

C.A.R.E. Forms Industry Vacation Travel Club Task Force

A non-profit trade association founded over 20 years ago has recently formed a task force to establish a code of ethics for the vacation travel club industry.

C.A.R.E. (Cooperative Association of Resort Exchangers) was originally formed by representatives from timeshare resorts who found that by exchanging vacation inventory among themselves, they were better able to satisfy their owners with increased vacation opportunities. Today, the C.A.R.E. member base of approximately 175 companies is comprised of resort developers, management firms, exchange organizations, travel clubs and resort service providers.

Initially considered at the ARDA conference last year, the Travel Club Task Force (TCTF) was formed at the C.A.R.E. 40th semi-annual conference in Daytona



Beach, FL and has recently announced its strategic plan for adopting a code of standards and ethics.

Melanie Gring, Immediate Past President of C.A.R.E., is Chair of the Task Force. Members of the task force include representatives from C.A.R.E. member companies and its Board of Directors, led by Bonnie Kosco, Board President.

Explains Gring, "C.A.R.E. member companies and their representatives adhere to a stringent Code of Ethics. To protect the vacation experience for owners and the entire vacation industry, the C.A.R.E. Board of Directors agreed that it was important to establish a code of ethics for the travel club industry. We recognize that by 'self-regulating' this important segment of our industry, we will have

a more vocal voice with ARDA as well as state regulators. We also recognize that this segment of our industry may be regulated in the near future and we want to play a role in this process."

Gring adds that establishing a code of ethics for the vacation travel club industry will go a long way in promoting ethical sales and business practices. "We believe this will ultimately result in generating industry, consumer and legislative goodwill."

As the vacation industry evolved, C.A.R.E. developed programs to assist diverse entities to increase revenue, fully utilize inventory and enhance owner/member vacation experiences. C.A.R.E. is an international organization with members in the US, Canada, Mexico, Europe and Australia offering over 2,500 vacation properties and service to over a million vacation owners and members.

Owners Share Vacation Club Experiences

My family belongs to **Disney's Vacation Club (DVC)**. It was our first foray into timesharing and remains our favorite in many ways. While not cheap, it is far cheaper than many think, if used correctly. DVC is extremely flexible and high quality, and staying on property at Walt Disney World is important to us. We normally go Sunday to Friday to take advantage of the lower weekday points, which are common to points based timeshare systems. Like most points based systems, there is also low value alternatives. With DVC, this includes any stays outside the DVC resorts. But it is nice to have options like Disney Cruises, other Disney hotels, II exchanges and the Concierge Collection, a group of world class hotels and inns.

Dean Dalrymple,

We belong to **Fairfield Vacation Club**, which is points based. We have been on a lot of vacations with it. They have NYC getaways and other getaway programs for points members.

All units are very nice and the amenities are excellent. We are very pleased with Fairfield.

James Barry, Whiting, NJ

We belonged to **Travel Service Network (TSN)** out of Batavia, Illinois, and paid close to \$5,000, which we just let go. They were no cheaper than going to Orbitz, Travelocity or a good travel agent. It was difficult to get a hold of anyone or have calls returned. There was no newsletter or monthly e-mails as to what the specials were. My wife and I went to a couple of other presentations with other travel clubs in the area and they wouldn't use TSN as a trade in.

Then later we spent close to \$3,500 for **Grand Getaways Vacation** which is a subsidiary of Mini Vacations out of Miami, Florida. The dues are \$160 per year. They do have a web site. There again, no newsletters to update you or monthly e-mails of specials. When you call, you have to give all your info to the person answering the phone and then someone calls you back, maybe that same day or in a couple of days. There again, the prices are no cheaper than Orbitz or Travelocity.

There again, with both travel clubs you have to be pro active in getting anything done, except paying your annual dues.

Of course, their salesmen's make it sound as though it's the next best thing

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to going to heaven.

If you are retired and can go at the drop of a hat and don't care where you are going, maybe this is the group that should be buying this.

