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THE REDMOND Spokesman

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REDMOND AIRPORT

Summer travel beginning to heat up

BY SUZANNE ROIG
CO Media Group

Be prepared Central Oregon: Despite rising airline tickets and fuel prices, this summer could bring an avalanche of visitors.

On Friday, an average of 2,000 passengers went through the three Transportation Security Administration screening stations at Redmond Airport. The number of passengers was

500 more than the normal, said Lori Dankers, TSA spokeswoman.

"We're expecting the number of flights to be down by about 3% from last summer," said Zach Bass, Redmond Airport director. "But the number of seats are up 5%. Some markets that fly here are using larger planes."

The net gain is a win for Redmond and Central Oregon, which derives its

strong economy from tourism-based businesses. Summer is a strong season for Central Oregon. And while most visitors come by car, within an eight-hour driving window, many also fly, Bass said.

"With air service, they track tourism and in-migration, people moving here," Bass said Tuesday. "We are about even with pre-pandemic travel numbers from the same time frame in

2019."

In the months of July through September, Bend hotels and vacation rentals averaged an 80% occupancy rate prior to the pandemic, according to Visit Bend statistics.

There are still no nonstop flights from Redmond to Portland, Bass said. Alaska Airlines dropped that route in November.

See **Travel / A4**

Former death row inmate sentenced in bar stabbing

BY GARRETT ANDREWS
CO Media Group

A Washington man who served time on Oregon's death row will go back to prison for 17½ years for stabbing three people outside a Redmond bar in 2021.

Gregory Paul Wilson, 55, won't be eligible for early release, the judge told him at sentencing Monday morning in Deschutes County Circuit Court.

Last month, following a two-week trial at the court facility at the Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center in Redmond, a jury convicted Wilson of all counts: three charges of second-degree assault and three of unlawful use of a weapon.

Early on the morning of July 23, police were called to a report of a stabbing outside the Tumble Inn Tavern on SW Sixth Street.

At the time, Wilson was staying in Central Oregon with a woman here to attend a medical conference.

The facts of the case are hazy to this day, as nearly everyone involved was intoxicated at the time. But central to the case is a physical altercation that took place between Wilson and a trio of bar patrons — Clint Holdbrook, Kyle Bates and Seth Gannon — during which Wilson produced a pocket knife and stabbed each of the men.

Wilson was arrested and charged with three counts of second-degree assault, a Measure 11 offense in Oregon and punishable by a mandatory minimum sentence of 70 months in prison. Since he was charged once for each victim, he was looking at three 70-month sentences, but it was up to Judge Randy Miller whether those prison terms would run consecutively (back-to-back) or concurrently (all at once).

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Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin

Kristina Sinohach looks over a message about a potential job on her phone while talking about the next day's plans with Connor Steeves and her sister Ira Sinohach.

FINDING SAFETY

Ukrainian sisters recount journey to Redmond

BY JOE SIESS • CO Media Group

Ira and Kristina Sinohach, two sisters from Chernivtsi, Ukraine, left their home after the start of Putin's war, embarking on a journey through multiple countries before crossing into the United States via Mexico on foot, and safely arriving in Redmond.

The two sisters are thankful to have made it all the way to Central Oregon, and said their parents, who remain in Ukraine, are also relieved. After such a long journey, the sisters can finally catch their breath while they are hosted by the family of a new friend they met in southwestern Ukraine soon after the war began.

While volunteering for the We're Near team, a humanitarian organization that assists refugees, the sisters met 23-year-old Connor Steeves, who had been in the country since the beginning of January, teaching at the Borys Hrinchenko Kyiv University. After first leaving the country at the start of the war, he decided to return to volunteer, and that is when he met Kristina and Ira.

Not long after meeting, Ira and Steeves be-

gan dating and are now engaged. But staying in Ukraine was not safe, so the three of them decided to leave in April and travel to Redmond, where Steeves' parents live.

Neither of the young women can imagine returning to Ukraine any time soon.

"Only one good thing, all people all

"Our parents are happy we are in a safe place. They miss us, but they are glad we are here."

— Kristina Sinohach, Ukrainian refugee

around the world know now what Ukraine is and where it is," Ira said.

The day the Russian invasion began, Ira, 22, was sleeping in her home when her mother loudly and abruptly opened the door. "The war has started!" she told her daughter.

"I started crying, because it was a super bad surprise," Ira recently recalled. "Honestly for me, it was a big, bad surprise. I didn't know about it, and I didn't think about it."

Her sister, Kristina, 20, heard about the start of the war while texting with coworkers.

"It was maybe 6 a.m. and I wake up, because my phone has a lot of notifications," Kristina said. "Everyone texted, 'the war has started.' At first I didn't believe... I was so calm."

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