



So Who Are Those Guys & Galls Hassling Us On The Street?

■ They are timeshare snaggers, and maybe you should just relax and enjoy

BY CELIA FATE

Surly you've seen them, but maybe you didn't know what they were all about. They buzz around tourists like flies buzz on horse poop.

It starts when you arrive at the airport; they are those pesky people who yell at you to stop and talk to them. They try and engage you in conversation, usually asking you where you're staying or where you're from. You

escape to your hotel, check in, and before you even get up to your room, you will have to bat away at least one more of these pests. You go out for a walk in the street and there are more of them, standing behind a counter of some sort, yelling at you to

names are now in the business, names like Disney and Raddison and Sheraton, and these big guys demonstrate more ethics in sales than the riff raff of yesterday, bringing up the whole industry a little notch. Another reason OPC is not quite the scummiest of the scumbags in Cabo anymore is the timeshare industry has cleaned up its act a bit. Believe it or not, there is a sanctioning group that half assed polices them. The OPCs used to harass people who didn't want to talk to them, but they've largely backed off that now. You're still likely to get offered drugs by the OPC at the activities booth on the street, or a man

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look at the activities they offer. But they aren't selling activities, they're selling timeshare. They're called OPC's, or outside personal contact, and lately they like to be called outside promoters because OPC has become a dirty word.

The OPC is at the bottom of the timeshare food chain, dwelling on the lowest rung of what many people believe to be a lowly profession. It's not as bad as it used to be though, as big legitimate

will often be offered a girl if he declines a timeshare, but hey, it's not as sleazy as it was a few years ago. At least the drugs and prostitutes are not sanctioned by the timeshare company, those OPCs are

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An OPC is not on salary, they are strictly commission sales people, and that commission depends on where they work. It can vary a lot. For example for a couple between the age of 36 and 59 Villa del Palmar will pay the OPC that snags them about \$175, but the ever aggressive Mayan Palace

pays \$500 for the same couple. Well, that's part of why the cost of marketing timeshare is 50% of the purchase price.

The OPC has a certain amount of leeway to negotiate the gifts for attending the presentation. Sometimes they can even use part of their own commission if they want to in order to get *continued on page 42*



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the prospect reeled in. And if the prospect is not too interested some of them give almost all the money they were going to earn because it is also a numbers game and some of them can win prizes depending on the number of "Q's" (qualified prospects,) that they can gather up in a month.

The OPC will probably always be with us because timeshare simply will not sell itself; it needs to be sold hard. The industry needs to have lots of warm bodies with fat wallets walk into a presentation room where the pros, who are much higher up the food chain, can spin them and close them. Prospects don't walk into that presentation willingly,

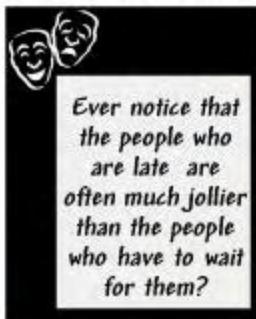
they must be snagged in off the street with much cajoling and promises of free stuff and free activities, hence the OPC. Most OPC's hope to eventually move up to liner, the person who shows you the property, and eventually to closer, a position that earns a lot of money, often more than 100 grand a year. And that's just for about five or six hours work a day.

The OPC must qualify their prospect, and there are guidelines he or she looks for. The prospect must have a pulse and a credit card, and if they are married, they must drag that partner along. That's about it.

They start by approaching you with that hussler smile. Nobody who is not a puppy is not naturally that friendly, so there is your tip off right there. If they are in what looks like a tourist

information booth or an activities center, they had better stay there. One of the rules of the street is to be behind a barrier. If they were not, can you imagine what would happen at the airport? On an aggression scale of one to ten, those guys are off the chart and would probably have you in a hammer lock before you got to the baggage carousel.

Another disguise the OPCs use is as restaurant host or hostess. Yep, that nice young person who seats you is not working for the restaurant, but for a timeshare resort. The resort pays the restaurant anywhere from \$2000 up to \$5000 per month to place that OPC in the restaurant, and the restaurant owner doesn't have to pay a host to



boot. If the OPC is too pushy or otherwise offends the diners, the restaurant owner can ask to have that OPC reassigned. Watch carefully and you will see a car drive up several times a night and the "host" run outside and talk briefly to the driver. This driver is the OPC's boss and is checking on him or her.

