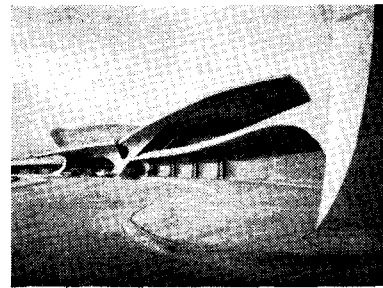
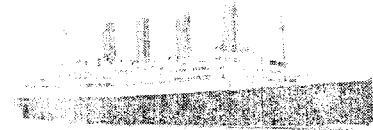


# 1947—1967



## TWENTY YEARS OF TRAVEL

# FROM MOTION TO MOBILISM

By HORACE SUTTON

IN NEW YORK the 5-cent subway fare was in danger, but meat prices were going down. Stewing lamb had dropped to 23 cents a pound and sirloin steak to 73 cents. Elia Kazan had directed Arthur Miller's play, *All My Sons*, and it took the Critics' Prize. Ralph Bellamy was deep in politics in a thing called *State of the Union*. So was Harry Truman, who had just vetoed the Taft-Hartley bill. Ethel Merman was shooting up the scenery in *Annie Get Your Gun*, Judy Holliday was the dumb broad in *Born Yesterday* at the Lyceum. Moscow was examining the Marshall Plan. The ads in *The New York Times* (3 cents) announced that *Brigadoon*, the Critics' Prize musical, was playing in a "scientifically air-conditioned theater." Evita Peron had just concluded a trip to Madrid, where she received a tumultuous greeting not seen since the visit of Heinrich Himmler. Stockings, fifteen denier, fifty-one gauge, were \$1.69. Robert Penn Warren had gotten the Pulitzer for *All the King's Men* and Loretta Young won the Oscar for *The Farmer's Daughter*. More doctors were smoking Camels than any other cigarette, an A-1 secretary could be hired for \$60 a week, a maid for \$46, and at Bergdorf Goodman's dress sale the prices started at \$20.

Things were so different it seems like an interlude out of some previous incarnation, a passage of history long before one's time. It was spring and it was 1947. Six liners, with the *Mauretania* leading the way, sailed out of New York harbor with 4,000 passengers aboard. A Pan Am around-the-world plane carrying a party of junketing publishers landed at Dum Dum Airport in Calcutta at the unhandy hour of 4:09 a.m. They would be up for lunch to accept the Governor's invitation. Ten-day cruises to Bermuda and Nassau started at \$195. And eighteen travel editors, a new breed, embarked on a tour of New York State to evaluate its resorts.

In the issue that was dated the last day of spring that year, *Saturday Review* carried its first travel article. And its first travel advertisement. The ad sang the glories of The Grand View Hotel at Lake Placid, New York, where, for \$14 a day, "young folks" could get not only a room, but free tennis, free beach, and "free use of car." All drinks, including Scotch, were 50 cents.

SR's first travel article, an inauspicious bagatelle on France, noted the curious irony that "today, three years after the invasion, France is ready to receive more tourists than there is transportation to ferry



—Great Northern Railway.

**American trains —**Waiter's affable smile bespoke new hope for railroads.



—BOAC.

