

# Booked for Travel

David Butwin

## Button-down Town

A MAN doesn't go to Washington, D.C., to buy a suit, or eat a gourmet meal, or look at girls. If he tries to talk to a Washingtonian about something other than politics, even in a year when Ted Williams and Vince Lombardi have stirred the ashes of a long-cold sporting furnace, he may suffer a snub normally reserved for people who use the wrong dentifrice.

On a recent Cheezies-and-Coke flight from New York to Washington, I studied the newspaper political columns with uncommon avidity, ready to drop Jack Anderson's latest bomb on upcoming conversational foes. Hiding behind a newspaper seems the right guise on a plane to Washington, so large is the cast of FBI-looking types in dark suits and matching attaché cases. This commuting uniform goes such a long way toward stealing a person's individuality that I nearly failed to recognize the figure just ahead of me boarding an early afternoon flight at LaGuardia. I tried his name, and sure enough it was my uncle. He had come up to New York on business two days in a row, preferring to risk untold travel snags rather than stay overnight in Manhattan. My order of priorities would have been reversed, but surely the decision has boggled many minds.

Years ago, when my travel arrangements were handled by the woman who cooked my meals and scrubbed behind my ears, we used to ride out of the midlands *en famille* on smoke-belching Baltimore & Ohio Pullmans, to pass a few sweltering weeks in Washington visiting relatives and seeing all the sights my friends knew only from schoolbooks. Doubtless the summit of those trips was the night spent in an upper berth, perhaps the only time all year when a boy looked forward to going to bed. There was something delicious about being closeted behind drawn curtains, left alone to anticipate low whistles in the night, and the peeping faces of frolicsome siblings.

Washington, whatever its climatological pressures, was a summer's delight, the one place that gave meaning and magic to the word "sightseeing." I might not remember the city's legendary heat, but for a lasting vision of my mother and aunt, transfixed on a street corner, mopping their brows and hunting for a cool oasis called PEOPLE'S.

It was autumnal but still sultry on

the afternoon I was disgorged from a notably unfrolicsome shuttle at National Airport. (One somehow refrains from playing peekaboo with martini-draining men in dark suits.) Though less than an hour by air from New York, Washington forces an outsider to make adjustments. It is a city of decidedly Southern cast, despite the dash and fever on Capitol Hill. People walk slower and talk slower than they do in cities farther north. They seldom cross the street against a light, least of all in downtown Washington where the pace suggests Savannah in mid-afternoon.

The visitor's eye scans the daily newspapers and stops on an ad for the film *Putney Swope*. Where the upraised finger should be overlaid with a woman's slinky form, there is only space.

Store windows show lots of male and female plumage, but the people passing by bear the drab feathers of an earlier age. Washington—outdoor, workaday Washington—is all Ivy: rep ties, wing-tip shoes, high-water cuffed pants. I hesitate to classify women's styles, other than to marvel at the local resistance to uprising hemlines. Noteworthy, too, is a mass refusal to part with penny loafers.

I tried out a few of these observations on a young Washingtonian, Jay Friedlander, who joined me for a drink at the Brickskeller, a little wedge of Munich on P and 22nd. "The mistake a New Yorker makes," he said, "is to compare New York with Washington—or New York with anything. I think Washington is like the rest of the country. New York is a hybrid."

"When you live in Washington," he went on, "you get to know who the ambassadors are, when the President's helicopter is landing. You become a political creature in spite of yourself. Washingtonians are the most politically sophisticated people in the U.S., but they aren't sophisticated any other way."

If the truth were known, I think, every Washingtonian would admit to owning a set of the gladdest rags Bill Blass could imagine, a costume or two

put aside for those special indoor, after-work events. An arts-and-crafts opening, "OBJECTS: USA," brought out hundreds of strutting peacocks on October 3. The show didn't lose any of its social gloss because the collection was sponsored by the Johnson Wax Company, or because it took place in a Smithsonian Institution museum on 7th Street. The Nixon administration long ago took the mickey out of the embassy cocktail circuit, but D.C. nightcrawlers have not been denied. On this night they milled around for an hour, paying less attention to the plastics, mosaics, and leatherwork than to each other's bare backs and ruffled evening shirts; then as a cordon was lowered before an immense buffet, they stepped quickly into line. Weighted down with plates of stroganoff and all the trimmings—no canapé freeloader this—they repaired to window sills, the laps of stone gods, the bare floor itself, and went to work clearing space for the petits fours.

