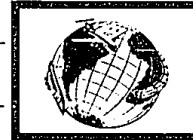


Travel Scene



108**

O&E Thursday, April 26, 1990

crossroads

Iris Sanderson Jones

The holy path to Mecca

The first time I saw the sign it was inside a bureau drawer in the Rasa Sayang Hotel, one of several beautiful high-rise beach hotels in Penang. Penang is an island connected by bridge and ferry to the northwest coast of Malaysia, on the southernmost peninsula of southeast Asia.

The sign was one word: KIBLAT. It was printed inside the outline of an arrow that pointed towards the rear corner of the drawer.

Malaysia is a Muslim country, but it has large minorities of many religious persuasions, so we had been taking our shoes off all day to enter the state mosque, to climb the hill to the Pagoda of Ten Thousand Buddhas, to creep into the Snake Temple and to admire the 100-foot-long Reclining Buddha.

The second time I saw the sign was on the ceiling of our room in the Perdana Hotel in Kota Bharu, across the peninsula on the South China Sea. We had photographed Malay fishermen pulling colorful boats through the surf on a wide sand beach, watched the top spinners, the drummers and the Kelantan dancers, before falling into bed, so I didn't actually see the sign until I was flat on my back, ready to turn out the light.

THE SAME word: KIBLAT. The same boxed arrow. Only this time it was on the ceiling of our hotel room, pointing toward the corner.

"It must be something to do with electricity or fire escapes," I said.

Malaysia is a small country, but we spent a lot of time traveling from one place to another aboard Malaysian Air Lines, so the mystery wasn't solved until we reached the capital city of Kuala Lumpur.

Our guide, Anuar Haji Abdul Hamid, took us for a walking tour around the minarets and domes of Masjid Jamek, the public mosque, built on the very spot where Kuala Lumpur was founded centuries ago at the junction of the Klang and Gombak rivers.

"Why are the men stretched out all over the floor?" somebody asked. "They look like they're napping."

"Muslims must pray five times a day," Anuar said. "Today is Sunday, these men don't have to work and they are waiting for the next prayer."

"Do they pray facing to the east?"

"They face the holy city of Mecca," Anuar said.

The question kept nagging at me as we photographed the mosque, the old colonial buildings of Kuala Lumpur, the war memorial high above the Lake Gardens. How does a devout Muslim know the direction of Mecca when he travels?

It was a rhetorical question, long forgotten by the time we checked into the Hyatt Sajjana Hotel and Country Club, eager to leap into the swimming pool.

I pulled a stack of clothes out of my suitcase, opened a bureau drawer and there it was: KIBLAT. And an arrow pointing nowhere.

By that time I had bought a Malay-English dictionary. I dug it out of the bottom of my carry-on luggage and flipped through to the letter "K."

"Kiblat. Here it is," I said. "You're not going to believe this!"

"What does it mean," Mickey asked.

"It means the direction of Mecca."

He looked puzzled, but any devout Muslim would know exactly what it meant when he prepared for prayer at 6 a.m., at 1:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m., at sunset and at 8:30 p.m. It is how you know the direction of Mecca when you travel in Malaysia.

St. Louis!

THE BIG, SMALL TOWN ON THE RIVER

By Carolyn DeMarco staff writer

Welcome to St. Louis, Mo. — a big, small town or maybe it's a small, big town, pressed up tight against the Mississippi River, halfway between Canada and the Gulf of Mexico and proudly referred to as the "gateway to the west."

It's also the location of the world's largest brewery, site of the 1904 World's Fair, birthplace of sliced bread, home of the National Bowling Hall of Fame and the eastern border for all radio stations that start with K.

We took our trip during the midwinter season which offers cheap travel rates and a break from the hustle and bustle of tourist season. However, most river boats and outdoor tourist sites are closed for the winter.

Most Mississippi sidewheeler excursion boats run between May and October as well as the Six Flags Over Mid-America amusement park. If you go this summer check them out and don't forget St. Louis Cardinals baseball — the heart of St. Louis tourism.

