

FRUGAL TRAVELER

## The New Long Weekend

Does a Saturday-to-Monday weekend mean savings and fewer crowds? We tested the model in four cities.



Credit...Jared Oriel  
**By Elaine Glusac**

Nov. 1, 2019

For most people, long weekends usually run from Friday to Sunday, a surge that often means higher travel costs. But what if we tinkered with the timing to reset the weekend as Saturday to Monday? Would we save money?

Depending on where you go and stay, the answer is yes, from somewhat to substantially.

The variability starts with your choice of accommodations. The new long weekend takes advantage of a Sunday night hotel stay, generally the lowest occupancy night of the week, which dictates lower rates. STR, a global hospitality benchmarking firm, found that hotel occupancy in the United States in 2018 was 53.2 percent on Sunday nights, the lowest of the week; occupancy peaked on Saturday nights at 74.7 percent.

[HotelTonight](#), the last-minute hotel booking app, notes that Sunday night hotel stays cost 30 percent less on average than Friday or Saturday night rates.

“Friday and Saturday are traditional weekend leisure travel nights, and Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday are business travel,” Sam Shank, the chief executive of HotelTonight, said. “You’re left with orphan Sunday nights which are neither leisure nor business.”

Additionally, fliers can take advantage of lower fares on Saturday, a less popular day to fly. The airfare prediction app [Hopper](#) found that traveling Saturday to Monday is 10 percent cheaper on average for travel within the United States than traveling on Friday to Sunday, or \$255 for an economy round-trip a ticket versus \$284. Hopper cautioned that consumers should return on Monday when business travelers aren’t in the air.

“There are more options for people traveling on a Monday when they’re not traveling on business,” Hayley Berg, the economist at Hopper, said. Early morning flights tend to fill with business travelers. “A 6 a.m. flight from New York to Chicago is going to be more expensive than a 3 p.m. on the same day,” Ms. Berg said.

A lot also depends on the weekend in question. The travel search site [Kayak](#) found that the combination of days doesn’t affect prices much, though booking a weekend trip after a major holiday, such as the weekend following the Thanksgiving weekend, may save 20 to 35 percent on airfare compared to holiday prices.

Gains and losses aren’t always financial and the Sunday night hotel rule doesn’t always apply, especially in cities popular with conventions, as indicated in the following analyses of four popular weekend destinations weighing the value of the long weekend shift.

## Las Vegas

Price-wise, long weekends in Las Vegas — second only to Orlando in convention business, according to the meetings technology provider [Cvent](#) — are subject to the convention calendar.

Using [Google.com/travel](https://www.google.com/travel), I found average nightly rates from \$165 at the [Luxor Hotel & Casino](#) and \$121 at the [D Las Vegas](#) for a Friday-to-Sunday weekend in November on a non-convention weekend. Shifting to a Saturday-to-Monday stay, I got nightly rates from \$87 at the Luxor and \$92 at the D.

Advance booking makes a difference too; looking six weeks out, average nightly rates at the Luxor and D drop to \$36 and \$47, respectively, for Saturday to Monday nights in late November. On a convention weekend in late November, I recently found average nightly rates from \$74 at the Luxor and \$89 at the D for Friday and Saturday nights, and \$35 and \$49, respectively, on Saturday and Sunday nights.

Staying over on a Sunday in Las Vegas, “visitors would also avoid long waits at restaurants or nightclubs,” wrote Scott Roeben, the founder of the blog [VitalVegas.com](#), in an email. “They’re hungrier for business on Sundays. Because Vegas is a 24/7 town in many ways, I don’t see much downside.”

# Miami

In the Miami area, both Sunday and Monday are low occupancy nights, hovering around 72 percent in 2018, versus nearly 85 percent on Saturdays, the busiest day of the week, according to STR.

In addition to occupancy, advance booking may also affect prices. For the traditional Friday-to-Sunday weekend in early November, the website for the [Aloft Miami – Brickell](#) hotel showed average nightly rates from \$174 (or \$165 if you join the free Marriott Bonvoy loyalty program). Shifting Saturday to Monday saves \$20 a night. In a Google search for stays during the last weekend of November, rates at the hotel dropped to \$135 a night for Friday and Saturday; they started at \$129 on Sunday.





“There’s so much available to travelers on Sunday and Monday that they’ll likely only miss out on the crowds,” Kayla Becker, a Miami-based assistant editor at [Fodor’s Travel](#), wrote in an email.

She points to a [list of museums offering free admission](#) published by the local visitors bureau, including the [Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami](#), which is always free, and the [Pérez Art Museum Miami](#), which offers free admission on the second Saturday of the month. There are free flea markets at [Lummus Park](#) on Saturdays and Sundays, and a [farmers market on the Lincoln Road Mall](#) in South Beach on Sundays for bargain food foraging.

If you’re coming to see and be seen, you’ll miss prime time on Friday night, but “there are way fewer people on the beach on a Monday morning,” Ms. Becker added.

## New York City

Occupancy peaked in New York hotels in 2018 on Saturday nights at nearly 92 percent, a figure that fell to nearly 80 percent on Sunday. HotelTonight found that over the past two years, New York City has had the lowest Sunday night rates compared to other cities around the country, starting at \$103 for the period between Oct. 11 and Nov. 24. By comparison, New York’s average daily rate in 2018 was \$262.32, according to STR.

[Arlo Hotels](#), which has two locations in New York, recently priced a Friday and Saturday night at the [Arlo NoMad](#) at \$306 a night in mid-November. That rate held for a Saturday and Sunday stay, though if I booked a single night on Sunday, the rate dropped to \$204. On a recent search, HotelTonight listed the World Center Hotel in

the Financial District from \$175 a night for the traditional Friday-to-Sunday weekend, versus an average of \$168 a night for Saturday to Monday.

Subbing Sunday for Friday, visitors may be required to shift their expectations. Instead of seeing “Hadestown” on Broadway at 8 p.m. on a Friday, the show, [like most on Broadway](#), runs midafternoon matinees on Sundays.

“New York is a little quieter on a Sunday,” said Christopher Heywood, the executive vice president of global communications for NYC & Company, which promotes tourism in the city. He also noted that crowds at attractions may be fewer and restaurant reservations easier to get. [NYCgo.com](#) maintains a list of free activities.

## San Francisco

For all its leisure appeal, San Francisco is a business travel town, hotel occupancy figures suggest. Occupancy peaked in 2018 on Wednesdays at 88 percent, STR found, and fell to 73 percent on Sundays (Saturdays stand at 83.8 percent).

The new [Yotel San Francisco](#) seemed like a good place to test rates. Yotel is known for its tiny but well-designed rooms — in San Francisco these “cabins” start at 86 square feet — and commensurately affordable prices. On Fridays and Saturdays in early November, rates started at \$189 and on Sunday jumped to \$249, which management attributes to its location near the Moscone Convention Center.

Looking for a property less subject to the business market, I found the hostel [HI San Francisco City Center](#) had private double rooms at \$130.50 per night on a November Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

For Rachael Levitt, the digital managing editor of [Fodor’s Travel](#) who lived in the city for five years, the new long weekend saves money as well as time battling peak traffic on Friday.

“I’d take a full day on Sunday over any evening of the week,” Ms. Levitt wrote in an email.