

TRAVEL

PAGE 6C★★

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IRIS SANDERSON JONES

Couple finds travel in Romania easy

"It was hard to believe that we were in Romania once again."

That was John Schroth of Redford, who spent three weeks this summer traveling through eastern Europe with his wife Mary. Mary's family comes from Hungary. John's family comes from Romania. They traveled to both countries two years ago, before the wall came down in Berlin and things began to change in eastern Europe.

The State Department has issued a travel advisory about Romania, which means that they don't recommend travel there, but Schroth didn't know about that until after he got home. It probably wouldn't have stopped him anyway.

"When we went to Romania in 1989, before the revolution, we had a hard time getting in," he said. "The border guards searched everything. We had to take everything out of the car. They even made us open the hood. It was the same way going out."

"But this time, in 1991, we had no problem at the border of Romania. I paid \$63 for a visa for my wife and myself. The border guard gave me a small form to be filled out, and that was that."

"If you drive into Romania as we did, you must buy coupons at the tourist office to purchase gas. Usually there are about 20 or more cars in line for gas, but foreigners are allowed to go ahead of the line."

"We visited my cousin in a small town called Deta, and had a very good time. They seem to have everything but on a smaller scale."

I love to hear stories like that about readers who travel. Governments and public relations professionals give us the facts—the information we need to plan trips, but there is nothing like a personal experience to make that information real.

If you have a brief experience to share with us, in or out of the country, send it to me at 22000 Springbrook, Suite 206C, Farmington Hills 48336. Feel free to include one color print of yourself in a travel setting, as long as it does not need to be returned.

THE MIDWEST is more likely to be on your calendar this month. If so, here are some of the events that may brighten your summer.

• **Nautical Festival** — The Rogers City Nautical Festival has been chosen by the state for its special list of festivals celebrating the Great Lakes this summer. It will be July 31 through Aug. 4.

They are advertising it as a real homecoming, Lake Huron style. There will be brass bands, polka music, ethnic foods, a kiddie carnival, a children's parade, fishing and softball tournaments, grand prize bike race, 10K run and fireworks.

Rogers City, in the northeast Lower Peninsula 255 miles from Detroit, is known for its beaches, boating facilities, fishing and for the world's largest limestone quarry. Offshore shipwrecks are accessible to scuba divers.

The twin 7-foot Ogishco Falls cascade over fossilized coral limestone into natural wading pools 12 miles west of town.

• **Michigan Festival** — You can now buy a \$12 admission button for the fun and games scheduled for the fifth annual Michigan Festival in East Lansing Aug. 9-18. The button, which saves on the gate charge of \$14, will buy you four weekend days of music, dance and folklike activities as well as general admission to 10 evening concerts.

Outdoor concerts on the Oldsmobile Main Stage include Bonnie Raitt and Chris Isaak Aug. 9; country singer Reba McEntire Aug. 10; folk musicians Leo Kottke and Don McLean Aug. 11; Michigan Chevrolet Sisters Aug. 12; jazz guitarist Earl Klugh and guest Tim Cunningham Aug. 13.

Detroit's jazz singer Norma Jean Bell is on stage Aug. 14; the Latino rock quartet Los Loos Aug. 15; rock performer Robert Palmer Aug. 16; Motown's Spinners Aug. 17 and two soft rock bands — Air Supply and Little River Band — Aug. 18.

You can buy the button at Kroger stores or AAA Michigan branches or telephone (517) 351-6529 for more information.



John Schroth of Redford, center, with his wife Mary, traveled to Romania this summer where they visited his cousin Johann.



Top left, duck master Keith Lauby and one of his charges at the fountain in the lobby of the Peabody Orlando. Below, the 27-floor Peabody Orlando was opened in 1986. Ducks from the Peabody Memphis were brought to the new hotel.



'Here they come'

Fanfare greets Peabody ducks on their daily trek to fountain

By Iris Sanderson Jones
special writer

ORLANDO, FLA. — The hum of voices gets louder as the moment arrives. They'll be here soon, stepping out of the elevator, following the red carpet into the glare of flashguns.

"What time are they coming?"

"They're supposed to be here at 11."

Suddenly the music starts, the "King Cotton March." Heads turn. Voices drop to a whisper.

"Here they come!"

The clue was the sound of the elevator door opening, where the carpet disappears around the corner.

AND HERE they come, one by one, the teal-feathered drake in the lead, the four mallard hens behind, five ducks marching down the red carpet between rows of admiring fans, with duck master Keith Lauby right behind.

