

Travel Times * Volume 1, Issue 1

-----About Travel Times

Travel times is published six times per year by Darren Scott, a travel writer in Irvine, CA. This file is uploaded to a variety of bbs around the nation -- please move it around so others can read about my travel experiences. I want to hear from you. Write me in an I-Link or Smartnet TRAVEL conf. today and tell me what you think. Since I love to write, I enjoy the satisfaction of doing this. However, a donation is always welcome. Send to: D. Scott, 18 Urey Ct, Irvine, CA 92715-4045.

Just a note to any SYSOP or anyone else reading this...
I'm not employed in the travel industry, and I'm not trying to sell anything. I will, however, sometimes mention phone numbers to places for my readers. I get no advertising revenue.....

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Ski Colorado!

In the Christmas of 1991, I had the unique opportunity to ski in Colorado. A state of both nature and sport, the scenery and atmosphere of Colorado was much different from anything else I had experienced. Since this was my first visit, we stayed at the Denver West Marriott so we could drive each day to a different resort for skiing. Although downhill is the game in most ski areas, we tried cross-country most of the time. Cross-country skiing is a great way to get on skis for the first time. All of the trails we tried were groomed, this means that there are grooves on each side for your skis. You just push back with your poles, and away you go! However, many of the trails are not flat and go up, so sidestepping is a must. For a first day of cross-country, I'd recommend the FRISCO NORDIC CENTER or COPPER MOUNTAIN. When we were there, Copper Mountain was a "zoo" and trail fees were high (\$7.50 each). At Copper Mountain, however, there was a 10-mile long flat trail--perfect for beginners (no sidestepping). At the Frisco Nordic Center, the trails are short and easy, most of them are flat, it is located on the road to Breckenridge. If you want to get a long way from civilization--and people--but still want groomed trails, try DEVIL'S THUMB located within the large Winter Park complex. After a few days of cross-country, you'll want some more challenging--but not expert--trails. For this, KEYSTONE MOUNTAIN and ELDOORA are great places. Following a taste of cross-country, you'll want to be trying some downhill. The best place for beginners' downhill skiing--and lessons--is LOVELAND. Furthermore, lift tickets are inexpensive--but much more

than trail fees--compared to other resorts in the area. However, when we were there on Monday Dec. 30, all lessons were sold out. From the Denver West Marriott--located on I-70 a few miles from Golden--it was about 1 hour or so to most of the ski areas. Ones like Copper Mountain, Frisco, Loveland, and Keystone were on the freeway--or just a few miles off the road--and the driving on I-70 is scenic and easy. We usually were skiing by 1:00pm, and finished around 5:00pm. It was great being able to eat at suburban prices--and even the hotel dining was inexpensive (at least back in '91). The way we did it ****IS NOT FOR EVERYONE****, but you certainly should consider it.

Money saving tips:

* Rent skis from a ski shop in Denver or anywhere but the resort. We rented from APPLEWOOD SKI in Wheatridge, just across the freeway from the hotel, they were inexpensive, competent, and helpful. In addition, GART BROS. has been recommended.

* Buy lift tickets at a supermarket or ski shop -- the ones in Metro Denver and the SAFEWAY in Idaho Springs have good prices. Bear in mind, however, that discount lift tickets are only good for half day.

* Rent a car from SUPERIOR RENT-A-CAR, they have a counter on airport, and the lot is about 5 miles out on a courtesy bus. A good travel agent can book Superior, in '91 their rates were very reasonable compared to other firms. I did, however, find out many Superior customers in Florida did not have their reservations honored. MAKE A BACKUP WITH A NATIONALLY KNOWN COMPANY (Hertz, Budget, Avis, Dollar, Thrifty, National, etc.)

* Buy an ENTERTAINMENT book, this book--bought through various bookstores and fundraising organizations--can save you 50% off the rack rate at the Denver West Marriott. In addition, the Denver West Marriott offers 21 day advance, 14 day advance, and Two-for-Breakfast specials.

Getting there:

Continental Airlines and United Airlines have major hub operations at the Denver Stapleton Airport (DEN). The Stapleton airport will be closed around the end of 1993, and replaced by the new--state of the art--Denver International Airport (DIA).

Denver has nonstop service from many points in upper 48 states as well as service from Mexico, Hawaii, and London. America West sometimes offers attractive "Nite-Flite" fares. Contact a good travel agent.

New airlines take to the sky

With the demise of Eastern, Pan American, and Midway, many new airlines have begun to spread their wings. Each of them have different goals and objectives:

* RENO AIR (QQ) flies MD-80 aircraft to Reno from Portland, Seattle,

San Francisco, Los Angeles, Ontario, and San Diego. Reno Air is targeting Reno gamblers, Lake Tahoe skiers, and people wanting to get up or down the coast for less money. One way from Los Angeles to Seattle was--at one time--\$100.

* KIWI INTL. (KP) flies ex-Lufthansa 727-200 aircraft from Newark to Chicago Midway, Atlanta, and Orlando. Kiwi's expansion plan--within several years--include Cancun and the Caribbean. The airline reports load factors exceeding 60%.

* MORRIS AIR has been flying charter service from several airports via its Salt Lake City hub. With fares sometimes less than 33% of Delta's--Morris Air keeps rolling in the profits. Now, Morris Air is beginning to operate scheduled service with Boeing 737 aircraft. Stay Tuned.

