

# Where? in the world?

Disneyland, Mexico, Vietnam: Vacationers keep trekking around the globe, and travel agent Doug Walker has some tips for them

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Travel is in Doug Walker's blood. He's the third-generation owner of a Gresham travel agency, and he's set foot on every continent except Antarctica. Ask him how many countries he's visited, and he shrugs.

"You know," he says after thinking it over, "it's like poker. You don't count them until the game's over."

Then he smiles, looking relaxed as he leans back in one of the four vintage airplane seats that face his desk at Walker Travel and Cruises. These seats are usually reserved for his clients; Walker bought them from United Airlines "when they were upgrading," he says, and moved them into his office. He doesn't know how old they are, but they're leather and have built-in ashtrays — probably like the seats that Walker, 59, sat in when he started flying way back when.

His grandparents founded Walker Travel in 1927; located in a 1922 house at Division and Main streets, it's among the oldest travel agencies in Oregon. Walker, a graduate of Reynolds High School and Oregon State University who served in the U.S. Army Reserves, took over the family business in 1970.

Since then, this snappy dresser who favors bold ties and snazzy jackets has made it his business to know what most worries travelers age 50 and older ("No. 1 is security," he says) and where they will flock in the future ("Vietnam will be a big destination," he predicts). Walker even recommends which Broadway show to catch in New York: "'Jersey Boys' — we smiled for two and a half hours," he says, beaming.

Walker and his wife, Diane, saw "Jersey Boys" — the hit musical about pop legends Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons — in May when they flew to New York to catch a two-night working cruise in the Atlantic Ocean for travel agents who were trying out a new ship. Most of Walker's journeys are work-related; he's on the road one week a month, usually flying coach because he

has airline passes.

It's not all work. In September, the Walkers will rent a house in Italy, then fly to Portugal. Next January they'll spend a month in Australia. Even a travel agent needs a vacation once in a while.

It seems only right that Walker strives to live by the motto that he passes along in his phone voice-mail greeting: "You know, the secret to happiness is to always be planning your next vacation."

Walker, who's serving as 2007-08 president of the Oregon chapter of the American Society of Travel Agents, also is happy to share a few travel tips. Read on:

## Where are we going?

Doug Walker's list of the hottest vacation destinations includes:

- **Vietnam.** "It's a different country" from the war-torn region that Americans remember from three and four decades ago, says Walker, who visited Vietnam with his wife 1-1/2 years ago. They traveled via a mini-van tour — sightseeing with four other passengers, a driver and an interpreter — and took in the nation's history, natural beauty and French cuisine. China Beach, where many U.S. soldiers took R&R, now boasts five-star resorts, Walker says.

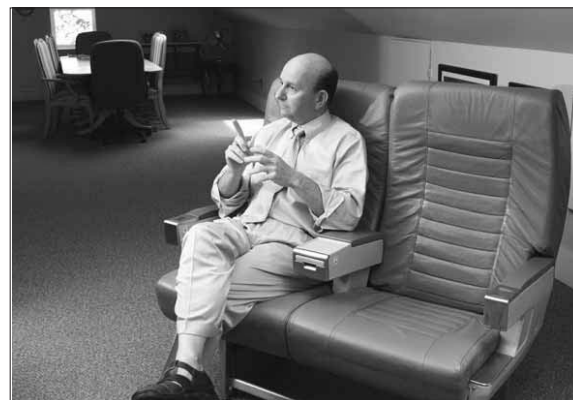
- **China.** Another of Walker's favorite places, he first went there with his wife in the early 1970s "after Nixon opened it," he says. It was about that time when the first of the life-size terra cotta warriors and horses were discovered near Xi'an. "China is amazing," says Walker, who has been back three more times.

- **Israel.** "Unbelievable," Walker says. He's fascinated by the ingenuity that the Israelis have shown in carving a country out of an inhospitable climate and "living on high security out of necessity." Tourists often shy away from Israel because of security issues,



Doug Walker was born to travel; he runs a travel agency that his grandparents started in 1927.

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Walker's office furniture includes four vintage airplane seats that the travel agent bought used from United Airlines.

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Doug Walker