**MARCH 15TH CHAPTER TRAVEL FORUM**

**By Dan Sockle and Terry Babin**

The Columbia River Chapter, MOAA’s, first *Travel Forum* for 2022 was held the evening of March 15, 2022.

**REMINDER:** On March 14th the Columbia River Chapter Secretary sent out an e-mail notice to all members about the special opportunity offered our Chapter for booking one or more cabins for MOAA Vacations’ Douro River Valley Cruise this June 5-12. If you did not receive this e-mail, more information is available on [www.MOAAvacations.com](http://www.MOAAvacations.com) under the MOAA Signature Groups tab.

The guest subject matter expert for the March Forum was Jon Brenneman, President, MOAA Vacations. The following is a summary of the presentation and answers to questions from the Forum participants:

MOAA Vacations is the official travel agency for MOAA. The mission is to provide the very best vacation experience for MOAA members and guests. MOAA Vacations offers the opportunity to enjoy the camaraderie of traveling with your fellow MOAA members from across the country. As a top account with every major cruise line and all the top tour companies, MOAA Vacations can secure the best prices to include negotiated special value-added offers. Close working relationships with the cruise lines means better care for MOAA members. MOAA Vacations’ highly trained and experienced staff handle the smallest of details.

Of special note was MOAA Vacations’ “Satisfaction Guarantee for MOAA members.” Customer service is the #1 priority. The staff is committed to solving problems before there is a complaint. Key features of their guarantee include, but not limited to:

* Superior service. [*Of note was that MOAA tried a different travel agency approach, and then reestablished its relationship with this group after a discovering that no other agency could offer the quality service consistently delivered by Jon Brenneman and his staff.]*
* Lowest prices for value received.
* Many amenities, which usually are charged separately, included in the price.

1. General overview of travel as 2022 begins:
   1. Cruising is better than ever (Some Chapter members have already noted this during the 2021 Forums).
   2. Cruise staffs are making extraordinary efforts to be welcoming, delivering exceptional service, and reducing lines and waiting times—in part because cruise lines are booking at less than capacity.
   3. Health/safety is the foremost concern in the COVID era.
   4. Rules for individual travel embarkation/boarding and cross-border transit are being relaxed.
   5. You still need to do your research on vaccination and testing requirements before traveling because rules can change quickly.
2. MOAA Vacations’ MOAA Signature Groups offer a twice-a-year opportunity for exclusive cruises and land tours hosted by the MOAA leadership. “Exclusiveness” includes:
   1. Cruise/tour is only for MOAA members and their accompanying family members and guests.
   2. Onboard events.
   3. Amenities, which start at the arrival airport, usually include such “goodies” as: Transfers upon arrival and departure airport(s), meals, beverages, excursions, gratuities, local entertainment, free internet/Wi-Fi, bicycles, etc.)
   4. 2022-2023 scheduled Signature Groups:
      * Douro River Valley Cruise: June 5-12, 2022.
      * Tour of Germany with Oberammergau and Oktoberfest: September 12-21, 2022.
      * Columbia River Cruise: July 2-10, 2023.
      * Iceland Tour: September 13-23, 2023.
3. Special event: “50 Years of Freedom Cruise and Tour.”
   1. MOAA Vacations is honored to be working with former POW and retired USAF Chaplain Colonel Robert Certain to mark the 50-year anniversary of the Paris Peace Accords.
   2. Vietnam, Cambodia, and the Mekong River: February 17 – March 1, 2023, with optional 3-day Hanoi extension.
   3. Starts in Ho Chi Minh City and ends in Siem Reap Cambodia. For those doing the extension, there will be a flight from Siem Reap to Hanoi.
   4. For further information, contact Mike Tyrell at 1-800-211-5107. You can also use [mail@moaavaca.com](mailto:mail@moaavaca.com) or watch for further information in the MOAA magazine.
   5. If interested, act quickly. Only 14 rooms remaining as of last check.
4. For many, single travel for cruises and tours is difficult to arrange at a reasonable cost. Not so with MOAA Vacations. Their Single Share program helps solve this problem by helping you to find a compatible cabin-partner, and can arrange a chat time between the prospective clients before you make a commitment.

General Information:

1. The date and time for the May Forum has not been set. If you have a preference, let Dan or Terry know your recommendation(s).
2. Also, as we move towards being able to gather as a Chapter in-person again, do you prefer to continue the Forum as Zoom sessions, or transition to a no-host social and discussion venue at a commercial business (e.g., coffee shop, restaurant, etc.)? Again, let us know your preferences.

Several Forum members are still considering (or have booked) travel to the countries listed below during 2022. If you have any suggestions/recommendations, please e-mail them to [tbear06@comcast.net](mailto:tbear06@comcast.net) or join the next Travel Forum during May 2022.

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| Czech Republic | Austria | Hungary |
| Finland | Germany | Turkey/Istanbul |
| Portugal | Athens/Rhodes | England/Scotland |

**Next Forum Zoom meeting: Place and date/time TBD**