Probably the most aggressive timeshare company is the Mayan Palace. They have placed OPCs in the new Mega store in San Jose, disguised as stock clerks. They wear red polo shirts with "May I Help You?"

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printed in English. They rove the aisles of the store asking if they can find the ketchup for you. Snap! The trap is sprung! You ask for help with the ketchup and before you know it you're sitting through a time share pitch. Not only did you not get your free gifts, you probably never even found the damned ketchup. Mayan Palace also has OPCs standing around on the sidewalk in front of their construction site. If you stop to watch the men working, an OPC will siddle up to you and chat you up. Snap! The trap is sprung!

Just be glad you're in Cabo, because in Matzalan they are

even pushier, employing roving squads of OPCs who will jump out of a van right onto the sidewalk in front of a tourist, blocking their path until you break down and talk to them. Or slug them. They can't do that here.

If you're naive enough to walk up to an OPC at a booth and actually inquire about activities, they will chat you up to determine if you are married and if you have that all important credit card. If you are with a good OPC you might not even notice you are giving him or her this information. While you and the OPC are doing this little ritual dance, they will be trying to determine if you are interested in some particular activity. If you're looking for that awesome sunset cruise or are into whales, they will dangle that out in front of you in exchange for sitting through a presentation. Then they will start giving you information about the place they work for (here comes the name of the hotel or resort,) they will trot out some photos of the place, and then they start filling out paper work for an invitation. Snap! The trap is sprung! Enjoy it.

They will ask for a little bit of money as a deposit for the activity (and more importantly as a way of making sure that you will show up.) Usually that money is refundable if after

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attending the invitation to the timeshare presentation you do not want to go on the activity. These activities are purchased wholesale by the timeshare company, or sometimes the activity is owned by the timeshare resort. You will notice some restaurants in town that appear to be popular but aren't great, and don't advertise; those are restaurants owned by a timeshare resort and used as a reward for sitting through a presentation. Yes, they do take walk-ins too, but those clients are just frosting on the cake, the restaurant is there to pay people off for sitting through a timeshare presentation. La Dolce Vida is an example of this, and Desperados is another one, this owned by Villa del Palmar and Villa La Estancia. Two new ones are The Sea Queen and La Fonda, owned by Solmar/Playa Grande.

Your gifts of a free dinner or a boat cruise or an ATV rental are all negotiable, so you don't have to settle for the first offer. Doesn't hurt to say you want a little nicer gift, because you know they're going to start at offering their bottom of the barrel gift. Remember, the OPC has latitude here.

All you have to lose is your time, so be careful there, as some properties keep you longer than they promise. If you have your own transportation, it's always best to get yourself to your appointment so you can walk

out if it's not to your liking or is running into your precious vacation time.

There are some OPC's known as pirates, and they can be trouble. Nope, they don't sport a wooden leg, an eye patch and a parrot on their shoulder. They dress as civilians, some of them may even seem like regular OPCs but they are not always a good option. Few of them will give you what they promise, and they are free lancing to the highest resort bidder. The problem is they are not regulated by the timeshare organization or even a legitimate timeshare resort. They have to come up with their own gifts and of course they don't want to part with those. And after you give a pirate OPC your deposit you may not see him the next day. Be sure they have a picture ID from their resort, or don't play with them.

After all these dire warnings, we still recommend getting yourself snagged into a presentation. Timeshare is not for everyone, but it certainly is a good option for many of us. Most timeshare presenters are courteous, all of the properties are drop dead gorgeous, and if they were not priced competitively, they wouldn't sell. Timeshare is a tradition here, and it's the engine that drives the economy, so go ahead and negotiate for your free goodies, and then show up the next day and try to negotiate the best deal on a timeshare unit that you can. If you feel you have been

abused by an OPC, contact ASUDESTICO. That's an acronym for the organization that regulates the OPCs and they are on Avenue Cabo San Lucas, corner of Avenida de la Juventud. The phone is (624) 143 2718 and fax (624) 143 3728 e-mail: asudestico@prodigy.net.mx