My wife and I are tempted to bite the bullet and drop Grand Getaways Vacation and chalk it up to life's learning experience. I should give a couple of timeshare weeks to these salesman; they could sell fly spray in the dead of winter.

Steve & Faye Hefele

We belong to **Shell Vacation Clubs**. We love it. We have always been happy with the resorts they have. And almost always can get into the resort we want and in the time frame we need to go. We started as weeks owners at Orange Tree Resort in Scottsdale, AZ, then converted to points when they went to points and we have never regretted it. We have since then purchased additional points. We are members in both the Southwest Club and the Hawaii Club. Last year when they added the SVC Elite membership, we opted to sign up for that too.

We have had lots of nice vacations in their Arizona and Hawaii resorts and have used our points for airfare too.

We have an ownership at another resort through RCI, but always have trouble trading to go when and where we want.

Susan Quaale

We bought a vacation club, **Royal Aloha Vacation Club (RAVC)**, as a resale from a newspaper ad in San Diego in February, 1991. We had other timeshares, but this was our first resale, and first vacation club. It came with 6 weeks banked which we immediately put in our RCI account.

Through the years, RAVC suffered various losses and problems, but the Board of Directors (timeshare owners) have worked hard to pull the club together and improve it. The maintenance fees have increased, but not by leaps and bounds like many other resorts. The weeks have been great trading weeks through RCI.

All in all we have been very happy with the Vacation Club and think it is a success story.

K. Smart

We have had a timeshare in Park City Utah for 20 years. It is in high demand

because it is during the winter in a ski area. RCI has given us some very good trades over the years but they are definitely not the same company as they used to be.

We purchased **Worldmark** credits as a resale two years ago. Since we are retired, we have lots of flexibility as to travel and the credits have been a good choice. Worldmark has lots of bonus time and inventory specials at 4 cents a credit. These have been great for short trips on short notice.

Most of the Worldmark properties are Gold Crown and are well maintained. I like the fact that booking takes place 13 months ahead without any booking fee. A week can be split between more than one property, so that you can be at more than one resort within driving distance.

Carole Cohen

We have used our Vacation Club membership for 6 years in Cozumel, Mexico. For the first year, it worked very well; we were able to use facilities throughout the Caribbean and Florida with deep discount airfare, etc. The next 5 years, the service diminished with only discounted hotels, and "free booze/sodas" when we went to Cozumel.

The original Club was to have timeshare week facilities at a local hotel. The deal fell through and the owners have had difficulty acquiring a new site. Last year, we simply used the discount hotel rate and coupons for discounted dinners, etc. on the island. We are not unhappy, as we have gotten our money back in services, but the project seems to be going NOWHERE!

Carolyn and August Fischer

We belong to two:

Marriott: Love the top quality resorts and the 21 days window to trade within the Marriott system before other II members get the opportunity. They are adding more resorts every year. The downside is getting through to make your next year's reservation at popular resorts like Newport Coast in July. Nearly impossible to get connected with a Marriott reservation agent.

Starwood: They have top locations like St. John and Atlantis/Nassau and are

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adding a bunch more. Downside is that they are making tiers within the timeshare groups, so what was once an even trade within Starwood has now become the elite and non-elite groups. Their Starwood Preferred Guest program for hotels works smoother than Marriott's.

We recently joined **Worldmark** which is sort of a vacation club. So far, it has been real easy to get anything we want.

Cathy and Bruce Broker

Our first experience with purchasing a time share was in 1995 and we purchased through the **Marriott Vacation Club** program in Palm Springs (Marriott Desert Springs). We have only praise for the quality of their program. The properties exchange exceptionally well and we have never had a problem with Marriott. Our annual fees are roughly \$600 which I believe is in line with other timeshare programs.

We have had a chance to stay at several of the Marriott Vacation Club properties (II gives us priority if we exchange into another Marriott - which is a definite plus) and they have all been high quality

properties.

