

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH PAULINE FROMMER, CREATOR OF THE
PAULINE
FROMMER GUIDELINES FOR ADULT BUDGET TRAVELERS

SUBJECT: TRAVELING IN A POST-9/11 WORLD

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MS. LINEWAND: Good afternoon and welcome to the National Press
Club. My name is Donna Linewand, I'm a national reporter for USA
Today and I'm the treasurer of the National Press Club.

I'd like to welcome Club members and their guests in the audience
today, as well as those watching on C-SPAN. We're looking forward to
today's speech and afterwards I'll ask as many questions from the
audience as time permits. Please hold your applause during the speech
so that we'll have time for as many questions as possible.

For our broadcast audience, I'd like to explain that if you do
hear applause, it may be from the guests and the members of the
general public here who attend our luncheons and not necessarily
members of the working Press. Also we're going to have a special

presentation today of some awards, so that changes the format of our
luncheon a little bit, but we will get to our guest speaker as soon as
possible.

And now I'd like to introduce our head table guests and ask them
to stand briefly when their names are called. From your right, let's

see we have Clarence Page, a columnist for the Chicago Tribune and a member of the Chicago Tribune's editorial board; Wes Pippert, director of the University of Missouri School of Journalism Washington Program; Jeff Fair, a writer from Audubon Magazine; Edith Hall Freidheim(sp), sponsor of the Eric Freidheim Travel Journalism Awards in the name of her late husband.

Skipping over myself, we have Angela Greiling Keane, chair of the NPC Speakers Committee and a reporter for Bloomberg News; Pauline Frommer, our guest speaker today; Pat Sheney (sp), chair of NPC's Travel committee; Christopher Cox, a feature writer at Audubon Magazine; Bradley Hague (sp) of National Geographic Television; and Jim Wallace, the retired curator of Imaging and Photographic Service at the Smithsonian Institution. (Applause.)

When Edith Hall Freidheim came to the Press Club this year and asked us to consider a travel journalism award in her late husband's name, we knew we would have to seek out writers of the finest caliber. Mrs. Freidheim, a concert pianist turned travel writer, has developed, over 20 years in the business, a great appreciation for the finer points of great travel journalism. Mrs. Freidheim has graciously agreed to join us today to tell us a little bit about Eric Freidheim and why he was so committed to advance the cause of travel journalism.

I welcome Mrs. Freidheim. (Applause.)

MS. FREIDHEIM: Let me begin by thanking Lisa Miller and Donna Leinwand for their invaluable efforts in putting together their wonderful program.

To hear Eric Freidheim tell it, if Moses was the world's first tour operator -- after all, he did lead thousands of Jews out of Egypt, then Marco Polo, that tireless Venetian chronicler of Kublai Khan's China, was its first travel writer. In fact, travel writing is one of the oldest forms of literature. We still journey with Ulysses through the pages of Homer; the tales of Joseph Conrad, Robert Louis Stevenson, Dickens, Mark Twain and Jules Verne, remain as interesting today as the day they were published.

Not to overlook more contemporary names -- Hemmingway, Maugham, Wharton, Michener, Thoreau, Bryson, and Morris, among so many others. Almost every 17th Century author wrote on travel, include Voltaire, Fielding, Boswell, Johnson and Goldsmith. The three-volume "Reference Guide to the Literature of Travel," by Edward Cox, lists hundreds of volumes printed in Great Britain up to 1800. Currently there are some 6,000 travel books in print, not including the hundreds of newspaper, magazine and electronic media articles and essays published every month.

Early man depended on sign omens, and verbal advice to learn about his destination. Written information later emerged with the development of papyrus and vellum. One of its early progenitors was Posselius, who wrote a 10-volume description of Greece after Greece became part of the Roman Empire in the year 170 A.D. Posselius' observations on various attractions is still in print today.

Throughout history, travelers have recorded their adventures. A

five-volume Emerique Piceau (sp), issued in the 11th Century, not only gave travel advice, but urged pilgrims to report the crimes of innkeepers along their way. This tract may well be the first piece of promotional literature in the travel field.

After the Middle Ages, as books, newspapers and journals became increasingly popular, more and more travelers with literary ambitions documented their experiences in the hope of having them published. England led the field. A book called simply "Travels," published by Sir John Mandeville in the year 1357, was a runaway best seller for almost 200 years, though, like many early writers, Mandeville took liberties with the truth.

In 1557, William Turner published his book of bathers" in England, while Dr. John Jones wrote a treatise on "the benefit of the ancient Baths of Buckstones which cureth most grievous sicknesses." And John Taylor's 1636 "Catalog of Taverns in Ten Shires About London" is one of the world's earliest restaurant guides.

