

TRAVEL

Holiday travel to go through the roof

GREAT ESCAPES

Great Escapes features various travel news items. Send news leads to Hugh Gallagher, assistant managing editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc., 30251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, or fax them to (313) 591-7279.

BELIZE VACATION

The West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation Department is coordinating a trip to Belize in Central America. The 8-day trip will include visits to Mayan ruins, the 1,000-foot Hidden Falls, a jaguar preserve and a bird sanctuary. The trip departs Detroit Metro Friday, March 27, and returns Friday, April 3. It costs \$1,991 for a resident of West Bloomfield and \$2,056 for a non-resident. The fee includes round-trip air, eight days and seven nights deluxe accommodations, most meals, trip transfers, baggage handling and an English-speaking escort. To register, call (248)738-2500. A non-refundable deposit of \$85 in due Jan. 15.

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Detroit Public Television station Channel 56 is sponsoring a New York City Cultural Getaway, April 30 to May 3. A limited number of spots are available for the trip which includes airfare, choice seats for a Broadway performance of "Bagin'us," a New York Philharmonic concert, a tour of the Guggenheim Museum and dining at some of the city's restaurants, including Tavern on the Green and Il Mulino. The cultural getaway is also highlighted by backstage visits at Lincoln Center to explore the Metropolitan Opera House, Avery Fisher Hall and the New York State Theatre. Guests will stay at the Essex House on Cen-

tral Park. The trip costs \$2,037 per person based on double occupancy and includes transportation, accommodations, performance, meals and gratuities. For reservations and information, call (313)876-8162.

HORSES ON BOARD

Carnival Cruise Lines MS Holiday recently became the first cruise ship to offer live video simulcasts of horse races via satellite from some of the world's top thoroughbred tracks. The races are broadcast in the new "Ocean Turf Club," which is located in the ship's casino on Promenade Deck and operates much the same as a pari-mutuel track on land. After selecting the horse of their choice, guests' wagers are transmitted via satellite directly to the host track and confirmation in the form of a betting slip is received in a matter of seconds. Racing odds and payouts are identical to the host track on shore and winning bets are cashed at the ship's casino window.

WINTER ACTIVITIES

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has a number of winter time activities planned from bird hikes at Maybury State Park, cross-country skiing at Mitchell State Park, ice fishing workshops, huge races, a snow shoe romp and much more. Activities this coming week include a 9 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 13, bird hike at Maybury State Park in Northville (248-349-3800); cross-country skiing by a full moon 7-10 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 13, at Mitchell State Park in Cadillac (616-779-1321). Rustic cabins, mini-cabins and campgrounds are available for overnight stays. To reserve a place, call 1-800-4F-PARKS.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 9 (AP) - Santa and his reindeer may have trouble navigating the highways and skyways this holiday as a record 44.5 million people expect to travel 100 miles or more from home during the Christmas-New Year's period, according to AAA.

In the last five years, Christmas-New Year's travel has increased 26 percent, telling us that the holiday period has become more than just a time to get together with family and friends - it's a time to vacation, as well," said Graeme Clarke, senior vice president, AAA Travel Related Services.

This year's travel volume is 4p

a healthy 5 percent compared to 1996's 42.3 million holiday trips. Last year's holiday period had the second-highest increase in AAA's 13 years of holiday forecasts - up 10 percent.

For the 1997 holiday, an estimated 34.9 million people will travel by automobile, light truck or recreational vehicle, up 4 percent compared to 33.6 million the year before.

Holiday travel by airplane, bus, rail or ship is expected to jump 10 percent, to 9.6 million, compared to 8.7 million in 1996.

The greatest number of auto travelers will originate in the West, with 9.1 million people, followed by the Southeast, 9 mil-

lion; Northeast, 5.7 million; Midwest, 5.6 million; Great Lakes, 5.5 million.

Travelers expect to visit the following destinations during the Christmas-New Year's holiday: city, 40 percent; town/rural area, 27 percent; ocean/beach, 13 percent; mountain area, 10 percent; lake area, 2 percent; theme/amusement park, 2 percent; state/national park, 1 percent; other and undecided, 5 percent.

Overnight plans for holiday travelers include: family or friends, 53 percent; hotel or motel, 31 percent; cabin/cottage, 5 percent; camper/trailer/RV/tent, 2 percent; boat/ship, 1 percent;

bed & breakfast, 1 percent; other, 2 percent. Four percent were undecided or didn't expect to stay overnight. Statistics exceed 100 percent due to multiple responses.

AAA's holiday travel projections are based on a national travel survey of 1,500 adults conducted by the Travel Industry Association, which does special research for AAA.

AAA is a not-for-profit federation of 97 clubs with more than 1,000 offices providing its 40 million members in the United States and Canada with a full range of travel, insurance, financial and auto-related services.

10 tips for a hassle-free winter getaway

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 11 (AP) - If a long car trip this winter to visit Grandma sounds overwhelming, think again. By following AAA's 10 tips for auto travel, your winter getaway can become a vacation to remember.

Make your hotel reservations well in advance. AAA travel agents can help you find the best deal for your budget and itinerary.

