

Thursday, March 26, 1981

On beyond beer: Milwaukee is tops for meeting people

By Iris Sanderson Jones
special writer

MILWAUKEE, Wis. — You meet a city one person at a time — the hotel clerk who points you towards Wisconsin Avenue, the student who shares his pub-crawling list with you, the shopper who gives you an insider's view of Heinemann's Cafe.

Sometimes you can actually make contact, with the girl who sneaks you in for a look at the glorious old Pabst Theater, or the woman who designed the Urban Habitat exhibit at Milwaukee Public Museum.

Sometimes you just meet across a crowded room, with the man who waves at you from the floor of the brewery during a tour, or the 7-shirted violinist at a \$1 rehearsal of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra.

The first "people experience" you are likely to have in any city is with a tour guide, and in Milwaukee that will probably be a volunteer from Bravo Milwaukee. Under this unusual marriage of public and private enterprise, trained volunteers from the Florentine Opera Club work with professional tour companies. Last year their labor contributed \$10,000 to the opera.

A QUICK BUS TOUR is the best way to put a town in perspective. Driving in from the south, through the Polish district of Milwaukee, you pass the two golden domes of St. Stanislaus Church and the cross-and-dome of St. Joseph Basilica before the high expressway bridges show you the city skyline.

Old copper-peaked brick towers mix with modern glass and steel, and familiar names like Schlitz are written in neon against the sky.

A one-hour walk, on a cold winter-cum-spring day, can introduce you to a lot of Milwaukeeans. The Milwaukee Exposition and Convention Center and Arena is a good place to start, with the revolving tower of the adjacent Hyatt Regency Hotel as a landmark.

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"How do I get downtown?" Two blocks south to Wisconsin, left across the river and back across another one of those angled bridges.

Milwaukee, like most northern cities, is trying to reclaim its downtown. Old buildings are either coming down or being restored. A mall is proposed for the main street. White columns rise on one side, and glass walls on the other side, of the river.

"Hi! I'm from out of town, and I was wondering where students go to eat in Milwaukee." Students always find the best, and cheapest places, and Marquette University is now about six blocks to the west of me.

"We go to John Hawk's pub on Friday nights, to the Mug Rack, which is a student bar on campus — it has lots of activities and free concerts on Friday afternoons. Then there's Captain's Steak Joint; the Loz, Stock and Bagel in Prospect Mall and lots of places on Wells Street behind the campus."

It is too early in the morning for pubs, so I turn north down Milwaukee Avenue to the Convention and Visitor's Bureau and ask another question.

"Where do people go for coffee or breakfast around here?"

"Well there's Jefferson Mall and lots of . . ."

"No, I mean where would you go." "Oh well, I'd go to Heinemann's."

Without such inside advice, you might miss this Milwaukee landmark, half a block back towards Wisconsin Avenue.

Heinemann's is one of those small, perfect restaurants that is only a street sign unless a local sends you there. Inside, in a bright room hung with good paintings, people drink first-class coffee and eat grilled coffee cake, a thick slab of bread-sugar goodness toasted and sprinkled with sugar.

MILWAUKEE has many historic hotel and restaurant traditions. I have already met the flamboyant maitre d', Frank Bonfiglio, who rules the English Room in the elegantly restored Pfister Hotel, and I'm scheduled to eat at another restored hotel called the Marc Plaza. But coffee and cake at Heinemann's is worth a special visit.

There are two other highly recommended quick stops I plan to make next time I come to town — Ovens of Brittany, a cafe and bake shop in the nearby Jefferson mall, and a tiny upstairs joint called Copper Pump at 135 Wells St.

But I am ready for my walk home down Wells, past the huge old city hall. From here you can see the 19th century German opera house that is called the Pabst Theater and the modern county-supported Performing Arts Center (PAC).

Milwaukee has a surprising number of top-quality arts events, either under the old crystal chandelier at the Pabst or on one of the three stages of the PAC. The PAC is also the riverfront site where Milwaukee's well-known festivals often take place.

