

Vacations: Mark finds out that even American Express can't help

by Mark Owens

Vacations are wonderful things. I recently took one myself to visit some friends, enjoy the fall season and get away from the increasing number of people whom I'd like to bludgeon with a running Osterman blender.

After this trip I've decided there are some things that people should know about vacations. So, as a public service column, here are my observations on vacations.

When you're staying at someone's home you have this fear of being a pest, getting thrown out and ending up sleeping in a dumpster behind the sleaziest bowling alley in town.

As a consequence this fear will affect everything you do, like breathing, eating and sleeping.

Unless you plan on eating out a lot, you're going to have to watch your host carefully to make sure you don't eat something he/she wanted to eat. After all, you don't want hard feelings to develop because you ate the last Pop-Tart, do you?

The trick is to follow your host very closely around the kitchen (about five inches away from him), watching everything he does. Eventually he'll start throwing food at you. Take it and retire to the living room, making sure he doesn't mix sharp objects in with the pizza.



Mark Owens

The Missing Pieces

A frequent problem that crops up is bathing. A lot of times you'll toddle up to the bathroom to take a shower and discover that you've forgotten your towel. You don't want to use his towel because 1) he's already used it and it's wet, 2) He hasn't used it yet, but if he finds it wet you may wind up in a dumpster or 3) you're staying with a guy who hasn't washed towels in two weeks, so this is his last one.

My solution is use yesterday's laundry. Provided you don't have a really large body, a t-shirt, jeans and socks should get you dry enough to use the hair dryer, unless you forgot that too.

You also end up doing things your host wants to do, even though you'd have more fun buying shoe laces, simply because you don't want to sleep in a dumpster.

My Host: Say Mark, how bout we go get some cheap beer and watch highlights of the

tractor pulls I've got on video tape? Then maybe we can go next door and play the home version of "Family Feud" with my buddy Stan.

Me: Uh...sure.

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Me: Uh...sure.

Of course, this all applies if you are the polite mild-mannered sort. If not, you should know that guests, like ambassadors, have diplomatic immunity.

This means you can do things you'd never get away with in

your own house, like not cleaning up spills, changing sheets, doing dishes, taking out the trash, paying the rent - this explains why your relatives try to stay forever during the summer.

In fact, it's not uncommon for a guest to mutate into Robin Leach: "Hello, and welcome to Bill Bently's living room! A fine showcase of third-hand furniture that any impoverished college student would be proud to have! And now, off to the bathroom!"

Also, you can find out some really interesting things about your host, like he actually reads magazines such as the *National Enquirer*, the *Evening Carnage* and *Cosmopolitan*. He also has an out of control herd of Chia Pets in the kitchen, and an autographed photo of Brent Musburger in his bedroom, right next to a closet filled with huge women's dresses and size 13 pumps. Why, I didn't want to know.

Sooner or later, the vacation ends and you must pack your bags and leave. Both you and your host will tell each other that you had a good time. Both you and your host will say that it should be done again real soon. Both you and your host are lying.

Actually the two of you are thinking silent thoughts. He is pondering how soon he can exact his revenge by visiting you and you are wondering how soon he'll notice his missing towels.

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