

Fall colors ablaze—even down in Georgia



Nature trails along South Dakota's Missouri River show fall colors at their most intimate. Here a young woman admires the area's beauty from the Oahe Nature Trail.

Chrysanthemums were first cultivated in China 2,000 years ago and introduced to America in 1795 as a garden plant.

You may already know that. You may not even care. Probably our lives wouldn't suffer much if we never knew about this piece of trivia, but it is one of the reasons I enjoy hearing from Calloway Gardens in spite of my purple thumb. And it's one of the reasons I keep telling you about events that go on down there in Georgia.

I have a funny feeling Georgia wouldn't know an autumn color from an evergreen, but, nonetheless, Calloway Gardens celebrates its Autumn Colorfest Oct. 20-21, 27-28, and Nov. 3-4.

It also celebrates its annual chrysanthemum show in the greenhouse Oct. 15 through Nov. 30.

If you are planning a trip to Florida, and thereby abandoning the rest of us to winter, you should plan a side-trip to Calloway Gardens in Pine Mountain.

It is a spectacular garden and wilderness planting experience with green house, chapel and modern motel on the grounds run by the Ida Cason Calloway Foundation.

FALL COLOR TRIPS may be on your agenda going east, west or north. In Wisconsin, the East Troy Trolley Museum near Lake Geneva

TRAVEL LOG of Iris Jones



Michigan color tours

Three Michigan areas have announced fall color tours.

The biggest one is probably the color cruise on Lake Charlevoix, which will be conducted on the Beaver Islander Oct. 6-7, Oct. 13, and Oct. 20. Contact the Charlevoix Chamber of Commerce.

Crystal Falls and Iron River, both in the Upper Peninsula, have color tours planned for Oct. 1-10. Contact their chambers of commerce, or Bob Helwig at the Upper Peninsula

Travel and Recreation Association, P.O. Box 400, Iron Mountain, 49801. Newaygo, on Highway 37, north of Grand Rapids, has new maps for self-conducted color tours recommended from Oct. 1 through 21.

You can also contact nearby White Cloud for tours and fall flea market activity Oct. 6-7, 13-14.

Again, contact the chambers of commerce in the area that interests you.

has chosen the weekend of Oct. 13-14 as the perfect color weekend for photographers.

They will be toled along trolley tracks both days with photo stops along the way. Write to P.O. Box

726, East Troy, Wis. 53120.

If you'd rather watch the colors change from a canoe, the Blackhawk Ridge recreation area of Sauk City, Wis. is offering trees-ablaze color canoe and camping trips on

the Wisconsin River Sept. 22-23, 29-30 and Oct. 6-7.

Canoes will be launched below the Castle Rock Dam, north of Wisconsin Dells. Cost is \$65. You must be over 16. Contact Blackhawk Ridge, P.O. Box 92, Sauk City, Wis. 53583.

VERMONT HAS A fall foliage festival in what they call Vermont's Northeast Kingdom Oct. 1-6, when six towns in the area offer home-town hospitality and keep their fingers crossed for good color trees.

The towns are Walden, Cabot, Plainfield, Peacham, Barnet and Groton.

You can pick your own apples during September and part of October by contacting the Vermont Department of Agriculture, which has information on pick-your-own orchards around the state.

While you're there in Vermont, explore the Upland Shooting School in Manchester, where they teach hunters how to shoot properly, catch the Octoberfest in Stowe Oct. 5-8 and the Stratton Arts Festival through Oct. 14; and join 60 fiddlers from New England and Canada for a great fiddle contest Sept. 28 and 29 in Barre, Vt.

IN CANADA you can take the Down East Color Tour for 10 days through New Brunswick; it leaves Hamilton, Ontario Sept. 29 for \$324.

L'Ermitage: It's a grand hotel in any language

"One day in the dining room there were two rock stars on my right. . . John Travolta was across the room, Telly Savalas was sitting at that table in a New York Yankees baseball jacket. Gerry Ford's son walked in looking for somebody who apparently never showed up."

Those were the words of an anonymous diner, and the setting was the Cafe Russe, on the eighth floor of L'Ermitage, a hotel that looks like all the other small apartment buildings along Burton Way in Beverly Hills, Calif.

The L'Ermitage began as an apartment building, and the only thing that is different now is the nameplate hidden against a low wall at the lobby entrance.

It is described as "Hotel de grande classe" although detractors say it is strictly a Beverly Hills idea of what grand class is all about. Either way, it is an excellent example of unique and elegant hotel accommodations built for the affluent traveler.

TRAVELERS ALWAYS have been fascinated by unusual hotels, especially the great hotels built for rich and royal travelers of another age: The Savoy in London, Raffles in Singapore, the Taj Mahal in Bombay. Some are small and elegant, like the Ritz Carlton in Montreal. Most are soaring palaces of stone like the Chateau Frontenac in Quebec.