He didn't learn that at King's Island or Sea World of Ohio.

The Peabody ducks march down the red carpet to the fountain in the lobby of the Peabody Hotel every morning exactly at 11 a.m., spend their day in the elegant lobby fountain and march back down the carpet to the elevator

every evening at exactly 5 p.m., so that they can spend the night in their \$100,000 Royal Duck Palace beside the tennis courts on the fourth floor.

The march of the Peabody ducks began in Memphis in the 1930s, when hunters typically used live ducks as decoys, known as "call ducks." The general manager of what is now the Peabody Memphis came home from a hunting trip one day and put his call ducks in the lobby fountain as a prank.

The guests loved the joke. In 1940 the Peabody Memphis hired former Ringling Brothers animal handler Edward Pembroke to formalize the duck march. He is 82 now and is still the duck master in Memphis.

WHEN THE 27-floor Peabody Orlando was opened in 1986, five of the Memphis ducks came with the staff — "we must preserve the Peabody breed" — and started their own lineage.

Enter Keith Lauby, raised in Cleveland, graduated from Ohio State with a bachelor's degree in wildlife biology, veteran of the wild animal habitat at King's Island and animal

Please turn to Page 5

Dining at Billingsgate — like being a guest at an estate

By Phyllis Kruger Stillman
special writer

A weekend in the country. Frazzled by the hectic pace of everyday life, getting away for a day or two of rest and relaxation appeals to many of us. But we don't know where to go, and we don't have the time to plan our escape.

Raymond and Cynthia Holland, who own Billingsgate, a fabulous restaurant in rural Horton about 15 miles southwest of Jackson, have heard this before. They have put together an overnight package with local bed and breakfasts so people can experience a relaxing getaway, and dinner at Billingsgate, without having to increase their stress level to plan the trip.

Billingsgate — the name conjures up the image of a wealthy family's estate, set back in the woods, surrounded by a high, wrought-iron fence. The restaurant resembles that estate and dining there is like being invited by the family (who happen to have a wonderful chef) as guests for dinner.

There is a reason why patrons feel like guests. "This is a passion that both Ray and I have. We've put a lot of love into this place, and we want to see people enjoy it," said Cynthia Gites Holland, who was born and raised in Dearborn.

BILLINGSGATE IS housed in what used to be a church. Stained glass windows dominate both ends of the dining room. The furnishings

are mostly antiques, but not just any antiques. They are the Hollands' own collection, as well as antiques inherited from their grandparents.

You seldom wait for a table. As a general rule, each table is reserved for only one party per evening. "It's all part of our philosophy of a special evening. It's the kind of place where you can relax and forget the world," said Ray Holland, who has lived in several southeastern Michigan communities including Canton and Milford.

The menu, which changes every month, is somewhat eclectic. "We wanted to give people a mix between classic French and comfort food," said Cynthia, who is head chef.

Dinner is five courses, with a set price of \$25 per person, plus tax and 15 percent gratuity. It was quite a dinner. A choice of three appetizers: country pate, mushrooms burgundy or cream of vegetable soup. A house salad or a Caesar salad. A choice of three entrees: beef Wellington, amaretto shrimp or chicken breast in phyllo.

And three desserts: a meringue shell-filled with ice cream, cheesecake, or a densely chocolate creation called "chocolate suicide" which was so good we decided it should be called "chocolate reason to live." The meal ended with a specially blended hazelnut coffee which is good enough all by itself to ensure a return visit.

EVERYTHING WAS beautifully presented and perfectly prepared, with staff continuing to make diners, like Shirley Gieggle of Troy, feel like special guests. "Very personal service. I asked them to make a variation on the dessert, and they did. I was also impressed that the chef came out to talk with us," said Gieggle.

I was also very impressed with the service. On one of my visits to Billingsgate I ran out of gas and had to coast into a parking space. I told the staff about my problem, and some-



Photo by MIKE MARLOW

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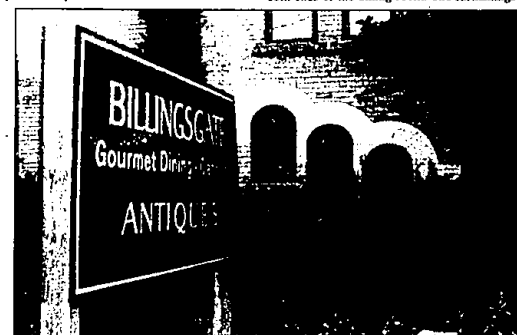


Photo by MIKE MARLOW

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Please turn to Page 5