

They Counsel the Nation's



Holiday Seekers

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Recently there came to light a gem of a letter written nearly 300 years ago by Sir Isaac Newton to a friend about to embark on a journey from England to the Continent, who asked the distinguished scientist and philosopher for some practical tips on traveling.

Newton set down do's and don't's governing personal behavior in strange places that are as cogent today as they were in the seventeenth century; and applicable alike to the 2-week tourist who visits the Grand Canyon and the round-the-world-cruise patron.

This decalog of travel behavior qualifies Sir Isaac as the patron saint of the travel industry. Certainly he was the forerunner of the thousands of men and women who labor daily to give millions of recreational travelers constructive advice on where to go, how to go, and what to do.

This force of professional experts, better known as travel agents, plays a strategic role in the vast recreational travel business—a role that is often neither properly understood nor thoroughly appreciated.

The travel agent is the point-of-sale contact between transportation companies, hotels, resort areas, and all the others who vie for more tourist patronage and the consumers who buy their wares. Nearly 600 of these travel purveyors have banded together under the banner of the American Society of Travel Agents to provide a cumulative sales power that is unmatched in the industry. ASTA members, all of whom have been subjected to the most thorough screening with respect to their technical ability, financial standing, and adherence to sound business ethics, are located in more than 240 communities in 44 States and in Canada. Precise figures are not available, but the best estimate is that last year this army of travel merchants sold some \$250 million of recreational travel to the U. S. public—domestic as well as foreign.

At a cost to carriers, hotel, and resort operators that is only a fraction of the expense of maintaining branch offices, these travel merchants provide vacation "shopping centers" for millions of Americans located in cities and towns and hamlets in virtually every section of the country. In appearance these shopping centers are quite different from the super markets that have become such an integral part of the American way of life. But in variety of offerings and range of merchandise, the travel agent's premises are as serviceable and as vital as the Food Fair, the A&P, the Big Bear, or the hundreds of other markets that are by-words to the American housewife.

The travel agent draws from his vast fund of personal experience to help the prospective recreational traveler pick the kind of trip that will furnish the relaxation, fun, stimulation, or whatever it is the traveler seeks, at the price he can afford to pay.

The travel agent does more than sell tickets. Often he combines the mechanical know-how of a traffic manager with the human know-how of a Beatrice Fairfax—with a sprinkling of Emily Post for good measure. Travel advice is an intensely personal matter.

Having helped the client decide where to go, how to go, and when to go, the travel agent removes the irksome details of passports, visas, and tourist cards. He provides travelers' checks; arranges for baggage transfers; takes care of the traveler's insurance needs, including accident, property loss while in transit, and even household effects during the vacationer's absence. He sets up and confirms hotel accommodations, and trims away all the other little fringes that are so essential—but often nuisances—in planning recreational travel.

In short, the travel agent regards his mission as the creation of recreational travel—coupled with doing everything humanly possible to help people extract the maximum enjoyment from their vacation expenditures. For most of these services he receives no compensation from the client. The traveler pays published rates for transportation and listed prices for all-expense tours. The agent's income is derived primarily from commissions paid by carriers, hotels, and resorts.

"See Your Travel Agent" has become a byword in national, regional, and local travel and transportation advertising. That phrase is good advice for the consumer. And it's good business for the thousands of carriers, hotels, and resort areas that have established a direct line of communication with prospective customers everywhere through the unique services rendered by America's travel merchants.

Quarterly Calendar of Events

Available to the general public as well as travel people, with an accent on information rather than format, the United States Travel Division's first Quarterly Calendar of Events is expected off the press by June 1, for the summer quarter June-July-August 1949. The present monthly calendar on the inside back cover of TRAVEL USA will be continued also.