

Alaska Airlines

NOVEMBER 2014



**HAWAII
ECO-ADVENTURES**

**Destination:
PALM SPRINGS**

**VETS in the
WORKFORCE**

BUENOS AIRES

SPECTACULAR SLOPES

SKIING THE WEST

2014

Celebrating the Holiday Spirit

*Gifts to
create lasting
memories*

By Renee Brincks

Afternoon sun slants through the trees as I stop to catch my breath along a trail outside Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. A few miles back, a steel bridge crossed a sparkling stretch of water at the base of these hills, and the flat terrain made for a speedy ride. Now, the paved trail narrows and twists its way out of the valley through pine groves that grow denser as I climb.

After a few drinks of water, I snap some photos and then adjust my helmet. It's time to head back down the hill, and I'm ready to roll as fast as my eight wheels will go. After logging more than 100 miles on a five-day, escorted inline skating vacation organized by **Zephyr Adventures**, I've discovered how much I enjoy the adrenaline.

Our group of 20 includes skaters at all skill levels, so not everyone seeks out steep climbs and speedy descents. Still, the 62-mile journey from Spokane through northern Idaho—all fresh air, with no car windows separating us from the scenery—helps each of us experience the outdoors, and the inland Northwest, in a new way. Who knew one could skate cross-country?

And new experiences are the essence of a new sort of gift giving.

During the 2013 holiday season, for example, experiences accounted for six of every 10 gifts purchased through the website **LivingSocial**: painting classes, wine tasting excursions, waterpark tickets and dining certificates. Even many popular gift items, such as photo blankets and photo albums, include an experiential component. Research has long indicated that just planning and anticipating trips, events and experiences produces positive feelings.



Engaging
Experiences



National Geographic Expedition's Alaska Family Voyage.



Museum of Flight.



Beekeeping outings.



Zephyr Adventures inline skating.



Ultimate Tequila Tour from the Four Seasons Resort Punta Mita.

IN EXPLORING consumer decisions and happiness, psychology professor Ryan T. Howell's research team at San Francisco State University found that experiential gifts create memories that have tangible characteristics similar to physical items—good wine, say.

"Good memories tend to get rosier over time. They never decay, and they're always accessible to reflect on," says Howell.

This year there are memorable experiences for every interest and budget. Consider short outings, such as the **San Francisco Architecture Walking Tour** (\$40; architecturesf.com); or Juneau's **Alaskan Food Tours** (\$99; alaskan-foodtours.com), which boost understanding of Alaska's marvelous seafood. Hike Maui creates a quintessential island adventure with a full-day **Hana waterfall walk** (\$189; hike-maui.com).

For an extended-stay experience, schedule **beekeeping outings**,

wine experiences, trail riding or treetop spa treatments at sunny Carmel Valley Ranch just south of Monterey, California (prices vary; carmelvalleyranch.com). Montana-based Zephyr Adventures offers **guided trekking, cycling and inline skating journeys, plus food, wine and beer tours**, around the world (\$1,950 and up; zephyr-adventures.com).

In Mexico, the upscale **Ultimate Tequila Tour** from the Four Seasons Resort Punta Mita includes a private helicopter ride

to the Jose Cuervo distillery and a tequila-making tour (\$20,000 for two; fourseasons.com/puntamita).

To spot bears, birds, sea lions and humpback whales, book the **Alaska Family Voyage** from National Geographic Expeditions (\$5,790 and up; nationalgeographicexpeditions.com).

For those with musical ambitions, **Lessonface** provides lessons on more than 40 instruments via live videoconference (prices vary; lessonface.com).

A gift membership

at Seattle's **Museum of Flight** provides both entertainment, education and inspiration for kids and adults (\$55 and up; museumofflight.org).

Alaska Airlines Vacations packages offer adventures across the United States, Canada and Mexico. Relaxing on golden beaches, enjoying the great outdoors or exploring American history, these journeys are memorable gifts (prices vary; alaskaair.com/vacations).