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San Francisco

Leave your heart in a personal place

By IRIS SANDERSON JONES

Gramma's is a grand old Victorian house set back from Telegraph Avenue in San Francisco. The Monte Cristo is a tiny elegant hotel on Presidio Avenue. The two guest bedrooms in the townhouse of John and Brenda McNamara have a glorious view of the Bay and of the Golden Gate Bridge.

All of them are Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodations in San Francisco, part of a growing B&B movement across the United States.

Bill and Mary Schoen of Birmingham explored these intriguing new accommodations in California recently.

They highly recommend bed and breakfast accommodation to travelers who enjoy a personalized visit in private homes or small inns.

The B&B movement in California divides two ways: guest rooms in private homes, ranging from private houses through townhouses, to houseboats; and small, privately run inns, most of them grand old houses converted to hotels in the city.

"Some people are never happy staying in a private house, so they should obviously try the inns," Mary said. "Others prefer to be part of the city in a very personal way, living in a private home and taking the bus into town like the natives do."

ACCOMMODATIONS in private homes is available by mail through Bed and Breakfast International, 151 Ardmore Road, Kensington, Calif. 94707. They list rooms primarily in California although they have a few in Hawaii, Seattle, Las Vegas and Manhattan.

The organization screens the hosts and probably the credit card of the applying guest. According to Mary Schoen, you can write and say "We're going to San Francisco for a week, we want twin beds in a place near the downtown area and we're allergic to cats." B&B International will find you a room.

You will usually share a bath and sometimes you will be offered kitchen and laundry privileges. You always get a good bacon-and-egg style breakfast. There is a three-night minimum stay in major cities.

John and Brenda McNamara typify the hosts. They are friendly people who love where they live, and love to show it off to guests. They have eight children, so they are used to activity, but only one child is left at home, so they rent out two bedrooms with an adjoining bath. The cost is \$36 for two, including breakfast.

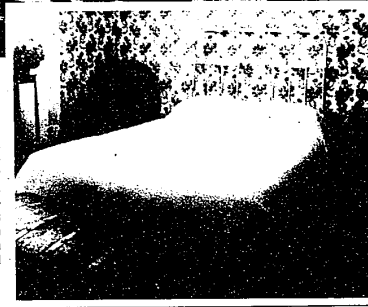
Bed and breakfast accommodation can also be found through the Bed and Breakfast League, 20 Nassau St., Princeton, N.J. 08540, a membership organization which mails out good directories.

The league was founded by an American woman who loved to travel bed-and-breakfast style in Europe, but could not find such accommodations in the United States. The directory lists accommodations in large cities throughout the country.

A typical accommodation which rents for \$28 a day for two starts "New York. Close to Washington Square at the center of Greenwich Village, exquisitely furnished home in former loft. . . ."



Bed and breakfast inns have long been popular in other parts of the world. They are cozy dwellings that demand and receive the unrelenting attention of their owners. ABOVE: The porch at Gramma's near the University of California campus in Berkeley. RIGHT: A room in the Monte Cristo in San Francisco. (Photos by Bill Schoen)



B&B accommodations in a private home are the cheapest of the two bed-and-breakfast styles. The bed and breakfast inns, which cost more, are usually in large, renovated old houses, or in two houses put together, like the first of these inns to open in San Francisco four years ago. The Bed and Breakfast Inn, at 4 Charlton Ct., San Francisco 94123, is on a small court yard off Union Street, one of the best shopping streets in the city.

"IT IS REALLY two old houses put together," Mary Schoen said. "It looks like the background for an elegant advertising photo for an expensive new car."

"You will find great attention to detail when a husband and wife are owners of a bed and breakfast inn, which means they are constantly on deck

and keeping their eye on things. This place has nine rooms, filled with such things as fresh flowers and cut glass decanters of sherry."

The cheapest room, which shares a bath, is \$38 for two and the most expensive suite with its own spiral staircase is \$148.

Two of Mary's favorite inns in the San Francisco area are Gramma's near the University of California campus, at 2740 Telegraph Ave. in Berkeley and the Monte Cristo at 600 Presidio Ave. San Francisco.

"Gramma's is an old house remodeled with taste and charm. It has 19 rooms with brass beds, hand-made quilts, fresh flowers, lace curtains."

"Eight rooms at the back have fireplaces and overlook the garden. Rooms are from \$55 up a night, including breakfast."

travel log
Iris Sanderson Jones
contributing travel editor

Seek and ye shall get food help from locals

Armchair travel is almost as good as the real thing when you have friends like Bill and Mary Schoen of Birmingham, who explored California bed and breakfast places for us this week.

The Schoens brought back three other tidbits from that trip: a story of news in the making, a secret list of restaurants coaxed out of San Francisco friends, and a surprising tip on how to buy sourdough bread.