If the Smithsonian seemed an unlikely host, it was only because its dusty antique image as "the nation's attic" has lingered too long. A grand housecleaning began in 1964 when S. Dillon Ripley, an Ivy League ornithologist, resigned the directorship of Yale's Peabody Museum of Natural History to become the Smithsonian's eighth secretary. Ripley inherited, in addition to a clutch of red-brick Victorian relics, the gleaming new Museum of History and Technology and the National Zoological Park, and he brought to life the National Portrait Gallery and the National Collection of Fine Arts, both tenants of the old Patent Office Building, scene of the "OBJECTS: USA" coming out. On the rise are the \$60-million John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, hard by the Potomac, and the Joseph H. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, on the Mall.

Under various roofs old and new, the Smithsonian treasures such magnetic attractions as the Hope diamond, the tattered flag that moved Francis Scott Key to write *The Star-Spangled Banner*, and Lindbergh's *Spirit of St. Louis*. But nothing packs the appeal of a little black rock in the ninety-year-old Arts and Industries Building. The rock may look no more exalted than something you kicked on the way to school, but it is a piece of the moon, and the people who file by in an endless pilgrimage give out an awe I thought only the Pope could inspire. Picture-takers' flashbulbs and strobe units bathe the rock—revolving within a cylinder beneath a glass globe—in an almost unbroken splash of light. I watched an Oriental man backing away from the exhibit, his eyes mag-



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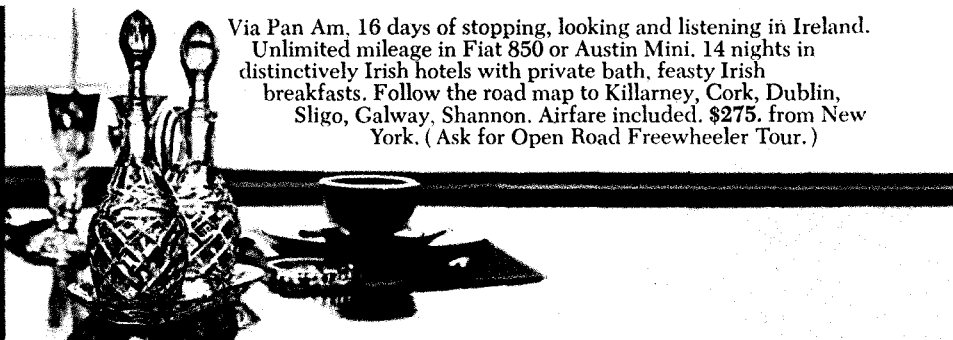
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turn left, or go back the way  
you're after coming. If I were you,  
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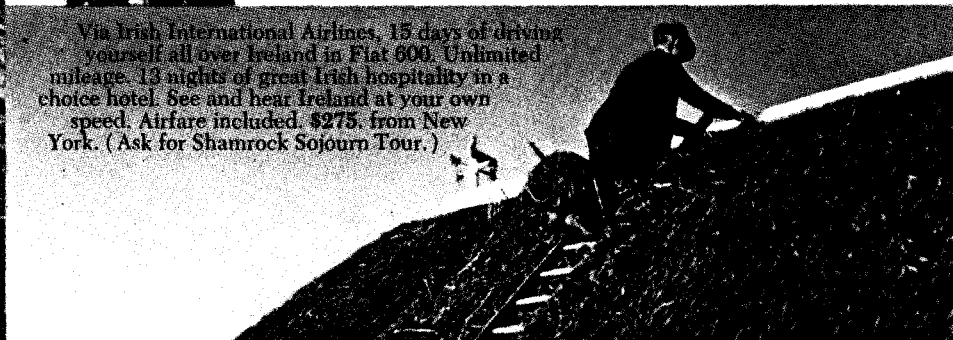
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horse still puts on the greatest show,  
you can bet on that."

