

***Cruise Lines International Association:
Master Cruise Counsellor Certification Program***

CASE STUDY 2

THE CLASS REUNION

As a veteran travel counselor at Acme Travel of Phoenix, you've faced just about every kind of request. Today, though, you take on an unusual challenge: to plan a vacation for a group of about 40 new clients whose only common thread is their association with the small town of Pine Bluff, South Dakota.

The group's "pied pier" is 60-year-old Jim Kennett, a former Pine Bluff resident and one of your regular clients. Compared to his hometown mates, he's a regular Marco Polo, having made forays to Europe and the Far East, as well as several sailings on popular vacation cruise lines. Jim is a "legend" to the Pine Bluffers, having led the school's basketball team to the state championship in 1949. That hasn't happened since. During a recent "all-class" high school reunion, Jim came up with the notion of turning Pine Bluff's annual gathering into a get-away vacation. He ran his idea by some friends, and most of them were enthusiastic.

You ask Jim to tell you about his companions. "You have to understand their small-town mentality. They're conservative – even about travel... they need to be talked into experiencing something different." Pine Bluff, he explains, is a tight-knit community where people enjoy doing things together – picnics, high school sporting events, community theater, the Rotary Club, the 4H, etc. Many of the town's citizens are either farmers or small business owners.

He figures that at least half of the possible travelers have never been out of the U.S. or been on a cruise ship. But Jim is a dedicated cruise fan and believes a cruise would attract his classmates.

The wheels begin turning as you search your mental travel library for... a cruise for farmers? But you're convinced that there's a cruise for everyone. To make sure, though, you ask if he's certain a cruise is the kind of vacation his classmates would want to take. He replies by joking that just because his friends are seemingly your typical "hayseed types," it doesn't mean they aren't open to new experiences. Many, for example, have made trips to Vegas – not so much to gamble as to be a part of the frenetic Vegas atmosphere – the spectacular shows, the glittering lights, and the excitement.

He also knows that one group of eight, who have remained friends, traveled together two years ago to Hawaii as part of an escorted tour, no less. Their reason: They wanted to sightsee and to "do things." Jim thinks they're excellent prospects for this trip and may convince others of like mind.

"When," you ask, "have you decided this cruise reunion should be?" "Well," he responds, "we're really looking at mid-winter, like February or March, just before the planting season. Fortunately, this gives us more than a year to plan."

You try to narrow your choices by asking a few key questions. You discover that the age range of the group is 30 to 70. There will probably be mostly couples, with about six singles. He doubts there will be any families with kids. They're allowing for 10 days away, and are willing to spend in the neighborhood of \$1,500 per person for the entire package.

You think you have several good ideas for the right cruise when Jim throws you another twist. "A number of people I talked to said they want to do more than just the cruise. They want to spend a few days in one of the departure cities – sightseeing, shopping, seeing shows, etc."

"Well," you respond, "this will help narrow our cruise choices, especially if we have just a little more than a week of actual vacation time to work with, but I'm sure we can still put together a trip your school's alumni will love."

In your essay, answer the following questions based on the scenario described above:

- Which itinerary and destination would you first recommend? Why? What back-up itinerary and place might you offer?
- Which cruise line might you recommend for these clients and why? What other cruise line might also serve their needs?
- What embarkation port would you select? Why?
- What would you schedule for the beginning of the vacation – the cruise or land segment? Why?
- What extras might you package into the vacation to make it more appealing to this group? What special arrangements might they appreciate?
- What specific steps would you take to proactively support Jim's "sales" efforts?
- What features and benefits to this package would you emphasize to these prospects?