



## travel log

Iris Sanderson Jones

### It was cold and cloudy, so to the moon we went

I just turned left into infinity, an experience I would have missed if my eyes had blinked as we passed Wapakoneta, Ohio. The Infinity Room is part of the Neil Armstrong Air and Space Museum built under a moon-shaped concrete dome on a small hill beside Interstate-75.

I was traveling with a friend who has the same eagle eye and the same love of exploration that took Armstrong to the moon.

It is a cold and cloudy day and the F-5D Skylancer plane that Armstrong flew for NASA just barely shows its sharp lines above the end of the runway.

The runway-shaped walk leads past landing lights and gentle lunar-looking hills to the eerily lit dome rising full-moonlike above a slight hill. Concrete roof lines spread high geometric curbs along the hill line.

The sign at the entrance reads, "Please do not walk on the building."

Armstrong and museum manager John Zwez are both natives of Wapakoneta, which was chosen as the obvious site for the exhibit by Ohio Gov. James Rhodes in 1972. It's one of about 50 air and space museums in North America.

Not a large collection, it is distinguished and well displayed. The building was built around the balloon, the Toledo Two, and the small yellow Aronca Champion in which Armstrong learned to fly.

The plane hangs tall down against an end wall, with a bicycle tucked under a wing. Armstrong rode the bicycle to flying lessons because he wasn't old enough to drive.

The ramp leading to the Space Flight Gallery, where Armstrong's space suit and the Gemini VIII space capsule is displayed, is only a warmup for your trip into infinity.

As you walk through the darkened sound tunnel towards the video room, the voices begin amid familiar audio crackle.

"Retro one . . . Looks good, Apollo Six . . ."

IT IS HERE, beyond the moon cameras and the seismic equipment used to record earthquakes on the moon that the lighted arrow leads you left towards the Infinity Room.

"It's to give the children a concept of infinity," Zwez says, as lights flash red and then blue and then red-and-blue into an eternity of mirrored walls.

We turn left again into the Astro-Theater. There is someone saying, "Oh, wow, look at that." I know it's me; we are under a revolving dome of stars. There, above us, hanging in space, is the moon.

A moon-landing craft curves by overhead. The Big Dipper swings by as pictures of the moon landing make patches of color against the nearest stretch of starry sky.

In the darkness, I breathe unevenly with awe and delight as I follow Armstrong into space. He bounces across the surface of the moon like a kid.

His craft takes off for Earth. As it splashes down on the nearby ocean, the planet rises in swirls of blue and white in a universe of stars overhead.

"We're late," a voice says into my ear.

"What?"

"We've been here two hours. We're late."

If you don't want to be late don't visit the Neil Armstrong Air and Space Museum. It's one small step for the traveler, but you might have trouble returning to earth.



### For that all-over tanning

The path ambles down the hill through flowering hedges to a sign that reads, "Through this gate pass the most beautiful trespassers in the world."

Trespassing is against the law in St. Maarten except when one must cross private property to get to one of the island's beaches. Public access to St. Maarten's entire shoreline — known as the Queen's Walk — is guaranteed to visitor and resident alike and you can put your towel down anywhere.

There's a beach for every one of St. Maarten's 37 square miles. Some are lined with stately palms, others hidden by rock formations. A few are accessible only by boat, so you will need a bit of guidance in choosing the stretch of sand suited to your mood of the day.

THE MOST POPULAR is cosmopolitan Great Bay beach in Philipsburg, the tiny capital of Dutch St. Maarten. Great Bay beach runs parallel to Front Street, the location of Great Bay, Seaview and Pasang-grahen hotels, of scores of duty-free shops and open-air restaurants. The bay is sanctuary for small boats and

the water is gentle and shallow and a good beach for children.

The counterpart of Great Bay beach on the French side is the graceful crescent in the town of Grand Case, pronounced Cahz. It is bordered by the main street and by small houses and French shops.

At the end of town, hidden by palms and seagrass, is Petit Plage, serene and secluded. Here is an unobstructed view of the nearby island of Anguilla.

Back on the Dutch side, just outside of Philipsburg is Little Bay beach and hotel of the same name. There's a beach bar and snorkeling rental hut. Chaise longuees dot the sand — but non-hotel guests may be charged a nominal fee for use of towels, beach umbrellas, lounge chairs and facilities.

At Simpson Bay beach, visitors may stop for lunch or drinks at the Simpson Bay Beach Hotel or quaint Mary's Boon, a picturesque guest-house. Mullet Bay beach on Mullet Bay serves the 172-acre resort which is the largest on the island. The facilities here are part of the hotel and they include restrooms and changing facilities.

The most directly accessible beach by car is Maho, between the Concord and Caravanseer hotels.

St. Maarten's entire shore is punctuated with coves, some accessible only by small boat. For the adventurous, boats may be rented but take along a good marine map showing shoals and rocks. Cruises are also available that circle the island and stop for lunch and swimming at one of St. Maarten's beaches.

