

Travel Scene



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Seniors take spring break

(AP) — City leaders who abandoned college spring break as a bad idea say they'll replace the lost income, if not the crowds, by catering to the over-50 set with a Senior Spring Festival.

But Daytona Beach, which gladly took in the snubbed collegians and now reigns as spring break king, says it wants the seniors, too.

Fort Lauderdale plans to kick off its festival in May, offering Big Band concerts instead of wet T-shirt contests and juice cocktails instead of cold beer.

"We hope to bring in the seniors to take up the slack left by the spring breakers," said Bart Strang, festival president and director of the Center for Gerontology in Fort Lauderdale.

IN ITS 1985 heyday, Fort Lauderdale's spring break drew 350,000 college students, a record Senior Spring Festival organizers don't hope to match. But they say the elders will spend far more than the students did.

Organizers envision 2,000 festivalgoers 50 and older this year with location promotions.

Next year's festival will be advertised nationally, bringing in 10,000 seniors and as much as \$10 million, Strang predicted. Delta Air Lines has agreed to be the official carrier for the 1991 event and will include the festival in its vacation packages.

"Everyone in the world has something to sell to the seniors these days, and we wanted to get in on the ground floor," said Philip Goldfarb, general manager of the Guest Quarters Suite Hotel, a festival sponsor. "Frankly, we're glad spring break is over."

Fort Lauderdale's original title for the festival was "Senior Spring Break," an idea nixed early by the Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce for fear of negative comparisons.

But civic promoters in Daytona Beach aren't afraid to use the words, even though they haven't yet firm up their plans for this year.

"We've had some strategy sessions on a senior spring break," Ty Wilson, member of Daytona Beach's Spring Break Festival Task Force and former president of the local Chamber of Commerce, said Thursday. "Volusia County, you know, is next to Finelands in having the highest rate of retiree residents in the state."

NEXT YEAR, he said, "We're going to do something, some type of festival that would basically be targeted toward the seniors because they're a vital part of our resort community."

Daytona Beach expects 400,000 college-age visitors during a five-week period this spring and will try to get them back next year. There still is plenty of room for the older crowd, said Wilson.

Fort Lauderdale expects less than 20,000 young people during spring break.

"We have 28 miles of beaches, and we have a lot to do, with all of our golf courses, etcetera," Wilson said. "And we still think we're certainly a better value. You still can buy an oceanfront condo here in the 70s."

TAXI

Driver turns trip to Greece into a joyride

'I don't think he will ever understand two independent women, traveling alone around Greece. We both own and drive cars which we were sure he had difficulty comprehending.'



Elias Anastasopoulos

By Sally Davis
special writer

Greece, the beautiful, Greece, the splendid, Greece, the historic, Greece, the home of Elias Anastasopoulos.

Having sailed through the Corinth Canal on a friend's yacht a few years ago, I was familiar with the small island of Trizonia, which lies in the Gulf of Corinth, across from Patras. Another friend and I decided to visit Greece and create our own classical excursion, away from structured group tours.

Our adventure began at the Trizonia Yacht Club where we became the owner's first guests to arrive by land. Sailors from all over the world make a stop at Trizonia for a drink, a meal and a chat.

We left Athens and took a bus and ferry to the nearest point on the mainland to reach Trizonia, a fishermen's village. Ion, the owner of the yacht club, wrote me and said that we would meet a moustached taxi driver, Elias, who would deliver us to Hania.

AS WE WERE getting off the ferry at Agios, we were confronted by the hired taxi driver, holding a sign that read, "Ion, Trazonia." There was no chance for him to miss us. We looked like Americans and we

were the only passengers with large suitcases. Graciously, he took our luggage and ushered us to his awaiting taxi. His English was non-existent, as was our Greek. We crammed into his car. There wasn't much room because he had brought his wife and young daughter along, who both knew a bit of English and could translate. There was much joking and laughing along the way to the dock where we were to take a boat taxi to our yacht club destination.

After a few days of getting acquainted with the island, we decided to take some day trips through the country. Ion, our host, arranged for Elias to drive us to our desired destinations.

Our first stop was Messolongi, the memorial cemetery dedicated to the Greeks who were killed during the Greek-Turkish war in 1826. Also the burial place of Lord Byron.

After a full day of sightseeing, we decided to head back to the yacht club and rest up for our next day's journey.

WE TALKED OF renting a car to see the sights of Peloponnese, but Ion advised us that it would be cheaper and more convenient to rent Elias and his taxi for the week.

So, we took a few trial runs to see how we felt about our charioteer.

Delphi was a breeze. Meteora was four hours travel each way and the taxi was much quicker and easier than the bus, which takes seven or eight hours one way. It also gave us a chance to check out Elias' driving ability in the mountains. He easily passed.

We felt privileged to hear his car horn play its song, "Never on Sunday." We were treated to the song of the horn only if there was a pretty girl by the roadside or if the road disappeared behind a hairpin curve in the mountains.

Near Kalambaka, we visited the hanging monasteries at Meteora, high on top of the rocky pinnacles. When the sites noon closing time arrived, we ended up staying until 12:15 p.m. As we retreated to the parking lot, Elias was waiting impatiently, making heated remarks in Greek and pointing at his watch.

By this time, we had learned to say, "parakalo" and "efcharisto," "please and thank you." Our efforts to teach Elias English however, fell on deaf ears. His limited English ironically consisted of "stop" and "no."

ELIAS CHOSE TO use his own style of communicating. He was very demonstrative in getting his point across and would punch our shoulder or arm for emphasis. It

took nearly a whole day for our arms to heal.