**Comfortable planes —**First Constellations stressed ease of transatlantic flying.

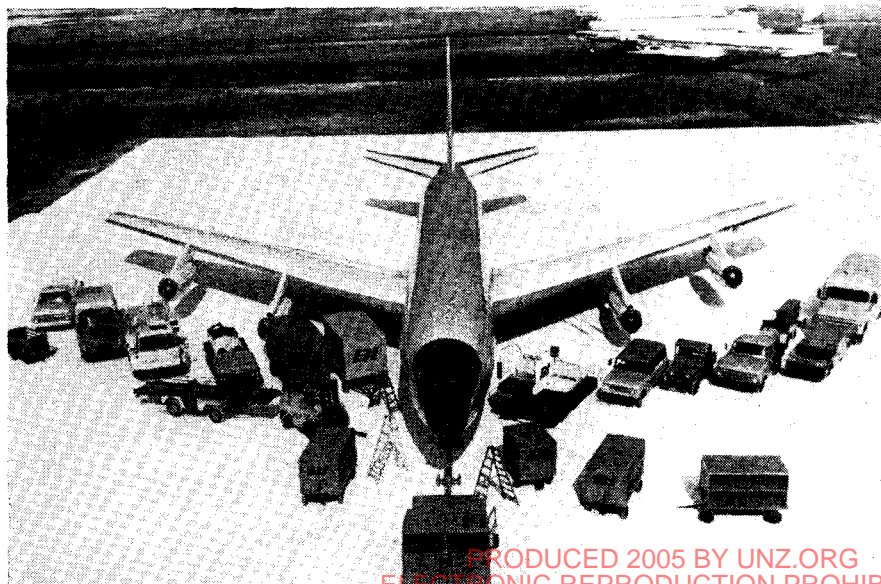


—Sovfoto.

**Beyond the curtain—**In the mid-Fifties tourist travel to Russia began, at \$50 a day.

**Servicing a jet—**The propless wonders opened a vast, exciting world in which to roam.

—Braniff.



them abroad." The French Line had two ships on the Atlantic, the *Wisconsin* and the *Oregon*. Air France was churning through the new air lanes in sixteen hours, but that summer "plane passage," as I so quaintly called it then, would be as "tight as ship space, and both are as hard to find as a four-room apartment."

Somehow, in some inexplicable manner, in some curious telescoping of time that compresses a thousand adventures into one memory the way a telephoto lens flattens a long scene into one foreshortened view, twenty years have passed. Seven hundred articles have been written under this by-line and, if the abacus doesn't lie, some 2,000,000 miles logged.

That yellow brick road, which now from the heights of Oz seems so short a trail, has brought us from the first real summer of postwar travel right up to what some house phrase-maker has termed The Dawning Age of Mobilism. Well, hell. We all felt we were incredibly mobile then. Even if the ships weren't back, there was the phenomenon of transatlantic flight. In the autumn of 1947 when I went to France to write a book, I took the plane. The new age of transatlantic flying was also an age of airborne luxury. The planes were competing against the ships. And besides, the memory was still fairly green of the comfort of the old flying Clippers that took off and landed on water, and the sybaritic splendor aboard the old German Zeppelins.

Air France that fall flew a new Constellation, took only thirty-four passengers, and, despite the incredible restaurant which it had to transport across the North Atlantic, the weight load was low enough to permit a nonstop flight from LaGuardia Field in New York to Le Bourget in Paris. What a marvel! What an adventure! One could dine out on it for months. In the provinces the French with whom I talked could scarcely believe it, and, as I reflect on it now, there won't be another travel experience to match it until the first paying passenger makes the first supersonic dash in the 1970s.

**T**RAVELING in Europe in 1947 was its own adventure. The advance notices had been full of warning, and I recall my anxious relatives pressing tinned food-stuffs on me as my plane left for the leap across the sea. It is hard to realize now, but in 1947 one traveled about France on ration coupons, rations for meat and rations for bread. And one drank (see Geoffrey Bocca's article, page 47) make-believe coffee called *café national*, manufactured from acorns. As the days wended into November and the heat in the provincial hotels failed to flow into the radiators, so mute and cold, I slept under the comforters fully clothed. Rail



strikes and subway strikes and taxi strikes bedeviled France, the tourist's paradise. And then there was the electricity. It was off during the day and even sometimes when it was supposed to be on, it suddenly went off, leaving the elegant guests in the still elegant George V hotel marooned in the elevator shaft.

Britain, which last year passed France in tourism, was more ruin than resort. The food was in short supply and so, apparently, were qualified cooks. But Britain needed dollars, and it was brash enough and doughty enough to launch a campaign that was to make it a tourist country when it had never been one before. Last year it earned \$924 million from a business it was scarcely involved in before the war.

**T**HE idea of a trip to the Soviet Union in the first postwar years was a fantastic notion roughly akin to a trip to China today. When in 1948 a travel agency named World Tourists, Inc., said it had tickets to Russia ready and waiting, I went down to see them. The previous year they had sold fifty tickets, World Tourists said, mostly to furriers who paid \$19 a day first class for room, board, and sightseeing and \$15 a day in tourist class. World Tourists deducted its 10 per cent and deposited the rest to the Soviet account in the Chase bank. The only hitch was the visa, and to get that one applied at the old Soviet Consulate across the street from New York's Pierre Hotel. I went up there to see what would happen and was greeted with a gratuitous barrage of polemics delivered above the din of a radio turned up to full volume. The bugging game and its antidotes had started early.

