

Teng's westward drift bodes well for U.S. travelers eyeing China

By IRIS SANDERSON JONES

On Jan. 1, 1979, according to our western calendar, the United States of America and the People's Republic of China established diplomatic relations after 30 years of silence.

It is the year 476, the Year of the Horse, on the Chinese calendar. On Jan. 27, Chinese New Year, it becomes the Year of the Sheep. For many Americans who dream of walking in the land of the Great Wall, it might be the year of the Chinese dragon.

A few travel agents have visited the Forbidden City and the Ming Tombs with delegations invited by the Chinese government since television cameras showed us thousands of bicyclists in Tien-An-Men Square during Nixon's visit to Peking.

A few airline officials have walked across the Sun Chun Bridge from Hong Kong to lead the small number of tour groups flown by regular airlines during the last two years.

Thousands of Americans have reserved the limited number of travel spaces allotted by the Chinese government for 1979, leaving few travel opportunities this year unless new options are offered.

One such travel option is being explored by Pan American World Airways, which has applied to the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) to fly the first direct flights from the U.S. to mainland China.

If the CAB, and thus the U.S. government, and the Chinese government approve, Pan American will fly three times a week from San Francisco to Peking, parting the Bamboo Curtain

for travelers who have only dreamed of names like the New Gardens of the Purple Jade of Autumn.

Pan Am also is reportedly spending \$500 million on luxury hotel accommodations there.

THE LOGISTICS of China travel are determined by the Chinese government, which encourages a small flow of American travelers. They control the number of travelers by allotting blocks of potential visas to specific agents.

Pan American was allotted 1,500 for 1979 and 3,000 for 1980. A few seats are still available for winter and fall of 1979. Reservations are being taken for 1980, although the allotment for next year has not yet been determined.

Japan Airlines has allotted 1,500 visas for 1979. The New York office assigned a proportionate number to regional offices, which in turn assigned a quota to districts. About 50 were assigned to the Detroit area. All seats for 1979 are filled, but a waiting list has been started.

Other airlines which fly Americans to China, via Hong Kong or through Bangkok, Thailand, include Canadian Pacific, Iran, Pakistani, Varig and Air France airlines.

Americans who apply directly to an airline, or through a travel agent, are given visa forms which are returned to them when they crossed the border from Hong Kong, included Nanjing, the capital of the south, and Peking, the capital of the north and of China itself.

"I have traveled around the world eight times, but this was the travel highlight of my life," Carvallo said. "We visited the Forbidden City, walked the Great Wall, went to the Ming Tombs, watched thousands of Chinese bicycle and read posters in the square in Peking, and visited Mao's mausoleum."

"The mausoleum is open three days a week, and the Chinese line up to go in," he said. "Foreigners don't stand in line. They are always taken to the front of any line in China. We felt uncomfortable about that but the people who were waiting clapped for us, a traditional Chinese kind of greeting."

MOST CHINA travelers are people who have already been everywhere else, said Joe Clark of Bloomfield Hills, a Japan Airlines executive, who recommends that people with heart conditions stay home.

"It's a fast, hard tour," he said. "I was really put off by the time I got to the top of the Great Wall."

Clark didn't see much comparison between the China he saw this year and the China he knew when in Shanghai during World War II. "There's not so much poverty now. It

just looks like a different country," he said.

Clark's group visited Kweilin, where the Reed Flute Caves and the misty mountains of traditional Chinese painting are seen in southwestern China. He also went to the smaller cities of Chongsha and Shaoshan. "The difference between these places and Peking is like the difference between New York City and Albuquerque," he said. "I'm a country boy. I like small places."

