

The Difficulties Faced by a Dentist

Vacationing with a Non-Scuba –Diving Wife

My wife, who is also my office manager, best friend, and harshest critic, asserts that my passion for scuba diving mirrors my love of dentistry. In both, I dive into an aqueous medium and look for interesting things to photograph.

My wife really isn't a very bad person at all. It's just that she's a non-diver.

In fact, she won't even snorkel. She says the mask makes her claustrophobic. She won't set foot on any boat smaller than the Queen Elizabeth either, because she gets seasick. The only fish she'll associate with is the one she encounters in a tuna sandwich.

The problem, of course, is agreeing on a vacation destination. My wife demands locations with luxury hotels, museums, cultural attractions, and sophisticated shopping, while I'm happy with a nice beach and good diving.

Getting her to agree on a vacation site that I'd enjoy is one of the greatest challenges I face in my marriage.

This past winter was no exception. My wife, Fredi, was reading a lurid romance novel, about famous celebrities in the Casino de Monte Carlo, while I was flipping through "Fodor's Guide to the Bahamas."

I cleared my throat casually. “Gosh, Fredi,” I began in a matter- of-fact tone, “According to this, Harbour Island has the most beautiful, pink sand beaches in the entire Caribbean!”

My wife peered at me over the top of her novel, one eyebrow raised. “So?” she asked, suspiciously. “Well,” I continued, trying not to stutter, “Beautiful beaches, romantic sunsets, just you and me, July 4th weekend...”

My wife got right to the point. “Is there any scuba diving there, by any chance?” she demanded.

“Uh, scuba diving?” I repeated brightly.

Now I was definitely stuttering. “Well, let’s see, according to the Fodor’s travel guide,” I was stalling, making a great show of flipping through the travel book. “Um, yes, it looks like there might be some diving there, if, you know, someone might want to go on a dive or two.”

My wife put her book down. “In other words,” she concluded, “You want to go on another diving vacation! And what am I supposed to do while you’re having a good time?”

At this crucial point in our conversation, I knew that great verbal dexterity was called for. “Do you think that all those rich and famous celebrities would go to such an exclusive hotel just because there’s diving there?” I exclaimed. “Most of those famous celebrities probably don’t even dive!”

My wife sat up and leaned toward me. I knew I had her interest when she asked, “What does the book say about that hotel?”

Now, of course, I would never lie to my wife; after all, she is my best friend. However, I’m sure that anyone who has been in this situation will forgive my being somewhat selective in presenting the facts.

So, I explained, in great detail, that Harbour Island’s pink sand beaches were prominently listed as *Fodor’s Choices*, not only under “Best Beaches,” but also “Romantic Hideaways;” and, that the hotel “Caters to an international clientele of well-traveled people who know what’s good when they find it.”

At the same time, I felt it would be unwise to tell my wife everything.

For example, I chose not to report that claims of “Airy rooms,” “Unspoiled friendliness,” and “Native charm,” usually translate into “No air-conditioning,” “No phones,” and no modern amenities.

Perhaps Fredi really believed me; perhaps she admired my deft presentation of the facts; or, perhaps she felt I was very stressed-out dentist deserving of a good vacation.

But, as soon as my wife agreed to vacation on Harbour Island, I quickly made reservations, before she had a chance to change her mind. The ticket agent couldn’t understand why I insisted that our reservations be non-refundable.

.....

My very loving, but decidedly non-diving wife was in a great mood as we embarked on our vacation to a luxurious hotel on a beautiful island, with romantic, pink sand beaches.

The first indication of trouble occurred after we arrived at Miami International Airport, and were checking our luggage for our connecting flight to Harbour Island. All was well until the perky ticket agent innocently asked us “How much do you weigh?” I mumbled a response.

The little airline terminal was stuffy, non-airconditioned, and hot, but my wife’s voice was ice cold, as she turned to me and asked, with excruciating slowness, “Why...did...she...ask...how much we weighed?”

I mumbled something about weight, fuel requirements, and small airplanes.

“How...small...is...our...plane?” she demanded, in a frosty voice. I did my best to mollify her, although by now she was extremely concerned and on the verge of hysteria.

Now, it was true that we had to climb over the airplane’s wing to get aboard. And, that we were the only passengers (although there was ample room for four). It’s also true that the co-pilot asked me to please hold the rear door closed because

the latch was broken. And that this very small airplane vibrated violently and emitted loud, growling noises.

However, I've always maintained that there was absolutely no justification for Fredi to spend the entire flight white-knuckled, her hands in a death-grip over my right forearm, and her unblinking accusing eyes boring holes through my skull.

I looked out the window, and watched as the plane swayed not-too-gently over dozens of green, uninhabited Bahamian Islands. I also watched our mellow, laid-back pilot, sitting a few inches in front of me, and wondered if his eyes were open behind his very dark aviator glasses.

