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Section One

TRAVEL GEOGRAPHY FUNDAMENTALS

Know The Client

Most new travel agents would rather have their teeth pulled than to have someone walk in the office and ask to go to Djibouti. Don't feel badly, because even those agents who have been in the industry are stumped once in a while. We had a client who came in and asked to go to Polo. Now, we have traveled most of this world for the last 30 years and we have never heard of Polo. After asking him where he heard of Polo that made him want to go there, he said it was on a TV travel show. The people were diving among small, beautiful islands which appeared to be floating. We suggested it was Palau. He said "No, it's Polo." While he was still in the office, we checked the atlases, Worldwide OAG, and every source we could, but to no avail. Finally, we told him, trust us, we are sending you to Palau because it meets every requirement you are expecting to see. When he returned, he said it was Palau. Clients are not always right, so it's a challenge to keep ahead of them.

Determining where and when your clients should go are probably the most important parts of knowing your client and the selling process. As in the above example, clients often don't know where they want to go; they just know they want to go somewhere that is either warm, cold, has great shopping or culture, or for any number of reasons. This feeling or desire is often stimulated by an ad in the paper or a magazine advertising a destination which sounds appealing. Our experience has been that this destination mentioned in the ad is not always the correct destination to send them.

There are many techniques which help determine where and when a client should travel, but as this is a geography text and not a travel-selling text, we do not have time to go into this important stage of knowing your client. Just be aware that knowing your client's needs and getting them to the right destination at the right time of year is one of your most important responsibilities. This text will help you determine what a destination has to offer and when to send your clients there.

Traveler's Tips

Lodging

Literally every type of accommodation can be found throughout the world. Bed and breakfasts, quaint inns, deluxe properties, family-owned hotels, and a wide range of villas and condominiums are available to your clients. It is very critical to place your clients in the type of accommodation that not only best suits their needs (family size, cost, etc.), but that is also near the sights they expect to spend most of their time.

Food and Water

Tell your clients to assume it is safe to drink the water and to eat the food in most countries of North America, Europe, and the South Pacific. Assume it is not safe to eat the food and to drink the water (including ice) in developing and third world countries. Most tourist areas are safe, but do advise your clients to use ordinary precautions and be selective where and when they eat and drink.

Electrical Current

Nearly everywhere 210/220 volt is the electrical current. Major hotels usually have adapters for guests' use. Be sure to check with the local tourist office for any changes or additions. Most North American countries use 110/120 as the electrical current. Check the individual listing of each country.

Dress Standards For Tropical Islands

Tropical islands can be extremely warm and humid. Tell your clients to take lightweight summer, casual clothing that is washable (preferably cotton), comfortable and loose-fitting. Also take some light canvas shoes or sandals, which are great for walking around the area and exploring the coral reefs. Be sure to wear at least modest clothing (no swimsuits, shirtless, short shorts, etc.) in towns. Also be sure to take coat and tie for men and suitable evening wear for women (cocktail

dresses, etc.) for evenings, as some islands (Bermuda, Barbados, etc.) and some restaurants and casinos require or expect them after 6 p.m. Always have a sweater for the evenings, which can be cool.

Dress Standards For Adventure Travel

Some areas of the world, such as the Middle East, Thailand, and parts of Africa, are very religious and/or more conservative in dress than others. Notify your client that while traveling through these areas, especially outside of the hotel pool areas and beaches, conservative dress is preferable. Women should not wear short shorts, short skirts, halter tops, etc., and men should not go shirtless unless positive they can. Suggest your clients check locally the accepted dress for entering temples, churches and certain villages.

Immigration Requirements

Suggest that your clients obtain a passport. It is so much easier to enter a country with one, and it will save them a lot of anxiety attacks wondering if they will be allowed into their destination or be sent back to their home country. True, some of the islands and countries don't require them, but do not let them take a chance. Tell them to get a passport. Some countries such as Trinidad and Tobago require that United States citizens have a passport or they do not get in.

Visas

Assisting your clients in obtaining necessary visas is your responsibility as a travel agent. Citizens not native to your country may have different requirements than do natives. Check with the consulate of the countries they plan to visit to verify what visas are needed for their travel plans.

Drugs

Those clients requiring special or difficult to obtain medicines are advised to take an adequate supply with them. Check with the individual embassies or consulates to see what accompanying documentation is required to take the medicine into the country. Be aware that the use of controlled, illegal drugs is often unlawful and punishable by fine and/or prison sentence. Granted, some areas appear to be more tolerant of those using drugs, but suggest your clients stay away from them while there (if not altogether).

Beaches

Suggest that your clients take insect repellent and check with the locals prior to entering any beach

not being swum in by locals. If a beach is at a hotel or condo, it is probably safe, but check to be sure. Most islands and countries do not encourage or allow nude sunbathing, although if done extremely discreetly, it can be done in most places. Jamaica, the United States (Blacks Beach at La Jolla, CA, etc.), St. Martin, along the Mediterranean and other areas of the world do have nude beaches.

Did You Know

It is important for you to have a basic understanding of physical geography, which is the study of the physical characteristics of the world such as climate, terrain, oceans and countries, and destination geography, which is the study of how physical geography relates to travel and tourism and how it affects your clients' trip. Then you can feel more confident in selling and knowing more about the world.

Geography, as it relates to travel, is fun and exciting. For example, did you know:

- That the world is basically round (globe, sphere) in shape, which means it's approximately 360 degrees. This means that because there are 24 hours in a day, every 15 degrees you travel equals approximately one hour.
- That there are seven continents, six if you combine Europe and Asia into Eurasia. Technically, Europe is a peninsula to the continent of Asia.
- That the world is divided into two sets of hemispheres: northern and southern and eastern and western.
- That the world is divided into five major climatic zones (beginning from north to south):
 - North Polar Zone (north of Arctic Circle)
 - North Temperate Zone (between Tropic of Cancer and Arctic Circle)
 - Tropical Zone (between the two tropics)
 - South Temperate Zone (between Tropic of Capricorn and Antarctic Circle)
 - South Polar Zone (south of the Antarctic Circle)
- That water covers approximately 70% of the earth. The world's largest ocean is the Pacific. The greatest depth in an ocean is 36,198 ft/11,033 m and is located in the Pacific around Guam. The Red Sea is saltier than the world's oceans.

- That there are numerous island chains throughout the world in various areas such as the Caribbean, South Pacific, West Pacific, and Indian Ocean. Some of these islands are clustered in groups and called archipelagoes. An example of an archipelago is The Philippines.
- That the world's largest country in size is Russia; the largest in population is China.
- That the world's highest mountains are found in the Asian Himalayan chain.