The 18th and 19th centuries spawned considerable literary activity due to the popularity of European grand tours. About the comforts of traveling in England, the early 19th Century author, Robert Sotheby wrote, "Wherever you go, printed information is to be found concerning everything which deserves a stranger's notice." From mid-century onwards, such information has been codified in the handbooks of Karl Baedekers, Thomas Cook, Temple Fielding, Eugene Fodor and Arthur Frommer -- all distinguished guidebook authors.

This, then, is the brief history of travel journalism as documented by my husband, Eric Freidheim in his chapter on Travel Writing, from a book called "Travel Agents, From Caravans and Clippers to the Concord," a book I was fortunate enough to work on with him. Just to digress for a moment, in 1989, I had contributed updates for two Frommer guidebooks and was looking for a full-time job in travel writing.

A colleague arranged an interview with Eric Freidheim, the former owner-publisher of Travel Agent Magazine, but still its editor in chief. During the course of the interview, Eric confessed he never did any hiring for his magazine because in the past, when his new hirees hadn't worked out, he hadn't had the heart to fire them -- what a splendid human being, I thought -- nor was there a position open at Travel Agent Magazine, but would I be interested in assisting him with a book he was writing on people who help people travel. The rest, as they say, is history.

Eric Freidheim had been a passionate newsman since the age of 8, when his mother gave him a toy printing press. At 11, he was writing and publishing a weekly newspaper for the guests at a residential hotel where he lived for a brief time with his family. Reports of Ms. Jones' new hat, Mrs. Smith's new baby, Mr. Johnson's vacation to Detroit, and who went into the hospital and who came out -- kept all the hotel guests well-informed.

At American University in Washington, Eric played football for the team he affectionately called, "the World's Worst Eleven," and wrote a "Looking the Campus Over" column for the college newspaper.

Lack of money forced him to drop out, but the International News Service, the INS, gave him a job and a professional "baptism of fire," an experience he later credited for his considerable reporting skills.

On the day Pearl Harbor was attacked, Eric was covering the treasurer as a White House correspondent. He immediately enlisted in the Army's Officer Candidate Training Program, where one of his classmates was Clark Gable. As a wartime correspondent, he was shot out of a plane in Germany and wrote, "Fighters Up," a book about the ordeal. After the war he freelanced, sending travel articles to most of the leading magazines, including Esquire and Newsweek.

In 1951, he borrowed the money to buy "Travel Agent Magazine," a weekly news publication in the travel industry. Over the course of the next 33 years, he and his magazine won every award the Trade Press offered and his weekly opinion editorials were both a model of content and style in travel journalism and a source of invaluable information. He also wrote consumer columns for the New York Post and Los Angeles Times.

In Eric Friedheim's long and productive life nothing was more meaningful than his professional and emotional connections to Washington in general and to American University and the National Press Club in particular. If New York and Palm Beach were the cities of his mature years, Washington was his spiritual home, the place that jump started a career he never took for granted and which he loved until the day he died.

Good travel writing needs more recognition. There is no Pulitzer Prize for it. Two of the most prolific travel writers of our time, Jan Morris, whose idiosyncratic illuminations of the world are beyond compare and, Paul Thoreau, a recognized master in the field have never won awards for travel writing. That's why the Eric Friedheim prizes are so important. By celebrating three travel journalists whose work their editors and our judges consider exceptional, we're taking a major step in honoring a genre so rich and so colorful that we simply cannot ignore its significance.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MS. LEINWAND: As a frequent traveler, I find myself constantly clipping articles from newspapers and magazines and tucking them into my travel guides as I embark on different adventures to some very strange places. So I know that great tales and tips from the best travel writers can truly make or break an adventure. So today we're honored to have among us some of the best in the business.

Ms. Friedheim, if you'll join me for -- to be in charge of the award.

MS. FRIEDHEIM: Okay.

MS. LEINWAND: Let me begin with our third place winner. Judges selected, "Beauty and the Bomb," a very unusual name for a travel story, an article about visiting Vieques, the mostly undeveloped island between Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands which until 2003 served as a military training range. This article was selected

for its creativity and thorough research. Here to accept the award is author is Christopher R. Cox of Audubon Magazine. (Applause.)

MR. COX: Hi. My name's Chris and I'm a recovering journalist. (Laughter.) I think I have the same printing press that your late husband had.

But I spent 16 years working in newspapers. I worked with the other newspaper in Boston, the Boston Herald where I was a feature reporter which is kind of an oxymoron at a tabloid. The motto there was bright and tight and I think the last story I filed before I took the buyout was 362 words. So it was with a mixture of shock and awe when Audubon told me they wanted a 3,000 word feature out of me. So I'm grateful to the editor-in-chief, David Seideman and especially my senior editor Renee Ebersole for taking a flyer on a writer who had never written for them before. I'm also grateful that they wanted a travel story that would concern more than just resorts and restaurants and would also delve into some of the complicated history and environmental issues of an island that had been a bombing range for more than 60 years.

