



I would like to alert you to a danger which threatens travelers on Italian trains.

My source of information is a bulletin sent this week by the Society of American Travel Writers (SATW) to its members, who are full-time travel writers and editors on newspapers and magazines in the United States and Canada.

The bulletin warns that Italian bandits are using a James Bond-type technique to rob train passengers. The Society's Consumerism Committee has received an alarming number of reports citing Italian bandits who spray an unknown chemical substance into compartments occupied by foreign travelers and then take passports, luggage and money.

The robberies are most common on overnight journeys between points in Italy and Switzerland when the train

itinerary calls for a stop in Milan. The U.S. State Department admits receiving complaints about such robberies. Lucy Wright of the Italian desk says that "Milan is a particularly bad place. We have had reports of thieves who work the trains between Switzerland and Milan."

The Italian Government Travel Office in New York says it has received no first-hand reports of armed-wielding marauders on trains, but that they "are warning tourists to be vigilant at all times, particularly of pickpockets at train stations and on board trains."

Complaints received by SATW are not limited to Americans. A German nurse reported that Italians traveling in her compartment left shortly after the train left Rome en route to Sicily. The next thing she remembers is awakening from what she thought was

a deep sleep. Her luggage was ripped to shreds and her possessions gone. Similar reports have been received on other train routes throughout Italy. Most common robberies occur on overnight train trips while passengers are asleep. The compartment is sprayed and passengers dragged into a deep sleep while thieves loot luggage.

How seriously should a traveler take this warning? My experience tells me that one should be alerted by it but that overreaction is unnecessary. It is generally safer to travel in Europe than in many parts of the United States, although Italy has a bad reputation for robberies.

Check with the U.S. Consulate offices within Italy for the number of complaints on a specific route. A pattern of complaints often takes months to evolve, so it doesn't do too much good to rely on a state department report made before your journey.

I pass this alert on despite a small

warning voice in my head, which says that too many travelers already fear they will not be safe abroad. I can say with some certainty that this should be thought of as a specific problem. Avoid making generalizations based on this warning about European travel.

**ATTENTION SKIERS.** The entire U.S. Cross Country Ski Team will be in Aspen, in the Upper Peninsula, Saturday for the first race in the Karhu Challenge Cup. Many of the competitors will ski for the U.S. in the Winter Olympics at Lake Placid in 1980.

For information on the Karhu Challenge Cup, including spectator access to the course, write to Dixie Franklin, Route 2, Box 76, Marquette 49855, or call 1-800-225-6007. Other Karhu Challenge Cup races will be held Jan. 4 in Eagle River, Wis.; Jan. 13 in Lakeville, Minn.; Jan. 27 in Cloquet, Minn.; and Feb. 10 in Eau Claire, Wis.



## Not just the ozone losing layers

## Detroit It's a gem of an industrial town

By IRIS SANDERSON JONES

A group of tourists peered through the window on the 70th floor. A city of lights spread out in the dark beneath: freeway lights moving outwards, street lights in lacy lines, river lights blinking. A broad river flowed away to the north.

"I've seen the Hudson from this angle in New York," a voice said.

"I was thinking of the Seine in Paris," said another.

"No, it's wider than the Seine. More like the Thames in London, except the buildings aren't right. If you look down the river, it looks a little like the Rhine beyond Cologne, Germany," said still another.

The river in question was Detroit's own.

These tourists from various cities were touring Motown as a vacation destination. In a few days, they toured the city, partook of Greektown cuisine, visited the Hiram Walker distillery in Windsor, watched cars being made at the Ford Rouge plant, went to the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, and had brunch with Bach at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

They saw Detroit as city and suburban residents seldom do.

Seeing Detroit as tourists see it is a great winter weekend activity for the Christmas and early New Year season when you are looking for a mini trip without straying far from home.

A one- or two-day trip can cost the price of gasoline, parking and meals plus a few dollars for admission tickets. For those with a Christmas travel budget, it might include a glamorous overnight stay at hotels long identified with the Detroit area, such as the Plaza Hotel, the Dearborn Inn, the Dearborn Hyatt Regency, the newly renovated Radisson Cadillac and the Pontchartrain.

It is exciting to check into a modern big-city hotel, or an historic inn. Merely walking through the corridors does not provide that feeling. The one ground rule for being a tourist in your home territory is to pretend to be an out-of-towner who having just flew in, and that you have never been here before.

