

Monday, August 18, 1980



travel log

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contributing travel editor

# Bright night in Whitehorse long time before the dawn

WHITEHORSE, Yukon — There are strange things done in the midnight sun, but the strangest of all is the midnight sun itself, which shines day and night in the Yukon.

Strictly speaking, the midnight sun can only be seen north of the Arctic Circle, because you must go that far north to see a sun that never sets below the horizon.

That is just a technicality, however. In Whitehorse, capital city of the Yukon territories, the sun just dips briefly below the horizon in the middle of the night, leaving the sky, as bright as it is at 8 p.m. in a Detroit summer.

I'VE KNOWN ABOUT the midnight sun ever since I read Robert Service's ditties about the Klondike as a child, but I still wasn't prepared for it.

I assumed that the sun would make a rosy glow on the horizon, as it does at dawn in Detroit — or anywhere where they have a dawn, which they certainly don't have at this time of year in the Yukon.

Not so. The sun shines brightly enough to take full-sun pictures at midnight. You can see blue sky at 1 a.m. Whenever I woke in the night, I would rush to a window to see if the sun was still shining. It was, at 3 or 5 a.m., with a light that you could picnic, play baseball or read a book in.

My friend Dave Bruce of Houston drove north to the Arctic Circle and watched the sun swing down, and up again, without touching the horizon.

I was unable to do that, so I climbed the Dome above Dawson City to get the same effect. Going to higher ground gives you the same effect as going further north.

I tried to take pictures to show my friends that the sun was shining brightly at midnight, but the midnight sun doesn't look any different than the midday sun. Finally, I wrote midnight on the dusty trunk of my car and took a picture of that.

The White Night, as it has been called, has a significant cultural effect on the people who live in the north. The sun shines all day and all night during the summer, and it barely shines at all in the winter. Spring and fall are transition times, and the only times when Yukoners see our rhythm of day and night.

Visitors dread the idea of a dark cold winter. The temperature drops as low as 72 degrees below zero in Whitehorse, but locals hasten to tell you that there is very little snow and the air is dry. They get rapturous sometimes about the joy of taking a walk in the clean cold air of winter, with the moon shining down.

THE SUN RISES about 9:30 a.m. and sets before 4 p.m. in winter, but the most depressing seasons to the people who live here are spring and fall.

"I get depressed when it starts getting dark in September, and I get depressed again when it starts getting light in the spring," I was told by Joy Denton of Tourism Yukon.

Of course, all the local jokes are based on the midnight sun. Example: "Tourists should be out of town by sundown, and sundown this year is September 14."

I found myself laughing at something else: daylight saving time. They've already got 24 hours of daylight in the Yukon in summer. What they need up here is Darkness Saving Time.

# Travel in the Yukon today

By IRIS SANDERSON JONES

WHITEHORSE, Yukon — The crude little sign was set in the side of a steep slope at the bottom of a canyon. It was briefly visible from the back platform of the White Pass and Yukon Railway, an 80-year-old line built 110 miles across the mountains between Whitehorse, capital of the Yukon, and Skagway, a seaport in the panhandle of Alaska.

The sign read simply, Trail of '98. There, on that narrow track ribboning painfully across sheer rock, the greenhorns packed their 2,000-pound loads into the Klondike during the gold rush of 1898. Most of them traveled in deep snow.

This scenic railway trip along the trail is only one of many ways in which tourists can follow the gold dust trail without suffering the incredible hardships and disappointments of that time.

By land, Mile One of the Trail of '98 was at Dawson Creek, British Columbia, to the southeast. This part of the trail was followed by those who came by sea.

You can follow the trail on a modern map by tracing your finger up the Inside Passage from Seattle or Vancouver to the small coastal town of Skagway, or to the Yukon ghost town of Dyea. Old photographs show thousands of eager but inexperienced prospectors unloading in these two ports after gold was found in Dawson City, 450 miles to the north, in 1896.

They didn't know where they were going, and they didn't know that most of the claims would be staked long before they got there. They only knew they had to struggle inland over either the Chilkoot or White Pass to Bennett Lake, by boat through a chain of lakes and down the Yukon River past Whitehorse to Dawson City.

