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### **Vacation Outside the Box**

Traveling with friends or extended family and don't want to be in a small hotel room? Thousands of vacation properties in more than 100 countries are available for rent with a choice of studio up to 2 bedroom resorts, villas, cottages and homes.

### **Friendliest Airports**

A recent survey of American Society of Travel Agents ranked airports for being family-friendly:

1. Orlando International
2. Heathrow Airport
3. Atlanta's Hartsfield

And if you get tired of waiting in Amsterdam's Schipol airport, you can get married in the wedding chapel, take a nap in a snooze chair, or visit a casino.

### **Travel Green**

The success of Al Gore's film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, and scientists warning of global warming have travelers asking about eco-friendly options. These are defined as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people." With habitats disappearing, glaciers melting and certain animal and fauna populations declining, more people want to experience these locales with the understanding that it may be "now or never." Eco-friendly trips tend to be active with small groups and can offer high-end amenities.

### **Days are longer!**

Before you start all those yard projects, and with cooler weather still in the forecast, why not plan a vacation to the sun? To keep on top of travel specials, just send me an e-mail and I'll let you know what's available.

### **Speaking of Sales**

Couples Resorts is offering a savings of up to 50% off published rates at their four resorts in Jamaica. Book by April 30 and travel July 9 to Dec. 24 to take advantage of these great savings. There is a minimum 3 night stay. There is still space on many April vacation trips at a discount to several destinations.

### **Cruising**

Still one of the best values for your money. You can get all your meals, transportation to various ports, entertainment and activities to please everyone on your list. There are cruise lines and itineraries to satisfy just about every wallet and interest. Here are just a few ideas:

**Like to travel but don't like to fly?** You can take a cruise from many different domestic ports, like New York, Boston, Charleston, and Norfolk to name a few.

**Always dreamed of traveling on the Queen Mary?** Queen Mary 2 will be sailing round trip from New York to the Caribbean starting this October for 10 days. Fares start from \$1599 per person plus taxes.

**Want a shorter trip?** You can sail from New York or Boston to Canada and New England on 4 or 5 nights cruises. You can even take a 1 or 2 night trip to nowhere from New York and enjoy all the amenities onboard.

**3-masted sailing vessel interest you more?** Take off from Newport for a 5-night adventure stopping in places like Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket, and more on board a 42 passenger, 40 stateroom yacht. When the temperatures drop, this vessel moves to the Caribbean where you can island-hop.

**How about a river cruise?** You can travel in the US, Europe, or China on exciting itineraries and get to see small towns and villages.

**Alaska always been your dream?** Sail on a 7=night glacier discovery cruise from \$549 per person.

### **Passports**

Did you get your passport yet? As of Jan. 23, 2007, all U.S. citizens entering the country by air, must have a passport, except when coming from Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. In 2008 all persons traveling by land OR sea will be required to present a passport. Some hotels or destinations are still offering passport rebate incentives or resort credits.

### **Golf**

Crystal Cruises will offer a golf-themed cruise from London on Aug. 20. Guests will be able to play at Scotland's St. Andrews Golf Club and courses throughout Ireland. Special guests will include CNN/Sports Illustrated journalist Jim Huber, and veteran golf pro John Clark.

New Hampshire's Balsams Grand Hotel is offering a free golf package including lodging, breakfast, and 18 holes of golf from \$99 per night from Sundays through Thursdays, May 18 to June 28.

### **Spring in Bermuda**

Fly non-stop from Boston on a Friday and spend 3 nights in Bermuda from \$299 per person based on double occupancy. This includes airfare, accommodations, hotel taxes and transfers. Airport and Government fees are additional. Leave on a Monday for 4 nights or stay an entire week!!

Look on my website for new photos!



## **Trips and Seminars:**

### **Godmother for a Weekend**

Just like the old television show, "Queen for a Day", I got to be treated like royalty for a weekend by Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines. In the spirit of maritime tradition, Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines is looking for a godmother for the naming ceremony of their new ship, Liberty of the Seas, debuting in May of 2007.

Royal Caribbean had put out a search for "exceptional women travel agents who have shown exemplary inspiration, courage, determination and dedication to philanthropy and service in their communities." A panel of 19 members of the media, cruise industry executives, and Royal Caribbean travel partners reviewed more than 2,500 nominations of exceptional women travel agents for this honor. My daughter submitted an essay on my behalf, and I was fortunate to be in the group of 100 finalists who were honored at the recent re-launching of The Majesty of the Seas out of Miami. This ship had just finished a 28-day makeover and will be offering shorter cruises to the Bahamas.

Ten semi-finalists were selected during the weekend festivities and the field has been further narrowed to three outstanding women. Although I did not make it to the semi-finals, it was quite an honor to be selected and given the chance to experience the festivities. The public was invited to vote for the godmother on Royal Caribbean's website.

### **Sarasota Area**

I took a long weekend in search of some sunshine and warmth. I found plenty of sunshine, but unfortunately the temperature was not as warm as I would have liked, but definitely warmer than in the northeast. I visited Lido Key, which has great shopping in St. Armand's Circle and lots of nice restaurants and beaches. The city of Sarasota offers great dining, museums and art galleries. I found a charming French Bistro downtown with wonderful café au lait, authentic baguettes, and a French speaking staff. Also drove out to Longboat Key with it's upscale condos and marina and ate lunch at a popular seafood shack on the water on Anna Maria Island.

### **Seminars**

Since before the Christmas holidays, I have been busy attending many seminars and trade shows to keep up with the constant changes in the travel industry.

Several trade shows with hotel representatives, tour operators, and tourist boards in attendance afforded me the opportunity to learn more about each destination and property, so that I can better plan your vacations.

In January, Central Holidays and MSC cruises presented their new tours and trips in the Mediterranean. Both companies continue to offer specials.

February had me learning more about St. Kitts and Nevis. The neighboring islands offer natural beauty, welcoming people and a refined culture. Centuries-old sugar plantations, stone churches, volcanic mountain peaks and long stretches of sandy beaches are bordered by the turquoise Caribbean on one side and the deep blue Atlantic on the other.

I also attended the NY Times Travel Show. Hundreds of hoteliers, tourist board representatives and suppliers from all over the United States, Caribbean, Europe, Africa, Asia, and South and Central America were present and giving out information about their locations. It is always an opportunity to learn more and make new contacts so that I can better prepare your travel itineraries.

I have been elected to the Board of the CT Chapter of the Caribbean Tourism Organization. This organization promotes travel to the Caribbean by hosting trade shows, and monthly meetings with informative sessions about different Caribbean destinations.