

Novel vacations range from potatoes to paradise



GO AHEAD AND LAUGH

MASON WEST

SPRING BREEEAAK, YEAH! Whew, now that I've gotten that out of my system, it'll be easier to survive the seven-week wait until the migration to Mexico. Not for me though. What's so special about Mexico anyway? The drinking age is low and the temperature is high, but that doesn't mean it's Shangri-La. There are other places on this earth worthy of my valuable tourist dollars, and I made it my mission to find one.

I began my search for the next spring break hot spot where any technology-savvy traveler would: the Internet. My searches for "spring break" yielded nothing but talk of Mexico, college and bikinis, the very things I was running from. I didn't have time to sort through the 1.5 million sites hoping that one would reveal my destination, so I had to buckle down and do what every college student fears: think.

After a solid hour in the position of Auguste Rodin's "The Thinker," I started feeling hungry. Hungry for potatoes — Idaho! This query eventually led me to a quaint city in Idaho called Moscow. Moscow,

the 10th largest city in the Gem State, is home to the University of Idaho, the state's oldest educational institution. With a population only slightly larger than the enrollment in our University, the town should be completely deserted come spring. The town will easily allow a peaceful day of skiing with your comrades. And there will be plenty of places to sit around drinking vodka and talking about the good old days when the Mother Country was strong.

But even though the novelty value of telling your buddies you went to Moscow for spring break is high, it's not really a stellar spring break destination.

Back to Rodin. This time, I thought about the pearly beaches from "Cast Away," which I recently saw. That is what I want in my virgin spring break destination. After all, Tom Hanks seemed to be having a great time on the island. So the question remained: Where can I find an island? The obvious answer is Micronesia.

The Federated States of Micronesia are composed of 607 separate islands and divided into four states. With only 65 inhabited islands, I'm guaranteed to have some space to myself and try out that great "Cast Away" diet. Did you hear how many pounds Hanks lost for that movie?

The one state that stood out from the others was Yap. While it was the odd name that first caught my attention, it soon became apparent that there was much more to this

place than a cheap laugh.

Yap consists of four major islands and a handful of smaller islands. The four main islands are actually connected by roads, which may warrant a visit just to see how that works. It is known as the land of stone money because of the large stone discs that reside on the island-proper. These rocks are still used by the islanders for some transactions, and I was worried about finding a good dollar/rock exchange rate. But Yap is prepared to cater to my ethnocentric sensibilities by supporting the U.S. dollar as the official currency and English as the official language.

While Yap would be inaccessible to me without such accommodations, it would be a shame to lose touch with the Yapese language. In my self-taught online lesson, I learned the three most important phrases: "I like," "I don't like" and "how much?" They follow: "gub adug," "dabug" and "im pulwon." I think there is some subliminal messaging in that last phrase. If you sound it out phonetically, it's not too far off from "I'm payin'."

It seemed that I had found the island paradise I was seek-

ing. They take my money, speak my language and will provide my underage self with alcohol, all without the presence of MTV or anyone who would want to be on it.

Then I find the catch: To visit Yap, you have to get permission from the government through an application process. I guess they don't want just anybody in paradise, but I could hurt myself if I tried thinking anymore.



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Time flies, so book overseas travel now

International flights become spendier and harder to reserve as spring break rapidly approaches

By Kendall Larsen for the Emerald

Those students who dream of traveling to distant lands to spend their spring break days need not look any further. International travel requires some extra time to plan but can make the break an even more memorable experience.

Those who wait until the very last minute to plan an international vacation will have quite a bit of trouble in finalizing their trip. Laurie Niblett, a certified travel consultant for Ambassador Travel Services, gave this advice: "Plan way in advance."

Spending extra time on planning does not have to be a difficult chore. Travel agencies such as Ambassador offer a number of free services to help voyagers complete their oh-so-long checklists and leave home with peace of mind.

The more flexible people are with their traveling dates, the better chance they have of booking flight reservations at this point, Niblett said. Before too long, there will be almost no flights left for departure on Saturday, March 24, and return on Saturday, March 31.

"The more mid-week [Monday-Thursday] you can travel, the better rates you will get," Niblett added.

The plus side is that because this is the "down season," a round-trip ticket from Eugene to London would only be about \$650, Niblett said.

Costs vary, however. Yumi Aoyagi, a senior international studies major who frequently flies interna-

tionally, said her tickets to Latin America are usually about \$1,500. "Going to Japan is cheaper," she said.

Next comes the passport. International vacationers who do not already have passports need to take care of this as soon as possible. Applying in person ensures a faster delivery of the passport, and it can be done at the main post office at 520 Willamette St.

You will need two recent full-face photos, two inches by two inches in size. There is a fee of \$60, plus a \$35 "rush" fee if you need the passport within 10 days. You must also bring proof of identity, which could be a driver's license, and proof of U.S. citizenship, such as a birth certificate.

Normally, it takes about six weeks to receive a passport by mail, so there is still time for the spring break deadline. Check the United States travel Web site at www.travel.state.gov for more information on passports and visas, which are required for visiting most countries.

Travel agencies are an excellent resource for easy, hassle-free planning. However, with the rise of do-it-yourself Internet travel resources, the Web is a smart place to look for lodging, car rentals and plane tickets. A comprehensive site to try is Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel at www.frommers.com.

Angela Biancalana, a freshman communications pre-major whose family lives in Germany, has an important recommendation once plans are finalized.

"When traveling internationally," she said, "you should open yourself up and absorb the culture around you. It's amazing to see how the smallest differences make our worlds so diverse."