

TRAVEL

Monday, December 9, 1991 O&E

★78



CROSSROADS

Iris Jones

Give the gift of free flights to the needy

While you are thinking about Christmas giving, you might contribute your Continental Airlines frequent flier miles to CAREFORCE, an organization founded by Continental employees to help people in a transportation crisis.

CAREFORCE is a volunteer organization that spends time, money and frequent flier miles to help anybody in a personal or medical crisis with air transportation. The 3,000 people they have helped so far include a man traveling monthly from California to Sloan-Kettering in New York for last-ditch cancer treatments and a Sioux Indian girl born without arms who traveled to Houston for surgery.

President Melia Reed says that they get 300 calls a month, and can help 75, so they rarely respond to people who need to visit a dying father.

"We work through a social worker, medical professional or clergyman, any professional who is removed and can verify the situation. By the time people find it they have been in the situation a long time, and exhausted their finances."

Continental contributes a certain number of seats a month. CAREFORCE buys tickets and encourages the contribution of frequent flier miles, which Continental allows you to transfer to this organization.

"If that sounds like a good way to celebrate Christmas, or any other time of year, contact CAREFORCE at Box 3816, Humble, Texas, 77347-3816 to contribute frequent flier miles."

To ask about a medical or personal crisis, call Continental Airlines reservations and ask about CAREFORCE; the agent will give you the current contact number for a CAREFORCE volunteer on duty.

CAREFORCE is just one of the things I learned about while flying Continental Airlines flight 157 to Houston recently.

Continental is also giving gifts with your help.

They sponsor a cookbook called "Cookin' Up Miracles," recipes from famous restaurants, with proceeds benefiting 5 million hospitalized kids through the Children's Miracle Network. You can order one from a plane by using Airline free and calling (800) 637-0077.

You can call that toll-free number from home or send \$16.95 plus \$3 postage to "Cookin' Up Miracles," P.O. Box 26057, Columbus Ohio, 43226.

If you'd rather give a gift to yourself or another traveler, here are a couple of travel passports worth thinking about.

The Freedom Passport, usually available only to passengers 62 years old or more, can be bought until Jan. 16, 1992, by anyone 55 years old or older. The \$1,799 passport is good for one year in the 48 contiguous states as well as Canada, St. Thomas and St. Croix.

You can make a maximum of one one-way trip per week if you stay over a Saturday night, with a few blackout dates during special holidays.

Practically speaking, this gives you about 23 flights a year at \$78 a flight. The only other costs might be the \$6 U.S. departure tax to Canada or the Caribbean. Continental flies to most states. It doesn't fly to Tennessee and has limited service to states like North and South Carolina and West Virginia.

If you are 62 or over, you can buy this passport anytime. The special promotion for those 55 and over is available only through Jan. 15, 1992. If your application is postmarked before Dec. 16, 1991, you get an additional month on your ticket.

Call toll free (800) 441-1135.

While you're at it, ask about the Global Passport. They won't mention it unless you ask, but it is also available to the 55-and-up crowd for the same dates.

That passport costs \$3,599.

Atlanta burns up with holiday spirit

By Mary Augusta Rodgers
special writer

Atlanta, the south's largest city, has all the razzle-dazzle of an American metropolis: a glittering skyline, a wide choice of glitzy hotels, shops and restaurants, a tempting array of shows, exhibits and nightlife and attractions that range from Atlanta Underground to the World of Coca-Cola.

The city seems to be on a roll. After the drama of seeing the Braves in the World Series, Atlanta is looking forward to the 1994 Super Bowl and the 1996 Olympics. Excitement is in the air.

But another Atlanta still exists in the side streets, a traditional soul-spoken, slow-paced, friendly southern town.

One way to enjoy that ambience is to stay at the Shellmont Bed and Breakfast house, built in 1891 with many fine architectural details, located in a quiet residential neighborhood within walking distance of downtown Atlanta. The main house has 20 rooms, all with private bath.

THE SHELLMONT'S carriage house, a small building in the back of the property, is a real find for travelers who like a home-away-from-home feeling. There's a living room, kitchen, bedroom and bath and a little porch overlooking a charming garden, as well as a hammock, a small pond stocked with goldfish and a resident cat.

(\$90 a night for two people; continental breakfast included).

Piedmont Park is within walking distance, at Piedmont and 14th Street, with jogging trails and tennis courts. (Even in winter, Atlanta has many mild days.) There's also a spectacular Botanical Gardens, 60 acres in all, with a large conservatory full of tropical plants and during the Christmas season, poinsettias, and a 15-acre hardwood forest. It's a wonderful big-city oasis.

Coca-Cola and Cable News Network are two of Atlanta's most famous products; they're now decorated for Christmas and offering special events as well as their popular tours. CNN is in the Omni Complex at Marietta Street and Techwood Drive Reservations are available only on the day of the tour, tickets cost \$5 and Saturday tours fill up fast.

CNN Center's fifth annual Tuba Christmas brings 100 tuba players from around the country to play Christmas music from noon to 2 p.m. Dec. 20. If you are a tuba player, you can register on the day of the event.