In Europe in the late Forties train travel was surprisingly good considering the years of attrition that had only recently ended. The trains were probably better than they were at home, but more comfortable railroading days were coming—or so everybody said. General Motors was touring the United States with its Train of Tomorrow, featuring air conditioning, full-length mirrors, colorful draperies, even wallpaper. Most exciting of all, the cars had glass bubbles, called Astro-Domes, built into the ceiling, from which sightseers could view the nation from a perch two feet higher than the roof of the ordinary car. In Chicago, 50,000 people stood in the rain to see it.

Although the new travelers were being pampered with what I then called "nursemaid service" aboard the airlines and with startling new cars and shiny new buses, nobody had a kind word for American trains. They were way behind. Only General Motors held an optimistic view. The new trains coming from Pullman and Budd had fluorescent lights and pastel colors. The Pennsylvania

Railroad put in a daring innovation—automatic doors. The Chesapeake and Ohio was showing movies, and the New Haven (what happened to it?) was preparing baby foods. We could all expect tomorrow's trains to have individual seat radios, news tickers, nursery cars, barber shops, bars, secretaries, and a rotating art show on the walls. Sure.

Dramamine, first of a series of sure remedies for motion sickness, a traveler's ill that had plagued man for 2,000 years, appeared on druggists' shelves in 1949. That same year the airlines broke into a scuffle over the fares for the 1950 Holy Year in Rome. Out of it came a new lower excursion fare and the promise of two-class travel overseas. American Airlines and TWA had just begun coast-to-coast coach service using DC-4s. In Grand Bahama, Billy Butlin, the ringmaster of Britain's highly popular Holiday Camps, had brought regimented vacations to the new world. He had invaded the scrub pine lands of Grand Bahama, only 50 miles from West Palm Beach, and offered \$98-a-week vacations on a 4,000-acre playland. The same island, long since bereft of Butlin, is a developing vacationland with large new hotels, a gambling casino, and a bubbling cauldron of controversy over kick-backs and shady connections.

**C**RUISES were back, and by 1951 the *Caronia* was off on an elaborate 111-day sail to India, Fiji, New Caledonia, and Pago Pago. Outside rooms were going for \$6,000 per person, two in a room. The *Ocean Monarch*, built just for pleasure cruising, began a regular shuttle service to Bermuda, where the Castle Harbor had just been dusted off. Life on the modified American plan, with no lunch, cost from \$22 to \$38 for two.

Over the Atlantic, Pan American was trying to get a transoceanic fare of \$200. Air coach flights to Europe for about \$225 were promised by the spring of 1952. But while the fight was on to bring down over-the-ocean fares, super-luxury trips to foreign places were getting splashy headlines. A \$15,000, thirty-seven-day excursion promoted by Temple Fielding, a travel book writer, drew fire from Congress, which was worried about the posture of free-spending Americans rollicking through convalescing Europe. The *Louisville Courier-Journal* rapped the whole idea and the Congressional reaction in an editorial entitled "A Booby Trap for A Booby Trip." Dean Acheson worried about another money-flinging expedition, this time to the sensitive East, which guaranteed every male member his own personal geisha during a five-day stopover in Japan.

As far back as 1951 the International Union of Official Travel Organizations was sending out pronouncements to

eliminate or reduce discriminatory taxes on tourists. It asked for common measures to ease complex customs forms, visas, and health and immigration inspections. More than a year after that noble gesture, clearing customs at Hawaii after a return from Japan took nearly two hours at the dock.