"Food may be good for thought,  
but 'tis the liquid stuff that interferes  
less with conversation."

"Of course, we don't believe  
in fairy tales, but they do exist,  
you know."



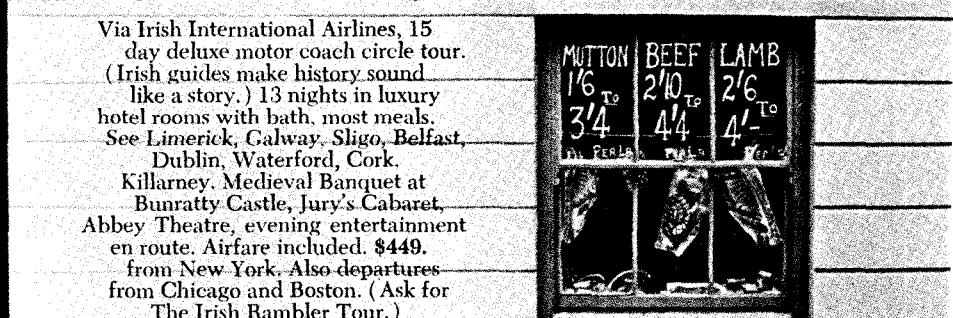
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netized to the lunar gem, suddenly stumble over a tripod propped up moments before by a camera crew. A man leaped forward and grabbed the two falling objects, one in each arm, before they crashed to the red carpet.

In retrospect, I think, it was more than the heat that used to wear down my mother and aunt—more, too, than their indefatigable charges. When Pierre L'Enfant mapped out the city in 1791, hoping to work in the broad expansive lines of eighteenth-century Paris, he paid little heed to the corns and bunions of future tourists. Doing the Mall by foot is in itself a day's labor, even in months more salubrious than July and August. Of course, one could always sign on with an organized bus tour, but until an outfit named Landmark Services got in the running last March with a fleet of open-air Tourmobiles, a roving three-hour civics lesson cost as much as \$6.50. Landmark, a subsidiary of Universal Studios (which runs a similar tour of its Hollywood spread), charges passengers a dollar, or 50 cents for children two to eleven. That's a pittance for the day-long privilege of riding the Tourmobile's carousel, getting off and on as you please to ogle all the pillars of culture.

Front-of-the-bus guides—mostly college students—receive a news briefing each morning at headquarters so their spiels don't evoke a canned travelogue tone. They are also supplied such fetching pieces of trivia as: "On your left is the Pentagon, in area the third largest building in the country (behind Boeing's 747 hangar at Everett, Washington, and the Cape Kennedy assembly plant). A total of thirty-two thousand cups of coffee are consumed each day at the Pentagon." Another: "This is the Pan American Union. It has the longest mural in the world." When I asked the guide what the mural represented, she shrugged dreamily.

On a solo tour, I revisited some sights vividly recalled from summers long past. One was Ford's Theater, completely redone a few years ago to look as it did the night Lincoln was shot. It now stages Circle in the Square productions from October to April. Across 10th Street is the Petersen House where the President was taken on April 14, 1865, and where he died at 7:22 the next morning, in a bed just large enough to support him diagonally. The only original object in the small room is a pillow, protected by a Plexiglas shield. Four black high school-age boys peered in the room for a while, then came out and asked Robert Lipton, a National Park Service attendant, why there was no blood on the pillow. He said it had been laundered after the assassination.

When they left, Lipton, a Washingtonian with the ready tongue of a New York cab driver, shook his head and said: "Kids come in every day and want to see blood on the pillow. I mean kids eight and nine years old. I tell you this generation is going to be wild; they really eat up the violence. I wouldn't work here if I saw blood on the pillow. I think the story is brutal enough. I hate wars, I hate violence of all kinds. And I believe in ghosts."

