

Adult Services Minutes
January 17, 2002 Meeting Notes

Attendees: Mary Trev Thomas (TROY), Debbie Shoup (EGRN), Zina Shevchik (COLN), Ann Close (COLN), Ellen Gamache (APLM), Sue Gorman (BETH), Meryl Norek (BETH), Margaret Garrett (GUIL).

Topic: Travelers Advisory

Guest Speaker: Rhona Koretzky, Saratoga Springs Public Library.

Rhona orders the travel books for Saratoga and knows the industry from her extensive traveling. She brought some magazines and books that she has used reliably with the patrons she encounters. These are:

Periodicals

Bestfares.com

Budget Travel

Consumer Reports Travel Letters

Books

Frommers, Fodor's, DK Eyewitness Guides, DK Top Ten (coming in February 2002), Mobil Travel Guides

Web Sites

http://travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html

The following is a handout Rhona created for an Internet class on Travel.

**PLEASE GO AWAY!
BE YOUR OWN TRAVEL AGENT ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB.**

The opportunities to plan the trip of your dreams have never been better, thanks to the Internet Explosion. For those who prefer to leave the details to a professional, travel agents are still available and will do all the work for you. But, if you enjoy the challenge of comparing and seeking your own perfect arrangements, most of the tools previously available only to travel agents are now at your fingertips. Take control of your own travel future!

The Internet is a constantly changing entity - what you see today may be gone tomorrow. Today's deal may be replaced by an even better deal tomorrow - or not. This was never truer than right now. Because of the recent upheaval in world events, the travel industry has been rocked. You literally do not know what you will find next!

Many people are uncomfortable about travel right now. I admit to some discomfort myself, and I am pretty intrepid about such matters. If immediate travel is not in your plans, use the Web to dream for the future.

The beauty of planning a vacation or business trip on the Web is that you can use the Internet resources to the extent that you are comfortable: that is, you can plan an entire trip, book a hotel or a flight, rent a car, purchase tickets for theater, concerts, museums, view tourist attractions, make restaurant reservations, or any combination that suits you.

HOW TO BOOK A FLIGHT

Every airline has a website. The easiest way to access an individual airline site is to type the name of the airline into any search engine - I prefer Yahoo. If you prefer to see all airline URLs in one location, use a site such as 'Airlines of the World' - <http://www.kls2.com/airlines>. The other way to book a flight is to go to a discount travel website - a favorite one is <http://www.travelocity.com/>, where you can enter data to compare fares for various airlines and for hotels, rental cars, cruise lines, etc. My preference is to access Travelocity through Yahoo. They are partnered, and I find it easier to navigate through the Yahoo Travel site. Simply go to the Yahoo home page at <http://www.yahoo.com/>, and click on Travel. If you have a Yahoo account, you can customize your options to track fares to your favorite places. A caveat: I do not recommend using Yahoo travel for rental cars. I have not had good luck. However, I have used them numerous times for airfares, and have gotten some great deals! The prices are frequently, but not always, lower than at individual airline sites. Orbitz at <http://www.orbitz.com/> is a new (inaugurated this summer) site jointly owned by the major airlines. Hopefully, they will stay in business! I have not used it yet, in my brief look it seems to be similar to Travelocity.

I have never used Priceline (www.priceline.com) and I probably will not. My preference is to see a price and decide whether that price is acceptable, rather than to negotiate. I believe that you can find equally good deals by carefully searching other sites.

HOW TO BOOK A RENTAL CAR

In my opinion, the best way to book a rental car alone (that is, not part of a package), is to go the company website. Every company has one. Again, put the name of the company into any search engine and it should come up easily. And again, I do not recommend using a "clearing house" site such as Travelocity. Compare rates with each company individually.

