

GOING PLACES IN RETIREMENT

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How we saved \$20K for the retirement trip of our dreams

For the Fryes, it took a lifetime of frugal choices

Tamara E. Holmes
Special to USA TODAY

Some consider retirement to be synonymous with relaxation, but Shirley Frye and her husband, Dan, had something more adventurous in mind.

In 2015, the Fryes embarked on a 5½-month, 8,300-mile bicycle trek across South America. “We were both serious runners and hikers, and then, as the limbs and the legs started to fail, we got into cycling,” says Shirley Frye, 60, a retired chief financial officer at a community bank in Cape Cod, Mass.

The couple’s love for adventure led them to sign up for tour company TDA Global Cycling’s South American Epic, an expedition where they cycled about 65 miles per day before stopping at various campgrounds and hotels from Cartagena, Colombia, at the top of the continent to Ushuaia, Argentina, near the southern tip. “It was just life-changing to have that much fun and see so much of the world just by riding your bike,” Frye says.

For the Fryes, the \$19,900 dream trip was the culmination of a lifetime of wise financial planning. When Dan, 71, retired from his job as an oceanographer, Shirley retired, too, so the couple could enjoy the new chapter together. To fulfill their traveling dreams without sacrificing their financial future, the couple put the following strategies in place:

They put needs before wants

During their working years, the couple always socked away as much as possible in their 401(k) plans and were

quick to take advantage of a company match. “We saw our retirement money as what we needed to just live on,” Shirley Frye says.

They paid off their mortgage early

To give them enough of a nest egg that would allow them to splurge beyond those basic needs, they aggressively tackled their debt. “We paid off our house very early, and we’ve lived a very modest lifestyle, so all the times that our incomes were going up, we didn’t have our expenditures go up to the same degree,” Frye explains. When they bought their house, the couple took out a 15-year mortgage, then whenever they would get a raise at work or score another small windfall, they’d put an extra \$500 or \$1,000 toward paying off the mortgage.

They financially fed their passions — and starved the rest

The Fryes identified what was important to them and were willing to spend money on those things while being frugal in other areas of their life. For example, they didn’t spend a lot of money decorating the house, buying new cars or eating out because those activities didn’t bring them as much joy as traveling, Frye says. “You can’t have it all, so you’ve got to make those choices.”

The Fryes say the joy they continue to experience from the memories has far exceeded the five months they spent traveling through South America.

Advice from a pro

Jerry Linebaugh, founder of Baton



Dan and Shirley Frye take in the view from a pass in Ecuador during their 5½-month, 8,300-mile bicycle tour of South America. DAN AND SHIRLEY FRYE

Rouge-based financial services company JLine Financial, not only helps consumers prepare for retirement, but he has worked with many clients to get their dream trips to fit their retirement budgets.

He offers these tips:

■ **Consider the off-season.** When you’re retired, you’re not restricted to traveling during holidays or popular vacation times. By traveling to a country during its off-season, you can save money on airfare, making your budget stretch further, Linebaugh says.

■ **Stay in neighborhoods rather than hotels.** If you want to travel for several months, save by renting an apartment or home on a site such as Airbnb instead of paying for a pricey hotel in the tourist district, Linebaugh advises. You can even make money to spend by leasing your house on a vacation website. “You can lease your house by the week or by the day,” Linebaugh says. “Now you’ve got a good tenant, and you’re not having to worry about signing a six-month lease.”

■ **Save by traveling to multiple locations.** Open-jaw flights are those in which you travel to one location and re-

turn home from another. If you want to visit several cities or countries in close proximity, fly to one and take a train or drive to other locations, and fly home from the place where you can get the least expensive flight. Doing so makes a more memorable trip, and “it’s an amazing amount of money you can save by doing that,” Linebaugh says.

FUN FACT

Certain days of the week are much cheaper to fly. Book your trip on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Saturday to take advantage of the savings. Even if you can’t take your flights on the cheaper days, booking one leg can save you money on your next trip.

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