

Toronto, Britain, Orient 'in' places to go

# Campus travel agencies — who's got what

by Audrey Djuwita

Ah, December. Let's skip the unpleasant thoughts of final exams and weeks of agonized waiting. (Ugh!) Think positive. Think about the exciting fight over turkey drumsticks or days of basking in the sun somewhere exotic.

David Ward, manager of INTRA Edmonton Travel Agency, said: "As soon as the cold weather hit, business picked up. In winter time, it's usually a tossup between Toronto and Hawaii."

Cindy Fowler, the regional manager of CUTS (Canadian Universities Travel Services), agreed and said many students and members of faculty fly to Toronto in order to return home or visit relatives for Christmas.

In reading week however, the most popular destinations are Hawaii, Mexico, or ski resorts such as Jackson Hole, Lake Tahoe, Banff, Austria, and St. Moritz.

Europe and summer seem to go hand in hand. According to Ward, Greece was a popular destination last summer.

"Those who visit Europe in the summertime are usually under 30 and are looking for new experiences," Ward said.

"Europe is a very complex market," said Barbara O'Leary, Sales Supervisor of Travel CUTS.

"We know Europe like the back of our hands and we use this knowledge to help the clients to plan the best possible trip."

While Travel CUTS caters mainly to students, INTRA Edmonton does most of its business with faculty members, governments or corporations.

Ward said that in the past many people limited their choice of holiday destinations to Hawaii, Mexico, and Europe, but currently, more people are going to Costa Rica, Barbados, other Caribbean sun spots, as well as the Orient.

"One of the big misconceptions is that we are in competition with Travel CUTS for business. Actually, we are in no competition with CUTS. We aim for that leisure dollar that people spend. So in a sense we try to convince people that it's better to go on vacation than to buy that second TV set or new furniture," Ward explained.

Travel CUTS agrees there is a minimum of competition.

"We don't really compete with other agencies because we are unique. We cater to the student market. Even other agencies in the city sometimes refer to us. We tailor to the need of individual students," Fowler said.

"We have the competition in other areas, for instance, the Kontiki package," said O'Leary.

CUTS is the only student agency in Canada. The Services part of The Canadian Federation of Students owns CUTS. It has 17 offices across Canada. CUTS also has affiliation with 60 other students' travel agencies worldwide.

INTRA Edmonton is one of the 185 independent agencies across Canada that come together under an affiliation.

Both CUTS and INTRA offer a guarantee for their deals.

"We also have a preferred supply list of companies with good credibility and service," Ward said.

"We don't cater much to the ethnic market. We can't compete because we can't guarantee to have a certain number of deals to fall back on during a time period," said Ward.

Ward believes that, speaking for Western Canada, London is the major destination in Europe for various reasons. Many Canadians still have family and friends in Britain and there is a bond of common language and custom. The airline schedules are also more frequent and convenient. Many tours begin and end in London.

"CUTS has an office in London which is used widely by Canadian students. It serves as a contact point," said Fowler.

Although U of A is no longer a member of CFS, "nothing has changed. We still offer the same services because we are essentially committed to the students," cited Fowler.

The only exception is that the U of A students are no longer issued an international student card free of charge.

Another program under CUTS' wing is Students Working Abroad

Program (SWAP).

"Some of the profits CUTS makes go to the SWAP. Although SWAP is extremely popular, it's losing money. We've got rave reviews on SWAP. It's a priceless experience. Last year, over a thousand Canadian students went to Britain alone," O'Leary said.

Other destinations include Bel-

gium, Ireland, and New Zealand. Recently, Australia has been added to the list. Only full time students are eligible for SWAP.

O'Leary and Fowler both said that the exciting part of working in a travel agency on campus is the good feeling of being able to help plan a vacation that to many has been a life-time dream.

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