I'd also like to thank my parents. I had a great Navy brat childhood which gave me the travel bug at a very young age. And I'd like to thank Edith for her generosity and support of this award. And lastly I'd like to thank my wife and son for not complaining when I took a notebook along for the beach on what they thought was going to be a family vacation. (Laughter.)

Thank you. (Applause.)

MS. LEINWAND: Judges selected for second place, Chicago Tribune reporter Alan Solomon for his account of a visit to the villages of the Ardennes in "Thanksgiving of the Bulge." This often-visited part of the world has been the subject of many travel articles but Solomon's article stood out for its unique on-the-ground approach. Solomon interviewed some of the few villagers who actually remembered the battle to paint a searing picture of the region's history.

Here to accept the award on behalf of Alan Solomon is Chicago Tribune columnist Clarence Page. (Applause.)

MR. PAGE: Thank you very much. When I first saw that headline, "Thanksgiving of the Bulge" I thought, yeah, that's how I feel every Thanksgiving. (Laughter.) But Alan did do a terrific job.

I'm delighted that Alan asked me to come pick up the award for him today and he is very, very sorry he couldn't be here himself. I asked him, "Is there anything you'd like for me to pass on to the good folks at the ceremony?" And he gave me this little note. He says, "For seven years I covered big league baseball, seven seasons chasing Cubs and White Sox around the country. And for the last 13 years I've seen the world -- all on the Tribune's nickel. That's almost 20 years of living a little boy's dream -- on expense account. So I'm a little embarrassed when awards happen. But I'm very, very grateful."

And ladies and gentlemen, we at the Chicago Tribune are very

grateful. I'm really happy for my friend Alan. He greatly deserved it. And I want to thank the Frommers and the Friedheims for doing your part to celebrate and to encourage travel writing which I believe has some of the most marvelous and engaging writing in the paper and is too often unappreciated.

So thank you all ladies and gentlemen very much and keep traveling. (Applause.)

MS. LEINWAND: And finally we have Audubon Magazine's "Power Lunch", a compelling tale of an unclosed visit with wild brown bears beside the remote McNeil River in Alaska. The author of vividly recounted his travels and wildlife encounter while reporting the legislative actions and competing interests that stand to radically alter such experiences.

Here to accept his first place award, all the way from Alaska, is Audubon writer Jeff Fair. (Applause.)

MR. FAIR: Thank you. About a month ago in my little cabin outside of Palmer, Alaska which is four time zones west of here -- and this is a math story, so keep a count -- I received a telephone call that I couldn't get to and I heard a voice on the recording machine -- a very kind sounding voice saying that she was calling from New York at quarter to 10:00 in the morning -- there's the math. (Laughter.)

When I realized who she was and what the message was I kicked the quilts off the bed -- it's 5:44 a.m. in Alaska -- ran to the phone and just picked it up as she was hanging up and there was no return number or anything on the message. So I never had a chance to say thanks, but Edith Hall Friedheim, thank you for the award and this honor.

I would also like to thank Larry Aumiller who's the human protagonist in my story who put three decades of good work in on bear conservation and the trust that he built between humans and bears that allows us to understand a little more about how to get along with wild things in wild areas. In fact, Larry and I -- because of this story, Larry and I are now collaborating and I will be writing a biography of his 30 years at McNeil River. So this story just has one life after another for me.

Finally and most heartfully I'd like to thank my auditors at Audubon Magazine for their acceptance and direction. And in particular, senior editor Renee Ebersole, an angel of patience and good advice who not too long ago said to me, "You know, maybe we ought to write this as a travel story." Thank you, Renee.

And thank you all. This is quite an honor. (Applause.)

MS. LEINWAND: So -- the audience looks very young today, so I thought I would introduce our speaker with a little fairy tale.

Once upon a time, you could go to Europe for \$5 a day. In fact, there was a nonfiction book called "Europe on \$5 a Day" and this book became famous as thousands of average Americans began taking advantage

of more affordable airline tickets and ventured across the Atlantic. The author of that book was Arthur Frommer. Eventually Mr. Frommer and his wife Hope had a little girl by the name of Pauline. Pauline began her travels long before her first birthday. In fact, she taught her worldly parents how to travel, they joked, on five diapers a day. (Laughter.)

Now Pauline Frommer is all grown up and she's got some travel guide books of her own. She joined the family business a decade ago, serving as the first editor of Frommer's online guide, Frommers.com. Frommer then moved to MSNBC's online travel section. In 1999, she won the Lowell Thomas Medal for -- from the Society of American Travel Writers for her magazine work. Although she has embraced her father's philosophies on budget travel, she has broken some new ground on her own, addressing such topics as the Internet, off the beaten path of cultural opportunities and especially travel for the experience-seeking adult instead of the intrepid backpacker who does not want to sleep in the 10-person hostel.