We live in Hawaii now, but like to vacation on neighbor islands in December or January. We have been able to exchange to the Kauai Vacation Club property two years in a row (on very short notice). This feature with II is extremely valuable.

We own a two-bedroom lock-off unit and the ability to make this into two weeks a year is a very nice feature. We also have the option of giving up the week every-other year in exchange for Marriott points. We do this regularly, as the points give us options for air fare and hotel nights in exchange for our timeshare unit. Even the small studio lock-off exchanges very well in II.

The quality of the Marriott properties has always impressed us, and obviously impresses II as well. We have never had a problem exchanging our unit.

Toni Lathrop-Lee

I am a timeshare owner at Club Cala de Palmas at Palmas del Mar in Puerto Rico. I have been going to the resort for more than thirty years and have owned four

weeks for the last twelve. Over this period of time, my wife and I have met some great people, made great friendships, and developed some strong relationships. We have never exchanged our weeks, and we look forward to returning to our friends every year.

Last year, the property (which has fallen into disrepair) was purchased by **Royal Holidays**, a Vacation Club company with several properties in Mexico. This purchase was to be their expansion into the Caribbean.

During our annual visit to Club Cala, those of us who own timeshare weeks at Club Cala were invited to attend a "sales pitch" extolling the benefits of converting our timeshare ownership into vacation points. The "deal" was not good, particularly to an audience that basically looks forward to returning to the same resort and their friends every year.

As timeshare owners, we were told that there might not be room for us during the weeks we owned. Or that we would be put into the un-renovated units, because the renovated ones would be reserved for the vacation club members. To the best of my knowledge, there were no conversions while I was there.

Dan Heist, Club Cala Property Owners Association

We have been a member of **Perennial Vacation Club** (it use to be World Class Vacation Club) since 1990 and we have been very happy with it. We now have four weeks and have never had a problem with them. They have about the same maintenance fees as other timeshares, with a wider selection of resorts than some of our timeshares, and it did not cost as much as our other timeshares. The one downside is that we have not been able to sell it as quickly as other timeshares.

Gordon Burton

I belong to a Vacation Club, **Marriott**, I own seven full weeks plus an Every Other Year and travel the world. The business and first class seats on airlines, the wonderful hotel stays, and of course the approximate 65 or 70 exchange weeks I've done is a travel retirement plan come true. (Well, I'm not retired yet, but when I do, I'm, set.)

I've owned other timeshares in the



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Spotlight on Questionable Deals

past and they could not hold a candle to the program that Marriott has put together. I have been one of their points members for over 20 years and always loved that program, trusted and stayed in as many Marriott hotels as possible for business and personal travel, so when I got the invitation to a sales presentation from Marriott, I was the easiest sale my salesgirl had ever made. It is really a no brainer, and a real money saver.

Over the twelve years I have been an owner, I have travelled to over 45 countries, stayed in approximately 75 Marriott hotel properties on points, lots of air fares and about 65 exchanges through Interval and a few with RCI. My first timeshare (not Marriott) was purchased in 1978, but my ex-husband has been enjoying them since the late 80's. After you have vacationed on timeshare, and you figure out how to use it, you really don't want to travel any other way. There is truly a FANTASTIC value and cost savings there, even after all the maintenance fees are paid.

Like I mentioned earlier, my ownership is a segment of my Retirement Account (My Travel 401). Try it, I bet you like it too.

Kathy Werness, Irvine, CA

I have been a member of **America Travel and Vacation Club** for 4 years and have been to Kauai, Gatlinburg, Bahamas (twice), Kissimmee, South Carolina and have scheduled Palm Desert in October. Their resorts are located in Kauai, Cancun, Palm Dessert, Calif, Gatlin-burg, TN, Great Barrington, MA, Myrtle Beach, SC, Park City, Utah, Kissimmee and Cocoa Beach, Florida. If your desire is Mountains, Snow, Desert or Ocean, it is all available or you can exchange for another resort for a minimum fee.