The international boundary between Alaska and the Yukon was at the top of each mountain pass. The Canadian government forced prospectors to carry 2,000 pounds of supplies into the Yukon, so that they would not be stranded and become a public burden.



BEFORE THE WHITE Pass and Yukon Railway was built, the greenhorns, or cheechakos as they call them in the north, had to pack by foot and with pack animals across the 7,000-foot mountains. Most of them arrived at the beginning of winter.

At Lake Bennett they built a motley assortment of boats. Old photos show them downriver on Lake LaBarge, the lake made famous in the Robert Service poem, "The Cremation of Sam McGee." The boats filled the lake from shore to shore: sailboats, junks, all kinds of hand-made transportation to the Klondike.

The White Pass and Yukon Railway was built in 1900 and is now a tourist line following the trail to Whitehorse. The best seats are on the last car, where you can see the spectacular scenery through large windows and from the platform. The chairs are movable and eventually clog the pathway to the door, where a sign reads "Passengers are not allowed to ride on the platform."

From Skagway to Bennett is a 4 percent grade, a rise of 4 feet per 100, said to be the steepest grade of any freight-hauling narrow-gauge common carrier in North America.

At Bennett, a tiny corner of British Columbia crossed by the tracks, everybody gets off for lunch. It's called a miners' meal: long tables are set and ready for the onslaught in the railway station. Steaming bowls of homemade beef stew, pork and beans, biscuits of new bread, freshly baked apple pie and coffee. Every dish of tasty homemade food is refillable on request and included in the price of your train ticket.

A new highway runs almost parallel to the train, through Carcross, where great herds of caribou once crossed these mountain waters. Both highway and train cross the Alaska Highway near Whitehorse.

Whitehorse was only a supply stop during the gold rush, a half-way point between the coast and Dawson City. Now it is the capital of the Yukon, its government buildings built across the street from a dry-docked paddlewheel that is open to tourists. You see such paddlewheel museums everywhere in the Yukon.

The Indians named this site Whitehorse, because of Yukon River rapids that "looked like white horses with flying manes." Those waters have now been tamed to make a scenic lake, a spectacular white-water dam, and fish ladder, near the town.

A tour boat goes daily upriver to Miles Canyon, where the white water once upended home-made boats and,

later, paddlewheelers carrying people to the Klondike. Women and children were not allowed to ride through the rapids. They rode a wooden tram along the top of a cliff to the other side.

There are several decent motels and a surprising number of excellent restaurants in Whitehorse, where a tour of the town gives you insights into the area. The railway station dead-ends the modern main street, which is full of tourist shops, Indian crafts, Eskimo carvings, and gold jewelry, none of it really cheap.

Down the street at the McBride Museum are relics of Klondike history, including Sam McGee's cabin, made famous by poet Robert Service (Service's cabin is on view in Dawson City), and

priceless photo albums showing 19th-century photos of the gold rush days.

Across the street from the museum, Gold Rush Tours rents canoes, provides guides, takes tour boats upriver to Dawson City and stages a popular evening river ride and barbecue, with wine and beer or cocktails on board.

If you take the boat tour, the Gold Rush Two goes 12 miles downriver to Egg Island, tacking to round Swallow Bend, where birds make rows of holes in the high sand wall and a pair of bald-headed eagles perch high in the pines above the bluff.

For more information, contact the Canadian Government Office of Tourism in Detroit.

# KEEP IT UP, AMERICA

We're doing it.  
We're driving less, planning trips more wisely, keeping our cars in tune—we're taking the simple but necessary steps to save gasoline... and money.  
Why money? Because wasted gas is wasted money.

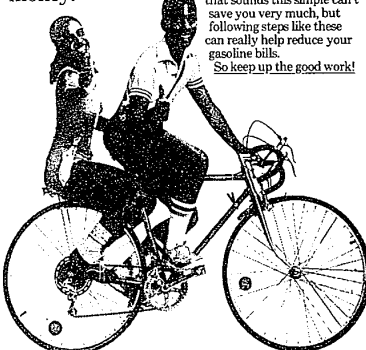
And we're doing even more to make the most of our gas and our gas dollars. Things like:

■ **Driving at a moderate speed and a steady pace.** 35 to 45 miles per hour is the most efficient driving speed (no more than 55 on the highway). Select routes that include long smooth stretches of road so you can drive at a steady pace.