But travel has changed dramatically since Arthur Frommer roamed Europe with a pocketful of change. As we all know, the dollar is a little weak -- (laughter) -- a little. Security concerns are intimidating travelers both here and abroad. And so here to discuss this new world of travel with us, I give you Pauline Frommer. (Applause.)

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MS. FROMMER: And I, too, want to thank Edith Hall Friedheim for establishing this important award and I want to thank the National Press Club for inviting me. It is a great, great honor to be here. I know that on Monday, your speaker at this luncheon was President Ahmadinejad of Iran and I have to warn you, this speech is going to be much, much more controversial. (Laughter.)

And it is an interesting challenge to talk about how travel has changed since 9/11. I don't think I could have pictured the vast and deep and broad-ranging changes that were going to occur in this industry on September 10th, 2001. And on September 12th, I don't think I could have ever imagined the amazing rebound that travel has taken -- the fact that people are traveling again. I'm speaking in Washington, so I don't think I need to tell you what a devastating impact travel had -- 9/11 had on every aspect of our lives. I -- on a personal level, I remember walking home from my office 50 blocks -- I live downtown not so far from the towers -- seeing people covered with white dust. I remember hearing rumors in the crowd that more planes were coming. Several days later, I got a call that a friend of mine from high school had perished in the towers.

This was the important stuff that was happening. On the less important side, on Friday after the attacks, I went back to work and sat in front of my computer and I've never felt like such a fool because I had to write about travel in a time when nobody wanted to travel. And so for the next several months -- and really, years -- I wrote about how to get out of traveling, how to get your money back if you had booked a cruise or an air fare, how to -- how you weren't going to get your money back if you had rented a villa, what the new

security regulations were. And it really only got worse for several years. First SARS hit and that wiped out trans-Pacific travel. Then in the run-ups to the Afghanistan War and the Iraq War, travel, cross-Atlantic was virtually wiped out as people were nervous about visiting Europe even though it was nowhere near those places. But that's another discussion of geographically-charged -- challenged America.

It got so bad that many in the travel industry were taking out ads in the newspapers that I'm sure you all remember, how it's your patriotic duty to travel. I remember the Puerto Rican government gave away free air fare if you would spend five nights in Puerto Rico. And

then, like a miracle, it all turned around, and suddenly this pent-up desire to travel broke over everyone in the industry like a wave. And now according to the Travel Industry Association of America, 330 million trips will be taken by Americans this year, which is a new record.

Now with this record travel that's happening unfortunately have come -- a sharp increase in the cost of travel. If you go to New York -- if you went to New York in 2002, you would spend an average of \$150 dollars a night on a hotel. It is now \$300 a night. If you were going to Las Vegas, you would have spent about \$45 to see a show in 2002. Now the average price is \$85, and many shows are topping \$100 and more. If you were going to get an air-hotel package to Paris in 2002, 2003, 2004 -- even 2005, you would have gotten air fare from the United States and six-nights hotel for as little as \$399. Now it's closer to \$549 -- \$699 and up, depending on when you travel. And of course, as you mentioned earlier, the value of the dollar has plummeted, which has made it much, much more difficult for Americans going abroad.

But there have been some good things -- trends happening as well. Travel is now a more do-it-yourself industry. Agents started losing their commissions from the airlines in the late '90s just as Travelocity and Expedia were debuting, Orbitz debuted in 2001. And suddenly booking travel was something that everyone could do. It wasn't this great mystery only in the hands of travel agents. Many of the folks who started Travelocity, Expedia and Orbitz are behind the next generation of travel websites that are out there. Travel websites such as Kayak.com, Mobissimo, Sidestep -- and what these are doing is they are changing once again the way we search for travel. They're giving deep searches. They're searching both the discounters and the airline sites.

There's a site called Farecast which has harnessed the power of computers and the Internet to input the historic data for hotel prices and air fare prices that you can tell somewhat when you're overpaying. There's another terrific new website called yapta.com, which stands for "Your Amazing Personal Travel Assistant." And what it does is you send them what flight you've booked and how much you've paid. And if the cost goes down -- and according to Yapta, it goes down in a third of the flights they tracked -- they send you a notice and then you can contact the airline. Now, it won't work with every airline, but with many of them, you can get back the difference in the cost of that ticket because they will acknowledge that the price has gone down. It doesn't work with certain airlines -- American Airlines, for example,

has a change fee which will wipe out any savings. But the fact that it really is so easy to plan your own vacations nowadays is changing drastically the way people are thinking about vacations, booking and researching.

There's also more types of destinations out there that the average American is considering. I speak a lot of different travel shows around the U.S. and lately there have been not one, but two

booths at every travel show I've been to for Mongolia. Who knew that so many people were going to Mongolia? The folks who used to go to Costa Rica are now thinking of Nicaragua. Czech Republic, and they're going to Slovakia. It is a broadened field, although I have to make the point -- only 26 percent of Americans even have passports. So when we look at these new destinations, we do have to look at them with a grain of salt. It's really the people who always traveled who are now broadening their horizons and there's a vast majority of Americans who are staying near to home, unfortunately.

