

LET'S GO! TRAVEL

Traveling well on a budget

BY SUZ MASON
STAFF WRITER

One the one hand, there's Robin Leach who rounds up the rich to travel on a champagne budget for his TV show.

On the other hand, there's Kate Rosevear, co-owner of Carlson Travel Network-Suncoast Travel in Plymouth, explaining champagne traveling on a beer budget.

The opening act to the Schoolcraft College Women's Resource Center's luncheon series, Rosevear served up words of wisdom, practical tips and personal experience to an audience interested in seeing the sights for less.

A travel agent's services are paid for by the providers of travel — the airlines, hotel and motels, cruise lines — so his or her services are free of charge to the client.

"You have people who say they can save money if they do it themselves, but sometimes the best prices aren't the best values," she said. "A travel agency has become a travel resource center, so you can make one call to a travel agent and access the airlines, car rental agencies, 4,000 hotel and motel chains."

"A travel agent can access in a few key strokes what you could spend days on the telephone trying to access."

Granted the worst nightmare is

the traveler who, usually in mid-February, "wants out of here right now to anywhere," but the smart traveler is the one who plans ahead, is flexible about travel dates and times and flies when businessmen don't fly.

The smart traveler also books at least 12 months in advance for peak travel times — Christmas and Easter — breaks and Thanksgiving — and still gets the best fares, even though rates haven't been set. The idea, according to Rosevear, is to lock in the seats in advance and then take advantage of the fare wars.

Rosevear has rewritten tickets four to five times and saved clients \$150-200 because of the fare wars. Airlines wait to see how well seats are selling, and if it's slow, they'll start a fare war to clear up unsold seats, she said.

The cheap seats
Travelers also should keep in mind that airlines peddle lowest fares when businessmen aren't flying. It is the businessmen who let the leisure traveler fly cheaply.

"He may pay \$300-1,000 because he booked today to fly tomorrow and have the worse seat on the plane, while you paid \$300 for a window seat with a beautiful view of the mountains," she said.

Booking early also can pay off for cruises. The earlier you book, the less you pay, "but you won't pay more than when the cruise lines sell off" close to the sailing

dates, Rosevear said.

Deals also can be had by taking a positioning cruise. That's when the cruise lines move their fleets from Europe or the Pacific Ocean to the Caribbean. There are wonderful values to be found like on the Queen Elizabeth II with positioning cruise fares of \$3,000 compared to \$4,500-5,000 during the season, Rosevear said.

As for the Caribbean cruise season, the best prices generally can be found during October and November when there may be "a few little storms," like hurricanes.

Frequent flier clubs and credit cards that offer travel points are another way to pare down plane fares and using an airport hotel that offers overnight accommodations, parking for your car while you're gone and a shuttle service to and from the airport can save.

Be creative
Being creative with lodging also can pay off.

"The Chicago Hilton is one of two five-star hotels in Chicago; you can spend \$145 a night during the week, but on the weekend it's \$89," Rosevear said. "I booked two men in a honeymoon package midweek because it was cheaper. They had double beds, so who cares what it's called, and no one can ask questions."

As for her final words of wisdom: "Use but don't abuse your travel agent."

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Money saving tips

Here are some more tips from Carol Rosevear.

■ Travel in the off-season for the best price. When is the off-season? When the kids are in school and the weather is OK here and not quite great there.

■ Take carefully selected charter air and escorted tours. For single travelers, ask for trips with a guaranteed shared option. With many tours based on double occupancy, a shared option let's you pay less and be assured of a roommate of the same sex.

■ Discover the joys and economics of condominium vacations. Generally available in resort areas, couples, golf foursomes, even retirees wanting to try out an area before buying can save money by renting a condominium weekly or monthly.

"It's a great way to travel," Rosevear said. "We've spent 10 years working with a developer in the south and retirees setting up three to four months in the south so they can try it out."

Wish you were here



Artists stop: Four members of the Farmington Art Club pause at the Chattanooga, Tenn. Aquarium. They are (from left): Alice Nichols, Jo Quillman, Beverly Schroll and Pat Putansu. The women traveled to Nichols' Tennessee mountain cabin for a painting workshop. They found much to inspire their creativity.

Get away in a recreation vehicle

Millions of Americans have discovered a sure-fire remedy for bouts with that dreaded winter disease, cabin fever. The cure? A trip in a recreation vehicle.

Would-be RV vacationers can call 1-800-47-SUNNY to receive a free full-color brochure full of RV, campground and trip-planning information.

Winter RVing is just what the doctor ordered for people who see colder temperatures as an opportunity to play in a winter wonderland. For example, people who

own RVs are twice as likely as the average American to ski (both downhill and cross country), according to research findings.

In the latest "Campfire Canvass," a semiannual national survey of RV owners tabulated by Robert Hill Research Associates Inc., Vienna, Va. for the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA), over half of RV owners polled say they'll spend 21 days or more on the road during fall and winter.

Recent advances in technology

have made winter RVing far more comfortable and fun than it was just a few short years ago. Manufacturers continually incorporate "creature comforts" such as high-output furnaces, better insulation and efficient power sources into their vehicles to make RV travel a year-round pursuit.

These innovations help to explain why significant numbers of owners use their RVs to participate in snowmobiling, ice skating, sledding, ice fishing and other cold-weather activities.

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