

Costs don't deter Florida drivers

It costs more and takes longer this year, but 90 per cent of the Florida-bound vacationers from Michigan will continue to make the trip behind the wheel of the family car, reports Automobile Club of Michigan.

Normally, hundreds of thousands of Michiganians visit Florida between December and April, lured by the prospects of warm, sunny days away from the wintry winds of the North.

Last January, February and March, despite an ailing economy and high unemployment, there were more requests for Florida routings from Michigan than in any previous first quarter.

And these routing requests should in-

crease by at least nine per cent in 1976's first quarter, according to Joseph Ratke, Auto Club touring manager.

"AFTER TWO bad years when the energy scare and economic recession discouraged tourism, the trend to vacations in the 'Sunshine State' was re-established dramatically in 1975," Ratke said. "The number of first-quarter Florida routing requests increased only 1.5 per cent in 1975, then plunged 43 per cent in 1974 before rebounding back up by 125 per cent last winter."

This winter's Florida-bound vacationers will find their travel costs up about 22 per cent. Their driving time

also has been extended by at least a half-day because of the slower, 55-mile-per-hour speed limit, Ratke said.

A three-day driving trip from Detroit to Orlando, Fla., a distance of 1,200 miles, would cost a couple \$207 this season, compared with \$170 the previous year, Ratke estimated.

"Driving 400 miles a day and with the car averaging 13 gallons per mile, the cost of gas and oil would total \$80 this winter, \$10 more than the previous year," Ratke said.

MEALS WOULD BE \$72 for the three days and lodging would total \$75. This is an increase of \$12 and \$15, respectively, over last winter.

Ratke emphasizes that vacation expenditures depend to a great degree on personal preferences, regions traveled and individual means. Lodging costs would be less in resort areas during the off-season, and travelers who picnic along the way will find their meal costs reduced, he noted.

"Florida-bound vacationers are advised to check into package rates offered by many motels and hotels," Ratke said. "They can further shave lodging costs by staying just a few miles away from such popular attractions as Disney World and Miami Beach."

There is plenty to lure sun-seekers from Michigan to Florida—even more than in previous years.

WALT DISNEY World, probably the undisputed leader of Florida's attractions, has a new look to its Tangerine-land that is centered around Space Mountain. It features a space-oriented ride, a magnetic propulsion system people-mover and a simulated trip to Mars.

One of Disney's neighbors, **Sea World**, has added a 400-foot Sky Tower—at a cost of \$1.3 million—to give guests a panoramic view of central Florida.

Other Orlando-area attractions are **Stars Hall of Fame**, a new feature presenting great moments of stage and screen entertainment; **Circus World**, a three-ring array of circus performances; and an expanded **Masterpiece Gardens** with a living Seminole Indian Village built on the site of an early Seminole settlement.

The state's other two brand-new attractions are in the Miami area. **Planet Ocean** is a \$6-million permanent ocean science exhibition, encompassing some 11 acres. The **Caribb Laseum** in Miami Beach presents an unlimited run of the innovative **Cosmic Laser Concert**.

VISITORS to Tampa's Busch Gardens will find an all-new Moroccan Village, part of a multimillion-dollar expansion program. It features Arabian-style archways and an assortment of Casbah-like shops.

Another Florida attraction, **Weeki Wachee Springs** on the state's upper Gulf Coast, has completely refurbished the underwater theater where it showcases its **Spring of Live Mermaids**.

Michigan motorists bound for the Sunshine State can choose from four principal highway routes. The accompanying map shows the four easiest and safest routes to Florida, one including a partial alternate. The routes are labeled A, B, C and D.

Route A via I-75 is the most direct for east Michigan tourists. It is 1,406 miles long, including 1,400 miles of four-lane highway, and it goes

through Cincinnati, Lexington, Knoxville and Chattanooga but skirts Atlanta with a bypass. Route A has only 50 miles of semi-mountainous country in Kentucky and Tennessee and the entire trip to Miami costs motorists \$520 in tolls.

ROUTE B, the most direct route for West Michigan motorists, is reached via Fort Wayne and Indianapolis from western and central Michigan. East Michigan travelers go by way of Toledo, Cincinnati and Louisville. All but six of Route B's 1,468 miles is four-lane highway.

Although it is 66 miles longer than Route A, driving time is the same. Route B has practically no mountain roads and often offers better driving conditions in winter than other Florida routes. Tolls on Route B are \$520 the same as for Route A.

This alternate route, which includes Route B to Nashville, is 1,518 miles long and has less freeway than Route B. Its chief advantage is an alternate to Route B in case of bad weather around Chattanooga and Atlanta.

Route C's 1,585 miles—roughly 1,300 of them divided highway—meander through Virginia's Shenandoah Valley and the central Carolinas but motorists should check winter road conditions in Ohio and Pennsylvania before using this scenic route. Tolls are \$953.

Route D should be avoided in winter because of the snow and ice conditions in mountainous West Virginia and North Carolina. At other times of the year, this 1,422-mile route offers panoramas of mountain scenery. Four-lane highways are found on 1,116 miles of the route and tolls cost \$680.

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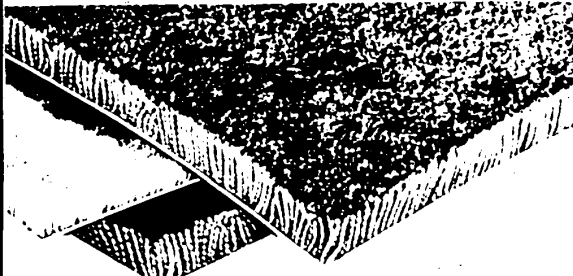
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