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## TRAVEL SERVICES HELP FIND TRAVEL PARTNERS HILLARY CHURA ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Carolyn Rice didn't mind traveling solo. But when a friend placed a personal ad seeking a fellow traveler and ended up with a spouse, Rice thought, why not take her chances?

Maybe she could find a **travel** - and possibly lifetime - companion too. So Rice called **Travel Companion Exchange Inc.** of Amityville, N.Y., one of the few **travel** agencies nationwide catering to the 40 percent of Americans who are single, widowed or divorced.

"I went on trips without anyone, and I wanted to meet {a **travel** companion} I didn't have to take my chances with," Rice said. "I also wanted a romantic relationship."

The more than 20 singles agencies offer travelers of different physical abilities, religion and sexual orientation everything from help finding **travel** mates to tips on less-expensive **travel**.

Rice sought a man who liked biking, hiking and active vacations. She wasn't that impressed at first with Tony Janish.

"I wasn't that sure I liked him because he sounded arrogant on the telephone," the 42-year-old free-lance **travel** writer said.

But Janish won points when he offered to drive 15 miles from his New Jersey home to a New York diner near where Rice lived. They hit it off and planned a Vermont skiing trip. Seven months later, Janish proposed in Hawaii. The two married five months later.

Jens Jurgen, owner of **Travel Companion Exchange**, says he has been the conduit for several marriages in his 14 years in the business.

"**Travel** and romance have always been connected, and people still go on trips and cruises to find somebody," he said.

While some agencies' aim is to mate clients, others just want to give them someone with whom they can eat, share expenses, enjoy the sights and feel safe.

Agencies have specialized in retirement-age travelers for 30 years, but those that cater to younger, single travelers find that demand for their services is growing, said Steve Loucks, spokesman for the American Society of **Travel Agents**.

**Travel Companions Ltd.** of Nashua, N.H., concentrates on platonic couplings. Owner Rose Kennealy said she has set up more than 30 pairs in her one year in

business.

"People like to save money, but they want to have someone to share the experience with. Not having to eat alone is a biggie," she said. "People make new friends. We introduce them to a handful of people who like what they like, and they are there forever."

Sometimes. Jorgen recalls two women who split up at the beginning of their European trip because they couldn't agree how fast the rental car should be driven.

"But that could happen to you with your best friend," he said.

Problems can stem from how tidy people are and how much luggage they carry to whether they are morning or evening people and whether they smoke or drink heavily.

Problems arise when travelers have opposite tastes: One might prefer to stay in expensive hotels and see free sights, yet the other wants to sleep cheap, attend the opera and eat in expensive restaurants.

Most of Jorgen's and Kennealy's clients are women older than 40, but people from their 20s to 80s have registered, too.

Carol Fallon of Balboa Island, Calif., wanted a **travel** partner when she contacted Jorgen's service three years ago.

"I kind of like adventure, and when I see a good opportunity, I do it. I do a lot of traveling on my own, but it gets to the point that you think, 'Gosh, it would be nice to have someone to share this with,' she said.

The 49-year-old horse trainer has been to the Havasupai Indian Reservation in Arizona, the Yucatan Peninsula and Death Valley with people she met through Jorgen. She said she has had only wonderful experiences and is good friends with at least one male participant.

Rice, however, wanted more than just a **travel** buddy and said services that link solo travelers are a good way to meet people not in one's social circle.

"I never would've met Tony," she said by telephone from New York. "He's a school teacher in New Jersey. I'm a writer. We never would've met."

PHOTO BY: NO CREDIT Sometimes, just sometimes, chance meetings on a cruise result in romances such as the one here between Cary Grant and Deborah Kerr in the movie "An Affair to Remember."

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