

AAMC TRAVEL COMMITTEE REPORT

September 2022

MISSION: To provide educational and cultural opportunities for Mills College alumnae through organized annual international travel programs, while earning revenue for the AAMC.

Members: Co-Chairs: Gwen Foster and Debi Wood; Viji Nakka-Cammauf, Deborah Dittman, Ellen Hines, Catherine Ladnier, Sheryl Wooldridge.

For more than 20 years, the AAMC has worked with Alumni Holiday International (AHI) and Gohagan & Company, providing international travel programs for college/university alums around the country. Since the start of the global pandemic, the Travel Committee has continued to work with AHI and Gohagan looking ahead to plan tours of interest to Mills alums as international travel resumes. While they both operate land journeys and cruises, AHI excels in land-based tours, many of which have extra cultural enrichment opportunities, including its Alumni Campus Abroad (ACA) programs, offered on some tour itineraries. Gohagan primarily operates small-ship cruise tours, with some land tours which, like AHI, have pre-and post-trip add-ons.

The 2022 travel season comes to an end with two remaining trips: The Charm of the Amalfi Coast (September 28 – October 6) and the Wonders of Peru, featuring an Amazon cruise & Machu Picchu (October 13 - October 24). AHI and the Committee are beginning to market the 2023 travel program. We should learn soon how Gohagan will assist us in marketing their trips. The AAMC's full 2023 program will be available on the new website, including live links which are connected to both companies' co-branded websites for full trip descriptions and the ability to book directly online. Travel Program advertisements were printed in the Spring issue of the Mills Quarterly and an ad has been prepared for the Fall issue. We anticipate that these more streamlined marketing techniques—along with the pent-up desire for international and domestic travel—will increase the number of Mills alum bookings. In the next few months, we will begin working with our travel partners on the 2024 travel program for the AAMC and begin that marketing early in the new year.

Moving the Committee's work forward, we recently met with the AAMC executive staff to discuss committee operations, ideas, and concerns that are important for the Board of Governors to be aware of:

- ~At the end of the year, the committee selects the next season's trips based on what is likely to be of broad interest and on past AAMC trips, from a list of tours each company will offer.
- ~To generate more alum interest in the Travel Program, we discussed (1) creating a social media presence (ex., Facebook) with the goal of posting once a month to highlight upcoming trips with photos and comments from past travellers and (2) continuing the ads in the Quarterly. AAMC staff would actively support these marketing strategies.
- ~The Travel Program page on the website continues to be a critical means of communicating with alums around the year's trips with live links to the AHI and Gohagan websites.
- ~Two alums recently requested to have their names removed from the database which has been shared with AHI for many years as part of its marketing. Further discussions will take place relative to potential privacy concerns as AAMC builds its new database.

~The AAMC receives commissions from both companies based on the number of travellers, so this is a revenue-producing program. However, the Co-chairs have not regularly received income reports, a key element of managing the Travel Program. We do know that six alums took a 2022 AHI trip that was previously cancelled due to COVID-19, so we anticipate commission revenues from this re-booking, but we do not know whether revenues have been received.

~We recently shared with the AAMC Interim Executive Director and BOG President an outline of Travel Committee duties that are necessary to operate the travel program going forward, differentiating Committee duties as volunteers from those that should be assigned to paid AAMC staff.

For the upcoming 2023 season, the selected travel programs that will appear on the new website are:

Gohagan & Company:

Panama Canal & Costa Rica (Winter)
Tahiti and French Polynesia (Winter)
Cruising the Canary Islands & Morocco (Spring)
Alaska's Glaciers & Inside Passage (Summer)
Island Life in Ancient Greece (Fall)
Autumn in Provence (Fall)

AHI:

Legends of the Nile (Winter)
Mayan Splendor in Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula (Spring)
French & Italian Riviervas (Spring)
Grandeur of Iceland (Summer)
Cotswold Escape (Summer)
Holiday Markets Cruise: The Festive Rhine River (Winter)

Submitted by: Debi Wood and Gwen Foster