

Dollars and sense

by David Uffington

Rethink Those Bland Summer Vacations

If you're planning to take a summer vacation, consider making this the year you do something different.

- Take a child's interest or a hobby of yours and turn it into a vacation. Don't send your child to space camp when the whole family can visit the Kennedy Space Center and expand your adventures from there across Florida.

- If you've worked for years on your family tree but it still has holes, consider planning a tour of state archives, museums and genealogical sources.

- Throw a dart (literally) at a wall map of the U.S. and go online

to research what's nearby that could turn into a vacation spot.

- If prospecting for gold or gems appeals to you, search online for gem and mineral associations in the states you'll visit. They're your best bet for dig locations to suggest.

- Start now to investigate things to do in towns and cities new to you. Contact the Chamber of Commerce in those locations for packets of information. While you have them on the phone, ask about things generally known only to the locals that you might otherwise miss.

- If the family loves hiking, collect state park maps of hiking trails and plan a week of visits.

Want interesting and cheaper accommodations at your destination? Check hovelstay.com. The accommodation categories are broken down into Survivor Hovels, Good Enough, and Clean and Comfortable. If you're headed to San Francisco, stay in a tent in Berkeley, California, near the BART station. Heading for Phoenix? Stay in a four-person room

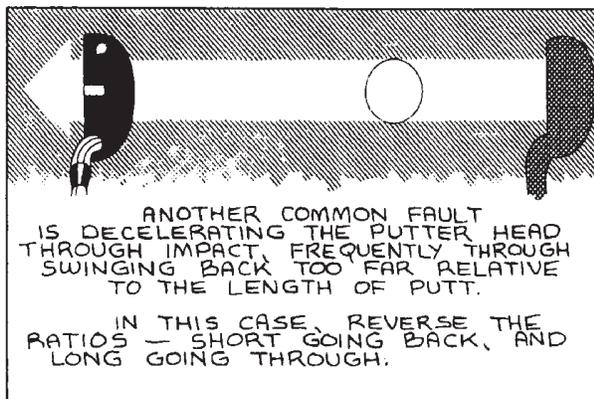
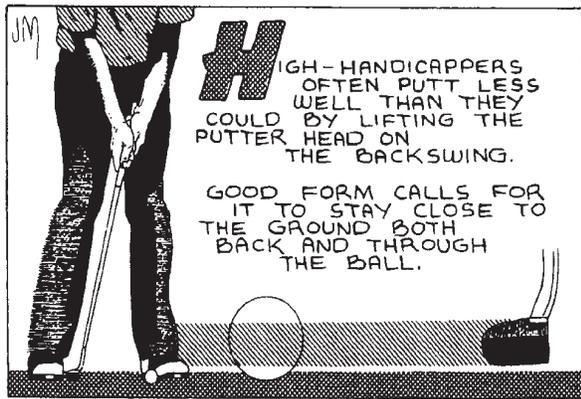
in accommodations that include cable, Wi-Fi, light breakfast, use of a computer and a karaoke machine. Looking for some posh but cheap digs in Seattle? Choose king-size accommodations that can take three people. While HovelStay.com is just now open to nonstudents and doesn't cover all areas of the U.S., it's worth a look if you want to save some money.

If you're going to a foreign country and will need a passport, don't wait until the last minute. From time of application, it can take four to six weeks for a routine application. If you ask for expedited service, you could have your passport within eight days ... but expect to receive it in three weeks. Expedited also will cost you an additional \$60.

David Uffington regrets that he cannot personally answer reader questions, but will incorporate them into his column whenever possible. Send email to columnreply3@gmail.com.

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