The World of Coca-Cola is next to Underground Atlanta at 55 Mar-

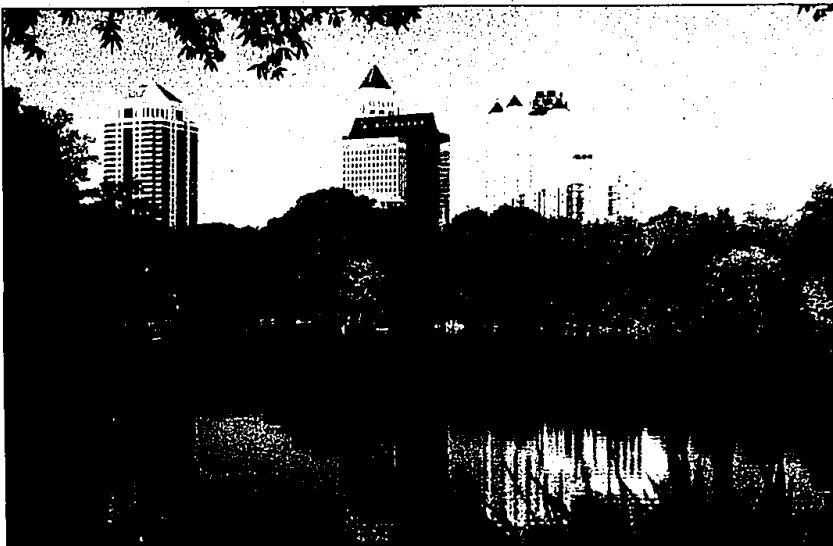


Photo by KEVIN C. ROSE

Located in Midtown, Piedmont Park is the site of the Arts Festival of Atlanta, concerts and other special events. The

park offers a view of the contemporary Midtown skyline.

lin Luther King Drive; tour tickets cost \$2.50 and reservations can be made ahead. See their spectacular International Christmas Tree and a Christmas exhibit featuring the artwork of Haddon Sundblom, who created the image of Santa Claus as we know it today.

ATLANTA'S ANNUAL Festival of Trees will be at the Georgia World Congress Center, 285 International Blvd., through Dec. 15, and has Christmas trees and wreaths decorated by the region's top designers, a children's corner with hands-on activities, a gingerbread village, continuous performances and a carousel.

The striking High Museum, at 133 Peachtree St. downtown, creates a quiet, contemplative world of its own with art collections and special exhibits. But even here there's a holiday mood, with an Hispanic Fiesta featuring music and dance on Dec. 17 at 12:15 p.m.

As big cities go, Atlanta is easy to get around in, thanks to the rap-

id rail and bus system known as MARTA. (15 minute rail service to the airport costs \$1.) Now the New Georgia Railroad is offering holiday rides, with carolling groups on board, for the Atlanta Loop and the Stone Mountain Loop on Dec. 14 and 21. These rides depart twice daily from the Milepost Station near Underground Atlanta; call (404) 656-0769 for times and reservations.

Underground Atlanta will, of course, be alive with lights, decorations, community choirs, street performers, storytellers and costumed characters — everything but snow and ice, which isn't traditional during the Christmas season in Atlanta, anyway. Look for the Great Tree.

For more information, The Shellmont Bed and Breakfast Lodge, 821 Piedmont Ave., N.E. Atlanta, Ga. 30308, (404) 872-9290. The Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau, 233 Peachtree St., Suite 2000, Atlanta, Ga. 30303, (404) 521-6000.



Photo by WILLIAM SCHOEN

Shellmont Bed and Breakfast in Atlanta offers easy access to the downtown area.

Take kids to Chicago by train

By Vera Hogan
special writer

My son Sean was a perfect car traveler as a baby. We could spend Christmas with his grandparents, Doris and Larry Hogan, of Parsippany, and we could visit grandma and grandpa in Chicago almost as easily.

By age one, a Christmas trip to Chicago was a nightmare. My darling son used six hours of confinement to test his lungs, and to play "throw the bottle and scream." That's when I decided that long car trips with Sean would end until he spoke fluent English and understood my "rules of the car."

This year I had a brilliant idea: we would travel by train. I was delighted to learn that my roundtrip fare on Amtrak would cost only \$40 and my son would travel free. Not only was I going to be able to maintain reasonably good mental health, I was going to save money as well.

WE WENT to board the train to Chicago in Ann Arbor, a pleasant and easy drive from our home in Holly. I knew right away that traveling by train with my son would be a definite improvement.

While waiting on the platform for our train to arrive, people were introducing themselves and sharing "why we're going to Chicago" stories. Some even made plans to sit together during the trip to play cards or just chat.

We boarded the train and sat in new, roomy seats where Sean could stretch out, unconfinned by a car seat. The gentle rocking of the train lulled him to sleep several times during the trip. While he slept, nice people offered to buy me sodas and snacks on their trips to the club car.

When awake, Sean was happier and more relaxed, and had my complete undivided attention. He took

great pride in sitting in his seat and eating snacks from the pull-down tray table like a "big boy." He very much enjoyed gazing out of the train windows and taking occasional walks through other cars.

Because I'm a new first-time mother, one concern I did have on this trip was the possibility of "child-snatching." I recalled that there was quite a long, underground walk from the tracks to Union Station upon arrival in Chicago.

IN ADDITION, my parents had warned that because of construction on several major Chicago highways leading to Union Station, they might be delayed in picking us up.

With this in mind, I bought a 3-foot, heavy-duty, chain-linked dog leash before leaving on our trip. Once we arrived in Chicago, I put my hand through the sturdy leather handle of the leash, slid it up my arm inside my jacket and secured it tightly around my upper arm.

The other end of the leash was clipped onto the clasps of my son's overall jeans, inside his jacket. Although I did receive a few odd looks, took comfort in the fact that if someone were to grab my son, they were going to have to take me too.

Fortunately, our arrival was uneventful and my parents were on time waiting for us.

Traveling by train has also solved an "at home" problem. We live two blocks from tracks where trains come through several times a day. A sound that once terrified by son, now sends him flying to the window with happy excited cries of "toot, toot!"

If you're planning a long trip alone with a small child, I highly recommend doing yourself a favor and traveling by train. For information and reservations, call Amtrak toll-free (800) 872-7245.

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