HOTELS ARE plentiful in St. Louis. The Hotel Majestic, a historic pearl of a hotel, is \$180 a night for two persons, according to the AAA Tourbook, \$100 a night per a long-distance inquiry, and only \$65 per night when you actually confront the desk clerk. Other hotels have similarly discounted for the quiet times.

A trip to St. Louis is not a trip to St. Louis without a visit to the famous Gateway Arch, this country's tallest monument and one of its most-visited sites since it was built in 1965. It's all part of Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, a national park commemorating St. Louis as the Gateway to the West.

For \$2.50 (4.50 for kids) you can travel to the top of the arch. Allow one hour for the wait and the ride. While you're waiting you can tour the free Westward Expansion Museum on the site and learn more about the trend that Lewis and Clark started and nouveau Californians continue.

While down by the river side, you can stroll the cobblestone levee (per Webster, an embankment to prevent a river from flooding bordering land). Many excursion boats double as restaurants — including a floating McDonald's!

IN 1764, a French fur trapper, Pierre LaClede, established a trading post on this western bank of the Mississippi. Today it's a tourist attraction — restaurants and shops. Among them are Gibbo's Novelties and Costumes, a fun shop with adult novelties, stage makeup and magic tricks; Missouri Peddlers, a showcase for Missouri craftsmen with quilts, toys and folk art; and Swiss Village Book Store Antique Annex, a browser's dream of old and rare books and artifacts.

After dark the parking lots fill with funseekers there for the good music and fun times and the streets fill with strollers and home-drawn carriages.

Young locals consider Muddy Waters the most popular nightspot. Hannegan's Pub features jazz. The Barney Stone houses a dinner theater.

JUST ACROSS town at Market and 18th is a specta-



The Old Courthouse (1839) in front of the Gateway Arch is a peaceful spot for relaxing in downtown St. Louis.

MICKY JONES

lar tourist attraction and prominent landmark, Union Station. In its heyday, the mammoth station was the largest and busiest in the world with more than 100,000 passengers through each day.

Shops in the station include all the upscale regulars you've come to know and love — Eddie Bauer, Crabtree and Evelyn, Banana Republic, and some interesting independents as well.

They include the Great Train Store, which sells O, N and H gauge to kids who never grow up as well as whistles, cassettes, books and mugs for train lovers. Near it is America's National Parks, a store devoted to books about U.S. national parks, history and ecological topics. Joy of Ireland, all the obvious Irish imports like woolens, Irish oatmeal and heraldic keychains and posters; a computer genealogy kiosk, and Top It Off, a small hat store.

GO TO THE HOME of the world's largest brewery and not visit! No chance. The tour takes you outside through blocks and blocks of Anheuser-Busch property including the famous Clydesdales' stable, packaging plant and the ever-popular hospitality center. A large gift shop caters to logo lovers of Budweiser and Michelob brews.

Beer lovers are often baseball lovers as well. If you fit into the category, not far from the brewery is Busch Stadium, home to the (St. Louis) Sports Hall of Fame. Stan is still The Man here, 40 years later. Muslim is immortalized with a statue outside, and a near-shrine inside. You can also follow the careers of baseball greats Lou Brock, Ken

Boyer, Dizzy Dean and Red Schoendienst. All other sports take a back seat.

Just across the street is the National Bowling Hall of Fame, depicting the history and heroes of the game, an old-fashioned bowling alley and other exhibits. Ho hum.

INSTITUTIONS on the grounds of the 1,400 acres of Forest Park include the St. Louis Art Museum, St. Louis Zoological Park, St. Louis Science Center and the Jefferson Memorial, which chronicles St. Louis history.

The art museum is the successor to the oldest art museum west of the Mississippi and ranked as one of the top 10 in the United States. Admission is free.

There is an admission charge to the strikingly modern science center — the combined McDonnell Planetarium, Museum of Science and Natural History and the Medical Museum. The Discovery Room allows children the opportunity to see, feel and touch. Monsanto Science Center provides 24 larger-than-life exhibits in an outdoor setting.

The Missouri Botanical Garden is the oldest botanical garden in the United States, conceived in the 1850s by Henry Shaw, and still referred to by St. Louisans as Shaw's Garden. The 79-acre garden is built around Shaw's country home, Tower Grove House, which can be toured.

