

ON THE JOB  
**TRAVEL AGENT**

↖ **Just as you arrive at** your gate, you find out that your flight is canceled — and the next flight is full. That's where Jill Allen comes in. A travel agent at Suzi Davis Travel, Allen books trips for her clients. When you find yourself in this situation, Allen can book you on a new flight before you even have time to panic. She's just a phone call away, and she has the whole world at her fingertips — literally.

⊗ SAMANTHA HIGHFILL

**What are your responsibilities as a travel agent?**

We are a full-service travel agency, so we do airline tickets, hotels, car rentals, vacation packages, cruises, train trips — the whole gamut. For example, I recently booked a trip to Las Vegas for 12 students. They needed airfare, and we had to figure out which flight worked best, what price was going to fit them, what hotel we were going to use, and then they wanted to see a show. Some people just need airfare; some people just need a hotel. It's always different. It's always challenging, and that's what I like about it.

**How can people get the best travel deals?**

The further in advance you can book, the better. If you're at least 21 days out, you have more options. If you call me five days before, it's going to be expensive no matter what. Look at alternate airports because you might get a cheaper ticket. For example, if you're going to fly to south Florida, look at both Miami and Fort Lauderdale.

**How can you travel last-minute on the cheap?**

For us, if you stay in the Midwest, it's easier. Sometimes you can still get to Chicago pretty reasonably. If you were in Chicago, I would recommend going downtown on the Magnificent Mile on Michigan Avenue. It has beautiful scenery, restaurants, shopping and museums.

**What consistent travel trends have you seen?**

I would say one thing that is steadfast is the Mexico



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destination. Even with what they have going on in the news now, we still sell a ton of Mexico. And that's been that way since I've been in the travel business just because it's inexpensive. If you want to do a five-night trip, you can get everything for between \$950-1,000 a person on average.

**How much travel to Branson does your agency handle?**

We don't do a lot of Missouri travel, but I know people love to go. I personally don't get the phenomenon, but people call all the time for Branson. I think if somebody from Columbia did a bus to Branson on a regular basis it would be full.

**What have been some of your worst scheduling experiences?**

Once I had a dentist office going on spring break. It was a trip to Cozumel, and one of the employees' last names was Test. Test is a last name they use when they're training people. After midnight, the system would cancel everything with the last name Test, so they kept canceling her. By the time we caught it, I couldn't even get her on the same flight.

**What's your favorite place to vacation?**

Playa del Carmen in Mexico is my favorite. The water is a turquoise blue, and you can see through it. The sand is white, and I love the modern yet traditional town.

**VOX ASKS BRANSONIANS**

What's the most interesting tourist encounter you've had?

⊗ JOSH BARONE AND WALKER MOSKOP



**BILL AUTRY, 40**

"A guy came in to the Welcome Center and started telling people, 'They're screwing you!' The manager had to throw him out."



**JOAN BOGGS, 53**

"We had a woman come here from Germany just to see Tony Roi (an Elvis impersonator). I think she stayed two or three weeks. She went to every performance."



**TOMMY EAGLE, 21**

"Watching husbands buy their wives Rowdy Beaver (restaurant and gift shop) thongs is priceless."



**GLENN ROBERTSON, 55**

"The most surprising thing I see is people coming to a tribute concert expecting to see the actual artist. They think they're going to see the real Neil Diamond."



**CLAYTON WATSON, 36**

"I once got a \$20 tip from a family. They asked me, 'Can you turn your piano music down? Our baby's trying to sleep.' So, I said, 'For \$20? Yeah.'"