## What to do and where to go when plans are up in the air

BY IRIS SANDERSON JONES

To paraphrase an old nursery rhyme, some like it hot, some like it cold and some like it, best of all, 100 years old.

For those who like their travel hot, there are several new items from Florida. The gigantic polar bears have left Central Florida's Circus World for a stint with the Barnum and Bailey Circus. They have been replaced by 17 male lions, including a cat that rides a cycle around the center ring.

Three popular Florida attractions are reopening after major expansions.

of its drive-through observation route closed to the public until March.

That may seem to wipe out a lot of the west, but, of course, Tampa is very much open, and you can always stuff yourself on the Cuban delicacies in Ybor City, where you can also watch Cubans rolling good hand-rolled cigars.

IF YOU LIKE IT cold, you can keep on looking for snow and you can keep calling the Snowline at 337-2500 for information about snow conditions in the 11-county metropolitan region.

The Southeast Michigan Travel and

The competition started on Jan. 25 with the men's 30 km and the women's 10 km. The men's 15 km, followed by the women's 7.5 km event was Jan. 27 and men's and women's relays will take place Jan. 29. The final contest Feb. 1 is the men's 50 km and the women's 20 km.

This is the last major event in which Olympic hopefuls will compete before the winter Olympics in Lake Placid.

Compared to that rarified event, more than 1,000 skiers will have the opportunity to exhibit their skiing techniques at the single longest cross-country event in the U.S., the Hennessy Cognac American Ski Marathon.

It is a 60-m trail through the Green Mountains of Vermont starting Feb. 2 in Ripton, Vt.

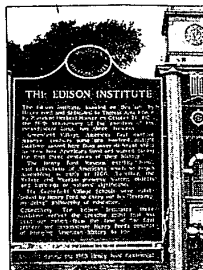
THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT Office of Tourist has sent updated information about travel services between Montreal and the Lake Placid Olympics. This replaces the information given on page Dec. 31.

They will now use Hawker Siddeley 748 prop jets to do 18 runs a day from Montreal's Dorval Airport to Saranac Lake, N.Y., for a cost of \$135 Canadian. Make reservations by contacting Reception, 4 Place Ville-Marie, Montreal, or by dialing 1-514-971-9339.

Morgan Dawson Voyages, Inc. has a \$155 package that includes return train fare, one night in Lake Placid and one Olympic event ticket. Their address is also 4 Place Ville-Marie, Montreal, or call 1-514-971-9212.

Charter bus transportation will also be announced at a later date.

If you'd be the cold closer to home, consider the Winter Carnival in Chicago through Feb. 9. The Hyatt Regency Hotel, part of the Illinois Center Complex, is offering a flat rate of \$59 a

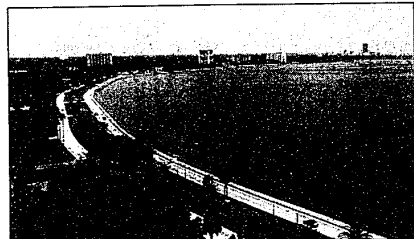


night, single or double occupancy, on an availability basis, during the festival.

AND SOME LIKE IT in the pot nine days old. Or maybe a century or so old. If you like your pleasures in old historical places, you might like to consider a new book titled "Restored Towns and Historic Districts of America: A Tour Guide," by Alice Cromie. It's a Sunrise book published by E.P. Dutton and is available in hardcover or paperback.

Mrs. Cromie says that there is a restoration and preservation boom in America today. "More and more civic and history-minded persons are joining organizations to save our national heritage, and this effort is being made on national, state and individual levels."

The book includes great mansions, plantations houses and museums as well as nationally known restored villages such as Shakerstown and Greenfield Village.



Southern Crossroads and the Living Forest, Cypress Garden's first expansion in 42 years, are now open. So is Sea World's \$6.5 million Florida Festival, which features ethnic and regional food and art and one of the most elaborate shopping centers around.

On the west coast, the \$12.5 million Timbuktu complex at Busch Gardens is now completely open to the public.

That's good news. Now for the bad news, most of it thanks to the devastation wrought by Hurricane Frederick.

Certain parts of Gulf Islands National Seashore near Pensacola are closed, as are the many recreational facilities in the Fort Pickens area, which won't reopen until March.

The Perdido Key area is open but the road is damaged. There is a temporary surface on the road along Santa Rosa Island. National recreation areas there are closed because of badly damaged boardwalks.

There's more. The "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge has a portion

Tourist Association tapes ski information on that line. They had 4,000 calls over the Christmas holidays.

The United States Ski Association sponsors the 1980 National Cross Country Championships Jan. 25 through Feb. 1 at Bretton Woods Resort in Bretton Woods, N.H. If you are tired of waiting for snow in Michigan, the Championship trails range from five to 50 kilometers over rough White Mountain terrain.



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