

Travel Scene

Iris Sanderson Jones editor



Thursday, December 6, 1990 (A&E)

•••••



crossroads

Iris Jones

'Tis the season — to shop

"I would kill to do that at Christmastime!"

I heard the voice through my office door. It was my friend Nora starting at a press release from Hamilton, Miller, Hudson and Payne Travel Corporation in Southfield.

It read "New York Pre-Holiday Shopping Spree" and went on to describe one-day trips on Pan American to New York City, with transfers to Macy's. Fortunately, some were already over and some were sold out but there was still space Dec. 6, 12 and 13, leaving at 7:30 a.m. and getting back at 12:45 a.m. for \$129 to \$149.

I started to say, "call your travel agent," but she held up her hand. "I could get there but I couldn't afford to shop," she moaned. "Oh my God, look at this. Chocolate!"

She picked up the ad and read it aloud: "If you love chocolate, you'll love Hershey's Chocolate World visitors center in Chocolate Town USA." That's Hershey, Pa., home of Hershey chocolate.

That's when I found out about shopaholics and what they go through at Christmastime.

"I love to shop," she sighed. "Even if I buy a pot at K mart I feel better because I've bought something. But we're on a budget and my husband took away my credit card. This year I can only shop by catalog or over the phone."

There she was, a shopaholic with a glut of Christmas shopping opportunities in front of her and no credit card. We threw out the brochure from AAA Travel Agency for a December shopping trip to European Christmas markets in Germany and Austria, and the invitation to spend \$1,350 roasting chestnuts in the Ritz Hotel in London, England.

"Can you travel a little if you don't shop?" I asked.

"As long as I don't go too far and it doesn't cost much."

I lifted a bright yellow brochure that said "Santa Claus Train Ride Through Wine Country." The third annual Santa Claus tree-cutting trains leave Kalamazoo on the Lake Shore & Chicago Railway for the Bonanza Tree Farm, a few miles west of Paw Paw, where you can cut your own Christmas tree.

The trains leave Paw Paw at 9:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Dec. 8, 9, 15 and 16, with a special 4 p.m. train Dec. 7. Fares are \$17 for adults, \$7 kids under 12, children under 2 are free. The ticket includes hot apple cider, hot chocolate, doughnuts and snacks aboard. It costs \$25 for the Christmas tree, which is mechanically baled, tagged and delivered to the train for the return home. Call (616) 657-7037 for more information.

There are a lot of Christmas activities where you can avoid shopping if you pass the craft tables blindfolded. Check Interlochen at (616) 276-6230 for musical events through the season.

"Here's one for lots of ho-ho-ho's at Grand Traverse Resort," she said. And then she saw it. An ad for a "Power Shoppers' Weekend." "It's all right, that one is over," I said. I didn't want any shopaholic fainting in my office.

It costs \$3.50 to see the new holiday laser light show, a 20-minute spectacular performed at Grand Traverse. You can also ride horse and sleigh complete with jingle bells. Call toll-free (800) TRAVELERS for other activities going on in the region.

Closer to home, there is, of course, Dicken's Christmas Carol at Meadowbrook Theater or an 8:30 p.m. performance Dec. 7 and 15 at the Hubbard Tavern bed-and-breakfast in Milford. Admission is \$15 including refreshments.

You can go to Toledo to see the Lights Before Christmas display through Jan. 6 in the Zoo, Christmas by the River through Dec. 30 at the Wolcott House/Museum Complex, Children's Wonderland through Dec. 30 at Lucas County Recreation Center and Holiday Traditions through Dec. 30 at Ritter Planetarium. Shopaholics can't get in too much trouble there.

A tale of warm breezes and cool rum in Puerto Rico



A group of school kids perch atop a pile of huge cannon balls at El Morro fortress.

By Noreen Flack
staff writer

It's hard to determine whether Puerto Rico is actually the paradise island I remember it to be or if it was the tremendous consumption of well-aged rum known to the Puerto Ricans that somehow has blurred my memory.

Needless to say, a few rum drinks blended with tropical fruits in a tall glass sporting an umbrella is enough to send anyone off into the palm tree breezes of the Caribbean and at least a few merry-making nights out.

For years, Puerto Rico has been a major exporter of rum. Last year, nearly 85 percent of the rum sold in the United States came from Puerto Rico.

I enjoyed several tours of various distilleries, which have a history all their own including pirate tales and origins of drinks. Call the distillery (Bacardi, Barrilito, Boca Chica, Captain Morgan, Castillo, Don Q, Palo Viejo, Ron Boy, Ron Llave, Ronrico and Ron Superior). You can also call the Puerto Rico Tourism Co. toll-free from Michigan to reserve a tour or for other information: (800) 223-6530.

It wasn't only the wafting rums that enchanted me with the island. The tranquility of Puerto Rico offered, among other things, the perfect sunset, allowing me to forget about the chaos I left on my office desk back home.

Like all Caribbean islands, the most important thing to do in Puerto Rico is to find a cozy spot on the beach and capture the magic of the ocean. Vendors line the shore with their wares while bronze bodies soak up the rays. The sand is as warm as it comes and there's nothing better than a barefoot stroll along the coast before dinner.

The island cradles a population of 3.3 million, one million of whom

Like all Caribbean islands, the most important thing to do in Puerto Rico is to find a cozy spot on the beach and capture the magic of the ocean.

live in metropolitan San Juan.

Spanish is the official language and most Puerto Ricans know at least some English so you can usually get your message across.

