

CULTURE

You need a vacation

2 Girls Travel opens up a world of possibility for women

BY KATHY BELGE

Everybody needs a vacation. But if you're overworked and stressed out, the last thing you want to do is put time and effort into researching a place, making the arrangements and heading off to some unknown destination.

That's where 2 Girls Travel comes in. Partners Pam Monette and Elise Campbell started their business as a way to empower women to get out and explore. They're planning their third trip to Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, in November and their first to Las Vegas next month.

Monette had been an active member of the Women in the Woods annual weekend at Breitenbush Hot Springs, and some of the attendees were asking for winter activities. The couple took note and planned Women in the Waves, their first Mexico vacation in 2002. "We wanted to take the magic of Women in the Woods on vacation," says Monette.

Christine Hall, 45, has been on both Puerto Vallarta trips and plans to go to Las Vegas and back to Mexico again this year. A stress-related illness convinced her she needed a vacation.

"It was easy because it was all prearranged," says Hall, who traveled by herself for the first time and enjoyed the company of the other women. "You get the benefit of a tour package but the freedom of being by yourself."

Trisha Vakarc, 55, has also been on both trips and plans to go again. She said one of the



Elise Campbell (left) and Pam Monette of 2 Girls Travel flank tour co-conspirator Diana in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico

best things about traveling with 2 Girls was their connection with a local lesbian tour guide named Diana, who took the group of about 16 women to a remote beach and to a bed and breakfast owned by a tequila distiller up in the hills. Some of the women went horseback riding and all enjoyed a wonderful restaurant, she

says, where they ate dinner overlooking the whole bay and city at sunset. "We never would have found that," Vakarc says.

Riding Diana's boat into the bay and seeing dolphins was a highlight for both women. Some members of the group jumped in and swam with the dolphins. "I have not had such a fun vacation ever," Hall says. "It made you feel like a kid again."

Monette and Campbell started 2 Girls because they love to travel and wanted to do so in the company of other women. They don't make any money off the trips but admit they hope by the time they retire the trips will fund their way. Campbell is a real estate broker, and Monette owns Helen's Pacific Costumers in Northeast Portland.

The couple are thinking of future trips to Europe, Florida and Provincetown, Mass., but acknowledge most of their clients are looking for more exotic vacations.

One of the goals of 2 Girls is to get women more comfortable taking risks and seeking adventures. Traveling to a foreign country can be intimidating, notes Hall, describing a scene at the airport. "It's crazy. There's all these people, and I don't speak Spanish. Taxi drivers are trying to get you to go with them. If you haven't been there before, you don't know what to do." The two girls of 2 Girls help their charges navigate the airport, exchange their dollars for pesos and set up the first dinner and breakfast.

They also arrange some side trips that women are welcome to participate in or not. Most do. They leave plenty of time for exploring, shopping, lounging at the beach or swimming in one of the many pools at the hotel. "Pam and Elise do a really nice job of facilitating the group," says Vakarc. "They have a nice combination of organized activities and free time."

"I believe in my heart of hearts if someone goes traveling with us and then they travel on their own, it's a good thing," says Monette, who finds that sometimes women are afraid to travel alone. "They don't get to see how capable and powerful they are." □

2 GIRLS TRAVEL's trip to Las Vegas is May 19 to 23. Puerto Vallarta's Women in the Waves is Nov. 6 to 13 (seven nights) or Nov. 6 to 20 (14 nights). Receive a discount if you book by June 1 at 503-281-3252.

KATHY BELGE is a Portland free-lance writer.

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—Christine Hall

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Procession from the Park with Cinnamon the donkey
April 4, 10:15 a.m.

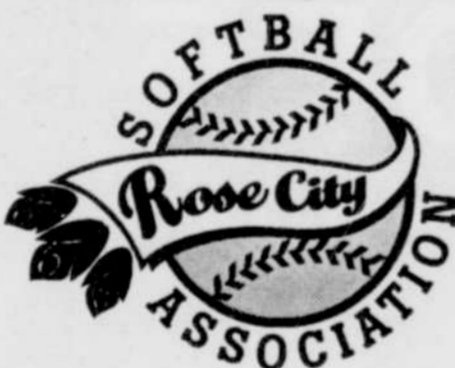
Maundy Thursday

Soup Supper & Service
April 8, 6 p.m.

Easter Sunday

Trumpets, Bells, Choirs, Special Music
Rev. Dr. Patricia Ross preaching
April 11, 10:25 a.m.

An open and affirming church where all are welcome – gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and straight



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7 to 9pm
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