

Travel Scene

Iris Sanderson Jones editor



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crossroads

Iris Jones

Swift trips to Africa

I read the words idly as I was waiting in front of Charlotte Boedigheimer's desk at Around the World Travel in Farmington. I was buying a ticket to Charleston, S.C., but the words on the brochure were about a wildlife safari to Kenya.

... photograph big game against the backdrop of Mount Kilimanjaro.

A wildlife safari is one of those trips most of us dream about but few experience. I thought that was the way it was for almost everybody until Charlotte told me about Jonathan Swift. Yes, I know, Jonathan Swift is the 17th century author of "Gulliver's Travels," but this is another one.

This Jonathan Swift, who lives in Birmingham, teaches at the Global Education Department of Stevenson High School in Livonia. He also takes some of his students on trips to legendary places like China, Morocco and Kenya.

The brochure I was reading turned out to be one of those trips, offered to his students, their friends and family, and any other young traveler who wants to go along. It is scheduled to leave June 22 and return July 7.

Listen to this, "The floodlit natural waterhole permits all-night game viewing from the comfort of the lodge." Or this, "... late-afternoon game drive ... rare and unusual reticulated giraffe, the long-necked gerenuk, the Grevy's zebra.

Charlotte and James Boedigheimer, who live in Livonia, have had an international family for many years, so it is not surprising that two of their children are signed up for the trip. All four of their children were adopted from far away places and are thoroughly familiar with the world.

When we investigated adoption 16 years ago, there were only older or handicapped children available locally, so we adopted internationally through the Department of Social Services," Charlotte said.

The first to arrive was Nathan, now 18 years old and a graduate of Oakland Community College. Nathan is from Korea and was adopted when he was 18 months old.

The last to arrive was Sheri, now 14, who was 3 years old when she came to this country from Costa Rica. Sheri is now a student at Holmes Junior High School in Livonia.

Martha, now 15, came from Taiwan at the age of two months. Ben, now 16, came from India through Mother Theresa's Missionaries of Charity in Delhi. He was 2½ years old when he became a Boedigheimer. They are both signed up for the Kenya Safari trip.

I was trying to imagine what it would be like for a high school student to experience an African safari, and how many families could afford the \$3,000 price tag. According to Charlotte, most parents split the cost with their kids. So a student has to come up with \$1,500 plus a couple hundred extra in pocket money.

"Nathan, Martha and Ben all managed to help it when they went to Morocco with this group," Charlotte said. "Ben raddies at Meadowbrook Country Club. Martha babysits."

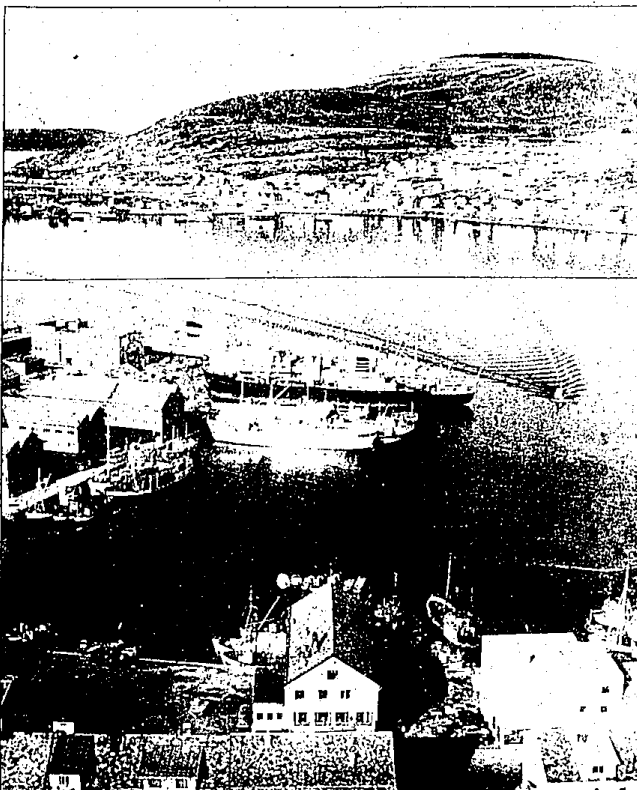
This time Charlotte and her husband James did the advance trip, so they have a large photograph album full of wild animals and Maasai warriors.