I was amused by one tradition that seems to remain intact: Street workers would practice their mid-afternoon siesta and drop to the pavement or under a tree. It didn't seem to matter where, for a quick nap, and as temperatures rose, a siesta didn't seem like a bad idea for me either as I tried to catch the sights in the island's heat.

I took a 90-minute ride across the island from San Juan to Ponce one day. The ride journeys through a utopian-like blast of dramatic mountain scenery and peaceful countryside.

I didn't get a chance to see the Yunque rain forest, 35 miles east of San Juan in the Luquillo Mountains. The rain forest has become a popular visitor site in the past few years. It roams for 28,000 acres and is the only tropical rain forest in the U.S. Forest Service.

Ponce, Puerto Rico's second largest city was even more tranquil than San Juan. The city park and shops are clustered together making downtown an easy stroll through the cobblestoned streets.

I gained nearly 10 pounds while I was in Puerto Rico, even though I

Please turn to Page 8

Light festival adds sparkle to Christmas

By Nicki and Harold Chodnoff
special writer

Communities across the country may be settling down for a long winter's nap, but not Wheeling, W.Va. They have flicked the switch and turned on the lights for the annual "Festival of Lights."

What started in 1985 as a way to relieve end-of-the-year doldrums during tourist-starved winter months has escalated into America's largest light festival.

More than 70 major lighted displays attract nearly 300,000 visitors through February in downtown Wheeling and Oglebay (pronounced O-gul-bee) Park.

Visitors are greeted by lighted sidewalk trees, storefront displays and 250 giant lighted snowflakes, lining downtown business-area streets. More than 40 giant lighted displays are seen throughout the city.

A kick-off celebration performance got the Festival rolling November 15, followed on November 16 by

What started in 1985 as a way to relieve end-of-the-year doldrums during tourist-starved winter months has escalated into America's largest light festival.

the annual gigantic holiday parade. All floats must be lighted.

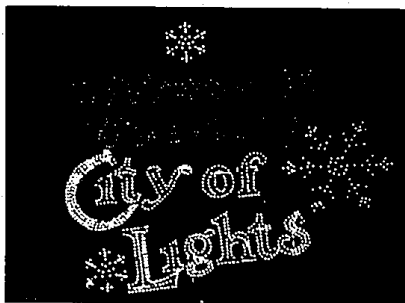
Since the Festival's inception, celebrities and artists such as the Drifters, Janie Fricke, Willard Scott and Loretta Lynn have appeared in Wheeling during the light show.

In Oglebay Park, more than 900,000 multicolored holiday lights glow from dusk until 11 p.m. through Jan. 30 and on weekends through February.

The free driving tour runs for seven miles through the city-owned 1,500-acre park, which showcases 32 giant lighted displays that include

four new designs for 1990. Lighting is not limited to displays. Selected landscape vistas, historical buildings and natural tree groupings on the property are bathed or outlined by twinkling holiday lights. Downright giddy with excitement, visitors view jumbo-sized breathtaking exhibits like tumbling teddy bears or the Stars and Stripes behind Miss Liberty, and believe in Santa and the sugar plum fairy again. Jaded, sophisticated spectators turn into children once more.

Please turn to Page 8



Wheeling, W.Va., proclaims its Festival of Lights with sparkling style. The annual light display attracts visitors from across the country.

Holiday excursions offer something for everyone

Skiers interested in braving the slopes of Colorado and Utah are invited to participate in upcoming ski trips offered by the Traveling Teachers of Detroit.

distinctive Crossroads cancellation. Handprinted cards are also available in the Village Print Shop.

St. Nick and Frosty the Snowman will be on hand to visit with the children. The whole family will enjoy rides on the village's gorgeous 1912 Parker Carousel and horse-drawn wagon rides through the gaily decorated streets.

Informal buffet Christmas dinners are served at the adjacent Mott

Farm, and reservations can be made by calling (313) 736-7100.

Tickets, which include admission to Crossroads Village and a 25-minute excursion aboard the Huckleberry Railroad, are \$5.95 for adults, \$4.95 for seniors 60 and up, and \$3.95 for children 4-12. Children under 4 are free.

Crossroads Village is just north of Flint. Follow I-475 off either I-75 or I-69 to Exit 11. For additional information, call Genesee County Parks at (313) 736-7100 between 8 a.m.-5 p.m. weekdays.

lanti through Dec. 31.

Ski Trips

Christmas celebrations like this are lighting up the world all over Michigan. The Sinterklaas celebration is in Holland through Dec. 16. There's an Old-Fashioned Christmas in Battle Alley, Holly, Fridays and Saturdays through Christmas Eve.

Other Christmas festivities include the Christmas Carnival Hall through Dec. 18. A Christmas Candlewalk in Flushing and a Dow Gardens Christmas Walk in Midland Dec. 6 & 7. Christmas at Courthouse in Charlotte Dec. 9. Christmas at the Binder Park Zoo in Battle Creek Dec. 12-23 and Dec. 26-30.

There's a Christmas Fantasyland Train Ride in Bridgeport Dec. 21-23, celebrations at the Nature Center in Kalamazoo weekends through Dec. 23 and the Festival of Lights in Ypsilanti through Dec. 31.

lanti through Dec. 31.

lanti through Dec. 31.

lanti through Dec. 31.

lanti through Dec. 31.

lanti through Dec. 31.

lanti through Dec. 31.

lanti through Dec. 31.

lanti through Dec. 31.

Please turn to Page 8