

A penny saved

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Many area restaurants and stores offer age-related discounts

Since the 1950s, one of the benefits of being a senior is qualifying for special discounts that allow you to use your age to advantage.

Americans are living longer, and experts say folks age 50 and older are wealthier than those in previous generations. Some 35 million people belong to the AARP nationwide.

Because the senior population is growing so rapidly as baby boomers mature, some retailers around the country have been rethinking those discounts.

In July, four major airlines quietly decided to drop their 10-percent ticket discounts for seniors. American, Delta, Northwest and US Airways all halted the discounts, according to news stories at the time. And though Northwest and Delta now offer special senior fares, airline spokespeople say those might not always be the lowest available.

Some airlines also offered flight coupon books for seniors but apparently decided they were no longer a value compared with discounted tickets and the paperwork was burdensome.

Locally, however, there are still plenty of incentives for seniors, says John Palmer, coordinator for the New Mexico AARP Information and Resource Center.

"A lot of merchants figure the senior population is going to grow by leaps and bounds, so they say, 'We should take advantage of it.' People are retiring early, they've got money and they're doing a lot of traveling."

Selected people

When people join the AARP, they receive a discount guide.

Sixteen more hotels and motels registered with the program this year than last, Palmer says.

Travel discounts are what most of New Mexico's 225,000 AARP members are seeking, he adds.

While most hotel/motel discounts average 10 percent to 30 percent, some places slash rates by as much as 50 percent, according to Palmer.

Car rentals and auto and homeowner's insurance are the other areas seniors look to for discounts, he says.

Merchants typically give seniors 10 percent to 15 percent off the regular price of goods or services. The discounts have varying age limitations, with some beginning as early as age 50 and others not until age 72.

Here is a taste of what's out there.

Travel

Check with individual airlines to find out if they offer discounts, coupons or special travel clubs for seniors.

Sometimes promotional fares are even cheaper than **senior discounts**, so check carefully. The key is to be flexible.

The same applies to car rentals.

Compare the discount with special promotion rates.

* Choice Hotels, which includes Quality Inns, Sleep Inns, Comfort Inns, Clarion, Rodeway, EconoLodge and MainStay Suites, offers 10-percent discounts for people older than age 50 and 20 percent to 30 percent for those age 60 and older. Plus, kids stay free when they share a room with their grandparents.

* Carnival Cruise Lines offers discounts to AARP members.

* Amtrak gives travelers age 62 and older a 15-percent discount on most trains.

Medical/pharmacy

Many pharmacies offer up to 65 percent off brand-name and generic prescription drugs with the SeniorDiscounts Prescription Drug Plan. There is a one-time processing and registration fee of \$15.95 to enroll in the plan.

To find out more about the plan, call (877) 924-2023.

Restaurants

This is one of the largest categories.

The following list was compiled from SeniorDiscounts.com. Age requirements, discounts and participation may vary by location, so if the one nearest you isn't listed, call and ask if it offers the same discount.

And remember, this is just a sampling.

These Albuquerque-area restaurants offer 10 percent off for seniors:

Arby's, 4701 Paseo del Norte NE; Boston Market, 340 Eubank NE; Carls Jr., 1312 Eubank NE; Chili's, 6909 Menaul NE; Church's Fried Chicken, 2100 Broadway SE; Country Kitchen, 6000 Menaul NE;

Dairy Queen, 1435 Central Ave. NW; Eat First Chinese, 3250 Coors NW; Fuddrucker's World's Greatest Hamburgers, 2120 Yale SE; Furr's Family Dining, 2001 Second NW; Grandy's Country Cookin', 4240 San Mateo NE;

Little Anita's Mexican Food, 2000 Menaul and 6131 Fourth NW; Marie Callender's Restaurants and Bakeries, 5220 Eubank NE; Mr. Powdrell's Barbeque House, 11309 Central Ave. NE; Seagull Street Fish Market and Restaurant, 5410 Academy NE;

Sweet Tomatoes, 10126 Coors NW; Taco Bell, 5215 Lomas NE; TCBY Treats and Yogurt, 10701 Coors NW; The Cooperage, 7220 Lomas NE; Village Inn, 6300 San Mateo NE, 840 Juan Tabo NE and 1741 Rio Rancho Blvd. SE.