Few of the grand hotels have survived the age of the chain motel, which was built for the middle-income traveler. Those that have survived are flourishing, because affluent travelers of today want the same thing that royal travelers wanted a century ago: An elegant environment where they can relax in the midst of individualized service and privacy.

Arnold and Severyn Ashkenazy opened L'Ermitage in Beverly Hills because they saw a market for a modern hotel that offers the service common to European grand hotels before World War II.

The Ashkenazy brothers were born into a Russian family living in Poland, and they were raised in France before emigrating to the U.S.

Severyn, the founder and present president of L'Ermitage, has been managing for years by some common hotel practices: The 25-cent newspaper that costs a \$1 tip when delivered. The breakfast that costs \$5 by the time it gets to your room.

At L'Ermitage, the paper is delivered free every morning along with a free breakfast of croissants, coffee and orange juice.

Of course nothing is really free, especially in a place where room rates range from \$105 to \$315 a day. The lowest-priced room is a suite with a king-sized bed on a raised platform behind a curtain, and a large living area with couches, dining table, bar kitchen facilities and balcony. The most expensive is a two-story, two-bedroom townhouse suite. All of them have hanging gardens of green plants as part of the decor.

WHAT IS IT like to stay in a hotel where an oil sheik was once married and Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones was once seen casually driving away in a red Pacer?

First, you have to find it, hidden away among other eight-story cream stucco buildings. It's the one with the wrought-iron balconies. The lobby looks like any small apartment-building lobby, except for the original oil paintings from the million-dollar collection of the Ashkenazy brothers.

There's no key. You give the desk clerk your birthday or some other easily-remembered number and he programs the Digitey so that only you and the hotel management can get in. Opening the door is like pushing the computer numbers on a cash machine at the bank, and sometimes you get the same maddening results.

If you arrange it in advance, your favorite liquor is in the liquor cabinet. If you came in on the romantic one-night-including-dinner tab, you'll have your own

chef and maitre d'hotel to fuss over your food and serve French wines while guitars strum in the background, and it won't cost you a cent more than \$350 in all.

If you're just a regular traveler, you'll probably eat in stay if you want to be seen. There are always rumors about famous guests, but the management will never confirm them because the unspoken contract with famous guests is to maintain their privacy.

The Cafe Russe is an intimate dining room of polished wooden tables, fresh flowers and oil paintings with a grand piano in one corner and a bar in the other.

The Filet of Sole Menniere was crisp on the outside and still soft inside. The house wine from the Loire was full-bodied and cool. We had chocolate cream for dessert. The dinner was perfectly served, although nobody hovered and there was no stiffness in the air.

The pianist switched back and forth from a little Bacharach to a little Bach, and he was happy to oblige when the slightly drunk dinner guest wobbled across the room and asked for "Spring is Bursting Out All Over."

That dinner for two, with house wine, cost roughly \$40.

What distinguished L'Ermitage from those grand hotels of the past may be privacy. This is not the place to stay if you want to be seen. There are always rumors about famous guests, but the management will never confirm them because the unspoken contract with famous guests is to maintain their privacy.

Is it worth the money to stay here? If you are already spending \$60-70 a night in a contemporary glass-and-steel palace somewhere, this isn't much of an increase and the price of the basic room is probably worth the experience. The dining room is reserved for hotel guests, so you won't find local diners there.

If you really want the old-world hotel experience, you will more likely find it in the Empress Hotel in Victoria, Canada, or the Old Winter Palace in Luxor, Egypt.

A 21st century grand hotel doesn't really mean opulence, but it is certainly a different experience from a roadside inn.

Photos by Micky Jones

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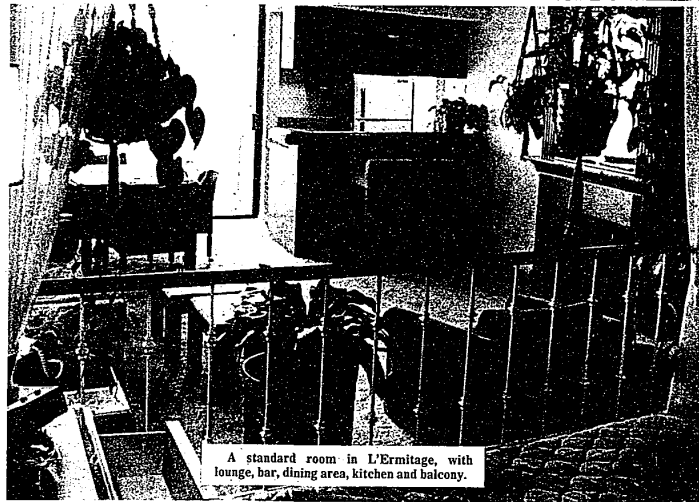
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L'Ermitage hides among affluent apartment buildings in Beverly Hills, California.



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