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With American families taking to the highways in greater numbers every year, often in search of a scenic trail or a restful campsite, Indian reservations are putting up welcome signs.

American Indians have discovered that they are the owners of some of the most scenic, unspoiled and undeveloped real estate to be found. As business men, they are turning these natural beauties into profits, with financial and technical aid from the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Although there is small chance that another group of Indians like the Agua Caliente band of Southern California will suddenly find themselves the owners of a resort like Palm Springs, there unquestionably are opportunities for Indians to tap the increasing flow of American travel business.

The very remoteness of most Indian reservations may be making them more attractive to persons who want to escape the crowds which now besiege the better known parks and scenic wonders. Some reservations, moreover, have fishing and hunting resources which are still relatively untouched.

In many cases, facilities are simple campground accommodations. In other places visitors be installed in a luxurious lodge with every comfort.

Travelers are a familiar sight to the Cherokees of North Carolina, whose reservation boasts fine trout fishing, museums, a typical Indian village, and a tribally operated lodge and restaurant. The drama “Unto These Hills,” based on episodes in Cherokee history, is presented in an outdoor theatre during the summer months and is an outstanding production.

In Florida, the Seminoles exhibit and sell their natives arts and crafts on their reservation at Dania.

The Miccosukees, kin to the Seminoles are also in business. They are descendants of Seminoles and Creeks who hid in the Everglades to escape the armed forces sent by President Andrew Jackson to enforce a land exchange treaty moving Florida Indians across the Mississippi. The group still calls the Everglades home. Recently organized as a tribal group in order to receive Federal aid, the Miccosukees are now the proud and successful owners of a beautiful restaurant -- the only one on: the Tamiami Trail, a highway that slices across the State from Miami to Tampa. Soon they will provide motel accommodations as well.

Vacationers in the Western States have even greater choices. A traveler might swing through Oklahoma, once known as the Indian Territory, in time for the American Indian Exposition at Anadarko each July. Sponsored by the Indian Tribes of Oklahoma, this event features dances, exhibits, and displays of arts and crafts, and attracts thousands.

Continuing on to the Southwest, there is an Indian welcome waiting in New Mexico and Arizona. States with a combined Indian population of about 140,000. The annual Inter-Tribal Ceremonials at Gallup, N.M., open August 12 for 4 days of fun and games, Indian style.

On the Fort Apache Reservation in Arizona, the White Mountain Apache Tribe operates what may be the

largest privately owned recreation area in the West. Continuously stocked trout streams and lakes offer fine fishing and there are more than 700 camping and picnic sites for outdoor living at its best. At Hawley Lake on the Reservation, the Indians have developed and leased hundreds of summer home sites on which vacation cottages have been built. There are first class guest accommodations at the Hon-Dah Motel. "Hon-Dah" means "Be My Guest" in the Apache language.

The Navajo Reservation to the north, home of the largest American Indian tribe, spills over from Arizona into New Mexico and Utah. The Navajos operate motels and restaurants at Shiprock, N.M., and at Window Rock in Arizona. Last summer the Monument Valley Inn, an 80-unit motel complete with swimming pool, restaurant and curio shop, opened at Kayenta, Ariz. This sparkling new guest house is located on the highway leading to fabled Monument Valley, a spectacularly scenic section of the reservation considered a "must" by most visitors.

The Mescalero Apaches of New Mexico have made ready for winter visitors by operating a ski facility just north of their reservation in the Lincoln National Forest on Sierra Blanca, one of the highest peaks in the State. They are planning to open a larger resort in the Sacramento Mountains within the reservation area, with a hotel, swimming pool, golf course and other facilities for outdoor sports.

The Apaches have been joined in the field of ski development by other tribes, including the Chippewa and Cree Indians of Rocky Boy's Reservation in Montana.

And the Santa Clara Pueblos, north of historic Santa Fe, have established new camping facilities to make life easier for vacationers with a yen to explore the ancient Indian ruins adjacent to their scenic canyon area.

On the aptly named Warm Springs Reservation in Oregon, not far from Portland, nature provides more than 300 sunny days each year. Here is Kahneeta, a hot springs spa opened by the Indians in May, 1964. The Kahneeta development features a swimming pool of Olympic dimensions which serves about 300 swimmers on week days and 1,000 on busy weekends. There are attractive, furnished cabins and unfurnished teepees. A new restaurant built high on a rocky hillside soon will provide a spectacular view for diners.

While these are some of the major Indian tourist developments, other tribes are entering the field.

Beautiful Pyramid Lake, an unspoiled 175-square-mile body of water in the Pyramid Lake Reservation in Nevada, is just beginning to attract developers. While overnight accommodations are now limited, there is fishing, boating and swimming in an incomparable setting. The Pyramid Lake Indians expect motel or lodge accommodations to be available before long.

For the traveler who prefers a vacation with simple surroundings there are ample camping facilities in Indian country. The Rosebud Sioux in western South Dakota now operate a large camping area with hunting and fishing privileges. On the reservation of the Cheyenne River Tribe of South Dakota, a picnic area to be known as Forest City is being developed on the shores of the Oahe Reservoir.

It is not for recreational opportunities alone that travelers return each year to be the guest of Indian tribes. Though the American Indians are adapting successfully to many 20th Century ways, they still hold dear their ancient customs, ceremonials, and tribal ties. Today, in fact, their reluctance to lose their cultural identity may be stronger than ever before.

The traveler who has observed the dances and ceremonials of Indian America carries away a priceless memory. For the Indian, progress has not brushed aside timeless values or stored away enduring traditions on the back shelf of history's closet. That is probably the real fascination of a vacation in Indian country.

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