

O&E Thursday, July 31, 1986

Travel

(BDB,T,RO)S-C,F-7C,80*)

Vancouver: Expo 86, Pacific Northwest

This is the second of a series on Expo 86, the world exposition being held through Oct. 13 in Vancouver, British Columbia. Vancouver is celebrating its 100th birthday this year. The fair is on two sites in the downtown city, a beautiful setting in a bowl of mountains on the Pacific coast of Canada.

The main 165-acre site, nearly twice the size of the Magic Kingdom at Disney World, has almost 100 pavilions and other attractions curving for two miles

along a sea channel called False Creek. Canada Place, the Canadian government pavilion with the sail-like roof, is on Burrard Inlet a few minutes ride away by Skytrain, the automated light rail transit system.



Iris Jones

GETTING THERE. I did an advance run for you, so here are some tips. Go in September when the kids are back in school. Check discount fares Windsor to Vancouver on Air Canada; they are already heavily booked but you never know when you will be lucky; 7 p.m. is a good time to catch a cancellation, but airline phone lines are open late at night too.

Check package tours from your travel agent, including AAA-Michigan especially if you want to see the whole northwest. More than 50,000 airline computer terminals have access to the Expo info data base, so your travel agent may be able to answer questions simply by plugging in to that file.

Many cruise lines added Vancouver to their schedule this year, and they get cancellations too; ships dock downtown at Canada Place, which will remain as a conference center and cruise ship terminal after the fair.

If you want to combine Expo 86 with a train trip, telephone the following toll-free numbers: Amtrak (800) 872-7245; ViaRail Canada (800) 367-1144; American By Rail, in East Lansing, (800) 351-7411.

Most of you will probably do what I did, fly to Seattle and go to Vancouver through "the back door." I flew Republic flight 579 that leaves Detroit at 9:35 a.m. and arrives in Seattle 11 a.m., and continues on Pacific Western Airline to Vancouver. Several airlines fly to Seattle. Some still offer bargain rates.

THERE ARE several ways to get to Vancouver from Seattle. Rent a car but drive it back to Seattle to avoid heavy drop-off charges. Take Gray Line's daily Expo Express bus from downtown Seattle to the Expo site, or a one, two- or three-day bus tour, but remember it is four hours drive by bus each way, three hours to do the 144 miles by car. Call Gray Line toll-free at (800) 426-7532.

You can also take a shuttle bus from Blaine, at the U.S.-Canada border, call (206) 946-1908. Take proper identification for crossing the border; other border crossings aren't as easygoing as the one in Detroit.

If you have time, I highly recommend taking a ferry to Victoria, B.C., on Vancouver Island, and another ferry through the Gulf Islands to Vancouver. That is an experience you won't forget. The Princess Marguerite leaves Seattle daily at 8 a.m., arrives downtown Victoria four hours later and leaves Victoria for Seattle at 5:30 p.m. One way \$18; \$27 for your car. Or drive to Port Angeles and ferry to Victoria for \$3.50, \$22 for your car.

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If you don't need or want your car, don't take it. Ferry to Victoria, buy a bus/ferry ticket to Vancouver and

bus home to Seattle after you've seen Expo 86. Vancouver has a good public transportation system and safe streets, so you don't really need a car if all you are exploring is the city. If you want to explore the nearby mountains, rent a car for the day.

ACCOMMODATIONS. WHEN you are planning a trip from your arm chair in Michigan, it sounds like there isn't a room left in Vancouver. Vancouverites say there is lots of room if you know how to find it. A July press release from Expo says that there are more room-nights for

rent for the remaining Expo 86 period than at any other time.

What causes the confusion is that tour operators typically reserve a block of hotel rooms and release part of the block at the last minute, which means you can almost always get a room.

Call ResWest, the official accommodation agency at (604) 662-3300. There is a toll-free number, but you will not be charged for the call until you actually get through to a live person. Remember the three-hour time difference and call after 4 p.m. Vancouver time, which is after 7 p.m. in Detroit. ResWest is open 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Pacific time, seven days a week, so you can call as late as 1 a.m. Eastern time and still get through.

How do you evaluate your accommodations? My Vancouver friends warned me that a few, very few, run-down hotels in sleazy areas spruced up their rooms and advertised for Expo, without really clearing the prostitutes out of the lobby, and that some Americans were reserving rooms as far away as Whistler Mountain in Sechart, which is a great location but two hours drive from Vancouver.

