to get a great deal. This year, however, things are different. "In a recovering economy, the travel industry is getting creative about discounts," explains travel expert Valarie D'Elia of New York City's NY1 Channel. Expect an extra night's stay, free breakfast, dinner at the chef's table and more to seal the deal.

Though the holidays are typically high season for many locales, D'Elia says deals can still be had by traveling midweek (for resorts) or on the weekend (for cities), or by asking for perks like free parking and resort credits. We've tracked down fantastic last-minute gems for beachy family fun, romantic rendezvous and even a couple of girlfriend getaways. Check out our favorite jaunts for a little fun in the sun at a price that's right.

## Girlfriend Escapes

Kick back with your BFFs at one of these decadent retreats

### PHULAY BAY, A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE, THAILAND

It's a haul to get to this posh resort, which is set in the lush province of Krabi in southern Thailand, but once you're there, you're in heaven. Bordering the Andaman Sea, the decadent spot features luxe villas, butler service, tropical gardens and a stunning spa.

**DEAL:** The Peace of Mind Package lets you stay five nights for the price of four

and includes a welcome gift, daily breakfast for two, free Wi-Fi and daily boat trips to Hong Island.

**SAVINGS:** Rates average \$400 per night, for a savings of about 20 percent. Deal available until December 22, 2011; phulaybay.com.

### HOTEL PALOMAR, SAN FRANCISCO

Get gift shopping out of the way during a girls' weekend in vibrant San Francisco. Located downtown, this chic boutique hotel hosts nightly wine hours and a lively atmosphere.

**DEAL:** The Shop 'Til You Drop Package includes deluxe room accommodations, a \$50 Bloomingdale's gift card and 15 percent off certificate to Bloomingdale's, a personal Bloomingdale's shopper (upon request), special gift and in-room post-shopping champagne.

**SAVINGS:** Rates start at \$239 per night for a savings of 25 percent, valid November 25–December 25. Use code SHOP when booking; hotelpalomar-sf.com.

### HOTEL VINTAGE PLAZA PORTLAND, OREGON

Take advantage of tax-free shopping with a weekend at this charming, wine-themed boutique hotel.

**DEAL:** The Shop 'Til You Lemon Drop Package includes accommodations, plus two Lemon Drop cocktails, complimentary yoga passes, holiday discounts from Pioneer Place Mall and a nightly wine hour in the lobby. **SAVINGS:** Rooms start at \$189 per night; the hotel will waive the 12.5 percent nightly sales tax, so if you stay two nights, that's a savings of 25 percent (plus the other goodies). No end date; use code PDROP when booking; vintageplaza.com.

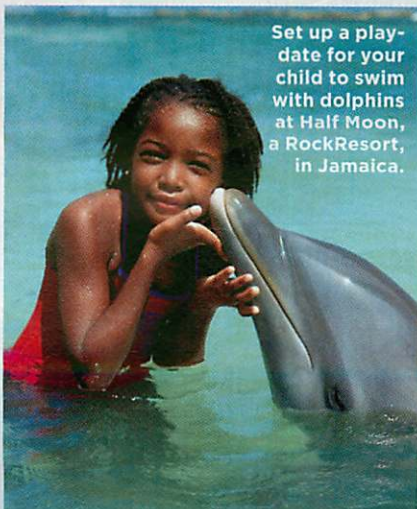
## Family Fun

Savor precious downtime at these kid-friendly holiday spots

### SANDPEARL RESORT, CLEARWATER BEACH, FLORIDA

In honor of Winter, the amputee dolphin whose story is told in the hit movie *Dolphin Tale*, this eco-chic spot has a special water-themed deal. Kids will really enjoy taking part in astronomy nights and making s'mores at the beach.

**DEAL:** The Winter the Dolphin Family Package includes accommodations for a family of four, daily breakfast for two adults and two children, two tickets to the Clearwater Marine Aquarium and a copy of the book *Winter's Tale* by Mark Helprin (Mariner Books). ▷



Set up a play-date for your child to swim with dolphins at Half Moon, a RockResort, in Jamaica.