

Travel plans?

Agencies best bet for info about transportation, accommodations

By PAM PROUTY
Staff Writer

"The first step is getting some idea where you want to go. Do you want a restful vacation or a busy one?"

These are questions that reputable travel agencies and university resource centers may ask if you are planning a trip this summer and have a pocketful of questions.

If you want to travel, most travel agencies recommend coming to see them first.

"A lot of students do not realize it doesn't cost you anything to go to travel agencies," says Mark Fisher of Small World Travel Agency of Chapel Hill.

"It's no more cost than buying reference books, and a lot of times it saves you more money," he says. "There are a lot of little tricks we can tell you about."

These tricks are acquired by experience, he says. And most travel agents get opportunities to travel and can throw in added information.

For students undecided about where and how to go, professionals run through this type of checklist with the traveler:

- Get some idea of where you want to go. You can choose a style of travel — either restful or busy. Do you want a tour? Would you rather go independently but with planned conveniences?

- Consider the initial cost of transportation. After paying airfare, many students find that leftover money dictates whether they go on a package tour or go at all. Agencies have listings on all major charter flights and airfare excursion flights.

- Ground expenses must be considered. This could include the cost of a Eurail pass, the most common form of student travel once abroad. The cost has risen 5 percent over last year; a standard 21-day pass is \$220. Eurail offers the Youth Pass which costs \$250 for two months. Travel agents say there is no better way to travel than the Youth Pass because service extends

throughout Europe. But you need a passport, you must be under 26 and you must use the pass within six months of the date issued. Travel is unlimited, but the cost of a lost pass is not refundable.

- Once in Europe, much money will be taken up by food and accommodations. Plan to spend more than you think you will. Travel agents say youth hostels are the best way to travel cheaply. Prices range from \$2 to \$3.50 a night. They are usually dormitory-style sleeping quarters and some cafeterias. European travelers say they meet people from all over the world at hostels. Most travel agents suggest using the hostels as definite stopping points while traveling.

- Get your passport in order. Find out from travel agencies or the North Carolina Health Department at Eastgate Shopping Center about specific visas, inoculations and other documentation. Passports usually take about three to six weeks to collect.

- Sketch a rough itinerary. You don't need specific day-to-day plans, but Barry Nash of Continental Travel Agency says people are usually too indefinite in planning a European trip.

"It's important to keep at least some goals in mind," he says. "You have to plan transportation and ground costs and per-day costs too."

Agencies refer you to state or national tour boards if they cannot help you. If looking for state travel material, the North Carolina Division of Travel and Tourism mails free packets if requested.

Travel agencies should be scrutinized like any consumer business, says Dorothy Bernholz, Student Legal Service attorney.

Her staff receives complaints frequently against merchandising companies that entice students with free trips if their product is bought. There are suits involving travel agencies.

"The best advice I have for a student," Bernholz says, "is to deal with a reputable company. Deal with a company in the United States too, so you can have recourse against them."

This advice is also given by Peter Topping, University travel abroad adviser. If students want a tour, find a reputable company. Use an established airline tour or go on a National Educational Association-sponsored trip.

Topping suggests students come to see him before going to a professional. He is located in the International Center in the basement of Bynum Hall. Topping can give you general brochures, reference books and also

refer you to other student travelers.

Reference books are often another source of information. Most local book stores and libraries have information for the student who would rather wing it or for students who need a handy guide. Students also can find concise information about countries in the extensive international and national travel series called the Fodor Modern Guides and the Frommer series.

A fair number of faculty members will give students credit for independent travel if a student decides on a University work-study program rather than individual travel, says John Florin, UNC adviser of international studies. "It's up to the students to initiate it, and many seem unwilling to do so or to take hold of this opportunity."

A student traveler will find necessary information at the International Center. A wide green poster features more than 30 excursions from nine universities within the 16-member UNC system. Prices range from \$616 to approximately \$4,000, depending on length of the visit.

One of the most popular trips is the summer trip to England, sponsored by Professors Gerald Unks and Christopher Armitage. Lois Filly, formerly of the International Center, says this program is unique because it is totally organized by these professors.

"It's really great that individuals take it upon themselves to organize such good trips," she says. "As for the students, these trips seem to be the greatest thing anyone could do, for the cultural as well as the educational experience."

Whether one goes to Montpelier in France or whether one chooses to go on tour or take a free-spirit approach, travel agent Nash has this advice:

"Get as much information as possible before you leave. You can't have too much. You must learn to roll with the punches. It's a fact of life, you have to be flexible when you travel."



A local travel agency can help you with your plans.

Today's puzzle solved.

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