He became very protective of us and would search out hotels for us, speaking to the desk clerk first to pave the way for his non-Greek speaking clients. We turned down a couple of steazy rooms he suggested and made him drive to the next town. He didn't understand. Hotels were hotels to him.

When we finally settled on a place, he dropped us off and we said, "Avria" and gave him a time to pick us up in the morning. We did much speculating as to how he spent his evenings, but he was always waiting for us in the morning at the restaurant in the hotel, sipping his little cup of strong Greek coffee. "Kalimera, Elias," which means "good morning."

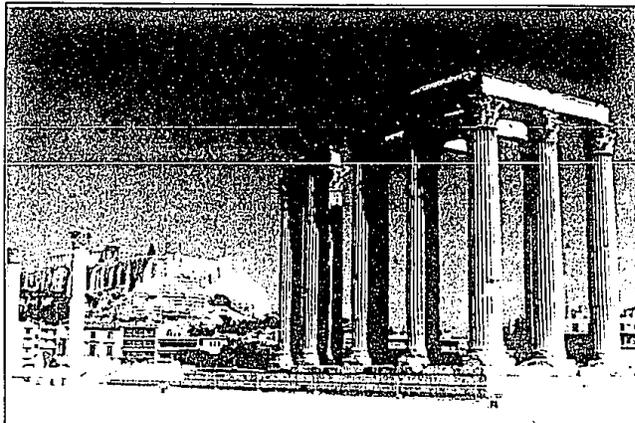
One day, we drove through the mountains and Elias stopped along the road to climb a pear tree and treat us to pears. "Patera" father, he said pointing at his chest.

Elias had a nasty habit of throwing trash out the window. We quickly looked up the word "illegal."

"Ameriki, no," we said as he tossed out an empty cigarette box.

"Litterbug" became his nickname.

Please turn to Page 9



The Temple of Olympian Zeus is surrounded with Acropolis in the background. Athens, Greece.

SALLY DAVIS

Blossoms in south bring buds north

By Irla Sanderson Jones
contributing travel editor

Spring has made its way north with flowers creeping up from the barrier islands near the Florida/Georgia border. The sweet scented blossoms are on their way from the Bellingrath Gardens in Mobile, Ala., to the gardens of the antebellum houses in Natchez, Miss.

Some of us Northerners go crazy waiting for that first traveling flower to bud. During these early days of spring, I dream of the unfolding dogwood trees in North Carolina.

I picture banks of azaleas in Savannah, Ga. and bluebonnet trails in Texas. I envision tulips pushing their way through the soft ground of the Callaway Gardens in Pines Mountain, Ga., and cherry blossoms creating white snow in Washington, D.C.

THE NICE THING about off-season travel is that you can buy warm weather at bargain prices. Whether you drive through all those flower gardens, fly to resorts like South Seas Plantation on Cap-

tiva Island, Fla., or lie flat-out on a deck chair aboard a cruise ship in the Caribbean, prices are low.

College kids are almost finished kicking the sands of Daytona Beach and Oahu Island, now it's our turn. But before you pack your bags, take my advice on spring season travel: never travel Easter week because you're back in high season and every teacher and family-with-kids is on the road.

From March 22 through April 21, the gardens will bloom during the annual Festival of Houses in Charleston, N.C. The National Cherry Blossom Festival will turn the nation's capital into a storm of pink and white petals April 1 through April 8. And towns all over Virginia will be showing off their redwoods, dogwoods and daffodils in late March and early April.

I didn't make it to the Great Midwest Quilt Show in Lebanon, Ohio, March 9-11, although it's right next door to one of my favorite historic inns, the Golden Lamb. My first stop going south is usually the Cincinnati-Covington area. The Cincinnati-Covington area. The Cincinnati-Covington area.

Please turn to Page 9



Monticello, the former home of Thomas Jefferson, is a popular site for visitors in Charlottesville, Va.

MICKY JONES

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Railcar mansion dresses up resort

AP — An Amtrak train rolls past the depot at The Greenbrier and for a few brief seconds the Curlyhut comes to life.

The luxurious 1931 train car, fitted out royally from the brass clock to the detailed woodwork and Chippendale furnishings, is one of four that have found a new home at the hotel.

About the only thing noticeably absent is the clackety-clack, clackety-clack of the rails.

Besides the Curlyhut, built in 1931 for a wealthy New York City businessman, there are the Randolph, the Virginia and the St. Nicholas.

The four private-railroad luxury cars were brought to the hotel last year, and soon will be put back into service as a novel setting for private parties and receptions.

"THEY WERE called mansions on rails," said Robert Conte, historian for The Greenbrier. "They were the epitome of wealth. The people who owned these cars might have lived the resort life, riding in their own cars from one to another. They are a nice addition to The

Greenbrier," Conte said. "And it seems to me a very appropriate one, because from 1870 to 1970, the vast majority of people came here by rail."

The depot, an attractive white brick building built in 1931, will be restored to its original condition to complement the addition of the railroad cars.

"The cars are museum pieces," said Rodney Stoner, director of food and beverage. "And we think having a reception in that kind of setting will appeal to some of our customers."

Stoner said basic food preparation would most likely be done in the kitchens of the hotel, and finishing touches done in the train car kitchens.

"IT WILL be for small groups," Stoner said. "Each dining room can seat eight people, so the entire party would have to be no more than 32."

"There's something unbelievably romantic about these cars," Conte said. "But the real appeal is that they are pretty much in their original condition."