

Vacations are for daydreaming; I don't have to travel for that

Not only are my trips cheap, they make me younger, better looking

I'm about to go on my spring break. Do I yearn for a Holiday Inn on Daytona Beach or a seaside condo in St. Pete's? No, I long for a far away, getaway, Mandalay kind of place.

Playa Del Carmen . . . Kuala Lumpur . . . Manuel Antonio . . . Punta Cana . . . As I slouch at my computer terminal, I slowly sound out each destination, swishing its strange vowels and consonants around my mouth like a fine wine. How the words trip off my tongue just might indicate how libations would drip off my tongue when I'm lolling in my lanai.

But when I inquire about the AARP discount to a booking agent in Guadeloupe, my youthful cover is blown — who am I fooling? "Wrong numero," I mumble in Spanglish, sheepishly hanging up the phone on the confused islander. After discovering that French is the national language of Guadeloupe, I have to concede

I'm better at collecting dreams than driftwood.

In the world of spring break, my body suddenly clings with a passion to all things spandex, silk, and linen. My white biceps have ballooned to become bulky and bronzed. And my thighs are now the size of swaying palm trunks. Tourists gape at my physique — "No way that guy holds down a day job and still looks that good." Even the French look up from their *Le Mondes* to pay attention.

And speaking of the French, why can't I pretend to be *Monsieur* Appell for the next week? Or simply *Le Monsieur*?

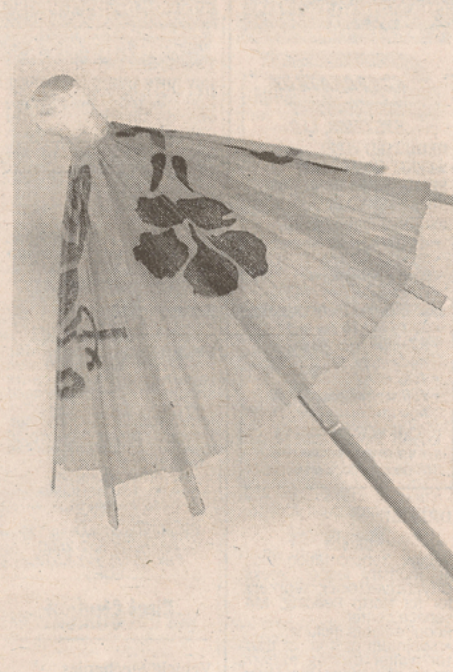
Whether in Bali, Polynesia, or the Southern Azores, wine tastes more complex when you're *Le Monsieur*. The sun penetrates more deeply and the wind sweeps more profoundly through my suddenly full head of hair. Servants clad in bone-white uniforms feel compelled to

whisper my name, groping for clues about their mysterious visitor. Even my CVS sunglasses are transformed into Givenchy shades that inspire rampant speculation.

Let others wonder about my true identity; gossip will not truncate my spring break.

It's easy to ignore the paparazzi as I saunter across the aquamarine pool to the sunken bar and order a pina colada topped off with a lime green umbrella. (Back in my hotel room I save up all the little umbrellas so I can pretentiously display them in my office cubicle.)

It makes no difference that the closest I get to the beach is surfing on the Internet, my fingers gliding over a faded Pan Am mouse pad. Spring break on the Internet never involves airline delays or lost baggage. Not to mention hotel rooms that disappoint with sagging beds or exotic people that disappoint with sagging bodies.



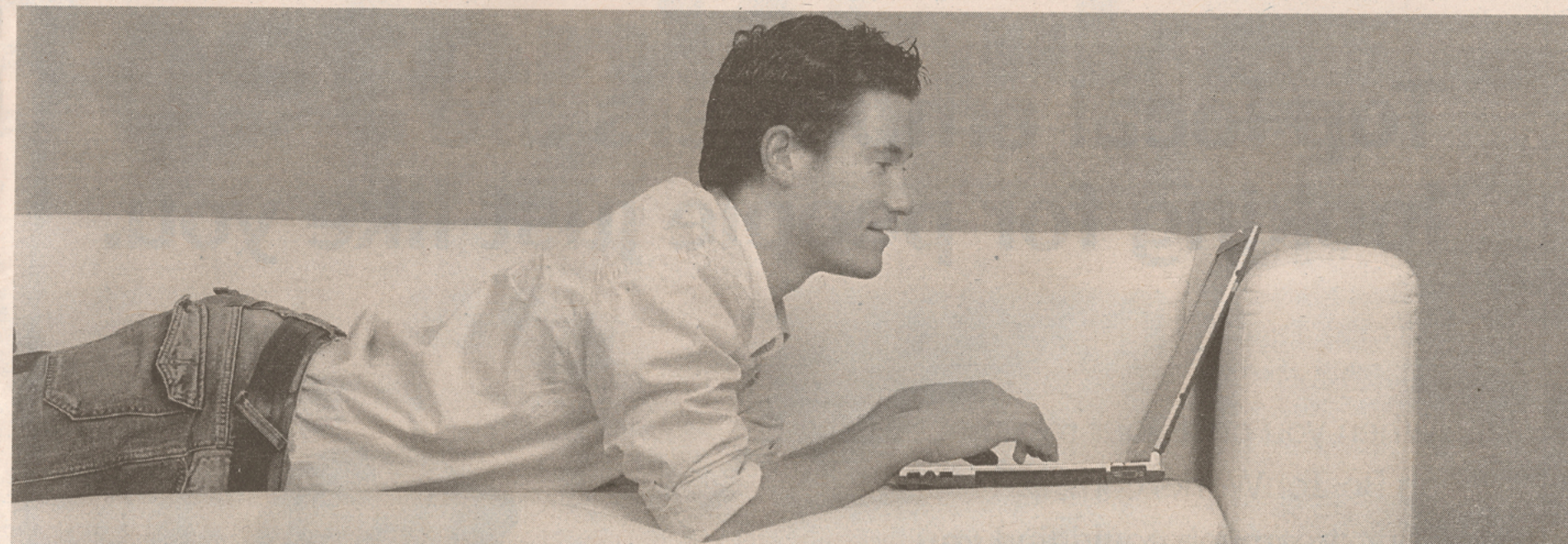
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Little umbrellas make the getaway seem real for longer.

That's why I'm always in the mood to check last minute travel deals. Thanks to the Internet, I now receive e-mails from 12 airlines with flight specials that promise a romantic getaway to Marrakesh or Molokai almost every week.

I can't afford these "special" offers, but

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Unlike trips that involve surfing at the beach, spring break on the Internet never involves airline delays or lost baggage.

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just seeing them pop up on my screen with such regularity gives me hope. I can casually cast away an invitation to the Wisconsin Water Park Resort, despite the tempting promise of 100 arcade tokens, because I know it's only a matter of time before I will find myself instead on a re-

mote beach or mountaintop. Far away from phones and computers, I revel in a place where the word "wireless" has yet to be whispered and ring tones have vanished into the vast reaches of the sheltering sky.

In this fantasy I'm not young or rich, just happily unconnected to the world. I'm

walking hand in hand with someone I love and we're not talking about anything that matters. And when my partner mentions "blackberry" I don't look in my pocket. I look down, and pick one off a bush, and savor its juice all afternoon.

No need to digitize, colorize, or otherwise beautify this journey. I'll never have

to worry about finding just the right place for a driftwood monstrosity or dread next month's Visa bill.

This is *my* spring break, and *Le Monsieur* has all the time in the world.

If you want to write about the view from your cube, send e-mail to cube@globe.com.