

EXTENDED TRAVEL TRIPS

The Decision Making Process

Sponsored by: Fitchburg Senior Center Friends



Hi Travelers:

This month I'd like to share with you how we decide on 1) trip selections, and 2) tour company contracts.

TRIP SELECTION DECISIONS

We start with your completed travel surveys. Your voice does count! After the survey completion deadline date, we add your check marks to a blank survey form. Ex: If you indicated you are willing to travel any time of the year, one check mark is added to each time frame. If you indicated you'd like trips that are 5-9 days and 8-15 days [but didn't check 16+ days], one check mark is added to the 5-9 days and the 8-15 days. The same holds true for travel mode, price, activity level, and indicated interest in USA/Canada, Overseas/Central America and European River Cruise trips. Then we look for trips based on the highest number of marks in each category.

We look at offering [usually] 3 or 4 trips. Timing is another factor for two reasons: 1) If we offer a trip in February, chances are we will not offer one in March but instead wait until April or May. We do this to give you a selection of trips that fit within the total numbers received for "Time of Travel". 2) Trip location climates are the other reason. We want to offer trips at a time when that location has decent weather patterns.

Most trips require airfare from/to somewhere. If we can obtain a good price for airfare from/to Madison, we will do this. Baggage check and security check-in is easier & faster, and there are usually less hassles to deal with than in a bigger airport like Milwaukee or Chicago. And...we don't have to spend up to 6 hours on the bus getting from/to one of those bigger airports.

TOUR COMPANY CONTRACT DECISIONS

There are lots and lots of tour companies in the country. I have about twenty-five of them on a spreadsheet including company names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, hours of operation, contact people, local tour representative name [if there is one], and commissions paid & incentives provided to groups.

Our tour company contract decisions are based on three key requirements: 1) Tour companies must have local tour representatives. When we host a Travel Presentation such as our 9/10/14 date, the company's local representative gives the trip's sales pitch. He/she has available a slide presentation or video of the trip being offered. He/she knows the trip better than anyone, i.e. daily itinerary, down payment/deposit requirement, trip insurance program, etc. 2) & 3) The Fitchburg Senior Center Friends (FSCF) sponsor the trips on behalf of the Fitchburg Senior Center [FSC] who is considered a 'group'. The FSCF look for tour companies that pay a commission on those going on our sponsored trips, and that provide an incentive based on their required number of people in a 'group' on a trip.

We are very fortunate to have a handful of tour companies we can work with that have the three key requirements we are looking for. In addition, if you travel with one of the tour companies we have contracted with – but the trip is not one of the offered trips of the year [you find another trip to go on in the company's catalogs], we still receive a commission from the company – provided you mention FSC when making your reservations.

Complete and submit a 2015 Travel Survey **by June 10th**. Forms are located in the "Extended Travel Trips" area near the reception desk at the Fitchburg Senior Center (FSC) or online at www.fitchburgwi.gov/668/Trips.

Georgia Ascher, Volunteer Extended Trip Coordinator