

Where should we go on vacation?

Sandra has decided to take a vacation. But where should she go? The question is best answered by making an appointment with a travel agent. She invites her friend, Donita to go with her. At the agency, they discuss possible journeys, the length of the travel and the cost of the trip.

Sandra: I would like to be gone at least two weeks, but not more than three weeks.

Travel agent: How about a trip to Alaska?

Sandra: No, I've been there; I'd like to go somewhere tropical.

Travel agent: Perhaps a trip to Hawaii?

Donita: No, I just went there for a wedding last month.

Travel agent: Maybe you would like a trip to Bermuda? You could take a ship from Florida.

Sandra: Yes! I've always wanted to go there.

Donita: That sounds good to me; cruises are a lot of fun.

Travel agent: All right, let me check on the computer about what is available. (She looks at the computer screen while typing.) Hmm. This doesn't look good.

Sandra: What do you mean?

Travel agent: There is a cruise ship available for the time you want, but... (She stops talking and continues typing.)

Sandra: But what is the problem?

Travel agent: I can't find a flight from Portland, which is the closest airport for you. Oh, sorry. The computer screen shows that someone just took the last reservation for that cruise.

Donita: There must be something else available. It doesn't have to be Bermuda.

Sandra: I agree. We just want to get away somewhere warm. This winter has been so long and cold.

Travel agent: I'll keep looking. How many days can you be gone?

Donita: I have the family trucking and ranching business to manage, so I need to be back in two weeks.

Sandra: I teach English at the college and am a visiting professor. I could be gone for fifteen days. Then I need to prepare for giving a lecture in Japan.

Travel agent: I'm still looking for trips for you; I have good news and bad news.

Donita: Give us the good news first! (Everyone laughs.)

Travel agent: The good news is that I found you a wonderful cruise to Aruba! The bad news is that I can't find a flight. At this time of year, everyone wants to travel. If you wait another week...

Sandra: What if we drive to another airport?

Travel agent: The next closest airport would be in Seattle. (Looks at computer screen.) Yes, I can get you a flight from there.

Donita: (To Sandra.) Let's do that. We can drive there and leave the car in long term parking. It shouldn't cost too much.

Travel agent: There is one more problem.

Sandra: What else?

Agent: I can't get you back to the same airport. You would fly into Portland on the return trip.

Donita: So I guess we couldn't drive to Seattle. What about taking the train?

Sandra: It would take too long. Why don't we rent a car, and then return it at the airport?

Donita: There are so many obstacles; maybe we aren't supposed to go on this trip.

Sandra: But I think we can solve all of them; let's go for it!

Donita: Only if you are willing to do the driving. (Laughs.)

Sandra: I don't mind driving; how far is it?

Donita: It's about 250 miles from here.

Sandra: (Groans.) Oh well, it will be an adventure for us. Maybe we will leave early in the morning and stop a few times to sight-see.

Travel agent: Well, there is another problem...

Sandra and Donita: No, now what?

Travel agent: The flight leaves at 7:00 am. You would have to be there one hour before, so it means you would be driving in the middle of the night.

Sandra: I don't want to drive that far in the dark. What about a later flight?

Travel agent: It isn't a non-stop flight and you would miss the other connections.

Donita: OK, let's do this: find us a hotel with shuttle service to the airport. We will go to Seattle the day before, get a good night's rest and be at the airport in plenty of time.

Sandra: Good idea!

Travel agent: That would mean you get to Florida the day before the ship leaves. Do you want me to make a hotel reservation in Florida, also?

Both: Yes!

Donita: So, as I understand all of this: We need to rent a car on Thursday, drive to Seattle, stay over-night, fly to Florida, stay over-night again, then board the ship on Saturday, right?

Travel agent: Correct. Then when you return, you might want to stay overnight again as the best flight for you would leave the next morning.

Sandra: What time would we get to Portland?

Travel agent: There is a time change of three hours, so you would get there around 3 in the afternoon.

Donita: That would be a great time to get home! I can ask my grandson to pick us up at the airport. It's only an hour and a half drive from there.

Sandra: That would be great! Make the reservations for us.

Vocabulary words

travel agent	a professional trip planner
tropical	hot, humid
cruise ship	passenger ship for leisure
vacation	period of time for rest or recreation
obstacles	something in the way
trucking	carrying freight on trucks
ranching	working on a ranch
flight	flying through the air
reservation	an arrangement made beforehand
lecture	speech made before an audience

Comprehension questions

1. Why does Sandra want to go on a vacation?
2. Does she want to go to Alaska?
3. Why doesn't Donita want to go to Hawaii?
4. How many days can the women go on vacation?
5. Who is helping them plan the trip?
6. Name some of the problems the agent has.

Cloze activity

Use the vocabulary words to complete the sentences:

1. The _____ had difficulty planning their trip.
2. They had to be at the airport at nine o'clock for the _____.
3. The cold weather made them want a _____ vacation.
4. Another name for a passenger ship is a _____.
5. When were are problems to solve, the agent had _____ to overcome.
6. The _____ company owned fifty trucks.
7. My boss will give me a two week _____ this year.
8. John has cows, chickens, and sheep. He has been _____ many years.
9. It is necessary to make a _____ at that famous restaurant.
10. The professor gave a very interesting _____ in front of the large audience.

Answers (reading comprehension)

1. It has been a very long, cold winter. She wants to go somewhere warm.
2. No, she has been there already.
3. She went there for a wedding last month.
4. They can be gone for two weeks (14 days).
5. A travel agent is helping them plan the trip.
6. They can't find a flight from the nearest city (Portland). The flight is very early in the morning (7:00 am). They have to drive 250 miles.

Answers (cloze activity)

1. travel agent
2. flight
3. tropical
4. cruise ship
5. obstacles
6. trucking
7. vacation
8. ranching
9. reservation
10. lecture