

Selling Those "DEAD" Months

Managing Director Don Thomas.
All Year Club photo.

By Don Thomas

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When I proposed the "four-season" or "year-round vacationing" program to the American travel industry at the convention of the National Association of Travel Officials in Chicago 2 years ago, it might have appeared to many that this was something of a radical idea.

It wasn't.

Others had already engaged in off-season travel business. And, as far as we of the All Year Club of Southern California were concerned, we knew it could work.

We knew that people will take vacations in the so-called off-season months, provided the following three points are true:

(1) A good vacation product is available during those off-season months to make their vacation journeys worth while;

(2) Accommodations are available, and open for business, to house and feed and entertain these people during their off-season stays;

(3) Finally, that adequate promotional and advertising effort is directed at letting the vacation customer know about points (1) and (2).

We knew this program would work, because we could see it already working in southern California.

Our area has been, you might say, a very good "laboratory" for the maturing of this idea of year-around development of the American recreational travel business.

Although in the past we had always emphasized only the two seasons of summer and winter in Southern California, we knew that even before World War II our area was receiving a very substantial flow of pleasure travel from outside the State during the two off-seasons in between.

The gross flow of motor travel from out of State was a very accurate indication.

During 1940 our area was visited by the following numbers of out-of-State travelers during the 3 months which we now regard as our spring season: March, 46,656; April, 41,745; May, 50,308.

And during the same year, the 3 months of what we now regard as our fall season brought us: September, 62,666; October, 53,659; November, 54,726.

That, of course, is considerably less travel than comes to southern California during the peak flow of travel. And this is the important point:



Here were 309,760 people who visited southern California during the supposedly "dead" months of the off-seasons. If this many were already coming, then these supposedly "dead" months weren't really so unmarketable as might be supposed.

At that time, we were well equipped as to point (1) of the three essentials of off-season travel. Southern California with its year-around dry subtropical climate, has excellent off-season weather. Spring is sunny and warm, the landscape is green, and bright with flowers. Fall is in truth a continuation of the summer. Regarding point (2) our vacation housing plant has operated for a long time on a year-around basis, so the accommodations were open, ready, and eager to serve. And, again, our activities in Southern California likewise are on a 12-month basis, so there was plenty for the visitor to do and see the year around.

It was regarding point (3) that we were weakest. We were not pushing the "off" seasons with direct advertising and promotion. For years, however, we had been making efforts to extend the existing summer and winter seasons so that they would, as nearly as possible, cover the entire 12 months of the year. These efforts seemed to have been quite successful.

During the past years we have been supplying the direct promotion and advertising called for in point (3) and our "laboratory" is continuing to show us interesting results. The spring and fall seasons during the past year have brought nearly double the number of motor arrivals which I mentioned earlier for 1940. Of course, this is due to a great extent to postwar swollen travel conditions. But it is obvious that our advertising is pulling. Our advertising, stressing all four seasons individually and equally, has broken all records for our 27 years of campaigning in the number of inquiries we have received.

Just one inquiry shows the way the appeal is pulling. It is from a man in Brooklyn, and he writes: "Your ad in the ----- says any season is the best season. I plan on driving out there the first of September and staying through October, if accommodations are not too crowded."

He's just the man we've all been looking for.