



TAKEOFFS & LANDINGS

By HANNAH KARP

Lively Layovers

SOME CITIES have a message for layover travelers waiting to fly out: Not so fast.

Japan's Narita airport this month began running bus tours from the Tokyo-area airport to a mall, an open-air museum and one of the country's largest temples, for 300 yen, or about \$2.50, a person. London Taxi Tour recently began offering day tours from the airport that visit the James Bond or "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang" film-location sites. And Mexico City's Marquis Reforma hotel last week began offering layover travelers a 30-minute drive to the downtown hotel's spa for a 50-minute massage and a buffet lunch before driving them back to the airport (\$180).

It's a way to capitalize on rising passenger traffic, up 6% worldwide in the 12 months ended in November, according to Airports Council International. Layover tours also cut down on crowds: Dubai, whose airport traffic was part of a 21% jump in Middle East passenger volume last year, issues free 96-hour transit visas to passengers with layovers of at least five hours, so they can explore the city.

While American layover tourists wouldn't have trouble using their passports for short jaunts in Japan, London or Mexico, they must request tourist vi-

sas for some other countries well in advance. And travelers aren't guaranteed they'll make their next flight, though some tours, like the London taxi offer, can be customized to layover requirements. "It's up to the passengers...we can't predict traffic conditions, or how long the security lines will be," says the Marquis Reforma's Karen Escalera.

From 'Yes' to Dress

MEMO TO THOSE planning to pop the question at a romantic resort on Valentine's Day: Hotels are expanding their

wedding-planning services, from giving advice to nervous proposers to throwing in a free dress.

Sandals Resorts this year introduced its own wedding-dress collection (made for the resort by Dessy Group) and will offer a dress free to brides who book at least 10 rooms at one of its Caribbean properties before April 15. Since last winter, Fairmont has professionals on site at all of its hotels to advise proposers. And last week, the Ritz-Carlton chain opened its Honeymoon Concierge toll-free number to advise newlyweds on where to go and how to enhance the mood (one recommendation: scattering rose petals around the hotel room).

"We're trying to capture the business of people that are getting married and staying in our hotels anyway," says Vivian Deuschl, spokeswoman for Ritz-Carlton.

But Richard Martel, president of the Association for Wedding Professionals International, says wedding planners can often get better deals on rooms, cakes and bouquets. And he warns people getting married abroad to make sure the legal details will hold up in court.

