

Evan Julber

# The home swap

Hotel rooms? A thing of the past for this reader from Bend, Oregon



**INFO** Evan Julber uses *homeexchange.com* (\$100 annual membership fee).

## 6 secrets of a home swapper

### 1. I travel more for less money.

Last year my wife, Patricia, and I were able to travel for four weeks for the typical cost of a week and a half, if you were renting a house and a car. (We did five exchanges: in Ashland, Oregon; on the Oregon coast; in Malibu; in San Diego; and in Carbondale, near Aspen, Colorado.) No lodging costs, no rental car fees; we cooked for ourselves or went out with the money we saved.

### 2. I travel to places I didn't even know I wanted to go.

Sometimes offers spark my imagination. I hadn't considered going to the Aspen area or even Colorado until we got an email with photos from a couple in Carbondale, and I

went, "Wow!" I looked up the typical weather in June (80°) and immediately booked the tickets.

### 3. I got to live like a Hollywood star for a weekend.

One of our best exchanges was a gorgeous 5-acre spread in Malibu with 180° views of Zuma County Beach and keys to a Mercedes convertible in the garage. We'd seen photos, but when we drove up and saw the view, the house, the surf on Zuma Beach ... life was good. And we got to cruise down Pacific Coast Highway in a convertible.

### 4. I'm really laid-back.

For this to work, you have to be trusting. There aren't formal agreements other than verbal handshakes and emails, so you've gotta be okay

with that. We haven't had any issues at all, but I usually lock a room in the house for off-limits personal items.

**5. I avoid tourist traps.** Staying in someone else's home gives us a window into a place we wouldn't get at a hotel. For example, when we showed up in Carbondale, the owners stuck around and showed us the best spots to fish on the Frying Pan River and gave us pointers on the whole Roaring Fork Valley. One time, the neighbors even came over to say hi, and we ended up going to a concert and dinner with them.

**6. I've gotten innovative.** I've created a welcome manual for my house in Bend so exchangers

have insider tips for exploring the town—like eating the incredible Pescado La Rosa at La Rosa (\$\$; 541/647-1624), hiking the Green Lakes Trail (free permit required, available at trailhead; \$5 per vehicle parking fee), and mountain biking the Deschutes River Trail from Benham Falls (\$5 per vehicle parking fee; both trails, [www.fs.fed.us/r6/centraloregon](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/centraloregon)). I also bought a fractional-ownership property in Cabo San Lucas just for house trading, and I started a website for owner-to-owner second-home exchange ([fractionalexchange.com](http://fractionalexchange.com)). And I've gotten offers for more unconventional types of trades—including an offer of payment in wine! ■

## Sunset says ...

Here's how to tell if you're the home-trading type

	HOME EXCHANGE	HOTEL
<b>LODGING COST FOR 3 NIGHTS</b>	\$0	\$600 (at \$200/night)
<b>WHO PLANS YOUR DAY</b>	You, possibly along with your host	You, with input from concierge and hotel staff
<b>PROS</b>	Budget-friendly, unexpected travel destinations, local lifestyle, self-service, homey personal touches, kitchen access, occasional free car access	Amenities, room service, maid service, occasional on-site activities, pleasant predictability
<b>CONS</b>	Potential for surprises, self-service, homey personal touches, people you don't know in your house	Expensive, often generic, less personal than a home, no kitchen, no free car access