

Thursday, March 4, 1982

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Look out, Ingrid Bergman! Orient Express returns

THE ORIENT EXPRESS. The name conjures up memories of old movies, spy stories, Agatha Christie thrillers — all the myth and magic of a travel experience that is gone forever.

At least I thought it was gone forever until Bob Davis waved a brand new glossy brochure under my nose recently.

Bob is the owner of Robert Davis Travel of Bloomfield Hills, and it takes a lot to get him excited. He has done all the exotic trips that most of us dream about — houseboating on the Amazon, trekking through New Guinea, touring the back roads of Burma — so when Bob gets excited, I pay attention.

What excited him was a new train, called the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, based on the atmosphere and part of the route of the famous old Orient Express.

The train leaves London at noon one day and arrives in Venice 24 hours later, with stops at Paris and Milan. Bob plans to include the trip in a European tour he has scheduled for September.

THE GLOSSY brochure is powerful stuff. Jeweled women in elegant 1920s settings reminiscent of a stylish 50-year-old movie. Before you pay the \$550 one-way fare, however, remember that neither Ingrid Bergman nor Albert Finney will be aboard.

The railway cars are beautifully renovated antique cars, some from the original Orient Express. The old Brighton Bell and the Golden Arrow, in their heyday 50 years ago, take you in an atmosphere of polished mahogany and brass from London to Folkestone, where the more contemporary Sealink ferry carries you across the English Channel.

At Boulogne, you pick up the 1920s *Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits des Grand Express Europeens* sleeper for Paris, and then track on through the Alps and the Simplon Tunnel to Venice.

The train doesn't start its official run until May. A few people in the travel

business have done advance runs however, so I can at least give you their evaluation.

THE RAILWAY CARS are apparently as sensational in fact as they are in the polished brochure. The meals are also said to live up to the advance publicity, which uses a lot of words like "gourmet" and "cuisine."

There is some indication that the train runs late, possibly because it is sidetracked for regular express trains; this, of course, could change with regular scheduling.

That's the good news. If you read the fine print, you will see the bad news. Sleeping rooms do not have lavatories; you must go down the hall just like they did in the good old days. There is only one porter for every two cars, which could slow down the service a little.

This is definitely an expensive travel experience for people eager to relive an early 20th century lifestyle.

Bob Davis' tour, Sept. 6-19, will cost \$2,700 per person for the train plus three days in London and Paris and four days in Venice, first class all the way.

YOU CAN book all or a portion of the trip yourself through your travel agent.

It costs \$250 London to Paris, \$500 London to Milan, \$390 Paris to Milan, \$40 Paris to Venice and \$75 Milan to Venice. The \$550 London-Venice price includes lunch, afternoon tea and drinks in England, but not on the continent.

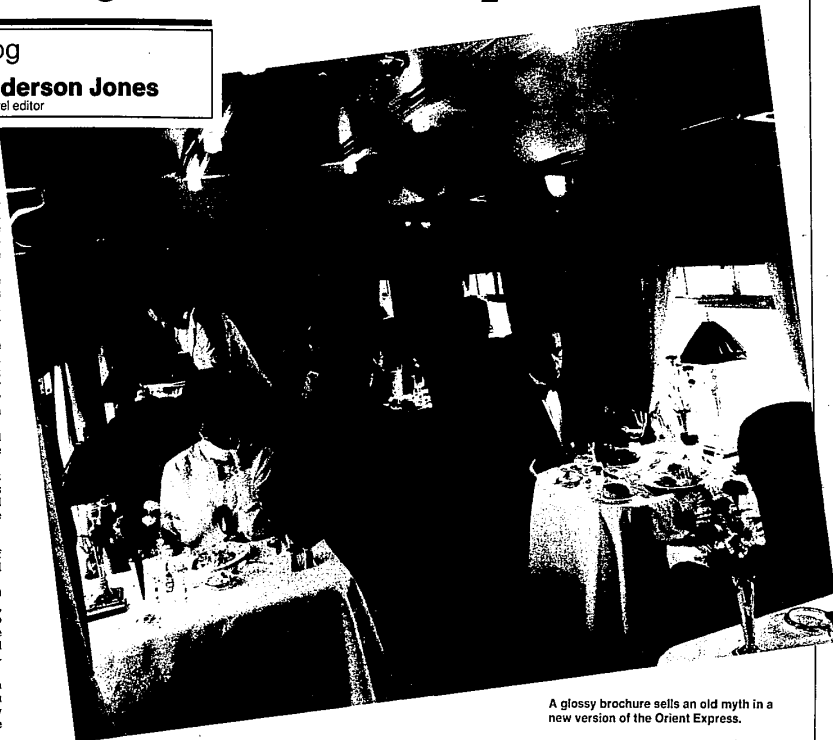
The gorgeous brochure is worth a trip to your travel agent, even if you never take the train. In fact, the new Orient Express may have a hard time living up to its advance publicity.



travel log

Iris Sanderson Jones

contributing travel editor



A glossy brochure sells an old myth in a new version of the Orient Express.

Exchange homes with England

A Northville family has gone into the foreign exchange business, but they are not exchanging money. They are exchanging travelers.

Joan and Karyn Robinson, a mother-daughter team, are working with a British travel agency to arrange home visits in England. American travelers can arrange to stay in British homes for approximately five pounds, or \$8.50 a night; they are also encouraged to host British families in their American homes for about the same price.

Travelers can also arrange to exchange free visiting time in a British home for free visiting time here in Michigan.

The Robinsons got into the business because a second daughter, Jamie, worked with Lancing Travel in Lancing, England. The firm has already established a vacation exchange program among families in various parts of Great Britain.

The Northville office launched the program by offering exchanges in British cities like Birmingham, Lancing, Plymouth, Brighton, etc. You can, however, arrange visits to any part of England.

If you are interested in such a travel experience,



contact Joan Robinson at 21228 Glen Haven Circle, Northville 48197 or call 349-9198.

More than 60 people have already filled out a questionnaire and several area families are already scheduled to visit British homes this year.

— Iris Jones

This English pub is typical of the scenes on an exchange tour of England.

Cranbrook leads tour to Florida

The Cranbrook Institute of Science will lead an April 19-29 field expedition, focused on both fun and education, into the Florida Keys.

The trip will be led by institute staffers James A. Fowler, a wildlife identification expert, and Donna Engard, exhibit designer and veteran traveler.

Ms. Engard, of Royal Oak, has participated in these expeditions to various parts of the world over the 12-year span of the program. She says that men and women of all ages are invited to sign up for the tour, and that no academic or adventure experience is required.

"We'll spend five days in Everglades National Park, walking, canoeing the swamp, going by train across Shark Valley freshwater slough, and we'll have optional activities like fishing, hiking, wildlife identification and other things."

"There will always be alternatives for anyone who doesn't want to participate in a particular event."

The tour ends at Key West, after a day exploring the "forested" Lignumvitae Key and the historic Indian Key. Optional tours to the Dry Tortugas are available.

The trip costs \$895, including day trip luncheon but no other meals. A \$100 tax-deductible donation

to Cranbrook is included in the price. For information, contact the institute at 645-3230.

— Iris Jones



The Florida Keys include sights of the gulls.

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