HOW TO BOOK A HOTEL ROOM

Again, and sorry to repeat myself, nearly every hotel chain has a website. Most have a facility for booking online. For major cities worldwide, you can also try the Hotel Reservations Network at www.hoteldiscounts.com. This site shows up under various other URLs. You are almost certain to find it. One word of warning, check cancellation and refund policies carefully. You may be obligated once you book, unlike a traditional hotel reservation.

There is another way to find a hotel room that is a lot of fun and will introduce you to non-chain properties, places that are unique to their city. Do a Yahoo (or other search engine) search for your destination, click on Travel and Transportation," then click on "Lodging." For example, that is how I found a lovely hotel in New Orleans called Le Pavillion.

HOW TO BOOK A PACKAGE

Booking a package tour may be the most fun of all. It is one stop shopping. In one website visit, you can book any combination of the following: your flight, hotel, rental car, train tickets, meals, sightseeing tours, cruise, and airport transfers. Tour companies vary widely in terms of how much group activity there will be and so it is important to study that aspect carefully, keeping in mind your own comfort level. Some tour operators make your basic arrangements and leave you on your own once you arrive; others provide bus transportation to each place of interest, welcome cocktail parties, and tour guides. On the following page, I have listed five tour operators that specialize in independent travel to Europe and other non-US destinations. I have personal experience with several of them. At the end of this handout, I have listed some other

sites for you to try. I am always looking for new ideas myself, so please feel free to pass along any fantastic sites that you find!

Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel www.frommers.com

Arthur Frommer, the dean of inexpensive travel for almost forty years, has joined the cyber revolution with this wonderful website. The site is somewhat cluttered and "busy," but there is a wealth of information here: a daily newsletter, message boards, a "letters to the editor" column, tips of the day, and Arthur's philosophy on the enduring value of travel. The site changes each day, with the highlight being a list of budget packages and ideas for the reader to peruse.

Go-Today www.go-today.com

This is a fantastic resource for the independent traveler who wants airfare and hotel reservations at a deep discount. Although there are packages to South America, the strength of this site is the variety of opportunities in Europe. Check out the winter package to London -- \$399 for airfare and six nights in a decent hotel. You won't beat it!

Europe Express www.europeexpress.com

Very similar to Go-Today, and with many of the same packages, but this site is worth monitoring for the occasional special deal only offered here.

Moment's Notice www.moments-notice.com

Theoretically, this website specializes in last minute deals. I have found advance deals here, although I have never used this site to plan a trip. I find it cluttered and a bit confusing, but I do enjoy perusing it occasionally to see what might be available.

Gate1 Travel www.gate1travel.com

I recently discovered this site and I adore it! It is much easier to navigate than Moment's Notice, and it is comprehensive in scope, covering not only Europe, but Africa, the Middle East, the Pacific and cruises. In addition, it has made me a liar! While researching for this class, I actually found a better price for the 6 day London package -- this company offers it at selected times for \$389. Just proof that the Internet changes constantly.

HOW TO GET LOTS OF REALLY COOL EMAIL

Many of the travel websites also maintain email lists to which you can subscribe. You can easily fill up your mailbox with messages! There is some duplication as well, so be judicious as you choose newsletters. Here is a short list -- there are many others. The websites themselves are worth a few minutes as well.

www.concierge.com click on 'daily deals email'

www.smarterliving.com click on 'subscribe'

www.travelzoo.com click on 'top 20 deals'

www.frommers.com click on 'subscribe'

www.bestfares.com click on 'hot deals by email'

In addition, most airlines have an email subscription service that can be easily located at the website. Some of these are 'e-savers,' with many restrictions (travel only for the coming weekend, for example), so read carefully. You will also learn about lots of new sites by reading email!

AND A FEW MORE SITES FOR YOU TO TRY

And one final note just about every destination in the world has a tourism office, and just about every tourism office has a website. It is wonderful fun to browse these sites, gather information for future trips, or just fantasize about where you want to go. The tourism sites are easy to find. Just use your destination and 'tourism' as key words, and you are set. **BON VOYAGE!**