

How much does it cost to winter in Florida in 1924?



(From an article written in 1924 by Karl H. Grismer)

Percy Gotrocks, who graces Palm Beach with his presence during the winter months, considers himself fortunate if he can get through a season without parting from about sixty thousand dollars. His “shack” on Ocean Boulevard has a retinue of servants that could man a hotel, and their wages are only a small part of Percy’s expenses. The way his parties waste away his bankroll is almost a crime.

Of course, Percy could economize if he cared to—but what would his friends think! He has to

put on the dog or people will get the idea that the Giltedge Investment Company, of which he is president, is going to the bow-wows.

As for Mrs. Percy—she wouldn’t think of coming to Florida without buying at least a dozen new gowns, fifteen or twenty pairs of shoes, and a couple of thousand dollars worth of other stuff. Why, she wouldn’t feel half dressed! So she splurges handsomely, and Mr. Percy pays the bills.

Not everyone who winters in Florida can afford to disregard expenses like Mr. and Mrs. Percy. Most people have to watch closely every item of expense, and if the total threatens to mount too high, they stay up North, regardless of the discomforts of northern blizzards. The sunshine and the flowers of Florida call them, but they turn a deaf ear.

There is no mystery regarding the cost of wintering in Florida. Despite all ideas to the contrary, a person can estimate before leaving home how much his expenses will be. And he can come within a few dollars of being right. There need be no guesswork about it.

The first item to consider is the cost of transportation. That is the simplest of all. By inquiring at the railroad ticket office the prospective tourist can learn exactly how much the fare will be. For persons living north of the Mason-Dixon line and east of the Mississippi the fare would probably average \$60 each way, including Pullman, or \$120 for the round trip.

Following transportation, the next major item of expense is that of rent. Although many tourists live in hotels, the majority leases houses or apartments for the season. And the prices, of course, vary greatly.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

“Only millionaires can afford to winter in Florida”—how often have we heard that statement?

And there is not a word of truth in it. If there were, nearly a million tourists would not be coming here each winter.

Some dependable figures regarding the actual cost of wintering in Florida are given in this article. They should be of particular interest to those contemplating visiting the Sunshine State for the first time.



They range from a medium of about \$250 for the season to \$3,000 or even more.

Small houses, in the suburbs, can sometimes be obtained for the same price as the cheaper apartments. As a general thing, however, the minimum seasonal rent for a place with modern conveniences and adequate furnishings is about \$400. A five-room house, close in, can be obtained for from \$700 to \$1,000.

Many persons may think the above rents are excessive. It must be remembered that the houses and apartments in the resort city remain empty during the summer months or else are rented for very small amounts. In order to break even the resort city landlord must charge as much for the winter season as the northern landlord does for the whole year.

The wide range of existing rents makes it difficult to estimate exactly just what the tourist will have to spend for living quarters. But for the purpose of estimating the average cost of wintering in Florida, let's use the \$400 figure.

The next major item of expense, following transportation and rent, is that for food. To give exact figures for this expense, of course, is impossible. One tourist cooking his own meals, may live well on \$5 a week or less. Another, eating the most expensive foods at an expensive restaurant, may pay \$5 or more each day. The tourist may spend as much as or just as little as he chooses. It all depends upon his appetite and his purse.

The tourist who eats regularly in cafeterias and restaurants can figure that he can get by easily for \$2 a day, and have everything he wants to eat. The chances are he will have enough left over from the weekly food allowance of \$14 to send a box of citrus fruit to his northern friends occasionally.

To get back again to the problem of estimating the average cost of wintering in Florida, for a 6-month season the total cost for food and household expenses would be about \$300.

Transportation, rent and food are the major items of expense. Aside from those there is nothing that will mount into money. The matter of clothes can be dismissed almost entirely. The tourist need only bring his summer clothes and a few winter garments along with him and he will be all set.

Amusements will not cost the tourist half as much as it does up North. In the public parks he can play all manner of games; he can go fishing; he can attend the public band concerts and listen to the music of the best bands in the country; he can attend the entertainments of the tourist societies. All this costs him next to nothing.

In summarizing, let us figure how much it costs a man and wife to enjoy a Florida winter. The transportation cost for the couple would be about \$240. The rent total would be about \$400. The cost of meals and household expenses, for a six-month season, would be about \$300, considering that the couple ate at home. Allow \$100 for incidentals. That brings the complete total up to \$1,040 for the six-month season, certainly not a prohibitive amount for persons in even very moderate circumstances.

Is a winter in Florida worth that amount? Is it worth it to leave the snow, and rains, and gloom, and sickness of a northern winter, to go to the land where all the time is summer; where the mocking-birds sing their songs of gladness; where the palm trees are gently waved by warm breezes from gulf and ocean? We'll say it is!

And when you come to Florida and try one of the summer-winters for yourself, you'll say so, too.