Take a tourist's bus tour of Detroit, as you would do in other vacation cities. If you are lucky, you will get a driver and guide like Andy Wilson, who speaks French and English and knows more about

the Detroit area than all the mayors and chambers of commerce combined.

Listen to a tourists overview of Detroit as the bus leaves the Renaissance Center.

"If we turned left here we'd go to Grosse Pointe, which means literally a fat point of land," Wilson says. "That's where Henry Ford lives. We're going left, past those painted buildings, done by local artists. On your left is the Mariner's church, the oldest church in Detroit, which was moved 800 feet to its present site."

"Beyond it is the Civic Center Plaza, with Edsel Ford Auditorium, the Veterans Memorial Building, and beyond that Cobo Hall. That funny looking thing is the Dodge Fountain, the twisted spiral statue is called Eternity. There is a girl sculpted by the famous Marshall Fredericks at the Gas Building and a statue called Transportation at Cobo Hall."

"Straight ahead is one of six trolleys built in England in 1885 and brought here by ship from Portsmouth, up the Detroit River. Detroit means 'the narrow straits' in French. Michigan gets its name from an Indian word, Michigami, which means big water."

Wilson rattles on about Bob-Lo Island, the new \$22 million sports stadium, and includes statistics like "Detroit has 2,010 churches, synagogues and mosques" and "the Ambassador Bridge is the 10th longest bridge in the world."

"DETROIT IS the sixth largest city in the U.S., with 1,550,000 people in the city and four million people in the metropolitan area. The Renaissance Center was the beginning of a whole new phase in our history."

Andy paused. "A lot of people who live in Detroit and its suburbs aren't yet convinced that the city is starting to move again. If we could get them downtown here, they would see for themselves."

A bus tour of Detroit can be the beginning of your first day in and around the city. See the Renaissance Center, drive to Windsor, have lunch in Greektown, perhaps tour of one of the two Detroit daily newspaper plants. If it's Sunday, try Brunch with Bach at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

The second day of your weekend probably will be spent in Dearborn, and will perhaps include a tour of the Rouge Plant, lunch at the Dearborn Inn and visits to either Henry Ford Museum or Greenfield Village.

The museum and village, jointly called Edison Institute, are considered among the 10 top tourist attractions in the U.S. If you have not been there in recent years, you have not seen the expansion and reorganization of exhibits at the museum nor the new buildings added to the Village.

Have you ever walked a catwalk above a moving strip of molten steel at the Rouge plant? A tourist stared and said: "I don't think I can tell anybody at home about this. They'll never believe it."

If you watched the cars being built on the assembly line at the Rouge? Millions of tourists do it every year, starting from the visitors' building on the grounds of the Edison Institute.

Downtown Detroit, which should include a drive around Belle Isle, and Dearborn are the two major tourist attractions, but there are other things to see in the area.

If you are looking for a small one- or two-day trip, try visiting the city that you may not have seen at all. Your own.



ABOVE: A worker on the line at the Ford Rouge plant. (Photo by Mickey Jones)  
Right: The Music Hall once again enjoys its status as a leading performing arts center.

### Free for the asking

With the snows of winter arriving almost daily, southeastern Michigan is again alive with numerous winter-time activities.

For updates on conditions at major ski resorts in the area, SNOWLINE, (313) 357-2000, provides round-the-clock reports on snow-base, grooming, hours of operation and weather conditions.

There also is information on cross-country skiing, ice-fishing and tobogganing.

The Southeast Michigan Travel and Tourist Association also provides the scoop on winter sports and recreation in the nine-county region in its "Winterfun" guidebook.

The book describes the facilities at eight major ski areas, cross-country skiing trails and snowmobiling areas.

Other winter activities like tobogganing, ice fishing, ice skating and sleigh rides are covered

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La Fontaine or in the authentic oriental setting of the Mikado. Enjoy the spirits of Christmas at the Celebration Lounge along with shows and dancing. And don't miss the first run movies in the three Renaissance theaters.

### Detroit Plaza Hotel

WESTERN INTERNATIONAL HOTELS

\*Single or double occupancy. Tax, tips not included. Subject to space availability. Good Nov. 20th through Dec. 31st.