



travel log

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Surveying the scene helps keep coffee hot

How do you rate hotels and restaurants when you travel? I don't consider myself a critic, because you must visit establishments often and anonymously to get any real feel for a place.

I do, however, try to get some general sense of the places I visit, so that I can give readers general advice about where to go. I was very interested in a talk given recently on the subject by Peter Blythe, vice president of food and beverage for Western International Hotels.

You must always evaluate survey information (i.e. Proctor and Gamble conveniently discovered that more travelers are concerned about their bath soap than anything else). I was impressed with Blythe's ability to explore travel needs without too much reference to his hotels.

One survey shows the following facts about dining out: one in three meals is eaten out, half the population eats out once a month, 30 percent twice a month.

What they want to know, according to Blythe, is whether a restaurant is what it pretends to be. If the decor and menu are formal, the food should be haute cuisine and the service formal. If decor and menu are homey, food and service should match.

They also want to know whether they will get value for the money. Blythe checks that by checking one or two typical foods, especially soups and bread and by checking the wine list. If wine is marked up more than twice the market price, it's too high.

If the specialty range is too wide, it means too much of the food comes frozen.

Ask yourself these questions the next time you visit a restaurant: Is the focus on bar or food? What kind of music is played and at what sound level? Is it a madhouse of contemporary decor, or does it have candles, flowers, soft lighting and folded napkins? How does the menu feel?

Are the tablecloths too long or too short? What about paintings, food displays, salad bar? How long can you linger without feeling uncomfortable? How is the service?

SURVEYS SHOW that hotels are rated by their customers by the following standards. Cleanliness is far ahead of everything else, followed in order by convenient location, large comfortable bed, quiet, friendly attitude, security, convenience of service, available restaurants and family comfort.

Blythe said his chain looks for 10 items when rating its own hotels. How are reservations handled? How does check-in work, including front desk, doorman, parking, bellhop? Are rooms fresh, repaired and have a good bed?

What is the quality of food and beverage service? Are public areas inviting? How is the design and decor? What about signs, graphics, brochures? Additional services, like shoeshine, and concierge? How are you treated at check-out? What about location, views, nearby tourist attractions, etc?

I asked him about my four pet peeves: cold coffee from room service, inadequate luggage racks, shower heads that dribble, and having to climb behind the floor lamp to plug in my hair dryer.

HOTELS HAVE always been designed for male travelers, who have only recently started to use hair dryers. They will be standard soon enough, if men keep using them. Simple luggage racks are cheap and therefore attractive to many hotels.

Check the shower head; if it doesn't say self-cleaning it will probably plug up.

If you need help in your room, never talk to anyone except the executive housekeeper. She handles everything from irons and beds to laundry and typewriters, and knows more than anyone else in the hotel. If you need something, she usually can get it for you.

Cold coffee? Some brilliant salesman sold glass "hottles" to hotels all over the country, despite the fact they don't keep liquids hot. When you order from room service, ask for a pot of coffee.

tripping

North to Alaska

The Holland America cruise liner S.S. Rotterdam will begin making trips along the west coast from San Francisco in 1981. The schedule includes seven 12-day jaunts to Alaska in the summer.

Dates for these are June 17 and 29, July 11 and 23, and Aug. 4, 16 and 28. Stops will be made at Vancouver, Prince Rupert and Victoria in British Columbia, and Ketchikan, Juneau and Sitka in Alaska.

Rates are \$1,795 to \$3,875. Those prices do not include air fare. Several fly/cruise packages will be offered. For information, see your travel agent.

hull type, engine modifications, and type of fuel burned.

Area contenders include the Mist, owned by Dutch Marriott and Jack Henry of Walled Lake and driven by Larry Cowell, and Hydrophobia, owned and driven by Paul Smith of Canton and sponsored by Square Wall Construction Co.