Please turn to Page 9

Festivals: from tulips to trout

By Iris Sanderson Jones contributing travel editor

The Michigan festival season will be launched in a burst of color when the annual tulip festival takes place May 14-19 in Holland. TULIP TIME '90 celebrates the Dutch heritage of this western Michigan city, where millions of tulips bloom every spring.

The festival includes 1,400 costumed Klompen dancers, eight miles of tulip lanes and a full schedule of parades, musical shows, street scrubbings and other Netherlands attractions.

You can beat the crowds by attending some of the warm-up events, which start with a musical cabaret called The All Night Strum May 9 and free performances in Centennial Park May 10. The traditional Tulip Time Market opens May 11.

This warm-up is designed to attract visitors a week ahead of the official festival, and to display the tulips as long as possible. The first big parade, Volksparade, will be May 15. By that time, the shows will be in full swing.

SHOWS INCLUDE the Living End Singers, 110 teens singing Christian music in a multimedia stage; the Annual Band Review; the Tulip Time Salute; a vaudeville show called Showstoppers; the Stars of Lawrence Welk; Barbershop on Parade; folk music; Victor Herbert's "The Red Mill"; Netherland folk dances; and a patriotic show called America Sings.

Year-round Holland attractions will be open and busy during the festival, including the Windmill Island attractions.

They include De Swaan, the only operating Dutch windmill in the United States, a 20-minute film about windmills, a Dutch merry-go-round called the draaimolen, and other picturesque Dutch attractions set amid the tulips of Windmill Island Municipal Park in downtown Holland.

To arrange housing, contact the Tulip Time Housing Service at 100 W. 8th St., Holland 49423. Ask them to send you a schedule so you can sign up for various events and meals.

For more information, call toll-free (800) 222-2770.

HERE IS A LIST of other Michigan events to be celebrated through May:

Two maple syrup festivals will be this weekend: in Shepherd April 27-29, and Vermontville April 28-29. Mushroom festivals also flourish in May: in Mesick May 4-6; and the National Mushroom-Hunting Championships in Hope City May 12-13.

The Highland Festival and Games will bring the clans together with a wall of bagpipes May 26-27, but not all Michigan festivals are that well known.

There'll be a live buzzard along with arts and crafts at the Buzzard Festival May 5-6 in Hell. And a Pasty Bake in St. Ignace May 27, where they'll try to bake the world's largest party for the Guinness Book of World Records.

SEVERAL OF the state's fishing festivals will culminate this weekend: the Perch Festival in Caseville, the National Trout Festival in Kalkaska and the Walleye Tournament in Midland.

The \$35,000 blue Water Fishing Please turn to Page 9

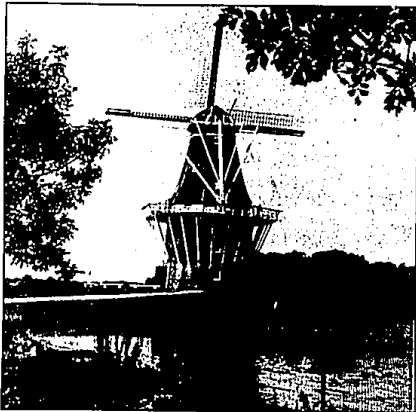
Vegas goers set a 1990 increase

(AP) — Las Vegas tourism officials say visitor volume showed a healthy 12.6-percent increase for the first two months of this year, compared to the same period in 1989.

Rossi Ralenkotter, director of marketing for the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, said 2.8 million visitors were recorded in the first two months of 1990, compared to 2.5 million for the same period a year ago.

While visitor volume is showing a double-digit increase, room occupancy was up 2 percent, because 6,000 new hotel rooms are on line this year. Another 10,000 rooms are under construction.

Southern California auto traffic increased by 23 percent in February, and 25 percent for the first two months of 1990, officials said.



MICKY JONES

Holland's Tulip Time Festival, May 14-19, is busy with Dutch-like attractions, including Windmill Island Municipal Park.