There's also been a huge increase in specialization -- the way people are able to customize their vacations. This has something to do with the Web because many of the sites that I discussed earlier give you all kinds of options with your group, but it also has to do with the way the industry has grown and is accepting different types of travel. Many years ago my father and I worked on a book together called "The New World of Travel" and we covered women only travel and there were literally 11 companies that did it. Now there are hundreds of companies for women who only want to travel with other women and many of the major tour operators now set aside certain departure dates for this type of travel.

The same with religious travel. It's amazing the number of companies out there doing pilgrimages. There is now an airline in Europe taking you from Rome to all the major pilgrimage sites. There's people who want to travel to visit different cheese makers. There are knitting groups. There are all kinds of camel-trekking organizations. In fact, if you wanted to knit while going across the Sahara you could probably find a tour organization and a group of travelers to do it with you. It really is remarkable how this is becoming a do-it-yourself and do what you want industry, to a certain degree.

Now, the most negative change since 9/11, I think, has been the sharp, sharp decrease in inbound travel to the United States. In 2000, we had 26 million visitors from abroad coming to the U.S. In 2006, we had just 21.7 million visitors. That's a drop of 17 percent and a loss in income to the United States of billions upon billions of dollars. And it's not because travel was tapering off in other parts of the world. Travel from Europe, from the Middle East, from Asia, from all parts of the world to other parts of the world increased that same 17 percent in these last seven years.

So what were the reasons? For the last couple of weeks I've been speaking with a number of tour operators, travel agents, and folks who plan conventions to talk to them -- to see what they thought was going on. One of the major, major problems is with visas. In 2003, the law was changed so that consular employees no longer had the ability to

allow tourists who they didn't think were security risks to apply for a visa through the mail. As of 2003, almost all nonimmigrant visa applications had to undergo -- or applicants had to undergo face-to-face interviews, and this put an indescribable strain on the system.

I spoke to a gentleman named Patrick L'Framboise (sp) who runs trade shows for furniture manufacturers. These aren't the folks who make furnitures but who make the machines that make furnitures. And one of their biggest sources of participants in the past had been Brazil. There's a huge furniture-making industry in Brazil. It's in the region of Bento Gonsalves. Now, if anybody's ever looked at a map Brazil is a massive country. In all of Brazil there is one office in Sao Paulo where people can go to get a tourist visa. So his furniture makers from Bento Gonsalves had to drive two hours to the nearest airport and then take an airplane to Sao Paulo, usually having to spend money for a hotel overnight to get the visas. He no longer has any clients coming from Brazil. He's talked also to me about his clients from China. In 2006, they were told that they couldn't apply for a visa longer than 90 days in advance. Then when they tried to apply they found out that they had to wait four months to get an appointment. It's Kafkaesque.

At the consumer electronics show just this year they were expecting 40,000 visitors from abroad. They only got 24,000. And I spoke to a tour operator who does a lot of inbound travel from Poland. Fifty percent of the people applying for visas from Poland were turned down. They were denied visas. And I asked him why and I asked a lot of people why and I obviously am an American citizen -- I haven't been through these interviews -- but from everybody I've talked to the questions they're asking seem to have very little to do with terrorism. They're asking the people if they're married, if they own their own business, or if they own an apartment, and basically if you're young and single you're not going to get a visa to the United States because you are going to be seen as having not enough ties to your home country. Most frustrating for the people I talked to was even people who had gotten visas in the past were denied. So it wasn't taken account -- into account that they had been to the United States and returned to their home countries. It seems to me -- it seems obvious that this is not about security or terrorism.

This is about immigration and it's being done in a very blunt and overly aggressive way.

Now, visas aren't the only problem obviously with why people are no longer visiting the U.S. If we look at the expected numbers just in the last year there's a 35 percent drop in visitors from France. Now, that has a lot to do with biometric passports because we're now requiring them and the French government has been slow to give them. But there's also been a 22 percent drop in visitors from England, and similar drops from other European countries -- from our closes allies, and this at a time when America is a bargain basement destination for them. They carry the mighty pound and the mighty euro. They can afford much more than we can afford when we go over there so why aren't they coming?

There's a new partnership called the Discover America Partnership. It's a group of business people who've gotten together

to try and encourage inbound tourism into the United States. They did a survey of 2,000 travelers worldwide and they found that the U.S. was seen to be the least welcoming country in the world to come into. This is partially because it's well known that we don't have enough officials at the airport processing people and so there can often be terrible waits.