The news occurred on a mountain trail in Yosemite National Park, where Bill and his daughter, Kitty, were hiking.

There are two main trails going up from the valley. While climbing uphill on one trail, Bill heard a roar that sounded like a plane taking off.

It was a rockslide on the second trail that killed several hikers that afternoon.

Bill would have been much more inhibited about taking pictures of the scene if he had known at the time that the slide was roaring down a hiking trail and that people were being hurt.

He didn't know. He took some good photos, one of which dominated page two of the San Francisco Chronicle the next day.

By that time, the Schoens were touring San Francisco with old friends Henry and Dottie McKenzie, who gave them an inside look at the city.

"IN SPITE OF too many high-rise buildings blocking the view, aging cable cars and other urban problems, San Francisco is still a beautiful, beguiling place — the closest we have to that 'shining city on a hill,'" Mary said.

"There's nothing like seeing a city with friends who live there and love it. There's the tourist Chinatown, for example, and then there's Stockton Street, from Broadway to Sacramento, where the Chinese do their shopping."

"North Beach, the Italian section, is full of good little grocery stores and restaurants; the Mission district has artists' recent arrivals from Central America, and 'low riders' who zoom around in souped-up, low-slung cars. Haight-Ashbury, hippy heaven in the 1960s, is coming back as a neighborhood after a long period of adversity."

Mary brought back to share "The McKenzie's Secret List of not-too-expensive, not-too-well-known Restaurants," where the local people eat.

● LeCyrano, 4134 Geary Blvd. "Small, excellent French food, good wine list."

● The Green Valley, 510 Green St. "Family owned (your hosts are Adriano, Baffie and Louis), good Italian food, fast service, comic waitress who sings out the menu and adds . . . and with meat balls!"

● Cafe du Nord, "don't have the address, but it's on Market Street, just past the Mint. Cheerful basement place with red-checked tablecloths, etc; good Basque food and a menu that changes daily. There's a splendid old mahogany bar with two antique gold cash registers at each end. Owner is a friendly chap with a fierce handlebar mustache."

● Four Seas, 731 Grant Ave. "A favorite Chinese restaurant. Try the melon soup. Another good one is Hang-Wah on Clement St. clientele there is chiefly oriental, which tells you something."

● The Gold Spike, 827 Columbus. "Go there for cioppino, instead of the overpriced tourist traps on Fishermen's Wharf."

● "For lunch, try Mama's in Macy's basement. Unbelievable sandwiches."

Final food tip: "If you want to bring back some sourdough French bread, don't buy it on Wednesdays — the bakeries don't operate that day."

tripping

Star light, star bright

Opryland talent scouts' scopes will be scanning the scene hereabouts for singers, dancers, musicians, stage managers and technicians for next season's productions Dec. 10 and 11.

Auditions for the entertainment park's '81 season will be from noon to 4 p.m. Dec. 10 in Assembly Hall of the Michigan Union at the University of Michigan. In Detroit, tryouts will be from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Madame Cadillac Hall in Alumni Hall of Marygrove College.

Singers will be asked to perform two or more numbers, one a ballad, other upbeat in nature. An accompanist will be provided, but you supply the songsheets. Dancers' routines should be no longer than a minute. Musicians will be asked to sight read.

Three hundred fifty people will be chosen from 25 auditions nationwide, so make it good and make us proud. For more, write Opryland Entertainment Department, 2802 Opryland Dr., Nashville, Tenn. 37214; 1-615-859-6900.

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You'll find spectacular restaurants—delightfully seasoned, of course. (And maybe an occasional visit from Old St. Nick.)
Dine at the Summit, 71 swales above a crisp winter's day . . . Enjoy gourmet cuisine at LaFontaine . . . Toast the spirits of Christmas at the Celebration Lounge. Bring the whole family to Cafe Renaissance for casual dining. There's lots of old-fashioned Christmas joy—so eat, drink and make merry!

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*Based on double occupancy per night. Single occupancy rate \$39.00. Tax and gratuities not included. Offer subject to space availability. Valid only in connection with individual travel and not available to convention or special rated business. Good November 15 thru January 10, 1981.

Time to think fast

Or at least think about the immediate period prior to the annual 40-day diet, called Mardi Gras.

The sixth annual Mardi Gras Fun Train will leave Chicago Feb. 27 for a six-day trip, four of those days and nights in New Orleans.

The tour includes round-trip rail from the Windy City, Marriott Hotel accommodations, a little sight-seeing, a little dancing, the originality that is New Orleans, and a lot of jazz. Tips and transfers are also included.

Price options are staggered. For information, write Sierra West Adventures, 111 Pine St., San Francisco, Calif. 94111.

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