

Harsh allergy season expected

■ With spring coming up quickly, allergy sufferers can take steps to minimize their pollen exposure

By Jessica Blanchard
Oregon Daily Emerald

While many students are celebrating the recent warm weather and sunshine, others are dreading the early arrival of the spring allergy season.

For many seasonal allergy sufferers, sunny weather brings sneezing, a runny nose and watery, itchy eyes.

"When you've been cooped up in the house all season, and when the rain finally stops, people want to come out and enjoy it," said Judy Moran, a registered nurse with Allergy and Asthma Associates in Eugene. "But often, they can't because their allergies kick in."

How tough this year's allergy season will be on sufferers depends on Mother Nature, said Dr. Kraig Jacobson, a physician at Allergy and Asthma Associates.

"It has all the makings of being a vigorous season," Jacobson said. "With the warm, wet winter we've been having, we would think that the sprout would be very high."

Eugene residents allergic to grass pollen are particularly unlucky: Oregon is one of the top producers of grass seed in the world. When the prevailing

winds are from the Northeast, the Willamette Valley acts as a funnel, blowing the grass pollen straight through Eugene, said University Health Center Director Dr. Gerald Fleischli.

Rain, however, helps clear common pollens — such as tree pollens and mixed weed pollens — out of the air. As a result, Fleischli said the severity of the allergy season depends largely on the weather.

"The season typically starts in mid-May and runs through the fourth of July," Fleischli said. "But because of the warm weather, we've already been seeing some people experiencing allergy symptoms."

Allergies can also develop unexpectedly, Moran said. There is no specific age group that is more susceptible to allergies, she said, and she sees people in the allergy clinic from age 5 to 55.

People already have a genetic tendency to become allergic, but it's a total variable as to when they'll develop clinical symptoms, she said.

"I hear a lot of, 'When I first moved here, I didn't have an allergy,'" she said. "But they can develop a sensitivity to certain allergens. You can really develop an allergy at any time."

When the allergy season really starts to kick up, many students find themselves unable to study or concentrate in school, Moran said.

Reducing symptoms:

- Wear sunglasses or eyeglasses to block pollen from eyes.
- Shower at night and shampoo hair to remove pollen.
- Wash bed linens often — especially the pillowcases.
- Don't allow your pet to sleep with you.
- Use a pollen mask.
- Damp dust your room.

SOURCE: University Health Center

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On-line travel sites lure students wanting deals

■ On-line travel is the largest retail e-commerce category, projected to grow to \$30 billion by 2001

By Brian Goodell
Oregon Daily Emerald

With spring break just around the corner and the announcement on Wednesday regarding the Preview Travel and Travelocity.com merger, students looking to book travel in the 21st century are facing an increasing dilemma — click or brick.

The creation of the new Preview Travel/Travelocity conglomerate is turning the classic brick-and-mortar operation into a do-it-yourself, click-and-save empire.

According to Computer Shopper Magazine, the on-line travel market is the largest retail e-commerce category, projected to grow from \$7 billion in 1999 to \$30 billion by the end of this year. By 2003, 26 million American households are expected to book their travel on-line, and 16 million will plan their trips via the Internet.

"There's so much information out there that it's easy to get lost," Travelocity.com spokeswoman Jacque Rardin said. "We have the tools in place to help weed through all the information that's out there, so people know that what they're looking at are the lowest fares on the web."

Rardin said on-line booking is not necessarily better for student travelers but said the Internet enables people to quickly and conveniently locate the travel packages that are important to them.

Council Travel, located on East 13th Avenue and in the EMU, also offers an on-line travel service for students. Niraj Shah, who works

in e-commerce support at the Council Travel headquarters in New York, said the site gets nearly a half million hits per month, with an average of 16,000 to 17,000 visits per day.

As popular as the site is, Kim Henry, manager of the 13th street office, says on-line booking is not necessarily the best way to go.

"The benefit of going into a travel agency is that an agent will tell you that if you adjust your travel dates, you can probably get a lower fare," Henry said. "Also, a lot of people are not comfortable with giving away their credit card number over the Internet."

Nevertheless, students are jumping on the bandwagon. Scott Rich, a graduate student and Greek Life Advisor, said he travels about 16 times a year, and he enjoys the discounts and the convenience of on-line booking.

"If I want to book on-line at 10 p.m., I can. Whereas my travel agent might not be at work at that time," Rich said. "A lot of times you can get discounted airfares and special deals on the Internet that you can't get anywhere else."

Rena Adelstein, a senior majoring in public relations, said her best bet for low airfares is on the Alaska Airlines Web site. As a frequent flier, Adelstein said she was able to save the most money by booking direct, rather than going through a travel agent.

Adelstein said there are some downsides to making travel plans on the Internet, however.

"There's no one you can talk to and ask questions of," Adelstein said. "If you want to switch flights or book a different time, it's hard to do that on a computer."

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