

Travel Trivia

NEW TWISTS ON THE MEXICAN TRAIN RIDE

The railroad equipment and the aircraft types used at each end of the line have changed some in 25 years, but the most famous train ride in Mexico still has its spectacular scenery and thrills, and one of the leading operators begins the 1986 season next week, with 24 trips between now and Dec. 20.

It is described as "sheer cliffs and towering mountains through a landscape of tropical canyons, with 37 bridges and 86 tunnels." A full 75 years in the completion, the railroad is the most highly-engineered link in what was seen as the best land route from the U.S. Midwest to the Pacific. The land terminal is Topolobampo, near the thriving city of Los Mochis on Mexico's west coast, half-way up the protected Gulf of California, or Sea of Cortez.

Folks used to somehow get to Presidio, then cross to Ojinaga in Mexico, to start the train journey. If someone wants to make about a 10-day variety outing of the trip today, they might fly to Chihuahua, to grab the iron horse, and do the same at the other end of the line to see the Pacific tip of Mexico, Cabo San Lucas at the very end of Baja.

There is much in between, also, but a travel agent can supply the details, and can reach Baja Adventures, or some other experienced operator.

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IF IT ISN'T FISHING THEY WANT, IT'S TENNIS

This corner seems to have satisfied the people who wrote in wanting to take a cruise that permitted them to go fishing at every stop. However, no post card has arrived from Portugal.

Now, there are land tours of Europe for those who just want to play tennis. Tennis: Europe is the name, and for USTA-rated players of age 23 and over, they offer this travel specialty in July and August.

Meeting and playing against comparable players in such places as Britain, or Paris to Copenhagen, or perhaps from the Alps back toward London is the route. Tours of similar style are available for junior players, too.

Travel agents have this information, also.

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HIGH FLIERS SUPPORT SOME UNUSUAL LOW FLIERS

Wings of Hope is a 23-year-old organization of some aviation people of every variety, and they mainly support free medical missions in remote places of the world by furnishing aircraft of different types to enable the samaritans to reach their isolated patients.

At a milestone event held last month on the Spirit of St. Louis airport in that Missouri city, a ground-breaking was held for the organization's new world headquarters and hangar.

Chairman and a founding member of Wings of Hope is George Haddaway, of Hideaway Lake in Smith County, who attended the St. Louis event. Afterwards, he and Mrs. Haddaway came home via a snowy Christmas vacation in Colorado, where chili con carne was probably on the holiday menu.

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A TOURIST IS A TOURIST IS STILL A TOURIST

The answer has remained the same since the vacation days of the '20s and '30s provided the axiom that a visit to California had to include a gawk at Hollywood, and the chance to see some real movie stars.

In 1986, it is a bit more organized than when one used to wait around a few restaurants or drug stores to take a long chance on seeing a "star," or played a stronger hand by making arrangements through the local movie theater owner or manager, to get a letter that took the visitor inside a real studio.

Today, there is the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce, 6290 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood, Calif., 90028, has Walk of Fame information, literature and full visitor information. Note: The Walk of Fame with its 1,850 bronze stars, is almost three miles long. Be shod accordingly.

There are three centers open for information, brochures, and the works, by the Greater Los Angeles Visitor and Convention Bureau. The address is 505 S. Flower St., L.A. Calif., 90071.

Current almost to the hour for star and shooting observation is something called "Hollywood on Location," which provides a free sample of their service by mail, if you provide a SASE. The office is at 8644 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 204W, Beverly Hills, Calif., 90211.

For \$19, they sell you a kit with the location at which film (or possibly TV) shooting will happen that very day. Also named are the stars, the type of scenes, maps and times. You must promise not to talk.

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BARNEY'S BEANERY THEY AIN'T

"Travel-Holiday" magazine has once again compiled its annual list of (in its opinion) the finest restaurants on the continent. Americans must be eating pretty well these days, judging from the 28 pages of small-print listings.

The Lone Star State gathered 33 listings. As usual, the magazine's editors looked no further than the city limits of the three or four largest towns in Texas.