Ever the jovial traveler, I pointed to a small, green bump jutting out of the ocean and asked the pilot, "Doesn't that look like Gilligan's Island?"

The pilot turned to me, smiled with a great, gap-toothed smile, and said, "Yeah, man, you want to go down lower for a closer look?"

It was at this point that I became acutely aware of an increased pressure on my right arm. My wife's beautifully manicured nails were puncturing my skin. Her face was chalky-white, and her head was turning from side-to-side as her lips kept forming the words, "No, no, no!"

I turned back to the pilot and hollered, "No, thanks, we'd better go straight to Eleuthra Airport."

.....

When we landed, not too gently, in Eleuthra, my wife climbed down out of the cabin, on unsteady legs. She looked around at the barren airport and bleak landscape and, ignoring me completely, asked the pilot sweetly, “So, this is Harbour Island?”

I wished the pilot had given me a chance to explain. Instead, he quickly answered, “No, ma’am. This is Governor’s Harbour Airport, in the center of Eleuthra Island. After I refuel, we’ll fly to North Eleuthra Airport, and from there you’ll have to take a water taxi to Harbour Island.”

I thought that my wife took this news rather well, although she continued to ignore me. And I couldn’t really tell, though, if her fixed smile through clenched teeth was a sign of her acceptance of a tranquil, island life-style, or of a more serious, deepening psychosis.

The co-pilot pointed to our heavy suitcases and to a shack way off on the side of the runway. “You’ll have to clear through customs while I refuel,” he explained.

My eyes searched vainly for a porter or skycap. The only other visible, living creatures were a very old man in a rocking chair, with an even older-looking, three-legged dog by his side.

To my great credit, I didn’t once ask my wife to help me carry our luggage; nor did I question her wisdom in packing such a large and varied assortment of

beach wear and evening wear – done no doubt so that we wouldn't feel out-of-place with all the rich and famous celebrities who were sure to be staying at our hotel.

Carrying our two oversized Delsey suitcases and dive gear bag, I huffed and puffed my way to the customs building, kicking up great clouds of dust. My wife walked alongside and slightly behind me with a glazed expression on her face.

We entered the building, and saw a very large, very officious-looking, Bahamian matron standing behind a desk, her uniform impeccably clean and starched, and her shirt pocket covered with a perfectly straight custom's insignia. Her meticulously organized desk was covered with neat rows of rubber stamps and pads. There was no one else in the room.

“Next,” she called.

My wife and I simultaneously turned around to look if anyone was behind us. Seeing no one, we stepped forward smartly. I resisted the urge to make a wisecrack (“Well, we certainly have been kept waiting long enough,” came to mind). I tried to look sincere, not wishing to get into any trouble with the custom official.

After clearing customs, we waited on broken, plastic chairs in the airport “lounge,” for our plane to refuel.

My wife, who can never stay angry with me for too long, laughed with me about our adventure so far. We drank warm cokes from the concession stand, and

listened to scratchy-sounding Bob Marley tunes on the staticky radio, and read year-old Newsweek magazines.

Two hours passed. The co-pilot came by and cheerfully informed us that the fuel truck driver had just left to get the fuel for the airplane. “ He left now? What’s he been doing for the past two hours?” I exclaimed.

The co-pilot looked at me in surprise, and said, “He was talking to his cousin about a fishing trip.” I must have looked exasperated because he put his hand on my shoulder and counseled, “Relax, man. You’re not in New York. You’re on Bahamas time, now.”

He was right, of course. I just wished that my “Bahamas time” was being spent on the beach or on a dive rather than in the airport. I was annoyed and I guess it showed.

It was here that my wife demonstrated why she was my best friend. She made me relax, by pretending that she really didn’t mind all of the day’s unexpected events.

She even kept up a façade of good humor as our plane lurched its way to North Eleuthra airport. She seemed in good spirits when it appeared that the entire teenage population of North Eleuthra met our airplane and vied for the privilege of carrying our luggage to the water taxi (for a small tip). Nor did she let me see her

spirits dampen when our luggage got soaked on the not-very-smooth water taxi ride to Harbour Island.

Finally, we enjoyed our stay on Harbour Island immensely. I had a wonderful time scuba diving, while my wife enjoyed reading her novels on the beautiful, serene beach. And, yes, the sand definitely was sort-of pinkish (especially if you kind of tilted your head toward the sun and squinted your eyes just so).

The other guests at our very informal hotel were very friendly, although none seemed to be famous celebrities. I explained to my wife that the rich and famous often travel incognito.

The hotel itself, although far from luxurious, did try to provide guests with everything they might need. For example, we found that a large, complimentary, can of RAID insect-killer had been placed thoughtfully on our night table.

Now if only someone could think of a way that I might convince my wife how very much she would enjoy a vacation to Australia's Great Barrier Reef.

.....