



CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE ON A BUDGET

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Attending a conference can be very rewarding. Not only allows you to update your knowledge, but equally important is the opportunity to exchange ideas and clinical standards with colleagues from all over the world. As a bonus it takes you to beautiful and/or interesting cities all over Europe. However, as most nurses need to find the money themselves to attend the conferences, the cost can be out of the reach for many. So here are some suggestions how to make it more affordable. The cost usually comprises of Travel, Accommodation, Registration fee, and food and drink.

GET SUPPORT FROM YOUR EMPLOYER: My own hospital never was prepared to sponsor me for a foreign conference. However, when I had an abstract accepted management usually agreed to pay my Registration Fee as this potentially enhanced the reputation of the hospital/clinic. It also indicated to them that I wasn't just going for a freebie holiday. Offering your employer a report after the conference on things learned and changes for the better that could be made emphasises the benefit to the hospital/clinic of you attending. So it is worth to see if your employer would do the same.

TRAVEL: There are many budget airlines offering cheap FLIGHTS. The earlier you book the more likely it is that you get a good deal. If you don't mind spending a bit more time travelling, booking with a change (rather than flying direct) via a cheap destination (e.g. Amsterdam, Paris, etc) may be cheaper at times.

Some of my cheapest travels have been on long distant BUSES that cross Europe (<http://budgettraveller.org/the-cheapest-way-to-travel-across-europe/>), provided you don't mind spending more time to get to your destination.

TRAIN tickets using a rail card may also be more affordable than flights, provided you have the extra time.

LOCAL: Once at the conference ESGENA delegates get a local transport ticket for the duration of the conference.

ACCOMMODATION : Booking the accommodation yourself will normally be cheaper than booking via the conference site. There are many budget options. "Bed & Breakfast" accommodation is usually cheaper than hotels and is listed with most hotel booking sites. Once you have a shortlist, don't book before ringing the hotels/B&Bs direct as they may give you an even better price than the hotel booking sites, especially if you are staying several nights. If you are travelling with colleagues, it may be worth to book a holiday apartment to share.

Airbnb (www.airbnb.com) also offers a range of affordable accommodation. But please make sure you ONLY pay by credit card or via the Airbnb website; NEVER pay by bank transfer as the listing may be by a fraudster/scammer.

FOOD AND DRINK: Breakfast is usually included in your accommodation, but if you don't want a big breakfast you may get a better room rate without it. A coffee and a snack on the way to the conference may be cheaper. Lunch and Refreshments are usually included in the conference registration fees. Evening meals can be expensive, so do some homework on the internet before you go to find non-touristy eateries that are affordable. Also I often just went to the local supermarket to get some food to eat in my room, including hot, cooked chicken, salads, fruit, local delicacies, etc. Asking local colleagues who know their city can also give you ideas and is a good way to make contact.

Drinks and snacks in your room from the hotel fridge are usually very expensive; get your drinks and snacks from the local supermarket.

Packages: One of the most cost effective conference travels I have made have been with City/Weekend Break packages, booking additional nights if necessary. Sunday nights are usually cheaper, as hotels tend to have more free rooms then. But remember to book early as close to the conference they may no longer be available. And the most economical attendance may be if you incorporate the conference into a planned holiday. The locations of the ESGENA conferences tend to be in attractive locations worth a holiday and with holiday packages available from travel agents and websites.

ESGENA is aware that it can be very costly to attend the conference. But with a bit of planning, homework on the internet and getting support from your employer it may be financially affordable and will be professionally rewarding. So we hope to see you at the next conference.

Christiane S. Neumann
ESGENA Past President