They are: Austin (three) -- Carmen's La Tapatis, Foothills of Austin, Green Pastures; Dallas (11) -- Arthur's, Auberge Les Saisons, Blom's, Cafe Royal, Ewald's, French Room, The Mansion on Turtle Creek, Mario's, Old Warsaw, Pyramid Room, Routh Street Cafe; Houston (13) -- Brennan's, Cafe Annie, Charley's 517, Delmonico's, Hugo's Window Box, Maison De Ville, The Red Lion, Remington On Post Oak, La Reserve, Le Restaurant De France, Rotisserie For Beef And Bird, Tony's, Uncle Tai's Hunan Yuan; and San Antonio (six) -- Arthur's, Chez Ardid, The Fig Tree, La Fonda, La Louisiane, San Angel Restaurant.

Not a bad showing. But it pales in comparison to some of the country's top "restaurantvilles" such as New York with 89 eateries judged top of the heap. Nearby New Orleans garnered 20 listings (including one in Metairie and two in Gretna) while Chicago toddled in with 36. Washington, D.C., counts 14 award winners. Out West, San Franciscans pat contented stomachs in 41 restaurants and 74 hash joints in "Angeltown" received the nod (which includes listings in Beverly Hills, Long Beach, Santa Monica, Malibu, Venice, Westwood, etc.).

Elsewhere, 16 restaurants in Mexico City received citations, while Toronto with 22 listings remains Canada's supreme shrine to fine dining.

Take it from Trivia and take this sort of thing with a grain of salt. It's almost impossible to accurately rate restaurants in this manner. As we've observed before, what is one man's banquet is another's hemlock.

One more thing. Should you decide to try any of these places, bring money. Lots of it.

Leave Cares Behind; Tips Before Leaving

WASHINGTON (UPI) — A vacation can be much more enjoyable if you're confident that everything within reason has been done to protect the valuables you left behind, as well as those you carry with you.

Simple steps can be taken to give your vacant home that lived-in look, such as stopping the newspaper so papers aren't piling up on the porch and stopping the mail for the same reason.

Experts caution, however, that protection can't be just skin deep — a dark house tells potential thieves as much as piled up newspapers.

One solution is an inexpensive plug-in timer to turn lamps on in the early evening and off at bedtime.

More sophisticated, and more expensive, are timers that will vary the on and off times of lights, televisions and the like.

Timing Systems

A Northvale, N.J., firm, X-10 (USA) Inc., says it has "inexpensive systems that can be installed throughout any house or apartment in minutes, require no wiring and can control all lights and appliances according to detailed, pre-set instructions.

The producers of one such system, X-10 of Northvale, N.J., say their a control timer can automatically vary on and off times by 30 minutes and allows for remote control by telephone.

The system is sold nationwide by Sears as "The Sears Home Control System," and by Radio Shack as "Plug 'N Power." Prices begin at under \$50.

There are a number of other steps to take.

The private non-profit Crime Prevention Coalition has prepared a booklet used by the Justice Department's Law Enforcement Assistance Administration to inform homeowners how to protect their home.

Other Pointers

Among the crime-prevention tips offered are:

- Be sure tree branches, fencing, ladders and trellises can't be used to get into upstairs windows.
- Doors should be solid-core wood or metal and fit the frame tightly.
- Secure sliding glass doors with a strip of wood or broomhandle in the track of the closed door.
- Be sure door hinges are on the inside, safe from a burglar's tools.
- Don't hide your keys outside; burglars know all the hiding places.
- Be cautious about letting strangers know about your vacation plans.
- Arrange for someone to mow the lawn, shovel snow or rake leaves while you are on vacation.
- Hide garbage cans. Empty cans when everyone else's are full can tell a burglar you are away.
- Turn the bell on your telephone down low. If a burglar is around, he won't be alerted to your absence by a ringing phone.
- In the winter, have a neighbor walk up your front steps after it snows to make your house look occupied.

To order the crime prevention pamphlet, write to Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 20402, and ask for stock number s-n027-000-00942-5202-783-3238.

Protection On The Road

Once the home is secured, travelers need to turn their attention to protecting themselves while on the road, particularly their credit cards.

The Federal Trade Commission estimates that credit card fraud costs card carriers as well as card companies about \$500 million a year.

Credit card loss can come about through cards being lost or stolen or through misappropriation — the use of the card number, not the card itself, without authorization.

The FTC says misappropriation can occur in the following ways:

- A phone caller says you need only provide your card number and its expiration date to qualify for a special discount vacation.
- A thief picks discarded receipts or carbons from your trash.
- A dishonest clerk makes an extra imprint from your card.

