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Trends

Predictability describes what future holds in travel

BY IRIS SANDERSON JONES

Chances are that in the next 10 years you will seriously consider buying a vacation home, as an investment and a status symbol. If you live in one of the new households added to the United States during the past decade, there is a one-in-five chance that you are single and that your travel habits reflect that.

If you are married, you probably have at least two wage-earners in your family, prompting you to explore more and shorter vacation trips, sometimes with your spouse and sometimes alone.

And if you are a kid, tough luck; there aren't as many of you around anymore and your parents won't necessarily take you with them when they travel.

I heard a lot about such changing trends when I attended the 25th annual convention of the Society of American Travel Writers in Poland recently.

The source was a speaker named Arthur Shapiro, senior vice president of the advertising firm of Yankelovich, Skelly & White Inc., who flew from New York to give us a look at an in-depth study done for the travel market.

Shapiro's firm represents such accounts as American Airlines and American Express; they spend a lot of money trying to figure out your future travel habits.

ALTHOUGH TRAVEL is slipping for the first time in 10 years as a measure of the good life, according to Shapiro, the Me Decade is definitely not over.

"The movement towards conservatism and tradition in politics is definitely not reflected in lifestyles," he said. "People who were raised on traditional values are moving back towards traditional values to some extent, but those who were not raised on them are still living by the philosophy of entitlement."

Americans raised on the work ethic saw the American dream come true after World War II, prompting them to adopt what Shapiro calls the philosophy of affluence. That meant raising children less strictly, acquiring a lot of tangible possessions and working even harder.

Their children, who learned about individualism and self-fulfillment, moved us from there into the philosophy of entitlement. If I want it, I deserve it, and I should have it, not how much does it cost a month?

The philosophy of entitlement, the right to a rich, full life, combines with other factors to have some interesting effects upon travel. These other factors include changing economics, changing family units, a new respect for time management, a new cautiousness, a changing sense of our sophistication and a population that

is getting older, less married and less child-centered.

Changing economics means we are investing more time and money in our residences. The vacation home not only is back, it is becoming a status symbol. Entirely new kinds of families are taking more and shorter vacations.

THE NUCLEAR family describes a unit consisting of a husband who brings home the bacon, a wife who stays home and two or more children. That family was once 70 percent of the population; today it is 17 percent.

There was a 9 percent increase in the population between 1970 and 1979, but single households made up 20 percent of the increase in households during that decade.

Yankelovich, Skelly & White learned that only 4 percent of the people questioned wanted to get rid of the family, however. Most of them just wanted a new kind of family. The future will hold more childless marriages, a smaller number of children in the average family, more transient households, more homes with two wage-earners and less focus on the homemaker role by women.

Most of the people in those new kinds of households wanted a new kind of leisure, vacations without the children, different friends, separate social functions, separate vacations and separate bank accounts. People will still travel in couples, and with children, but they will travel separately as well.

The most fundamental social change seen in the 1970s, the role of women, will have the most effect upon travel. Male-female roles are blurring and the new questions are Who has the time to clean the house? And who has the time to go on vacation?

ALL OF THAT makes us look like a very experienced, pioneering people, but the survey shows that we are actually getting more cautious in a way that affects travel. We are less inclined to the exotic destination, more inclined to the well-known place.

We want low-cost experiences and less pioneering, which means more value for less risk: extended bus trips, more vacations with friends, more package tours.

At the same time, we have a new sense of our own sophistication. Elitism used to mean the difference between the haves and the have nots, but it now means the difference between the blue collar worker and the new rich.



We want to be sophisticated but we don't want to work very hard at it. We are inclined to affluence and education, not to love of learning or in-depth culture.

So here we are, folks. We are older: between 1975 and 1985 there will be 8 million less people between 5 and 19 years of age. We mistrust institutions, including travel agents and the travel industry.

The role of children has changed.

We're more sophisticated, and so we think, and more cautious. We have more money, because both mates often work, but we don't have time to spend it except in short spurts. When we were asked our opinion, 68 percent said credit cards should be controlled because we are all too weak to control ourselves. At the same time, 50 percent of us favored buying now because it will be more expensive later.

If that is contradictory, contradiction is also part of the changing American character, according to the Yankelovich accounting.

"One of the most important things we learned about the American people is that the same people are watching both 'Charlie's Angels' and the 'Lehrer Report' on television," Shapiro said.

The survey shows that we are actually getting more cautious in a way that affects travel. We are less inclined to the exotic destination, more inclined to the well-known place. We want low-cost experiences and less pioneering... more vacations with friends, more package tours.

travel log
Iris Jones
contributing travel editor

Music is in their blood

The flags of 36 nations hang above the bust of Chopin during the international Chopin competition here in Warsaw. On the stage, the grand piano bristles with microphones as a young man from France begins to play.

He is the only moving object in the concert hall. In the audience rapt music lovers face forward across the parquet floor and over the polished balcony rail.

This is no high school competition of young pianists but a kind of world series of young concert pianists in the making. The 180 contestants play five pieces of music each in recitals that spread across several evenings. Thirty-four of them were from the U.S., but none of the Americans were playing during the evening I attended, the third of the competition.

I am here by accident. I knew this prestigious piano competition was on in Warsaw but it never occurred to me that I could get tickets so I didn't try.

Tonight, when our tour bus returned from Zelazowa Wola, Chopin's birthplace, I walked into the concert hall just in case. There were no regular tickets but, reluctant to give up, I followed the beckoning finger of a ticket collector up the white marble staircase.

With a little German and a little French, I learned there were tickets for standing room. Upstairs, another firm but kindly ticket collector used his hands and his feet to tell me in Polish that I could enter the hall until the next contestant began.

He directed me to a nearby television set, where I watched the contestant, a Rumanian, finish the last half of his recital.

INSIDE, WHERE we lined single file against the wall, we watched and listened as a young Frenchman played. Even good music can't compete with aching feet and an armload of coats and bags, however, so at intermission I moved to the doors facing the large center aisle. I staked out a place where I could lean comfortably against the doorframe.

Within minutes I noticed that a Polish woman was beckoning to me from a nearby seat. When I did not understand her, she wordlessly extracted a folding camp stool from her large purse. I set it up gratefully in the aisle.

By the next contestant, a young man from Taiwan, I was waved to seat by another friendly Pole whose companion was leaving.

I sit her now with all those perfectly still heads in front of me, while a Chinese woman pianist makes deep veiled sounds on the piano. The audience, which is rapt and silent during the music, does not move at all until she pauses between pieces; during the pause, they all clear their throats and move their feet for the few seconds of silence. There is no clapping until her entire recital is finished.

I cannot judge the quality of this exquisite music. Nor do I want to. The flowing blouse on the arms of the Chinese pianist make a composition of its own as the sleeves move back and forth across the polished piano. All those 36 flags fly above the respectful affectionate attention of the people of Warsaw whose musical standards are among the highest in the world.

The next time you make a disparaging Polish joke, come with me in your mind to this concert hall in Warsaw, rebuilt here in the 35 years since World War II by a people who love and understand music.

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