

## **INTERVIEW WITH STACI BLUNT – TRAVEL CONSULTANT**

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### **Q: What is your background?**

A: I have been actively employed in the travel industry since 1989, and have previously held managing positions with the *Arizona Office of Tourism* (Official State Marketing Organization), *All Aboard America!* (Tour & Bus Charter Operation), *Tempe Convention & Visitors Bureau* (City Marketing Organization), *Hostelling International* (Travel Agency & Store) and *America West Airlines* (National Airline). I have a Bachelor of Science degree from Arizona State University in Tourism and Recreation Management. I have also completed many supplier specialist programs and earned the highly sought after professional designations of Certified Travel Counselor through the Institute of Certified Travel Agents (ICTA) and Certified Tour Professional through the National Tour Association (NTA).

### **Q: What professional travel associations do you belong to?**

A: My organization is a member of [www.ASTA.org](http://www.ASTA.org) (American Society of Travel Agents) and I currently serve as President on the AZ Chapter Board of Directors [www.AZASTA.org](http://www.AZASTA.org). I also belong to [www.Vacation.com](http://www.Vacation.com), [www.latan.org](http://www.latan.org), and TEAMAZ, which is an Arizona-based travel agent network. I am happy to provide references or testimonials.

### **Q: What services do you provide?**

We specialize in complete travel arrangements for destination weddings, honeymoons, guest ranch experiences, upscale and world cruises, rail trips, luxury resort vacations, bucket list dream trips, and customized high-end travel.

### **Q: What personal travel experience do you have?**

Domestic exploration trips have included 49 of the 50 states, while favorite international destinations to 92 countries and counting visited include South Africa, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Tahiti, Fiji, Mexico, Canada, Costa Rica, and Peru.

### **Q: What can I expect from you as a travel agent and what do you expect from me as a client?**

A: The role of a travel agent is not just about finding the best price for travel—it's really about finding the best value. I first listen and qualify your vacation request and then try to match you with the right product to meet your budget and desires. Providing value for you includes searching for added travel services and/or benefits, sharing tips and personal insight from years of experience, and also being there to assist should anything go wrong or if anything is not as expected. An open and candid relationship makes for the success of every trip and requires partner commitment from both sides. It's in my best interest to help you find the best value for your money, and for this reason, it's very important for you to communicate your every wish and concern, and to provide me with prompt feedback so I can help you quickly.

### **Q: How are you paid and will I pay a higher price by working with you?**

A: I am paid by commission from the supplier only when a sale is completed, but I do not charge you an upfront service fee or plan-to-go fee as some agents do. I only ask that once we agree to work together that you are fairly committed to taking this trip and give me the chance to see it through and finalize your travel arrangements, since I am committed to spending my time and research efforts on your behalf. The commissions that I am paid by the suppliers are already built in to the trip components and usually do not affect the price you pay. My travel consultation services are essentially free to you, however there may be some services that I do charge fees for and I will advise you of this upfront. These service fees cover detailed custom trip planning, lengthy/difficult itineraries, low budgets or non-commissionable components.

### **Q: Why should I book with you vs. an online booking engine or another travel agent?**

A: In addition to comparing prices with the online search engines, I also compare prices with a major tour operator or two who specialize in your area of interest, and I also compare direct with the suppliers as well when possible. You will often receive added-value benefits that you don't have to pay extra for. I welcome it if you want to do some research online, and as prices can change quickly, just let me know if you find a lower price anywhere else so I can check it out for you, and most of the time I can meet or beat it. I want to give you a "Wow!" experience. Thanks for your support.