Other restaurant offers include:

* Bennigan's, 2105-B Louisiana NE, has seasonal discounts; call for details at 883-1665.

* Burger King, 10000 Coors Blvd., free small drink or coffee with purchase or 25 cents without purchase for those age 50 and older.

* Captain D's Seafood Restaurant, 1955 Juan Tabo NE, 10 percent off or, if the restaurant participates in the senior program, receive \$1 off a dinner meal on Wednesdays.

* Carrow's, 650 Juan Tabo NE and 4401 Wyoming NE, special menu for seniors.

* Cracker Barrel, 5200 San Antonio NE, seniors are welcome to order off the children's menu, which has discount prices and smaller portions; for those age 50 and older.

* Denny's, 2400 San Mateo NE, special menu for those age 55 and older.

- * Dunkin' Donuts, 5502 Fourth St. NW, 10 percent off for those age 65 and older. At 4416 Wyoming NE, people age 60 and older can get one doughnut and a small coffee for \$1.25.
- * Gold Street Caffe, 218 Gold Ave., free coffee with purchase of a meal for those age 65 and older.
- * Home Town Buffet, 1528 Eubank NE, 10 percent off Tuesdays through Sundays and 20 percent off on Mondays for those age 55 and older.
- * IHOP, 8100 Wyoming NE, 10 percent off, plus senior menu available with smaller portions for those age 55 and older.
- * McDonald's, coffee and small drinks are 25 cents apiece.
- * Pancho's Mexican Buffet, 4301 San Mateo NE, 20 percent off meals and nonalcoholic beverages. Get a free senior card and present it to receive the discount when you leave; for those age 60 and older.
- * Shoney's Restaurant, 6810 Menaul NE, save 50 cents off meals or \$1 off the buffet. Some Shoney's Restaurants offer a 10 percent discount instead.
- * Sizzler Restaurant, 7212 Menaul NE, free drink at lunch and 20 percent off dinners for those age 60 and older.
- * Steak & Ale, 2105-A Louisiana NE, offers seasonal discounts; call (505) 883-1407 for details.
- * The Ranchers Club of Albuquerque, 1901 University NE, 30 percent discount for those age 62 and older.
- * TGIFriday's, 203 Winrock Center NE, half off coffee for those age 63 and older.
- * Tomato Cafe, 1930 Juan Tabo, \$1 off for those age 60 and older.
- * Wienerschnitzel, 2929 Carlisle NE, free small drink.

Retail

The following retailers offer a 10-percent discount to seniors:

- * American Man Big & Tall, 2828 Carlisle NE
- * Banana Republic, 6600 Menaul NE, in Coronado Center
- * Exclusively Yours Boutique, 901 Rio Grande NW
- * Goodwill Industries, all locations
- * Jo-Ann Fabric and Crafts, 10 percent off on Wednesdays
- * The Men's Wearhouse, 6307 Menaul NE
- * Wild Oats Markets offers 5 percent off every day and 10 percent on Wednesdays.

Here are some other retail offers:

- * Sally Beauty Supply offers a discount of 5 percent to 25 percent on nonsale items at any location.
- * Savers, 3300 San Mateo NE, save 30 percent on used merchandise on Wednesdays.
- * Stein Mart, 2268 Wyoming NE, 15 percent off total purchase from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. on Tuesdays.

Books

For a good overview of discounts available nationwide, track down the bestseller, "Unbelievably Good Deals and Great Adventures That You Absolutely Can't Get Unless You're Over Fifty," revised and updated for 2002-03, by Joan Rattner Heilman.

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