

Home computers get travel facts

Take a personal computer with modem, dial up a database and presto! You have a fascinating research tool for travellers.

Computer shopping isn't about to do away with holiday brochures, travel agents or airline phone-reservation "please wait" recordings. It's not free. And most of us don't own computers yet.

But with the vast array of travel-related databases now available through on-line services like CompuServe and The Source, travel aficionados can use microcomputers to make airline and hotel bookings, get weather forecasts or the best route for a motor journey, even bone up on visa requirements or potential health and safety risks abroad.

CompuServe is probably the most popular on-line database service, with over 350,000 subscribers worldwide.

By plugging into it, travellers can tap into the Official Airline Guide Electronic Edition and get information on over 1.5 million flights worldwide, as well as on hotels.

You can even book and pay for a plane ticket. It's not unlike having your own airline reservations computer.

On the Worldwide Property Exchange, you can locate or list a home, cottage, vacation condo, yacht or mobile home to rent, charter or time-share.

Visa Advisors, a Washington, D.C., firm listed on CompuServe, provides information on visa requirements for Americans. Although this doesn't help Canadians directly, it does give an idea of visa restrictions imposed by most countries.

Also helpful for planning purposes is the ABC Worldwide Hotel Index, an index of 30,000 hotels with information on rates and services.

CompuServe users can order a road map with a suggested route for just about any motor-

trip planned in North America, including Mexico.

The Public Weather Service offers daily and 48-hour forecasts for any part of the United States.

The U.S. State Department lists its travel advisories. Periodically updated, they include information about political and health risks in various countries as well as potential bureaucratic hassles.

The advisory on Colombia, for example, warns in detail about street crime, terrorist activity and other problems your travel agent isn't likely to talk about. It advises which sections of the country are safe and which should be avoided.

Several databases and forums contain articles or briefings useful to a frequent traveller, although subscribing to a few good travel magazines or newsletters would be just as informative.

In all cases, the information that flashes across the screen can be copied on your printer for later study. Some articles can be stored on a disk.

The advantage of an Official Airline Guide Electronic Edition or TWA's Travelshopper, another airline reservation service available on CompuServe, is that they list flights and fares for all airlines so that you don't have to call around to comparison-shop.

After a few sessions with Official Airline Guide or Travelshopper, you could teach some travel agents a thing or two.

But getting that knowledge costs money.

To sign up with an information network there is a one-time fee, typically about \$50 Cdn. Then there is an on-line charge each time you call the network and there are additional charges to use some of the databases.

CompuServe subscribers, for example, are charged for each

minute on the line. That works out to \$6 US an hour if you are using a 300-baud modem, the hardware needed for computer-to-computer communication by telephone. The charge is \$12.50 US for modems that transfer information at higher speeds like 1,200 baud or 2,400 baud.

Then there may be the charge for a database. Rates for Official Airline Guide are \$21 US an hour for off-peak times (evenings and weekends) and \$32 US

for prime time, pro-rated for actual use. There currently is no surcharge for Travelshopper.

Most cities in Canada have a local CompuServe telephone number. Otherwise you also pay the long-distance charges to reach the CompuServe number nearest you.

At those rates, you don't want to dawdle, but the novice will inevitably take longer than the regular user to zero in on information.

Some databases aren't always accurate. A \$118 seat-sale fare listed as still available on some Air Canada flights for a Montreal-Toronto trip in mid-May was sold out.

The ABC hotel guide listed 31 hotels for Montreal, ranging from modest to the Ritz. But the Queen Elizabeth, one of the city's largest, was omitted.

— David Gersovitz,
Canadian Press

YOUR SOUTH PACIFIC VACATION IS JUST A HOP, SKIP AND JUMP AWAY.

Check out these great Continental Pacific Vacations.

Then hop, skip or jump to your nearest travel agent. You won't want to miss deals like these.



HOP TO AUSTRALIA \$1298.

\$1298 (Canadian per person) • Round trip economy class air fare from Vancouver to Sydney or Melbourne • 5 nights accommodation at either: Cambridge Inn, Sydney or The Chateau Hotel, Melbourne or 5 days use of Thrifty Group 1 car with unlimited mileage and CDW insurance • Valid April 1–September 30, 1987.

SKIP TO FIJI \$1230.

\$1230 (Canadian per person) • Round trip economy class air fare on Continental Airlines from Vancouver to Nadi • 5 nights at the Pacific Harbour Resort • Return transfers airport/hotel/airport • 5% Fiji government tax • Valid April 1–September 30, 1987.

JUMP TO NEW ZEALAND \$1290.

\$1290 (Canadian per person) • Round trip economy class air fare on Continental Airlines from Vancouver to Auckland • 3 nights at the deluxe Regent Hotel, Auckland • Arrival transfer in Auckland • New Zealand goods and service tax • Valid May 1–September 30, 1987.

Ask about our other hotel choices and longer stay options. For further information and reservations call 1-800-225-4834 or your travel agent.

CONTINENTAL
Pacific Vacations

Sydney • Melbourne • Fiji • Auckland • Honolulu



BCAA World Wide Travel Agency

690 Victoria Street, Prince George, Phone 563-0191

Seven Seas Travel

Downtown 564-7000
Pine Centre 564-9700

Parkwood 564-8700
Vanderhoof 567-4751



Anthology

continued from page 14

gives an account of his famous meeting with Livingston.

A few pages later, English photographer Sir Cecil Beaton describes an evening with the Rolling Stones in Marrakesh.

Some hardy women travellers provide amusing accounts, among them bicyclist Dervla Murphy, who fired a single gunshot into the ceiling to quickly dispatch a randy, scantily clad Kurd who paid an unexpected nocturnal visit to her room.

"I felt afterwards that my suitor had shown up rather badly," the intrepid Irish traveller wrote. "A more ardent admirer, of his physique, could probably have disarmed me without much difficulty."

A Canadian contribution comes from novelist Norman Levine who recounts how a Montreal bartender tried to cheer him up by cracking hazelnuts

in a nutcracker with wooden handles shaped like a pair of woman's legs.

Newby — author of six books including *Slowly Down the Ganges*, *A Traveller's Life* and *On the Shores of the Mediterranean* — likens this anthology to a Chinese banquet filled with exotic tidbits, some more appetizing than others, yet capable of providing a satisfying meal.

Many readers will be left hungry for more — and some may even take the advice of English traveller John Hatt.

"So pack your bags and go on your travels before it is too late," he urges. "There are still vast tracts of the world which beg to be visited . . ."

A Book Of Travellers' Tales, edited by Eric Newby. Published by Picador; \$9.95.

— Portia Priegert,
Canadian Press