Don't leave home without your hotel confirmation number. You may be asked to present it when checking in. This proof of reservation will come in handy if the

property is over-booked. Make sure you are well-rested before you leave. Stop every few hours to re-energize - especially if you are traveling with kids.

Dress in comfortable, loose clothing. Consider dressing in layers to accommodate changes in temperature. Verify that all passengers are buckled up. Children 12 and under should travel in the back seat and be properly secured in a child safety seat or with lap and shoulder belts.

Pack an emergency kit in your car. The kit should include jumper cables, a flashlight with fresh batteries, blankets, flares

or a reflective triangle, an ice scraper and a small shovel.

If you are traveling with your children, pack books or small toys to occupy them during the trip. Let them choose the radio station, or bring along a tape or CD player with headphones.

Travel with a cellular phone - especially if you are traveling off the beaten track.

The AAA affiliate for Northern California, Nevada, and Utah serves nearly 4 million members with an array of automotive, travel and insurance services.

Ski resorts ready for record-breaking snow

NEW YORK, Dec. 11 (AP) - Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow will likely be the refrain this year as ski resorts in the Rocky Mountains and along the East Coast prepare for record-breaking snowfalls and attendance. Travel Weekly reports.

Thanks to the weather phenomenon El Nino, forecasters and ski resort officials are predicting that winter sports enthusiasts will have a superb season - especially as early spring approaches.

In a survey of ski resorts, Travel Weekly has learned that Colorado Ski Country, a non-profit trade association for 24 Colorado ski resorts, is anticipating a "record-breaking ski season."

Tuus Ski Valley in New Mexico has been the happy recipient of more than 77 inches of snow since mid-October,

which prompted the resort to open Nov. 22, the earliest ever.

Sunday River Ski Resort in Maine has posted record attendance numbers every El Nino winter since 1980, and they're expecting to do the same this year.

And, during the 1996-97 ski season, another El Nino year, Vermont's Mount Snow and Killington resorts broke their

attendance records.

According to Travel Weekly, sources speculate that precipitation will likely be concentrated on the second half of the season. If so, it would be a boon for spring skiing, with a longer-than-usual season extending into April and providing skiers with warmer temperatures, uncrowded slopes and late-season specials.

While admitting that El Nino is a bit of a wild card, forecasting services generally agree with the ski resorts' predictions. A meteorologist says, "Trends in the West indicate warmer and snowier winters in the Sierra Nevada."

For information on ski conditions in the Traverse area call 1-800-SKI-UTC.

BOOK HAPPENINGS

Book Happenings features various happenings at suburban bookstores. Send news leads to Hugh Gallagher, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc., 30251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, or fax them to (313) 591-7279.

BIRMINGHAM, WOODWARD

Classical kids: The Making of a Violin, 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 14; Mike Karoub's cello jazz, 7 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 17; Sean Blockman and John Arnold on guitars, 7:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 19; Meet Arthur, the popular PBS award, 11 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 20; Jim Perkins and the Wren Band, 4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 20 at the store 34300 Woodward, Birmingham (248)203-0005.

FARNES & NOBLE BOOKSELLERS (WEST BLOOMFIELD)

Storytime features "Seven Days of Yvonne," by Elie, 10:30 a.m. Monday, Dec. 15, and 7 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 16 at the store 6800 Orchard Lake Road, West Bloomfield, (248)626-6804.

BORDERS (FARMINGTON HILLS)

Members of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra perform holiday music from their just-released CD "Joy: A Celebration of Holiday Music."

7 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 18, with selections by Bach and Schubert at the store 30995 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills, (248)737-0004.

BORDERS (ROCHESTER HILLS)

New tax legislation, 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 17; David Lubin performs on guitar, 9 p.m. Friday, Dec. 19; corduroy story time, 11 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 20; singer-songwriter Stewart Franke, 8 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 20 at the store 1122 Rochester Road, Rochester Hills (248)652-0558.

SOUTHFIELD LIBRARY

An afternoon of music featuring harpist Onita Sanders, 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 24; Michael Shells discusses his book about Detroit radio legend I.P. McCarthy, "Just Don't Tell 'Em Where I Am," 7 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 18 at the main library, 2600 Evergreen Road, Southfield, (248)947-0470.

WALDENBOOKS

Richard P. Smith signs his outdoor books "Stand Hunting for White-tail" and "Tracking Wounded Deer," 6 a.m. Wednesday, Dec. 17, at the store 30300 Plymouth Road, Livonia (313)261-7811.

Advertisement for RAND McNALLY featuring Globes on Sale. Includes phone number 248-613-7470 and website www.randmcnallystore.com.

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Table titled 'Holiday Rates' showing rates for various states including Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Texas. Includes AT&T and VISA logos.

Large advertisement for PARBADOS featuring the text 'JUST BEYOND YOUR IMAGINATION' and 'IMAGINE all the elements that make a perfect vacation and you'll find there's only one perfect location-- the wonderful island of BARBADOS.' Includes 'Travel Charter' logo and contact information.

Advertisement for DoubleTree Hotels and Guest Suites & Resorts. Includes the DoubleTree logo and the slogan 'Sweet Dreams'.