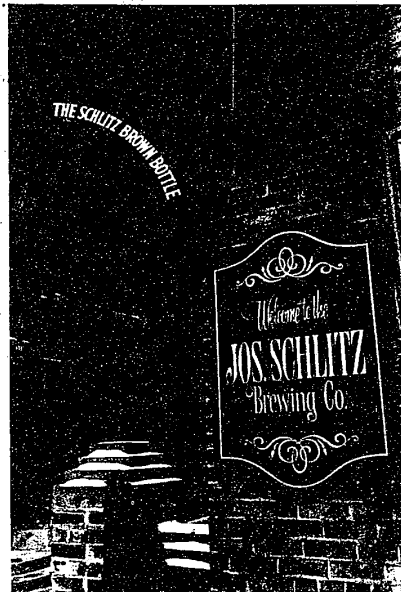
There are many things worth getting into a bus or a taxi for in Milwaukee. Pabst, Schlitz and Miller all offer brewery tours. You can eat lunch at an unusual restaurant called the Natatorium, where huge globes of flowering plants hang over a pool where the dolphins perform.

There's a decorative arts museum in a beautiful old mansion called Villa Terrace, and a fine contemporary Milwaukee Arts Museum near the river. If you have to pick only one of the city's attractions, however, don't miss the Milwaukee Public Museum.

I stood in the lobby with people who have traveled all over the world, and heard them say: "This is the finest museum of its kind in the world." I was skeptical, but they were right.

IF YOU WOULD like to meet Milwaukee one person at a time, contact the Greater Milwaukee Convention and Visitor's Bureau, 756 N. Milwaukee Ave., Milwaukee WI 53202.

Upcoming events include regular jazz and classic performances on the streets and in the parks west of the parks and recreation department; Music Under the Stars with the symphony; Milwaukee County Theater Festival May 7 to June 7; Summerfest June 26 to July 6; and the Alewife's Jazz Festival, July 6-31.



The tasting room of Milwaukee's Schlitz brewery is the traditional end of the public tours. (Photo by Iris Sanderson Jones)

travel log

Iris Sanderson Jones
contributing travel editor

Some tours off beaten track

Some of the most interesting trips available to local travelers are sponsored by non-profit organizations, rather than by private travel companies.

Jim Cantor of Ann Arbor will lead a six-week camping trip for teen-agers to the Yukon June 26 to August 7. The trip is sponsored by Camp Nebagun in Wisconsin and will be led by three guides, all former Oakland County residents.

Jane Poole, formerly of West Bloomfield, now works in environmental education for the National Parks Service in Indiana Dunes. Dave Bentley, formerly of Birmingham, leads trips for juvenile delinquents in St. Louis. Jim, whose family lives in Birmingham, is a program worker for the Michigan Human Services Department, working with mentally retarded youth.

The three of them will take 12 young people from the 10th and 11th grades on this camping expedition that will follow the Gold Rush Trail, exploring the natural history and geological highlights of the Yukon, as well as the people who live there.

The cost is \$1,700 per person from Seattle; the trip to Seattle is additional. The group will take the four-day ferry ride from Seattle to Skagway and then do a five-day, 32-mile hike over the Chilkoot Trail in Klondike National Park.

They will then canoe up the Yukon River to Whitehorse and Dawson City. If you are interested in taking this trip, contact Jim Cantor at 2841 W. Watters Road, Ann Arbor 48103 or call him at 662-6859.

If you would like to stay closer to home, the first signs of spring are beginning to burst on the festival scene. The Arkansas Folk Festival is scheduled for Mountain View, Ark. April 17-19 and 24-26. This is the 19th year that musicians and craftspeople will converge on this tiny Ozark town.

They'll kick off festivities with a Young People's Concert at the Ozark Folk Center April 16. The Mountain View Folklore Society will present its famous courthouse square musical Friday and Saturday nights during both weekends. The Hackensack Folklore Society will also stage shows Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. in the Jimmy Driftwood Barn.

The Ozark Foothills Craft Show and Sale will be held during the April 17-19 weekend only. More than 100 craftsmen will display and sell their work.

For information, contact the Mountain View Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 1831, Mountain View, AR 72560; or call the Ozark Folk Center at (501) 269-3851.

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