I went back to the Pan American Union, savoring memories of a dank indoor jungle and shrieking parrots. The birds were there, still noisy, but an adult's view of the jungle was reduced now to a modest skylighted patio with a few palms and shiny-leaved plants and a peace tree given by President Taft in 1910. My roadwork also took me past Lafayette Park, across from the White House, now undergoing a major manicure. Earlier this year, students from the area were invited to paint the wood fence surrounding the project with their versions of American history, and particularly the Presidency. One signboard enumerates the wars this country has fought, naming Vietnam near the top. "Just the idea," said my friend Friedlander, "that someone didn't wipe off that sign has done more for my confidence in the federal government than anything in years."

Georgetown is the social hub of Washington—more charming than Greenwich Village but less intriguing, less throbbing. I find it hard to relax completely in Georgetown bars. There's always someone at the door to check for coats and ties, and too many people inside with the earnest, button-down look of airplane commuters. At Nathan's—this year's spot—I squeezed in at the bar, while a mass of business suits and basic black dresses raised a discreet din behind me. At one point the bartender called the manager over and said, "You see that guy in the cardigan and tie?" From the sound of his voice, I thought he had spotted Lucky Luciano's ghost. "I don't want him in here. I don't want him in here," the manager snorted. He went off to evict the interloper, and I asked the bartender why.

"You can tell a lot about a man by what he wears," he said. "Know what I mean? Like if a guy doesn't understand what coat and tie means, what's he going to do when he gets drunk?"

I wanted to ask the bartender why he wasn't wearing socks with his penny loafers, but I got up and left and went down the street to The Guards, last year's spot. It was almost empty. All I heard was a woman telling her companion, "I don't care *what* Ralph Nader says . . ."

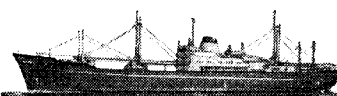
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<b>LONDON</b>							
102	Dec. 20	Jan. 3, '70	—	\$290	\$60	\$230	
329	Jan. 8	Jan. 22	\$275	—	\$60	\$215	
330	Jan. 29	Feb. 12	\$275	—	\$60	\$215	
105	Feb. 14	Feb. 28	\$275	—	\$60	\$215	
331	Feb. 26	Mar. 12	\$275	—	\$60	\$215	
106	Mar. 14	Mar. 28	\$275	—	\$60	\$215	
372	Mar. 27	Apr. 10	\$275	—	\$60	\$215	
<b>PARIS</b>							
112	Dec. 20	Jan. 3, '70	—	\$300	\$60	\$240	
334	Jan. 10	Jan. 24	\$284	—	\$60	\$224	
113	Jan. 24	Feb. 7	\$284	—	\$60	\$224	
335	Feb. 7	Feb. 21	\$284	—	\$60	\$224	
336	Feb. 21	Mar. 7	\$284	—	\$60	\$224	
337	Mar. 14	Mar. 28	\$284	—	\$60	\$224	
373	Mar. 28	Apr. 11	\$284	—	\$60	\$224	
<b>LISBON</b>							
108	Dec. 20	Jan. 3, '70	—	\$282	\$60	\$222	
109	Mar. 14	Mar. 28	\$262	—	\$60	\$202	
<b>ROME</b>							
123	Dec. 21	Jan. 4, '70	—	\$340	\$60	\$280	
125	Mar. 14	Mar. 28	\$320	—	\$60	\$260	
<b>BRUSSELS</b>							
116	Dec. 20	Jan. 3, '70	—	\$300	\$60	\$240	
148	Jan. 24	Feb. 7	\$284	—	\$60	\$224	
147	Feb. 28	Mar. 14	\$284	—	\$60	\$224	
<b>AMSTERDAM</b>							
142	Dec. 19	Jan. 2, '70	—	\$300	\$60	\$240	
145	Mar. 6	Mar. 20	\$284	—	\$60	\$224	
<b>MUNICH</b>							
121	Dec. 21	Jan. 4, '70	—	\$317	\$60	\$257	
345	Jan. 16	Jan. 30	\$300	—	\$60	\$240	
346	Feb. 8	Feb. 22	\$300	—	\$60	\$240	
347	Feb. 27	Mar. 13	\$300	—	\$60	\$240	
<b>GENEVA</b>							
117	Dec. 19	Jan. 2, '70	—	\$312	\$60	\$252	
119	Jan. 10	Jan. 24	\$295	—	\$60	\$235	
340	Jan. 19	Feb. 2	\$295	—	\$60	\$235	
120	Feb. 14	Feb. 28	\$295	—	\$60	\$235	
341	Feb. 23	Mar. 9	\$295	—	\$60	\$235	
242	Mar. 2	Mar. 16	\$295	—	\$60	\$235	
<b>COPENHAGEN</b>							
115	Dec. 20	Jan. 3, '70	—	\$312	\$60	\$252	
<b>TEL AVIV</b>							
132	Dec. 20	Jan. 3, '70	—	\$490	\$60	\$430	
349	Jan. 13	Jan. 27	\$450	—	\$60	\$390	
134	Feb. 6	Feb. 20	\$450	—	\$60	\$390	
350	Feb. 17	Mar. 3	\$450	—	\$60	\$390	
135	Mar. 7	Mar. 21	\$450	—	\$60	\$390	
351	Mar. 17	Mar. 31	\$450	—	\$60	\$390	
<b>ATHENS</b>							
127	Dec. 20	Jan. 3, '70	—	\$395	\$60	\$335	
129	Mar. 7	Mar. 21	\$380	—	\$60	\$320	