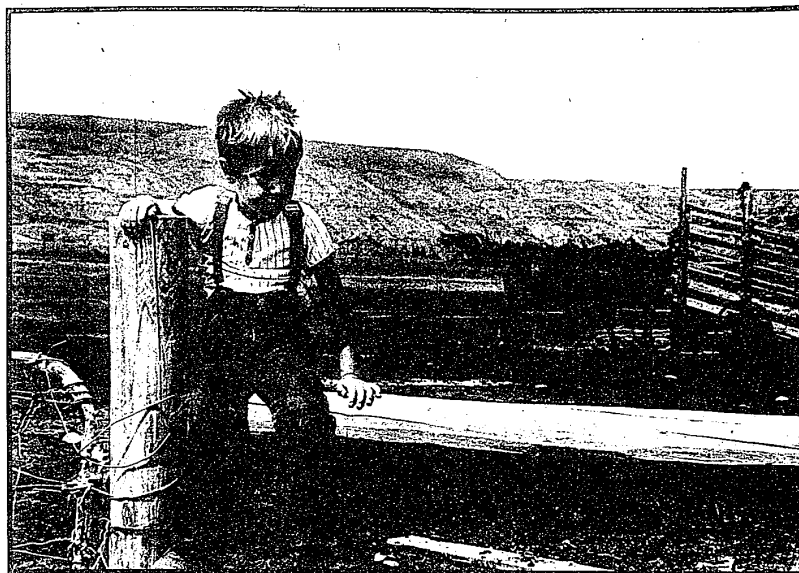
Holloway Reservoir is in Columbiaville, at Columbiaville and N. Lake roads. It's 1-75 to Mt. Morris exit, east from there to M-15, then north to Dodge Road. Admission is \$4 Saturday and \$6 Sunday. Children younger than 12 get in free.

ART APPRECIATION

Sixty woodblock prints of Japanese stage, fictitious heroes and the pleasures of the leisure class are in the "World of Kunisada," at the Indianapolis Museum of Art.

Utagawa Kunisada was regarded early in his 49-year career as a great ukiyo-e artist.

The show is in the Beesley Gallery at the museum at 1200 W. 38th St.; 317-823-1231. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays-Sundays.



When you're young and all the world is new, where but to see it all than from the top rail. The growing number of guest ranches scattered around the Alberta countryside provide a relaxing and healthful alternative to the bustle of city quarters. (Photo by Iris Sanderson Jones)

This Canadian potpourri will tickle your fancy one way or another, eh

Editor's note: The Canadian province of Alberta is celebrating its 75th year in the Canadian confederation this year. Last week, we took you from the capital city of Edmonton to Jasper National Park in the Rocky Mountains. This week we complete our western Canada tour by visiting the Athabasca Glacier, Rocky Mountain House, a guest ranch, dinosaur museum and Calgary. For further information on travel in Alberta, contact Travel Alberta, 10065 Jasper Ave., Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5J 0H4.

By IRIS SANDERSON JONES

As we drive south on the Icefield Parkway, the morning mist rises slowly out of the valleys and blue sky breaks through the cloud cover. Our route is between misted evergreens beside the Athabasca River. Our destination is the Athabasca Glacier.

This is the most scenic mountain road I have ever seen. From the road and the adjacent river, a great sweep of green trees mounts to sharp peaks on every side, jagged against cloud-puffed blue skies.

Across the great green valley is the Athabasca Pass, where explorers and fur traders went through these mountains to continue their 600-mile trek to the Pacific Ocean.

From the Interpretive Center where a curved winddown gives you a full view of the Athabasca Glacier, a model recessed in the

floor shows the 130-mile-long Columbia Icefield.

Here you can see it as you could never see it from any other spot on the ground. The icefield, which is the source of the many glaciers, spreads like a huge frozen lake across the top of a mountain range. Glaciers flow down the valleys in all directions from the icefields: Castleguard Glacier, Dome Glacier, Saskatchewan Glacier, Athabasca Glacier.

We will climb the Athabasca, which descends 4.5 miles from the rim of the icefields in a sloping tongue of ice that is as deep as the Empire State Building is tall. The glacier loses 30 feet a year.

THE TOURIST experience here is a strange one. A bus takes us up a high, rough road to tour buses mounted on tank treads. Smaller groups board smaller yellow vans, also riding on treads. The treads grip a steep 45-degree-angle road that leads us straight down to the surface of the glacier.

From here, the glacier makes a hard bumpy surface between rocky mountain peaks powdered with snow. The glacier is dusted with coal. Runoff follows a ditch downhill. This natural wonder is created from compressed crystals, not from snow, so it is blue when the sun shines through it.

The frozen road through the glacier needs only a yellow line and a stop sign to make it real.

At the end of the road, where the strange tour vehicles park and later run around, we get out to walk the glacier.



Special vans mounted on tank treads carry tourists across the Athabasca Glacier.

MOST PEOPLE would head south here to Lake Louise and Banff, two of the most scenic areas in the mountain. We have gone that route before, so we will drive out of the mountains toward the foothills on the David Thompson Highway, with stops planned at Rocky Mountain House, the town of Red Deer, a guest ranch and a dinosaur museum.

People swarm up the hard, cold surface, and a few go out to the red flags that mark the glacier's flow. It is chilly but not really cold. It is easy to imagine what the first explorers, like David Thompson, must have felt when they saw these great rock and ice barriers for the first time.



With high-rises rising fast, Calgary, Alberta, like Edmonton, is taking on a sprawling, cosmopolitan look.