And unfortunately sometimes people are drawn to the side and kept there for a reason that is never explained and they lose -- they miss their flights, and the urban myths around travel to the United States no longer have to do with the alligators that might be in our sewers. They have to do with my friend's grandmother's sister's neighbor who was strip searched at Dulles. Now, whether these things happened or not, that's what people are expecting when they come here. Usually when they get back past the barriers at the airports they have wonderful experiences of the United States but there is this worldwide feeling that getting into the country is so difficult that why bother.

And what is at stake here? Well, according to the TIA -- and I personally think these numbers might be a little conservative -- we lost \$93 billion in income last year, \$15 billion in tax receipts, and 200,000 American jobs. Travel is one of our biggest industries but rather than being seen and given the special preference that is given to other export industries, which really it is -- we're exporting American culture -- it doesn't cost us that much -- it's been ignored. So what can we do?

Well, there are solutions. Unfortunately or maybe fortunately they're in the hands of the U.S. Congress right now. There are a number of measures that are working their way through. Right now in committee there is the International Registered Traveler Program which is a common sense initiative which would allow people who had already received visas in the past to have an expedited registration process. There's another common sense measure to guarantee that there would be waits of 30 days or less to get a visa. When you consider that it takes three days to get a visa for China -- I just went there this summer -- and a week for Brazil, you'd think we could handle this.

There's also the Model Airport Program which has been signed into law. Twenty airports -- the ones that get the most visitors from the rest of the world -- will have more officers helping with the crowd management and getting people through immigration. There'll also be people handing out maps and saying, "Welcome to the United States. Thank you for coming." This has been passed and signed into law, but it has not yet been funded. So who knows when it's going to start?

And perhaps most importantly is the travel promotion campaign. We are the only nation in the West that puts no money federally towards promoting ourselves. I think the idea is that Hollywood will do it for us. We have no government office doing PR. Australia spends \$113 million a year on this. Canada spends \$58 million; France, \$63 million; Spain, \$120 million; the U.S., zip.

And it's time that we do it, not only to get out what the great sites and attractions and value our country is, but to dispel some of the urban myths that are wandering around -- that you're going to be strip-searched if you fly into the U.S., that it's going to be

terrible. It isn't always.

It is thought that this will be a public-private partnership paid for by a \$10 tax on tourists, which I worry; you know, we're already putting so many blocks in their way. And I'm a little nervous about the public-private partnership as well, but I don't see any other way to get this through politically.

So it all comes down to we've been eliminating the differences between us and other closed societies. And in doing that, we make our system of government less attractive to other peoples, and I think we make ourselves less safe.

So thank you. And I can take questions now. (Applause.)

MS. LEINWAND: Thank you very much. You know, you talk a lot about some of the inconveniences that travelers face. One of the ones that we've seen a lot written about is lost baggage. There's like a record amount of lost baggage.

So what do you think the government should be doing about this? What should the airlines be doing about this? And how should travelers protect themselves?

MS. FROMMER: Well, we saw the huge increase in lost baggage when the water issue -- when it became impossible for people to bring any liquids into their carry-ons. And that's when the system was really overloaded with baggage.

In terms of what can be done, I think it's partially a scheduling issue. We have so many airplanes trying to leave the airports at the same time. There was a study done by Business Week of one hour at JFK Airport in which, I think, 55 flights were scheduled to leave, but they only had room for 45 to do so. And so there were delays. And when there are delays, that also factors into where the baggage goes and how it gets lost.

By law, the airlines cannot talk to one another to mesh their schedules better. That would be an antitrust violation. So I think the government needs to step in and start dealing with these issues of scheduling, because scheduling really is the main problem, I think, in lost luggage.

MS. LEINWAND: Okay, we have a lot of airline delay questions, actually. So I guess people have been feeling the pinch. So what do you think should be done about some of these bad service issues and airline delays, people sitting on the tarmac for 10 hours? Is it time for the government to intervene?

MS. FROMMER: Yes. As I just said, it is time for the government to intervene. There is the traveler's bill of rights, which is also wending its way through the Congress. I worry that the airline lobby is too powerful for it to pass as it is now.

But there's something very, very simple, and it's called a rolling staircase. And I don't know why it hasn't been offered as an option for people who are stuck on the tarmac; if you were to simply,

instead of bringing the entire plane back, give the people on board waivers to sign saying that they will take the risk of walking across the tarmac and they could simply bring a rolling staircase.

It's amazing to me that these types of simple solutions have not been put into play. I mean, the reason the delays escalate when there are bad weathers, when people are stuck on the tarmac, is that the airlines are flying smaller planes to save money. And that is why there are so many planes in the air.

There are also problems with too many corporate jets in the air. I think the airlines are right about that. There's been an increase in the last five years in certain airport areas as much as 50 percent. So the government has to intervene with scheduling with the airlines. And it finally has to fund a new satellite radar system.

The one we have now is based on when the Wright brothers started flying and the people right after them. They would have bonfires on the ground to help them know which way to go. We then placed radar

dishes where those bonfires were. We are using a system that is so antiquated, it's laughable if it wasn't so dangerous. And they know -- the GPS in your car is more advanced than what our air traffic controllers are working with.