THREE-WEEK TRIPS				Total Prepaid (Off Season)	Total Prepaid (Shoulder Season)	Including Accom- modation Voucher	Thus, Real Cost of Round Trip
Trip #	Leave New York	Return to New York					
<b>LONDON</b>							
103	Dec. 21	Jan. 11, '70	—	\$340	\$110	\$230	
104	Jan. 3	Jan. 24	\$325	—	\$110	\$215	
332	Feb. 12	Mar. 5	\$325	—	\$110	\$215	
333	Mar. 9	Mar. 30	\$325	—	\$110	\$215	
375	Mar. 28	Apr. 18	\$325	—	\$110	\$215	
<b>PARIS</b>							
111	Dec. 19	Jan. 9, '70	—	\$350	\$110	\$240	
338	Jan. 17	Feb. 7	\$334	—	\$110	\$224	
339	Feb. 14	Mar. 7	\$334	—	\$110	\$224	
114	Mar. 7	Mar. 28	\$334	—	\$110	\$224	
376	Mar. 31	Apr. 21	\$334	—	\$110	\$224	
<b>LISBON</b>							
136	Feb. 7, '70	Feb. 28	\$312	—	\$110	\$202	
377	Mar. 29	Apr. 19	\$312	—	\$110	\$202	
<b>ROME</b>							
122	Dec. 13	Jan. 3, '70	—	\$390	\$110	\$280	
124	Feb. 28	Mar. 21	\$370	—	\$110	\$260	
<b>BRUSSELS</b>							
138	Dec. 13	Jan. 3, '70	—	\$350	\$110	\$240	
<b>AMSTERDAM</b>							
143	Jan. 9, '70	Jan. 30	\$334	—	\$110	\$224	
144	Feb. 6	Feb. 27	\$334	—	\$110	\$224	
<b>MUNICH</b>							
139	Feb. 7, '70	Feb. 28	\$350	—	\$110	\$240	
348	Feb. 20	Mar. 13	\$350	—	\$110	\$240	
<b>GENEVA</b>							
118	Dec. 20	Jan. 10, '70	—	\$362	\$110	\$252	
343	Jan. 19	Feb. 9	\$345	—	\$110	\$235	
344	Feb. 16	Mar. 9	\$345	—	\$110	\$235	
<b>COPENHAGEN</b>							
137	Feb. 28, '70	Mar. 21	\$345	—	\$110	\$235	
<b>TEL AVIV WITH ATHENS</b>							
131	Dec. 13	Jan. 3, '70	—	\$540	\$110	\$430	
133	Jan. 10	Jan. 31	\$500	—	\$110	\$390	
352	Jan. 29	Feb. 19	\$500	—	\$110	\$390	
353	Feb. 12	Mar. 5	\$500	—	\$110	\$390	
354	Mar. 5	Mar. 26	\$500	—	\$110	\$390	
<b>ATHENS</b>							
128	Jan. 3, '70	Jan. 24	\$430	—	\$110	\$320	