YOU WON'T really find much of that, and ResWest will tell you exactly where your hotel is and what the area is like. If you are still nervous, double check ratings by AAA or Mobile Travel Guide. Please remember that Vancouver is not one of our devastated northeastern U.S. industrial cities, so most of the downtown is just fine.

The automated light rail transit system, Skytrain, runs from New Westminster through Burnaby to downtown Vancouver, stopping at both Expo sites and near most downtown hotels. (Limited parking at Skytrain stations.) The new Pan Pacific Hotel is built right into Canada Place.

Five cruise ships have parked and offer accommodations, roughly \$65 in a passenger cabin or \$25 in crew quarters; three are in the city of New Westminster and two in downtown Vancouver. ResWest lists camp sites and bed-and-breakfast places as well as all these other accommodations.

Just as a P.S.: I met a young woman who rents two apartments on west 14th Ave. In the elegant old Shaughnessy area not far from Expo; I don't know her or her place, but a respected friend recommended it. Chen Fenny, (604) 732-5637.

Final recommendation. Call Tourism Canada in Detroit at 963-1044 for any information about Canada.

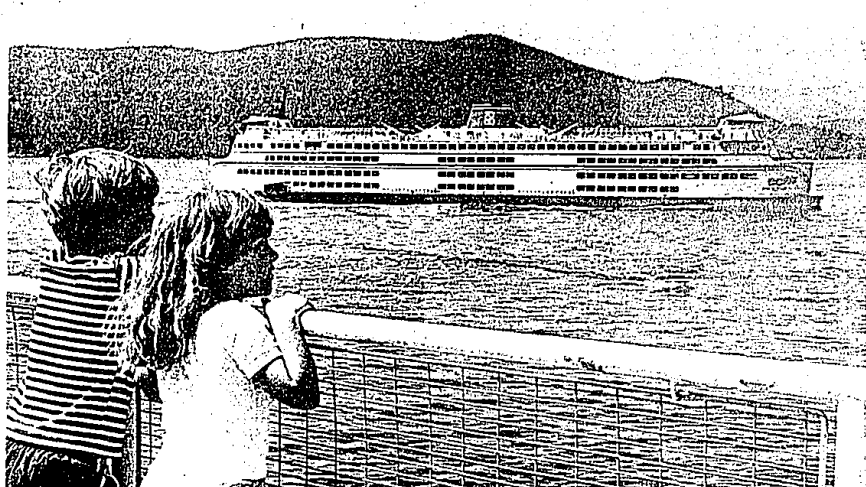
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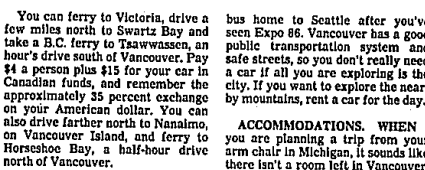
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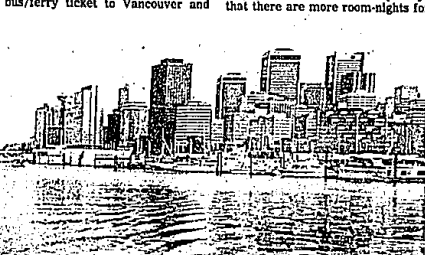
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Two youngsters take in the sights on one of the many British Columbia ferries operating in the Vancouver area.



The Vancouver shoreline makes a picturesque setting.



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AAA marks its 70th birthday

Auto Club of Michigan is marking its 70th birthday in 1986, a year which is expected to produce a record number of tourists on state highways.

Started on June 28, 1916, as the Detroit Automobile Club by 19 business and civic leaders, AAA Michigan has grown to more than 1.3 million members and is the nation's third-largest AAA club.

And while times have changed as it grew advanced from tot, to teenager and now to septuagenarian, AAA Michigan says its basic service objective has never changed: "To co-

operate in any way which may tend to benefit the automobile driver, user, owner or manufacturer and the automobile industry in general."

However, it has been broadened to include support of the state's tourist industry, and provide public service programs to schools, the news media and state residents. Services have grown from beginning the nation's first school safety patrol program in 1919, to providing car insurance and travel services. Meanwhile, AAA Michigan grew into the state's largest auto insurer and travel agency.

Last year AAA Michigan sold more airline tickets and made more travel arrangements than any AAA club in the world.

Three years ago, AAA Michigan got into the amusement park business when it purchased Boblo Island on the Detroit River and embarked on a multimillion-dollar, five-year expansion and beautification program.

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