It is a deeded ownership with no assigned week that can be booked up to twelve months or as little as 45 days. You can plan ahead and not be pressured to make a decision within 24 hours after your request as been met. When making a reservation you talk to the same person each time, therefore you are on a personal level and not a number. America Travel and Vacation Club is equal to owning nine timeshares in one. I also am a member of RCI and Shell vacations..

Jerri Vegyelek

Jane Brown, Oakland, CA
First, I need to say that the Timeshare Liquidators from California that advertises in this magazine (see page 32) is NOT the Timeshare Liquidators that I am writing about. .

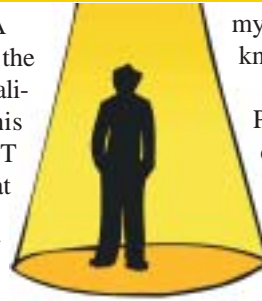
Back in November of 2005, I received call from a Mr. Jeremy Hilton of Timeshare Liquidators who inquired if I wanted to sell my timeshare. Having been "taken" once already I was very dubious about this call. However, he told me that he was a member of the **new sales staff at my resort**. They were beginning a sales program to help owners who wanted to sell their timeshares. They would only accept seven owners at a time, so that each could be assured of offers for their timeshares. They would forward each offer to you and you would receive your sale money quickly.

Of course, they wanted only \$499 up front to cover expenses. This would be all you would pay. They would get their commission from the buyers. When someone calls you from your resort, there is a tendency to believe him. Most timeshare owners would love to have someone at their resort sell their timeshare for them.

They asked for your bank routing number so that they could deposit your money quickly into your account without a lot of paperwork. If you did not receive any offers within six months, all your money would be returned. Also, if within three weeks of receiving their literature you changed your mind, you would get a full refund of your money.

Very stupidly, I agreed. They immediately deducted the \$499 from my account, which is \$1 less than the amount for which the bank calls to verify the withdrawal .

Naturally, the company disappeared. The telephone number that you are given is just an answering machine and no one ever calls back. The phone number they give you is 1-800-442-1157; the literature which they sent me consisted of a few flyers, no business letter included, no signatures, no names and no phone numbers. I realized then that this was another scam. So I immediately wrote them a letter requesting a return of my money. I did not hear a word from them even though I sent



my letter by certified mail. Hence, I know that they received it.

I then wrote to the BBB in Phoenix, AZ where they were located. The BBB informed me that they could not locate them, nor get in touch with them. They only got the same answering machine message

That is when I decided to write to the Attorney General in Phoenix explaining how I thought this was just another scam., probably cheating many other people as well, and that I had not received any satisfaction from this company.

Within about three weeks, I suddenly received a telephone call from a Mr. Steven Hohn, who told me that he was the "quality assignment manager" at Timeshare Liquidators. The reason he called me was that he had just received a letter from the Attorney General's office about my complaint. He was so sorry, but my letter must have just "fallen through the cracks". He told me he would send me a cashier's check (which I requested) the next business day. Needless to say, he did not send the check and I never heard anything more from Timeshare Liquidators.

About three weeks later ,the Attorney General's office in Phoenix mailed me a copy of a letter that they had received from Timeshare Liquidators. The letter stated that they had, indeed, sent me a check for the return of my money and that they had resolved all problems with me. Infuriated, I called and wrote to the Attorney General's office, explained that I had not received a check for the return of my money, nor had I received any communication from Timeshare Liquidators.

The Attorney General's office agreed to reopen the case. I am sure they were not too pleased with the fact that not only had Timeshare Liquidators lied to me, but also to the Attorney General's office. Within two weeks, I received a cashier's check for the return of my money from Timeshare Liquidators. Kudos to the Attorney General's office.

Moral: Don't believe anyone, even if they say they are at your resort. Ask them some question about a little known detail of your resort to verify their legitimacy.