■ **Not idling the motor for more than 30 seconds.** Anytime you park and wait for more than 30 seconds, turn off the ignition. Restarting takes less gas than idling.

■ **Leaving the car home once in a while.** When you can, share a ride or use public transportation. Or try walking, biking... or even skating! And many errands can be handled effectively by mail or phone.

You may think that anything that sounds this simple can't save you very much, but following steps like these can really help reduce your gasoline bills.  
So keep up the good work!



# LITTLE BY LITTLE, IT ALL ADDS UP.

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US Department of Energy

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## tripping

# Marshall serving tour No.17

Plan to be out of town Sept. 6 and 7, the two days when Marshall, Mich., celebrates its heritage with its annual historical homes tour.

The city, also celebrating its 150-year anniversary, will again roll out the banners and bunting, the arts and crafts, the architectural wonders of the past. Not to mention the parade, the antique sale at the Calhoun Country Fairgrounds, and the food and beverage available around the tour.

Tickets, good for either day of the tour, are available in advance for \$6, \$7 on site. People 12 and younger will be admitted free and group rates are available. For tickets or more information, write: Marshall Historical Society, P.O. Box 98-A, Marshall 49668.

special legislative study committee wants to hear about it.

Committee chairman Tom Alley, D-West Branch, will conduct a public hearing at 7 p.m. Aug. 21 in room 292, building J, at Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge campus in Farmington.

"Purchasing a package charter tour or other travel service has increasingly become a real gamble for the consumer. It is my hope that through the efforts of our committee, the Michigan travel consumer will be better protected in the future," he said.

Complaints to the legislature have ranged from long delays in departures to outright cancellation of planned flights.

A follow-up meeting will be held at 7 p.m. Sept. 17 in room 420-D in the capitol in Lansing.

## FOR CREDIT

Detroit College of Business will offer a travel and tourism program during its fall quarter.

The program is intended to train students for immediate employment in the industry as agents, reservationists, tour directors and other related occupations. Study includes flight attendant procedures, travel agency management, cruise ship operations, vacation and tour planning and using the various reference manuals of the biz.

For information, call the admissions department at 582-5983 (Dearborn campus) or 542-7225 (Madison Heights extension).

## FOR SALE

In the market for a gas-guzzling 707 or 727-100?

American Airlines has bought 15 Boeing 727-200s from Braniff International and is retiring some of its old stock. According to company spokesman David Frailey, the price is negotiable.

## MELON-HEADED

Friday-Sunday are the days for melon lovers to gather in Howell for the annual festival celebrating the joys of melonhood.

## BAY VALLEY MINI-VACATION PLANS

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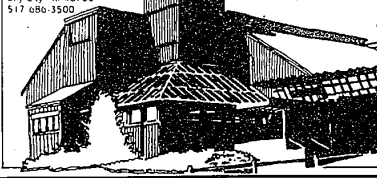
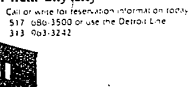
Weekend, Weekday and Holiday Packages include Deluxe Pkisside Room, Cheese and Sausage Board, Asti Spumante, Dinner, Brunchon, Wine, Cocktails, Lunches, and recreation: 18-hole championship Golf Links, in-door, out-door Tennis. Bikes and bike trails. Swimming in or out-doors, fine food Pier 19. Main Dining Room of the "Inn With Country Charm."

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## BLAST FOR THE PAST

Ypsilanti is having its yesteryear celebration Aug. 22-24, with a range of activities to keep everyone on their toes.

Events include an art fair at Depot Town and around the old town hall, something for the youngsters in Riverside Park, sidewalk shopping in downtown Ypsi, lunch, Wallenda high wire act, a circus on Frog Island, big band dance at the Washburn Country Club or street dance along Washington Street promenade, a 10km or two-mile run, parade, ice cream social, and more.

For a brochure and more information, call the Visitors and Convention Bureau at 482-4920.

## PROBLEMS?

Unscrupulous or incompetent charter travel operators got you down? If so, a