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# The Berlin Pass: The travel choice for people-watchers and pavement-pounders

Tribune News Service - By Anne Z. Cooke and Steven St. John Tribune News Service July 4, 2016 8:46am

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June 28-- BERLIN-- When the phone rang, it was the call I'd always dreaded. A family emergency canceled my long-planned trip to Berlin, putting my Berlin Pass (paid for in advance on the internet) in jeopardy, along with a nonrefundable airline ticket. Ouch!

Then came the brainstorm. I decided to offer the Berlin Pass to my cousin from Norway, Steven St. John, on the

condition that he'd use it to see the city, take notes and tell me what he thought. After all, we're different kinds of travelers, with different points of view.

He's an economist who squeezes sightseeing in on long weekends. I'm a sidewalk-pounder, a people-watcher, a museum maven never loathe to strike up a conversation with a stranger. I know what I think about city passes. What would Steven think?

I've bought a half-dozen passes over the last decade, usually in big cities such as London or Rome. When you pay up front, the way you do at an all-inclusive resort, everything after that feels free (even though it isn't).

But city passes aren't about saving money. They're about easy sightseeing. No running out of cash. No standing in line. You go to the gate at a leisurely pace and are waved through past the crowds. It means seeing more, with less energy, including places you might not have even known about.

Then the weeks went by until one day, an oversized envelope arrived filled with pages of notes, too many to quote here. (Story spoiler: my airline ticket was eventually refunded, except for \$100. And a close read of the Berlin Pass website says unused passes can be refunded within 30 days of purchase).

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Meanwhile, it was fascinating, getting into someone else's head. Here's a brief look:

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