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# SR Goes to the Movies

Hollis Alpert

## Avanti!

IT IS RATHER a shame that a cinematically daring first film called *Coming Apart* will be attracting the curious principally because of its erotic content, when actually it represents something new and relatively significant in what, for purposes of easy identification, we can call the avant-garde movement in film-making. In New York, where much of the present ferment is located, Andy Warhol has been the somewhat dubious leader, and until recently was able to give aid and comfort only to the outlandish and untalented. The problem is that he had almost nothing to say, and therefore substituted camp and, at best, put-on. He was and is, however, a cunning self-publicist, and there are always some unwary critics around ready to find significance in amateurish improvisation.

Milton Ginsberg's film, while made with severely limited means, is something else again. He began with an idea that embodied both a story and the filmic method, and, in the milieu of the avant-garde, this makes it distinctly fresh. A psychiatrist whose own mental seams are beginning to give way decides to keep a film diary. In a borrowed apartment he sets up a camera, disguised as a mirrored object, in such a way as to focus on a mirror that reflects a good deal of the room. The mirror is behind a couch, and from this couch, by means of a remote control switch, the psychiatrist can click the camera on and off at will. There is, by the way, such a camera, so the feat is literally possible.

But Mr. Ginsberg intends to be more than or at least something other than literal. His film—and also the psychiatrist's film—records the disintegration of a personality, with part and parcel of it being the disintegration of his and his visitors' system of moral values. His estranged wife visits him, a former mistress, a former patient, a succession of girl friends. In the intimacy of the room their facades crumble, and one form or another of unsatisfying sex is the result. The method is not totally successful. The fixed camera angle requires ingenious staging and playing, but it does become static and a little wearisome after awhile. On the other hand, the very limitation of means creates some unusual effects, the most striking one being the very last, when a girl goes berserk and crashes the mir-

ror that has been our vantage point, and we are now able to see only the blank, empty wall. Certainly a striking visual way of making a point.


Ginsberg shot more than he was able to use in the finally edited film; the cuts and the breaks in the action have a way of being arbitrary, almost haphazard. Yet, enough emerges for the pieces of the puzzle to fit into place. Rip Torn brings a precise understanding to his playing of the disturbed psychiatrist; Sally Kirkland, as a disturbed, hypersexual former patient is remarkably convincing. The film distresses and haunts, and is surely a vivid document of our erotically troubled time.

Very likely, to face it squarely, it is the eroticism—actual or promised—in the avant-garde film that makes it commercially viable. Agnes Varda, the French ultra-New Wave director, seems to have fallen for the Warholian pretense; she went to Hollywood to make, of all unnecessary things, a Warhol-type film about a ménage of three young actors and an avant-garde director (the real Shirley Clarke) who visits them. While the color camera work is infinitely superior to Warhol's clumsy technique, the material is fully as vacuous and, as a home movie, would be a good one to fall asleep by. It features two male members of the cast of *Hair* and that Warhol "superstar" concoction, Viva, who comes on perpetually stoned and flounders around in her unappetizing nakedness. Miss Clarke, by being herself, at least emerges as a human being, albeit vastly mystified, in what—for no apparent reason—has been called *Lions Love*.

Although Susan Sontag in her first directed film, *Duet for Cannibals*, does somewhat better than Miss Varda, this is because her actors are professionally capable. Otherwise, one wishes she would not have accepted a Swedish studio's misguided invitation to write and direct a movie. So now we have it, a Sontag movie, written in English, translated into and played in Swedish, and given back to us with subtitles. Nor does she allow us to make heads or tails of what her story is all about: An older couple erotically seduces a younger couple in a style bleakly reminiscent of Bergman, Pasolini, Godard, and Buñuel, all unfortunately mixed together. Miss Sontag was on the selection board that invited her film into the recent New York Film Festival while turning down *Coming Apart*.

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