

# Rolling in green

## St. Pat's Day is boon for Savannah

(AP) — It'll take more than the luck of the Irish to get a hotel room in Savannah for the St. Patrick's Day weekend.

The city already is rolling in green — not just green as in leprechauns but also green as in dollars — as residents prepare for their annual St. Patrick's Day parade, billed as the nation's second largest.

It takes foresight to find a room when the city is crisscrossed with up to 500,000 visitors competing for one of Chatham County's 6,500 guest rooms.

"Sorry, we are all booked," is a common phrase in hotels and inns. The demand for rooms is so great that the lodging facilities have, for the most part, been booked for six months or more — without a dime spent on advertising.

**THE CLOSEST** hotel rooms still available for March 16 and 17 are in Hardeeville, S.C., on Hilton Head Island, S.C., and in Statesboro, but even those could be full before Monday.

"There is a strong possibility that all of our 3,000 hotel rooms will be sold out," said spokesman Nikki Rickette of the Hilton Head Chamber of Commerce.

But she said the island's 6,000 rental villas are less likely to sell out because "visitors just don't think about renting a condo."

"There are very few rooms left in Hilton Head and Statesboro," said Judy Hammond, the Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce's switchboard operator and St. Patrick's Day information specialist. "We have eight phone calls on staff just for answering phone calls."

The holiday is the area's best day of the year for sales as people buy everything from lodging to T-shirts. "It is by far the best weekend," said Tricia Patterson, assistant manager and sales director at the East Bay Inn and Old Harbour Inn.

"We have been sold out since August," she said, adding that the two inns are receiving about 50 calls a day for rooms during the holiday weekend.

"I don't think anyone advertises. People already are calling for a room next year," Ms. Patterson said. A two-night package at the East Bay Inn goes for \$75, and a three-night stay at the Old Harbour Inn costs \$60.

Ms. Patterson said guests don't

mind spending the money for the mandatory two or three nights. "People welcome the two- or three-day packages. Nobody asks for a one-night stay."

The two-day package for Friday and Saturday night at the Hyatt Regency Savannah runs \$333 including tax, room, food and beverage. Sunday nights still are available at \$79, said sales director Kurt Mehl.

The Hyatt sold out in the two weeks after the hotel began taking

reservations for St. Patrick's Day weekend early last fall.

But not everything comes up green for hotel operators. There is a catch: double-bookings.

Clifford Meads, general manager of the Shalston Savannah Resort, said double-bookings have left some rooms empty in past years.

"This year," he said, "we are doing a better job with advance deposits."

## B&B owners convene to discuss fun, profit

Aspiring innkeepers are encouraged to join Bed and Breakfast Enterprises in Michigan for its fourth annual conference on "Startling and Managing Existing Bed and Breakfast Businesses."

The conference will be 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 21, at the Kellogg Center on the Michigan State University campus in E. Lansing.

The conference will focus on operating the inn as a business, personally, professionally and profitably. Experts on innkeeping, promotion, real estate and law will present information to participants.

This year's seminar is co-spon-

sored by Lake to Lake Bed and Breakfast Association and MSU's Department of Parks and Recreation and Cooperative Extension Service.

In 1984, there were approximately 50 bed and breakfast inns in Michigan, said Lynda Petty, innkeeper for Park House Bed and Breakfast in Saugatuck. Today, there are more than 350, she said.

Advanced registration is requested for the seminar. Tickets are \$60, which includes lunch. Walk-in registration is \$65, depending on the space available. To reserve a spot, call Lynda Petty at (616) 857-4535.

## Candles city's claim to fame

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On close inspection, the line was made out of roller skate-type parts and chains and gears of old bicycles all hooked up somehow to a little motor in the center of the room. The conveyor belt lurches forward and 350 dangling lapers rotate overhead around the room and dip into a tub of melted wax. The whole contraption looked to me like a great piece of pop art.

At a work table below, artists create special candles, fill orders and personalize wax pieces. During my visit, an order for a bar mitzvah was being filled. White candles with the child's name streamed down the side and a Star of David was designed at the top. There were 14 candles for

the 14 important people in the child's life to be lit during the ceremony.

MANY CANDLES are simply designed by pouring wax into a mold. There are molds for statues, frogs, gingerbread houses and valentines, to name a few.

The drive up to Davisburg proved to be both fun and educational. I picked up bits of history along the way and learned how candles were used thousands of years ago for daily use. Candles have also played a significant role in most religious ceremonies and are still being used today.

So, the next time you light up a candle, ask yourself where that candle may have been made. Maybe you're due for a trip to Davisburg.



GUE MARK

During the quiet afternoon sunset, visitors climb the massive rocks along the beach.

## Hidden coastal getaway

Continued from Page 10

town is the Hotel Peasas Real. Placed on a hill overlooking the beach, this fairly new hotel is a distance from town, under the flight pattern of the airport, and more expensive.