They know that if we put the money into creating a satellite system, planes wouldn't have to have the delay in time between them. They could better estimate the space between the planes. This would cut back on delays. It would also make near-misses, which has also gone up a lot in the last year in a frightening way -- near-misses would be much less likely to happen. So we just need to upgrade the technology and step in with the scheduling.

MS. LEINWAND: Okay, another doozy here -- airlines' frequent-flyer programs. They were once -- we once loved those things, and now they're kind of a nightmare. Do you think these programs have a future? And how do you think travelers should deal with them?

MS. FROMMER: They definitely have a future, because they're so profitable for the airlines. The airlines don't want to get rid of them. They make money when they ally themselves with credit-card companies and hotel chains. It's actually a profit center for the airlines, so they're not going to get rid of them.

The problem is that the airlines are still giving away 10 percent of their seats to award mileage users, but there are now 20 times as many award mileage users than when these programs were started.

So it's simply a problem of competition. And, I mean, it's great when you get the free seat, but I no longer am loyal to any airline because it's so darn hard to get those tickets.

The thing to know is that seats are opened up 330 days before a flight, so that's when you can start applying for your frequent-flyer miles. But recent -- it was about two years ago, an internal memo from American Airlines to its trainee reservationists basically said, "Don't give away any frequent-flyer seats until we know how this plane

is selling."

So sometimes it simply takes calling and calling and calling again over the months, because they often do not release the seats at first. So, you know, in terms of using your own mileage, it's a question of being persistent. And sometimes it's a question -- you know, you're not going to get to Hawaii on frequent-flyer miles over Christmas. Sometimes it's a question of giving up.

MS. LEINWAND: So with all this talk about the Internet and how to use Internet for do-it-yourself travel, what do you see as the future of guidebooks?

MS. FROMMER: Well, it's been interesting. We at the Frommer Guides put all our guidebooks online. We're one of the few series that does that, and we support that by selling advertising, not within the text but on the sides of the page. And our website has been tremendously valuable to the bottom line. It's actually doing quite well.

I see guidebooks eventually going on to hand-held devices so that you can carry them around better. I don't see the Internet as necessarily a rival to guidebooks. We haven't seen a sharp drop in the sales. It's been okay so far.

MS. LEINWAND: Given that, what do you think the best search engine is for travel and what pitfalls would you see if you are using some of these search engines?

MS. FROMMER: It really depends on where you're going, and I would suggest doing a couple of search engines. I like sidestep.com very much for travel within the U.S. SmartMoney Magazine did a study in which they had some poor intern for weeks upon end just doing

search after search after search for air fares on different search engines, and they found that Sidestep came up cheapest 60 percent of the time. So I think Sidestep is a very good tool. There's a wonderful one called cheapflights.com if you're traveling internationally. It does not give you prices for specific dates, but it will give you agencies and prices.

And the interesting thing about it is there are certain ethnic travel agencies who deal very specifically with one expat community. For example, when I went to Japan several years ago, I used a company called Nippon Travel and they only dealt with Japanese expats. In fact, it took a couple of tries just to get somebody who could speak English in their Washington office on the line. And they knew every trick in the book. They had specially negotiated fares, but they didn't really have a Web presence. What Cheapflights does is it puts you in touch with some of these smaller companies who might have these preferred relationships. So cheapflights can be good for international. And then there's the new metasites like FareCompare, which will give you an idea of which months are better to travel in.

MS. LEINWAND: Okay. So since we're not putting your guidebooks out of business with the Internet, can you tell us something about your latest travel guides and what their emphasis is and how they're

different at all from "\$5 a Day"?

MS. FROMMER: Well, I have a new series out called "The Pauline Frommer Guides." They are geared towards adult budget travelers. I felt like there was a lot of information there -- out there for backpackers and a lot of information for big spenders. But there wasn't much travel information in the form of guidebooks being put out for people like me -- and I would assume most of you -- who want to see the world but are kind of shell-shocked by these rising costs.

And so in these guidebooks, we put a lot more emphasis on how to use the Web and Web resources to save money. We emphasize a lot on how to book alternative accommodations, which can be a great money saver. For example, if you are going to London for a very, very cheap fleabag, you are going to pay between 70 and 100 pounds a night. You can stay in the childhood home of Virginia Woolf -- you can rent the entire house for close to 100 pounds a night and you can fill it with six people. You can stay in the home of a Londoner in your own private room with a bathroom for as little as 22 pounds a night. That is what you would pay in a hostel.

So we have found these alternative forms of accommodations and really -- unlike other guidebooks -- we do our research not only on hotels, but we look at the companies that book you into these places. We visit dozens of rental apartments, and those are just some examples from the "Pauline Frommer's London" guide. And finally, in the "Pauline Frommer Guides," we have a section in each guide called "The Other" -- "The Other New York," "The Other Las Vegas" -- in which you get -- you find out about activities that will allow you to meet people in the place you're going.

