

[By Rick Archer](#)

Rick Archer sat down with Don Nadeau, the president of BidonTravel.com, which provides Priceline bidding advice.

RA: Why would anyone want to use Priceline?

DN: You'll save a lot of money.

RA: Yes, but who wants to get up in time for a 6:00 a.m. flight? You can't pick your departure times or airline or anything like that.

DN: Well, just use Priceline for air tickets when you're going to Australia or traveling at the last minute. You'll save hundreds of dollars. When you can plan your U.S. travel well in advance, Priceline may not be your best bet.

But always bid on Priceline hotels. That's easy and you don't have to get up at 4:00 a.m.

RA: Sure, but I don't want to stay in some crummy place.

DN: No, no, no. Bid for three or four-star hotels. You pick the quality.

You'll end up at a Hyatt, Hilton, Holiday Inn Crown Plaza, Sheraton, Marriott, or Doubletree-someplace like these.

And, over a few days, you'll save hundreds of dollars.

In fact, I predict you'll save on average at least \$100 a night over the prices you get on Expedia, Hotels.com, or similar discount hotel sites. Priceline hotel savings average some 40 percent over these sites.

RA: What about location?

DN: You pick that, too.

In the Orlando area, you have a choice of 11 neighborhoods, in or near San Jose, eight.

RA: So you can't pick a specific hotel, just a general neighborhood?

DN: That's right.

That's why hotels use Priceline to sell excess inventory at prices they don't want their regular customers to find out about.

RA: So would it be correct to assume that if there's a big event going on in the area and hotels are heavily booked, rooms won't be available through Priceline?

DN: Actually not.

Groups can book large blocks of rooms at hotels, then find out not as many are traveling, and release some rooms back to hotels. I once got a Priceline discount at the headquarters hotel of a huge medical convention at the last minute.

Priceline tells you if rooms are available before you bid.

RA: How do I know what to bid?

I have an entire site devoted to that! Go to the [Priceline Hotels](#) section of BidOnTravel.com.

RA: Just give me three main tips.

DN: Okay. First, bid on three or four-star hotels. That's where the real savings are.

Second, look up the best prices for the star quality and neighborhood you want on a site like Hotels.com. Knowledge is power, and that way you won't overbid.

Third, find out what Hotwire.com charges.

Hotwire is Priceline's main competitor in the 'you don't find out the name of your hotel until you pay category,' and it's prices are usually a bit higher than Priceline's.

Therefore, bid 10 - 20 percent below Hotwire's price.

See BidonTravel.com, though, if you want to refine this process to maximize your savings.

RA: What if I still overpay?

DN: Priceline has a best price guarantee.

If you book a room on Priceline, and then find a lower price on another website for the same type of room at the same hotel or resort on the same dates, Priceline will refund you the difference. There's some small print, such as "this rate has to be available to the general public and you have to make your claim within 24 hours of booking," but you really can't lose.

RA: There must be some drawbacks to using Priceline for hotels.

DN: There are.

Most importantly, you'll get no refund if you cancel. You won't be able to change dates.

Also, you'll usually end up with a standard room. At some hotels, these may not be large enough for more than two people.

RA: What about smoking or nonsmoking?

DN: This is never absolutely guaranteed regardless of where you book.

When using Priceline or other online sites, I usually call the hotel directly to make sure it has me on its nonsmoking list. I also try not to show up too late, when the hotel may have run out of certain types of rooms.

RA: Thanks. I'll try bidding next time after reading the tips on your site.

Rick Archer is President of SearchSummit, a [Search Engine Marketing](#) company.

An extensive world traveler, Don Nadeau, president of [BidonTravel.com](#), taught world geography for many years in both Canada and the United States, and developed the first high school level Urban Studies program in the U.S.

Don loves helping people travel "on the cheap," and frequently uses the advice found in BidonTravel to make his own trips more affordable.

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