**CHAPTER TRAVEL FORUM UPDATE**

**By Dan Sockle and Terry Babin**

The Chapter’s fifth *Travel Forum* was held the evening of November 18th as a Zoom meeting.

Discussion about international travel planning and recent travel experiences were the primary topics for this Forum:

* A trip report was given on a recent Norwegian Cruise Line cruise in the Western Mediterranean:
  + Restrictions and COVID protocols on shore activities varied by country with Italy being very restrictive and Spain relatively normal.
  + Important to have all vaccination records with you and keep all COVID-related documents on your cell phone.
  + Expect changing COVID testing requirements and frequent testing including likely pre-embarkation testing.
  + If you have the opportunity for a cabin upgrade, find out exactly what is being offered before deciding.
* One Forum participant has an upcoming rebooking for a tour in Costa Rica and was curious about safety. If you have traveled to Costa Rica in the past two years, and have any advice, please pass on to Terry Babin or Dan Sockle who will forward the information to the member.
* Travel to Trinidad is being discouraged because of the high crime rate. If you considering travel to, or through, the island, check the Department of State website first.
* Information received from a travel agent was shared during the Forum.
  + Post tour and cruise complaints are on the rise.
  + Complaints are mostly about decreased quality of service and knowledgeable tour company personnel while being charged pre-pandemic prices.
  + Many companies cut higher cost amenities and staff to try to stay financially afloat and have not reinvested in employees or services.
  + Bottom line: You may have to adjust your expectations on cost/quality of travel for the foreseeable future.

Other items of interest and discussion:

* Regarding the travel agent’s warnings about increasing travelers’ complaints, one of the Forum participants stressed that using a top-rated tour company that takes the worry out of schedule changes and travel issues is the best way to go—particularly in this pandemic environment. You might pay a bit more, but for a lot more assurance. Tauck at **tauck.com** was again recommended
* Hawaii is increasing its efforts to promote tourism.
  + Use the Safe Hawaii site in making your plan to visit the Islands.
  + Kilauea Military Camp ([www.kmc-volcano.com](http://www.kmc-volcano.com)) on the Big Island was recommended as a very good deal.
* For RVers: U.S. Army installations usually have very good RV campgrounds.
* Space A expected to come back around January 20th.

Next Forum Zoom meeting is tentatively scheduled for 7:30 PM on Thursday, January 20th.