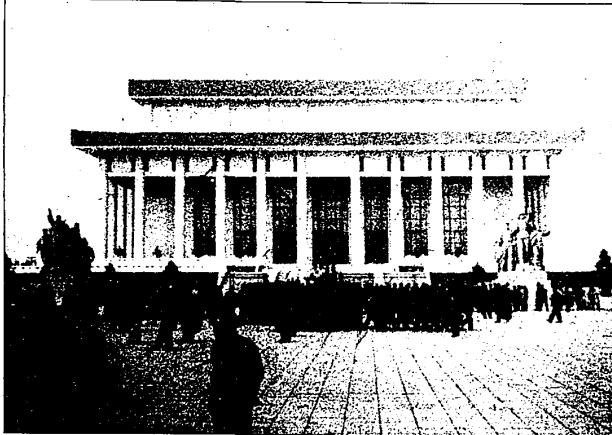
Both Carvallo and Clark entered China via Hong Kong. Several other area travelers with Hong Kong on their itinerary were given the option of applying for visas to China while they were in Hong Kong. Art Emanuel of Flynn, Mrs. Alice Zaitina of Birmingham and Dick and Betty McGowan of Rochester, took a quick trip to Canton this way while touring the Pacific in July.

Artist Jean Hascall of Grossesse, who traveled with other trustees of the Archives of American Art, entered China from Karachi after flying 30 hours around the world from New York with Pakistan Airlines.

Mrs. Hascall and her husband, Jim, visited Peking, Shanghai, Hangchow, Nanking, Yangchow and the Long March Commune which produces food for Shanghai.

"Hotels were either old and grand, or new and simple," she said. "The Peace Hotel in Shanghai had huge rooms with walk-in closets and a place for tea service. If it had been ours. At Westlake Hotel in Nanking, we were on a lake fringed with almond and cherry blossoms, dotted with temples. An imperial park on an island is now a public place, as are all the old royal facilities of China."

WILL GUIDES let you deviate from your route? Although some travelers complain that "they only let you see what they want you to see," Carvallo said that people in his tour group were free to leave the group and wander as they pleased.



Chairman Mao's mausoleum attracts considerable attention from the Chinese.
(Photo courtesy of Ramon Carvallo)

Mrs. Hascall agreed. "We told our guide that we didn't want to see any more factories, we wanted to see art made. He promptly changed our itinerary and took us to a village where they carved jade and lacquer boxes as well as traditional Chinese paper lanterns and scroll paintings."

The future of China travel will probably be determined by the speed with which China develops hotels and other travel facilities.

Although China travelers rave about food and tour sight in China, they warn that hotels are presently not deluxe by world standards.



Livonian Ramon Carvallo stands atop a section of China's Great Wall.



A fisherman strikes a pose for Milan Emanuel's lens.



Tours for the masses on travel agent's minds

British Museum, travels to Peking, Hangchow and Shanghai and will return via Teheran, unless the political situation there prompts a change.

Davis, who was president of the Mid-American Chapter of the Society of American Travel Agents from 1972-76, and is a founding member of the Institute of Certified Travel Agents, traveled with the society on a houseboat trip down the Sepik River in New Guinea.

"We used the houseboat as a hotel and dining room between tiny villages along the river where tribes were still creating original primitive art," Davis said.

"A naturalist lectured about the area every night, and took us out on a nighttime canoe hunt for crocodiles, which were kept alive and shipped to universities for study."

"Early one morning we went around and the 22 passengers helped to pull the boat off the sand bar. I was ready to leap to the second deck if I saw red crocodile eyes nearby, because they terrorize me."

Davis says that this kind of trip should be taken only by travelers who are deeply interested in coming face-to-face with this kind of primitive life.

"When you are dealing with primitive people, you are dealing with primitive feelings and you can upset the whole trip for others if you haven't picked the right tour," he said.

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"I personally don't believe Americans go to China to see factories and communism, or any other facet of modern Communist society," Davis says. "I think they want to see Chinese antiquities and treasures."

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The Society offers two expeditions to China in 1979, both of which still have openings. Although the society buys its plane seats from those allotted to Iran Air Lines, it requests specific tour features from the China International Travel Service.

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