"We had always wanted to do a wildlife safari and it was wonderful," she said.

If you are interested in exploring this travel opportunity for yourself or the high school students in your life, you should call Charlotte immediately and put your \$200 deposit on the line.

The tour is done through Sabana World Airlines. The cost is \$2,999 plus \$16 departure tax. That covers air, hotels, tours and most meals. Charlotte says this is \$500 off the published brochure price. You will probably need \$200 more for additional miscellaneous expenses.

You can call Charlotte at Around the World Travel in Farmington, 476-3433.



Hammerfest, the northernmost city in the world, is an important northern Norwegian fishing center, crossroads for tourists and sportsmen visiting Europe's last frontier and the land of the midnight sun.

Norway steamer

It's no 'Love Boat' and that's all right

By Mary Augusta Rodgers
Special Writer

A trip on a Norwegian coastal steamer is appreciated both for what it is ... and what it isn't.

What it is: A way to see the spectacular coastline of Norway from the decks of a sturdy ship called a coastal steamer.

What it isn't: An American-style cruise, as in "The Love Boat."

Winter and summer, 11 coastal steamers sail up the Norwegian coast carrying passengers and cargo from Bergen, Norway's second largest city, to Kirkenes, a mining town five miles from the Soviet border, and back again. The prime time for tourists is from May through September.

Sailing out in the open sea, the ships sail through fjords and thread their way past reefs and clusters of islands, often accompanied by seals and dolphins, crossing the Arctic Circle in mid-July.

The coast is a continually compelling sight: snow-covered mountains, forests, rocky cliffs alive with sea birds, glaciers and roaring waterfalls. There are fishing villages, busy modern cities, towns where wooden houses are painted in primary colors of yellow, red and white. As the ships move north, the trees grow smaller and sparser and finally disappear. The land becomes tundra, home of the nomadic Lapps and their reindeer herds.

If this isn't the world's most

Liquor is expensive. 'If you like having a happy hour, you'd better BYOB.'

— Tom Brown

beautiful voyage, as the ads say, it's certainly one of the top contenders," Priscilla Chave said. "I'd be happy to go again."

Priscilla and Grant Chave live in Birmingham. They were on the steamer Midnatsol in June when they saw the midnight sun, an unforgettable sight. "We were out on deck at 3 a.m.," Priscilla said, "watching the sun slowly sink to the horizon. It sat there for a while and then ... it came back up."

In Bergen, she recommends a side trip to Trolldhaugen, home of composer Edvard Grieg. "The house is impressive. It's built on land that juts out into the ocean and the view is something to die for."

Priscilla also recalls "the beautiful flowers we saw everywhere, almost up to the Arctic Circle, and the glaciers that looked close enough to touch."

Mary and Tom Brown of West Bloomfield were on a smaller steamer, the Finnmarken, last September. That was too late for the midnight sun, but they saw a splen-

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Boyne Highlands has new chairlift

Here's what's new in Michigan Skiing.

Boyne Highlands, near Harbor Springs, introduces Michigan's first detached chairlift, making it 2½ times as fast to go up the slope. The Highlands has also added night skiing on some runs, Tuesdays and Fridays during January and February. Call toll-free (800) 610-8382.

Crystal Mountain, near Thomasville, celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. In addition to adding a new triple chairlift, the new "Hot Shots" program (open to 11- to 16-year-olds) offers advanced sking and snowboarding instruction. Call (616) 378-2911.

Sugar Loaf, in Cedar, has expanded its nighttime skiing to include Saturdays as well as Mondays and Wednesdays. Skiers can obtain a Sunday morning half-day pass. By mid-December Sugar Loaf will have its own boarding area and a new halfpipe. Park up the kids in January for the "Just Kidding" weekend Jan. 4-6 when kids can sleep and ski free with parents. Call (616) 228-1461.

