

An advertisement for the HP LaserJet M1319f MFP. The background is red. On the left, the text 'HP LASERJET M1319f MFP' is written in white, with '» SHOP NOW' below it. In the center, there is an image of the printer with several dollar bills flying out of it. On the right, the price 'NOW \$149.99' is displayed in large white font, with 'AFTER \$150 MAIL-IN REBATE' and 'OFFER ENDS 7/31/08' in smaller white text below it. In the bottom right corner, the text 'WHAT DO YOU HA' is partially visible in white.

Games Galore

Top Travel Spots For Game Fans

Bonnie Ruberg 07.15.08, 6:00 AM ET

Gamers, pack your bags and grab your portable consoles, because you deserve a vacation.

According to the Entertainment Software Association, the average videogame player is now 35. That means, far from just sitting around a TV screen or computer back home, joystick-lovers have the income to let their passion for playing inspire another pastime: travel.

With their sense of exploration and their knack for the interactive, gamers should make natural adventurers. So, given a \$1,500 budget for a game-related vacation, where would they go? To a videogame conference? What about a museum or a top-notch arcade?

In Pictures: Eight Must-See Spots For Gamers

Tim Sell, 26, has never been to a large-scale gaming event before, but he knows exactly where he'd spend his money: the fan-oriented Penny Arcade Expo (PAX) this August in Seattle. "It's probably the only thing that could immediately convince me to visit the U.S.," the Londoner says in an e-mail. "The reason PAX interests me is that it feels like a community. An event organized and attended by people who love games is definitely better than one by people who want to sell them."

Gamer Jolene Rapport, also 26, says she's more interested in spots for meeting up with--and competing against--other players. Given \$1,500, the New Yorker says she would attend the E for All Expo in Los Angeles in October. "This is the first year they'll be holding the World Cyber Games USA National Final," Rapport says. "America's top videogame players will be there competing for a spot ... It's kind of a big deal to a geek like me."

She notes that E for All caters to female gamers and is a good place to socialize. "There's also going to be all sorts of fun stuff like a woman's gaming tournament and a pinball competition," she says. "It's a great place to meet people and see what's in store for the videogame world."

Another Los Angeles event, the Electronic Entertainment Expo--previously *the Mecca* for traveling gamers--became an invitation-only press event in 2007. The 2008 expo is being held this week in L.A.

Not everyone's so ready to move from the sofa and fly across the country though. Chris Furniss, a 26-year-old Web site designer at Microsoft Game Studios in Redmond, Wash., feels \$1,500 won't get him far. "Since flights anywhere are so expensive and I already live in Seattle, I'd go to PAX and live it up," he says. "I'd stay at a nice hotel downtown, get tickets for all three days and go on a shopping spree on the show floor. PAX is the gamer destination of choice and always a really fantastic time."

With twice as much money, Furniss says, he'd go to the Tokyo Game Show, one of the largest gaming events in the world. "I've never been to Japan, and I think that would be the perfect introduction," he says. "Just being able to go shopping in Akihabara alone would be worth it. I'd pick up so much retro game memorabilia, action figures

and games."

Furniss brings up a good point by mentioning Tokyo's shopping area for electronics and other *otaku* items: Gamers who like to shop should bring an extra suitcase.

Expos and conferences are only the tip of the game-travel iceberg. In San Francisco, for example, children interested in games can check out Zeum, a museum of art and technology that takes a hands-on approach to multimedia. New York boasts the Nintendo World Store, a two-story shop featuring the newest Nintendo games and merchandise. More artistically minded gamers might want to head to Gijón, Spain, where the LABoral museum is hosting an exhibit of game-themed installations called Homo Ludens Ludens.

Sometimes, however, the most traditional destinations are still the most fun. Michael Zenke, lead blogger at Massively.com, has been to tons of videogame events, so on his free time he just wants to play. His vacation pick: Disneyworld. "Disney is a great place to do gaming," Zenke, 27, says. "That DisneyQuest place in Downtown Disney is still really cool. And Universal has a bunch of really killer arcades as well, like good in the sense of arcades you never see anymore."

And you can skip the giant Disney rides. "There's one [arcade machine] where you can make your own roller coaster," Zenke says. "You make it, then you ride it with a motion simulator!"

Now that's a vacation.

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