ONCE THE BREEZY beach and laid back lifestyle embraced us, we had a tough time leaving Puerto Escondido to continue our travels in Oaxaca, known for its folk arts and crafts. We flew up to Oaxaca for the weekend, making sure we arrived in time for the Saturday market (Mexico's largest) in downtown Oaxaca. The Senatorial Hotel is situated on the zocalo or town square in Oaxaca and was recommended to us for its location and value, \$31 per night. The recommendation turned out to be a good one. The city square is filled with marching bands, street

performers, balloon and toy sellers, crafts and sidewalk cafes.

For a taste of history, we took a taxi for the 10 mile trip to the ancient city of Monte Alban (500 B.C.) on the Sierra Nevada mountain. The ancient civilization was built and rebuilt by Mixtecs, Zapotecs and Aztec Indians and discovered by archeologists in 1937. Incredible.

When we completed our tour of Monte Alban, there were no taxis heading back to Oaxaca. So, we joined about 80 workers and tourists on a bus which turned out to be much more fun than a taxi ride.

In Oaxaca, we made time to visit the Tomayo Museum, the Church of Santa Domingo, the Regional Museum and the Instituto de Artes Graficas (graphics museum) which features the best in Oaxacan folk art including black pottery, painted wooden animals and a variety of masks.

**THE MARKET PLACES** are filled with fresh and cooked food, crafts, household items and of course, people. The market offers some great buys on regional crafts with everything from rugs to pottery. The general rule is to cut the asking price in half and haggle upwards, but once you state a price and the seller accepts, it is impolite to continue to haggle.

The best eating place in Oaxaca was the Madra, a new restaurant in a lovely open courtyard, complete with a grand piano and tunes like, "As Time Goes By." Happy hour featured many complimentary snacks including delicious hot potato tarts, various degrees of salsa and spicy peanuts.

By noon on Monday, we were back on the beach at the Santa Fe. As always, the weather was perfect and we instantly set back into our relaxation mode. Previously, we had

resisted making any purchases in Puerto Escondido except for a pair of silver earrings at Alberto's jewelry store in town. Most everything can be bought from peddlers on the beach. They sell hand painted clay masks, jewelry, hammocks, hats, clothing, even hot tamales and raw oysters.

**AFTER LEAVING** Puerto Escondido to head home, we had one day to spend in Mexico City. We stayed at the Majestic Hotel which is a charming colonial style building located in the center of Mexico City. Our large room, complete with a balcony overlooking the town square was \$44. The city is filled with many interesting spots including the newly opened Franz Meyer Museum, a collection of decorative arts. We wandered over to the Gran Hotel, directly behind the Majestic, to see the incredible Tiffany glass encrusted in elevators, bird cages and the glass ceiling in the seven story atrium.

Most of the restaurants in Mexico City close around 7 p.m. so be sure to schedule an early mealtime. All good things must come to an end, and unfortunately our vacation ended while landing in the arctic chill of Detroit. We made reservations to return to Santa Fe next year. Puerto Escondido is an exceptional place and we can't wait to return.

By the way, if you stay at Santa Fe and meet Paul Cleaver before we do, say hello for us and remember to take some extra paperbacks with you to leave behind.

Sue and Hank Marz live in Detroit. Sue is an independent film producer from Detroit. In 1987, she won an Academy Award for her documentary, "Young at Heart." Hank is a self employed Detroit businessman.

## How to get there

Some tips for planning a trip to Puerto Escondido:

- Most flights from Detroit Metro Airport to Mexico City are approximately \$450 round trip.
- From Mexico City, board Mexicana airlines for a \$50, 50-minute flight to Puerto Escondido. Or, fly Aerovias Oaxaqueñas for a \$40, 30-minute flight due in south of Oaxaca. If you buy your tickets for travel within Mexico before you leave, you save the 15-percent tax charge.
- Although Puerto Escondido is only 270 miles down the coast from Acapulco, there are no direct flights between the two cities. However, you can connect through Oaxaca.
- Call El Santa Fe hotel, (958) 2-1-70, for reservations.

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## CATCH CHICAGO

Almost while no one was looking, America's second-largest city has become a confident, sophisticated, inviting destination for the visitor with a weekend or a week to spare.

Don't miss the fun of sailing one of the Chicago River tours which provide unique views of a major city from the river that winds its way through the middle of town. Then, to top it off, see the lights from the country's tallest building—The Sears Tower, open every day to midnight.

Cultural attractions abound in the City by the Lake. In summer, the Ravinia Festival is America's premier outdoor performance series. The Chicago Jazz Festival, the world's largest, attracts top performers. The renowned Chicago Symphony is celebrating its centenary season. Don't miss the Shedd Aquarium, preparing to open its futuristic Oceanarium for marine animals.

And, of course, Chicago is home to the Cubbies, the White Sox, the Bears, the Bulls, the Black Hawks. And Oprah Winfrey.

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