

Travel



Thursday, December 27, 1984 O&E

(S.F., R.W.G.-13A, Ro-6AL-9C, P.C-10C) ** 5C



Christmas continues at Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village through Dec. 31. The historic homes and buildings are decorated in ways appropriate to the season and the craft and cooking activities are demonstrated. Here children see a turn-of-the-century Christmas at the Wright brothers' family homestead.

Michiganians seek warm-weather trips

A respite at a Michigan ski lodge continues to be a favored holiday activity, but more travelers are opting to fly to warm-weather destinations compared to the last Christmas/New Year's period, according to the Automobile Club of Michigan.

"Airline travel is up an average 10 percent while holiday bookings at Michigan ski lodges are about even with last year," said Auto Club Travel Operations Manager Jim Drury.

Air carriers report Florida and the Caribbean are the most popular holiday destinations. The most heavily booked days are the Friday through Sunday before Christmas (Dec. 21-23) and the Saturday and Sunday after New Year's (Jan. 5-6). Best days for travel include Dec. 17-19, 25-27 and Jan. 1 and 3.

"Despite a slow start, operators are optimistic that with good snowfall, ski revenue this season will rise at least 5 percent over last season's \$134 million total," said Drury.

An Auto Club survey shows holiday business is crucial to a successful season. Thirty respondents reported they take in one-third of the season's profits during the year-end holidays.

MICHIGANIANS SHOULD find

How to make late air reservations

How do you get an airline reservation when you didn't plan in advance, you're in the middle of a busy holiday season and all you can afford is the discount fare. If you walk into a busy travel agent's office, or make one call to an airline, you probably can't. But the judicious use of a little creative problem solving will do wonders in this area.

Example: My son and his wife decided at the last minute to fly home from New York to Detroit for the New Year's weekend. They wanted those highly advertised \$45 one-way fares, or at least a good discount fare, but they weren't at all sure that they could get a reservation at any price.

It's holiday season, one of the busiest air traffic times of the year, so it would be easy to assume that there are no flights available and give up before you start. "We'll never get a reservation now, we might as well not bother." They know better, and so do I, so they'll be in tonight on a Northwest flight while other potential travelers stay home. Let's talk about how to find a difficult reservation in spite of the odds.

FIRST OF all, never assume. Lots of airplane seats fly empty even during holiday times because too many people assume those seats won't be available. Your travel agent can help, but have pity on that overly worked professional. Tell him or her the number and promise to buy your ticket from the agency even if you find your own flight.

What I would do, for example, is say "Hi Kay, I'm looking for the impossible, and you should tell me whether you have time to find it for me or whether I should help you. I want a \$45 ticket from Newark Dec. 27, going back Dec. 30. I know that might be tough. Do you want to try it or are you too busy to make all those phone calls. I'll do some of the calling, and buy my ticket from you anyway, if you can't do it the first time around."

Some people might object to that. After all, a travel agent is there to serve you and a good one will go to work on your behalf. But the reality is that they make very little on a \$45 fare, they may not get one right away and they really don't have time to make 25 phone calls, which is what you may have to do to get it yourself.

If you're a good customer, or you call a good agent, they'll certainly try for it, but don't settle for a "no" answer. Go to work on your own.

This is what I do. I call and find out what airlines fly to the destination. In this case New York Air, Northwest and People's Express fly between Detroit and Newark. American and Republic fly to LaGuardia Airport and Pan Am, TWA and Northwest have a few flights to Kennedy Airport. Of those three New York airports, I prefer Newark because my son lives nearby and the lowest fares are usually to that airport.

Vacationers planning lodge visits should make reservations as soon as possible.

The Michigan Department of Transportation estimates that mileage driven in the state is up about 4 percent compared to last year, a trend that should continue over the year-end holidays.

STEP TWO: I called New York Air and asked for all scheduled flights on the days in question. Not the available



One-of-a-kind traveler

Iris Jones

body else does. People's Express did so cheerfully. Their reservations phone is in Omaha, Neb., (you often call a local number, as I did here, and reach a reservations desk in another city). The travel agents start calling about 7:30 a.m. from the east (that's 8:30 our time) so your chances improve if you call before they do.

They start canceling flights mid-morning, and businessmen and vacationers often cancel after the day's work is done. That means you should call before 8:30 a.m., at noon and about 6:30 p.m. to get first crack at cancellations.

I made a Dec. 31 return flight reservation at \$65, just to be sure that they could get home somehow, and set my timer to call People's Express regularly for possible Dec. 30 cancellations. I knew from experience that I would probably get one.

Okay, Now I have some basic information. I can book two seats on a \$65 flight from Newark to Detroit and cancel if something better comes along but PLEASE REMEMBER THIS: people who book and don't cancel flights are the main cause of overbooked planes that end up flying half empty, putting airlines out of business and threatening our travel service.

Next, I called Northwest. They have a 5:55 p.m. flight on the 27th and I was lucky, there were still two seats at the \$45 rate. I booked them and immediately canceled the New York Air flight. It is illegal to hold two flights under the same name at the same time; what people do is book them under different names, but read the paragraph above again before you even consider that.

Northwest was also booked, except in first class (for \$99) on the return date, so my next call was to People's Express. You can fly for \$45 on Fridays or Sunday, or on certain late flights midweek on People's Express. They were also booked up for Dec. 30, so it was time to go to step three: finding a cancellation.

The reservations clerks will tell you if there is a waiting list and how long it is. They'll also tell you the best times to learn of a cancellation before some-

body else does. People's Express did so cheerfully.

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The Charter Club OF MARCO BEACH TRADITION

REYE SYNDROME

Reye syndrome is a rare but dangerous condition that can develop from flu or chicken pox. It occurs mainly in children under 16, usually when they appear to be recovering. Watch for these signs:

- Persistent vomiting
- Fatigue
- Confusion and belligerence.

Some studies indicate that there may be an association between the use of aspirin for flu and chicken pox and the development of Reye syndrome. Further studies are being conducted on this possibility. In the meantime, the U.S. Surgeon General suggests that you check with your doctor before using aspirin or any medication when your child has flu or chicken pox.

If your child displays any of these symptoms, consult a doctor immediately.

— A member of the National Food and Drug Administration