To guard against credit card abuse the FTC suggests:

- Sign your new cards as soon as they arrive.
- Carry your cards separate from your wallet. Keep a record of your card numbers, their expiration dates and the phone number and address of each company in a secure place.
- Keep your card in view, whenever possible, after you give it to a clerk.
- Avoid signing a blank receipt. Draw a line through blank spaces above the total when you sign the receipts.
- Void or destroy all carbons or incorrect receipts.
- Save receipts to compare with billing statements.
- Compare billing statements with receipts promptly.
- Report promptly and in writing any questionable charges to the card issuer.
- Notify card companies in advance of a change in address.

Further Protection

The FTC also cautions credit card customers to never lend cards to another person, never leave cards or receipts lying around, never put card number on a postcard or on the outside of an envelope and never give your card number over the phone unless you are initiating a transaction with a company you know is reputable.

Report stolen or lost cards immediately. By law, the FTC says, once you report a loss of theft, you have no further liability for unauthorized charges. In any event, your maximum liability under federal law is \$50 per card.

Argentine Trip Offered To End Of Earth

ALBANY, Calif. (UPI) — Where the Andes mountains taper into the sea, at the southern tip of South America, lies "the uttermost part of the earth" — Patagonia.

Travelers yearning to get away from it all may find this end of the earth — a landscape of Alaskan-size fjords, red and yellow Magellan beech trees and glaciers which fall into the sea — the right place to visit. They can do so on a 16-day overland tour exploring the plains, glaciers and mountains of the region, which is shared by Argentina and Chile.

Offered by Mountain Travel, the expedition begins with a drive across the pampas of Patagonia's Argentine side, where millions of sheep and their ostrich-hunting shepherds live.

Participants explore Glacier National Park, view the Patagonian icecap, and hike in Chile's Paine National Park, beneath the northern flanks of the Paine Grande massif. They travel by "expedition" bus, camping and staying in simple inns.

Tour cost is \$1,490, excluding airfare, with departures on Feb. 6 and Dec. 18, 1986. For more information, contact Mountain Travel, 1398 Solano Ave., Albany, Calif., 94706, (415) 527-8100, or toll-free outside California at (800) 227-2384.

Rockhounds Show Scheduled

FREDERICKSBURG — The annual Rockhounds Club Show is scheduled here Jan. 18 and 19 in Pioneer Pavilion in Lady Bird Johnson Park.

The show's hours will be 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 18, and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 19. Admission is free.

Various gems and minerals will be on display along with educational material. The show is said to be one of the best of its kind in Texas.

Further information may be obtained from M.W. York, 44 The Liveoaks, Fredericksburg, 78624.



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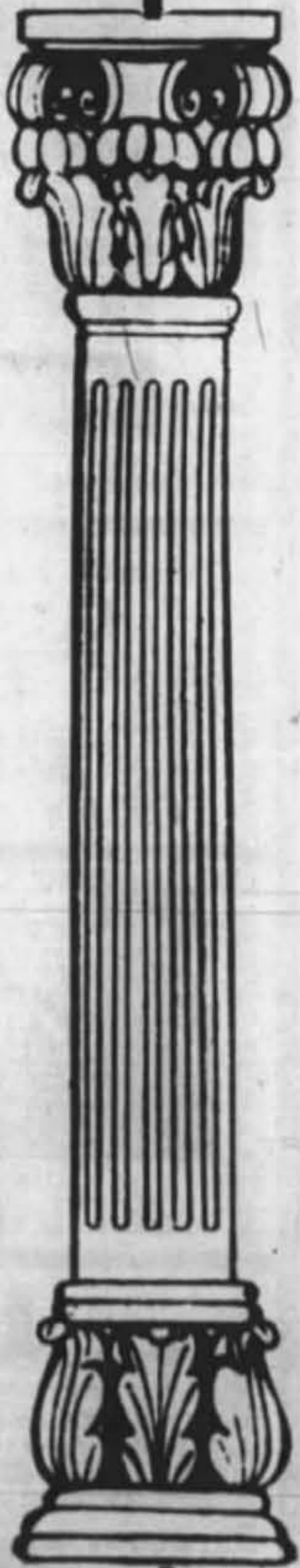
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