I don't know about you, but when I travel, the most magical things happen when I actually meet people in the places and get a peek behind the culture. For example, in "Pauline Frommer's Hawaii," we tell you about how you can spend a day volunteering with scientists who are studying endangered sea turtles. In "Pauline Frommer's Paris," we tell you about how you can spend an afternoon at a cafe philos. These are weekly cafes where Parisians gather to argue points of philosophy, and there's one that happens in English. So there you are, shouting at the top of your lungs in Paris, really living like a Parisian. In "Pauline Frommer's New York," we tell you about great nightclubs in Brighton Beach, which has the largest Russian population outside of Russia itself. And you go there and you're surrounded by Mafioso types and there are showgirls in feathers and everybody's quaffing vodka until five in the morning, and it's like you've gone to another country. And so we have these kind of unusual experiences along with hotels and restaurants and the like in the new "Pauline Frommer Guides."

MS. LEINWAND: Given the current weakness of the dollar, tell where we can still find a bargain abroad. (Laughter.)

MS. FROMMER: You can still find a bargain abroad if you go to China. China's currency is still devalued. It's going up in cost from what it was, but my mother went on a 12-day tour of China for \$999, including air fare from the U.S. That included all on-the-ground travel, that included all meals, transportation within country

and because China's tourism industry is really so new, even at the lowest price point you're getting brand-new hotels. Most of these hotels have been built in the last 15 years and you can travel very well very cheaply in China. Argentina is getting -- its economy is getting solid -- more solid, but it's still a value. You can get great steak dinners for 5 (dollars) -- \$10, wonderful designer clothing, lots of leather, other -- any place in Asia other than Japan and Korea, your dollar goes far. Many places in South and Central America, your dollar will go far. It's really -- it's really Europe -- (laughter) -- where we're very, very poor. I just got back from the U.K. I filled up my car with gasoline. It cost \$96 to fill up the tank.

MS. LEINWAND: Okay. We are almost out of time, so before asking the last questions I have a few matters to take care of.

First of all, I wanted to remind you of our future speakers. September 28th, we have Congressman Steny Hoyer of Maryland. The House majority leader will discuss "The Fight to Live Within Our Means: Why Democrats Are Willing to Restore Fiscal Responsibility and Ensure America's Prosperity." On October 3rd, Mayor Adrian Fenty of Washington, D.C. will discuss mayoral accountability and education and on October 8th, Congressman Dave Obey of Wisconsin will discuss the showdown over federal budget priorities. And the Press Club will have its Book Fair on November 1st.

Second, I'd like to present our guest with our coveted NPC certificate and coffee mug. (Laughter.)

MS. FROMMER: Thank you.

MS. LEINWAND: And now -- (applause) -- well, we've got one more question for you -- your last one.

MS. FROMMER: Mm-hmm.

MS. LEINWAND: This is a doozy. We've all heard about ugly Americans. So tell us what makes -- how we misbehave and what makes us obnoxious overseas.

MS. FROMMER: Well, I think the idea of ugly Americans is overblown. But not learning the language. We are one of the most language-challenged of nations. Most Americans speak only one language and the rest of the world speaks two, three, four -- and so I think not making any attempt to even say, "Please," "Thank you," "Hello" -- is found offensive abroad. I would say that that is the -- that's the main thing from what I can tell. You know, you travel the world and I think this -- I didn't say it in the speech, but I do think that -- you know, there's a lot of dislike for the current administration's policies, but they don't hold that against Americans. Americans are still welcome to -- whenever they go on a people-to-people basis. And so we should all go out and see the world. It's still very warm and welcoming and friendly.

(Applause.)

MS. LEINWAND: We actually have time for one last question. I

have -- we have like a minute-and-a-half. So this'll be a short one.

What is the one place you've never visited that you'd most like to go and why?

MS. FROMMER: Well, you were going on and on about how wonderful Turkey is and I have not yet been to Turkey. And that is someplace that I've always wanted to go. So hopefully I will get to Turkey soon.

(Applause.)

MS. LEINWAND: Thank you very much.

And I'd like to thank you all for coming today, and I'd like to thank the National Press Club staff members -- Melinda Cook, Pat Nelson, Joanne Booz and Howard Rothman for organizing today's lunch. A special thanks to Lisa Miller with the NPC Library. The video archive of today's luncheon is provided by National Press Club Broadcast Operations Center and Press Club members can also access free transcripts of our luncheon at our website, www.press.org. Non-members may purchase transcripts, audio and videotapes by calling 1-

888-343-1940. And for more information about joining the Press Club, contact us at 202-662-7511.

Thank you, and we are adjourned. (Gavel sound, applause.)

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