Shanty Creek Schloss Mountain, near Holland and Marquette, offers a weekend getaway for women Feb. 22-24. Discounts are being offered to skiers aged 55-69. Skiers over 70 ski free. Children's programs are also

available. Call toll-free (800) 632-7118.

Timber Creek (formerly Mt. Marquette) near Spruce, re-opens this year under new ownership and offers many improvements. In addition to a remodeled lodge with new lounge, ski shop and rental areas, a 600-foot expert slope has been added. Snowmaking capacity has been tripled and lighting improved for night skiing. Call (517) 736-8377.

Ski Reule Ski Homestead, near Iron River, features a new 6,000-square-foot lodge, addition that includes a 3,000-square-foot children's center with an outside "kids only" ski instruction area. For special family weekends and other family packages, call (269) 253-4957.

Big Thunder, near Escanaba, offers a new "onslope hut" for group parties, and a new 1,100-foot-long expert run. Call (269) 932-3100.

Marquette Mountain, at Marquette, claims the longest, steepest run in the Midwest this year with the 1,400-foot extension of its expert run. The resort is also introducing new children's rates and has built a new 300-foot-long halfpipe for snowboarders. Call (800) 225-1156.

Mt. Holly has widened loading and unloading areas at the triple chair-

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The Caberfae Ski Resort, pictured here, and many others across Michigan hope to host a lot of skiers this season. Mt. Holly has widened loading and unloading areas, increased

snowmaking capacity by 25 percent, upgraded rentals and frozen prices at last season's levels.

Saigon hotel moves into its fourth life

(AP) It may have been the best-known 500-square-yard of the Vietnam War, the Continental Hotel terrace, where spies, soldiers and journalists met at sunset to swap tales and numb the horror with drink.

After years as a military headquarters and extensive remodeling, the Continental and its "Shelf," as the terrace was called, are open again and catering to the business crowd.

The Continental was built between 1910 and 1915, in the French era, and initially welcomed a colonial east-of-rubber planters and Foreign Legionnaires.

Then the Americans came to fight, and to spend their dollars on the Shelf. Every night, they were ambushed by prostitutes, crippled beggars, pickpockets and the dis-

graceful-souled flowers, whom hardly any could resist.

That era ended in April 1975, when North Vietnamese tanks rolled into Saigon.

Saigon became Ho Chi Minh City. The French-owned Continental was summarily nationalized, as was the Barre block down the street, where American officers lived and played.

Vietnamese military officers occupied the Continental for 13 years. While communist authorities tried to impose their will on the free-wheeling southerners, with less than gaudy success.

A short while ago, the Continental began its fourth life. After two years of renovations, the hotel opened its 72 rooms to tourists and the foreign businessmen who are flocking to economic liberalization Vietnam.

War and its traditional intrigues

are gone from the Shelf. The talk on the terrace these days is of investment opportunities, cheap labor, bureaucratic snags and how to get around orthodox communist functions.

Military green and safari jackets are the stuff of ghosts, replaced by the once-scoured jacket and tie.

The rooms on the three floors above are occupied by company executives and deal makers. They come from Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Western Europe and from the United States, although Americans are barred by their government from doing business in Vietnam.

Old timers notice other changes, sometimes with regret. The Shelf has been glassed in, air-conditioned, adorned with new Grecian columns and crystal chandeliers.

"I remember most about the Continental is the open terrace, the ceiling fans, the colonial atmosphere," George Belcher said. "Now that's all gone."

Belcher, back on a visit, spent four years in Vietnam with the U.S. and mission.

Do Han Loan, the manager, said the Continental's history and architecture were of prime concern in the renovation.

These days, around the world, there is a tendency to pull everything down, destroy tradition and the beauty of the past," he said. "We have made some changes, but the basic structure is the same."

Rooms cost an average of \$70 a night, payable in U.S. dollars, and Loan said the occupancy rate was 85 percent last year. He hopes the Vietnam Year of Tourism proclaimed by

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George Belcher

the government will attract more, non-business travelers.

"The most important thing is to improve the service every day," the manager said. He told an interviewer the 120 hotel employees receive above-average salaries, plus bonuses for good performance.