* FAMILY AIR may begin operations in February of 1993, pending DOT approval. Service will be from Las Vegas, Newark, and Los Angeles to begin. Expansion calls for Honolulu, San Francisco, and other cities. Operating all-coach Boeing 747-100 equipment, Family will offer \$249 (round trip) transcontinental fares and \$49 (round trip) fares from Los Angeles to Las Vegas.

Although one of these airlines may fail--it is certain that these new airlines using low fares to lure customers will prove popular among customers.

There are lots more new airlines starting up including SKYBUS on the East Coast, and WINGS OF THE WORLD--an agency that charters American Trans Air L-1011s from Los Angeles to Hawaii and New York.

The Pacific Northwest : Washington & British Columbia

A few years ago, I enjoyed a magnificent summer trip to Washington and British Columbia. Many people from California choose to drive there--and I suggest it if you have the time. The drive up El Camino Real (US 101) to San Francisco and then up the coast of Northern California, Oregon, and Washington. We flew there, and that's also a great idea. Starting off in Seattle, spend your first afternoon at Seattle Center and the Space Needle. See a beautiful view of Seattle; furthermore, the trip up to the top is in a glass elevator. A 360 degree view awaits you, and--if you have the money--eat dinner up the top. If you're more casual minded, there are lots of take-out places in Seattle Center, I enjoyed fish and chips. In addition, take the short monorail ride "Just for Fun," visit Pike Place Market, and the Museum of Flight. The next day, take BC Stena Line's daily ferry service from Seattle to Victoria. The ride is beautiful, but it lasts five hours. The view of Puget Sound is picturesque, and there's a lunch buffet on board for your enjoyment. Upon arrival in Victoria, immigration is fast (from your car's window), and then you are on your way into the city. In Victoria, there's lots to do--walk down stairs at an aquarium and view the ocean

through glass, visit the Royal Museum of British Columbia, walk around and enjoy the entertainment and shopping, and have high tea at the EMPRESS HOTEL (I suggest not eating lunch beforehand so you can fit the scones and pastries in!). Also in Victoria, don't miss Miniature World and a ride on a double-decker London bus. Then, there are lots of side trips, don't miss the BUTCHART GARDENS, ANN HATHAWAY'S COTTAGE, and the small town of SOOKE. In the evening, it's time to catch a short 1-hour ferry ride to Vancouver. They leave every half hour (during the day) and the ride is fast as well as scenic. The ferry we took landed in Twassen, and it was a great base for getting into Vancouver the next day. In Vancouver, we spent a day at SCIENCE WORLD, there's an Omnimax theater--the best out of several I've seen, and many hands-on science exhibits. It was brand new when we went there in June of 1990. In the evening, eat at one of the many seafood places in the downtown area. Go where people are going, so you can be safe. Following that, we saw the IMAX theater at CANADA PLACE, it was great but not good compared to Science World. Be careful, park at Canada Place and not at the Granville Office Tower, we got a ticket. That evening, we stayed in North Vancouver, and the next day went on to Whistler. In Whistler, there are several mountain walks at the top of the gondola, and a nice village. In addition, I think there was even skiing! A day is all you need if you're not going to be skiing, though. Driving to Vancouver, we really enjoyed the beautiful scenery and nice roads. In addition, there were several waterfalls which we enjoyed. After several hours of driving, we arrived in Everett. In Everett, BOEING has their 747 production facility--the largest in the world. We didn't have time to tour the facility, but it is supposed to be fascinating. I don't think children under the age of twelve are allowed, though. Nevertheless, there are lots of great seafood places there to eat at. We spent the night in Seattle, saw Snoqualmie Falls, and flew home. We didn't see everything in Seattle, but we did get a lot seen in just a matter of days. This is a trip I'd love to repeat--and will not forget.

Where to stay:

* Hotels a few miles from the Seattle Airport are in a suburban setting. It's less than 20 miles into downtown, and rates are great. We tried the DOUBLETREE SUITES (paid \$79/weekend w/brek.), and the Marriott (paid \$69/weekend w/brek).

* In Victoria, the EMBASSY MOTOR INN has kitchenettes and regular rooms at reasonable rates. You can walk to almost everything in Victoria. Tourism Victoria can be especially helpful in regard to reservations.

* In Twassen, there is a BEST WESTERN with both Suites and regular rooms. Rates are quite reasonable.

* In North Vancouver, there isn't anywhere good to stay. Instead, buy an ENTERTAINMENT BOOK and stay at the Meridian, Hyatt, and others for 50% off the rack rate. NOTE: This info may be a bit outdated!!

* In Whistler, over the summer, we paid CDN\$99 for a 2 story condo with private sauna and whirlpool, full kitchen, 2 bathrooms, for \$99. We had no idea that we would be getting this. The unit, however, goes for over \$250 during ski season!

Money saving tips:

* Rent a car from BUDGET if their rates are reasonable. In 1990, their cars parked free at DIAMOND lots located throughout the city. This was a significant cost savings.

* Plan to be in Seattle over the weekend, many hotels--especially those near the airport--offer great weekend specials.

* Use a credit card whenever possible in Canada--you'll get a much better exchange rate.

Getting there:

All major airlines serve Seattle. From Los Angeles, Markair and Reno Air have some very good fares. Alaska, Northwest, and United have large operations in Seattle. American and Northwest offer service to Tokyo.