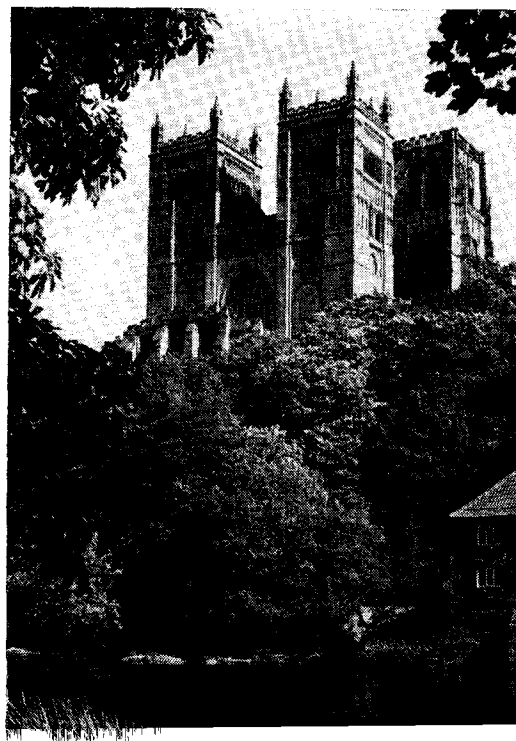
Tourist-class fares finally did arrive in the spring of 1952 and the flight from New York to Shannon cost \$431.80 during the high season and \$362.80 in the off season. Even though airlines were putting on DC-6s and Constellations—both considered large planes—overcrowding was a problem that was getting brow-furrowing attention. The story, now a seasoned chestnut, began the rounds concerning the pilot of a Constellation trying to make his way to the washroom on a plane crowded with nearly ninety passengers. The aisles were always jammed with people waiting, and so after several unsuccessful attempts, the captain went back to the flight deck, flashed on the seat-belt sign, and walked down the empty aisle.

Drive-yourself cars became popular and Warren Avis broached a plan to tie in flights aboard American Airlines with sight-seeing by car. Auto rentals to airline passengers jumped 50 per cent in a year. Of the nation's 24,000 rentable cars more than 6,000 were in Florida. The *United States* sailed into transatlantic service and so did the *Ryndam* and the *Maasdam*, a pair of Dutch ships designed to bring the tourist-class passenger out of the steerage and give him a place on deck, and, wonder of wonders, even a swimming pool. In September

(Continued on page 69)

**Durham Cathedral—At war's end Britain was more ruin than resort.**

—B.T.A.





—Monk Meyer.

## ARCHITECTURE FOR THE NEW ITINERANTS

By GEORGE NELSON

**T**HOSE OF US whose work takes us to a variety of once-distant places have been forced into awareness of what is happening to the new architecture for travel, but in my wildest dreams I never expected that I would be contemplating this phenomenon from an overstuffed room in the Hotel Leningradskaya in Moscow.

We have just mounted an exhibition of U.S. industrial design which is jammed every day by some 10,000 solemn, booted, and fur-hatted Muscovites, most of whom are hearing about industrial design for the first time.

As a perch from which to scan remembered images of the contemporary world, the Leningradskaya is not bad, because Russia, in architecture and design, is a kind of time tunnel. Anything you see there is sure to have happened

elsewhere ten to forty years ago. The hotel is barely twelve years old, but it looks a ripe seventy-five. My room overflows with "antique" furniture, lace curtains, heavy draperies, "oriental" rugs, and a telephone which transmits the voice with the same fidelity as the paper cup affairs we made when we were kids. This is all from twelve years ago.

Today there is the new Rossiya facing the Kremlin, "modern" like a reflection in a wavy mirror, equipped with fast automatic elevators and planned for an eventual 6,000 rooms. One could smile in a superior way at the Soviet tendency to confuse quantity with quality if not for the uneasy suspicion that with the coming of the jumbo jets 6,000 rooms will be a commonplace average.

The words for what has been happening to travel architecture since the war are "everywhere," "mass," "same-

ness," "big," "modern." There are no more replicas of the Baths of Caracalla in the travel business. You can now be identically and modernistically air-conditioned, balconied, and twin-bedded in Bali, Brasilia, and Bimini. There are still some places to hide if you don't go for this kind of thing, but not for long. The universal architectural response to mass travel is mass modern. One could do an article about a quick trip around the globe and use only two photos, one showing a glass air terminal and the other a glass and concrete hotel stuffed with cells. While the story would not be entirely true, it wouldn't be completely false, either.

Among people who get around a lot, the complaint that everything is getting to look alike is heard more and more. Everything is getting to look alike, and for good reasons. As the planet simmers down into a global village many reasons