

Trains in Europe

It finally dawned on me the other day, as I stepped from a Paris-Amsterdam express train, that romance and high intrigue will never ride with me on European rails. George Sanders and Sean Connery have run into more action on the way to the WC than I do on a *wagon-lit* from Stockholm to Rome.

What I found on nearly all my rail trips from Stockholm to Cardiff, however, was comfort and convenience, some good food, and—most important in this season of shortage—bedrock economy. A wallet-size plastic black-red-and-green card called a Eurailpass is the key to fast, sure, and inexpensive European travel. The card guarantees a ride on

any train on the Continent, including the crack Trans-European Expresses (TEEs), without a surcharge (though an overnight sleeper berth means a bit more).

Even though Eurailpass rates have been increased 10 percent for 1974, the system remains one of the best travel bargains abroad. A three-week pass costs \$150; a month's pass is \$190; two months, \$260. Children from four to twelve go half-price, and full-time students under twenty-six get two months of unlimited second-class travel for \$165. The pass must be purchased before going over, either from a travel agent, a government tourist office, or U.S. Eurailpass, Box 90, Bohemia, New York 11716.

Britain and Ireland are not covered by Eurailpass, but they have their own



French National Railroad
Bar and boutique on the Mistral—"In Europe I prefer the train," the Frenchman said.

magic cards. First-class BritRail Passes will provide one, two, three, or four weeks of travel for \$60, \$75, \$90, and
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Trains in America

Amtrak, the quasi-public corporation that took over operation of most American passenger trains three years ago in May, heads the rail revival that has been heightened by gasoline shortages. Service will soon be restored on the Inter-American from St. Louis down to the border at Laredo, connecting with a Mexican train for the trip to Mexico City. This will put trains back in Arkansas for the first time in several years. Also about to arrive is a daily train through the San Joaquin Valley between Oakland and Bakersfield, stopping at Merced, the gateway to Yosemite.

A 20 percent summer fare raise for the popular long-haul western trains, however, will make rail travel more expensive than airplane flights in some areas. After Labor Day these fares will drop to a 10 percent increase over present rates. Before the summer hike, for example, the Super Chief, America's best long-distance train, will charge sixteen dollars more for a roomette between Chicago and Los Angeles—\$148—than for a plane ticket over the same distance.



Dining car on Amtrak's Coast Starlight—Seats available during the summer rush?

Amtrak's family plan requires a full fare for husbands, two-thirds for wives, two-thirds for children twelve to twenty-one, and one-third for those five through eleven.

If the clamp remains on motorists, the long scenic rail trip will look even better than usual. The Chicago-Seattle Empire Builder glides right through Glacier National Park, stopping on either end. Southward the Chicago-Seattle North Coast Hiawatha (which returns in May to daily service from three-a-week) skirts Yellowstone National Park. The Chicago-Oakland Zephyr traces a dazzling route through the High Sierras, and the Coast Starlight hugs the rocky Pacific for its run between San Diego and Seattle.

The nation's sudden shift toward the rejuvenated railroads has spurred Amtrak's growth enormously, far in advance of its scheduled face-lifting. But the last six months haven't exactly been a gravy train for Amtrak. Two of its trains were stalled in the West during the winter, and in the first days of February a mishap in the East stalled for seven hours an Amtrak train carrying 400 passengers. To make matters worse, the train lost its power, and therefore its heat, and the passengers were stranded over a trestle within sight of Manhattan's lights.

Four Winds Travel, largest operator of rail tours in America, is offering ten different packaged itineraries, ranging from sixteen to twenty-four days in the United States, eastern and western Canada, and Mexico. "Bonanza Americana," a sixteen-day trip (from \$1295), travels through Grand Canyon and Yosemite

National Parks, Las Vegas, and California on one of three western tours. Other trips travel the Canadian Rockies and cruise through eastern Canada. All are accompanied by a tour guide. The rail cruises spend some nights at luxury hotels, among them the Royal Orleans, Ahwahnee Lodge, and MGM Grand.

Two companies that continue to run trains without Amtrak's assistance are the Southern and the Denver & Rio Grande Western. Southern has maintained an old-fashioned rosebud-at-every-table service from Washington to New Orleans. The D&RGW pursues a spectacular course over the Rockies between Salt Lake City and Denver.

In the East the Metroliner still operates the best short-distance ride in the American timetable, connecting Washington and New York. And the Montrealer, though tediously slow at times, weaves through the prime mountain region of Vermont on the nearly eighteen-hour trip between Washington and Montreal. If you're going south and want the car along, the Auto-Train Corporation (non-Amtrak) will pack it aboard outside Washington, D.C., and roll it off at Sanford, Florida.

Amtrak has standardized its food and beverage operation all across the network but still offers specialties of the region—country ham and grits for breakfast on the Florida trains, Rocky Mountain trout on the Zephyr, fresh salmon on the Coast Starlight out of Seattle. Whether there will be seats available in the summer rush is another question.

D.B.

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near Buffalo, for the opening of a race-track in a train that, with its parlor-bar cars and its jolly stewards, made the journey—which involved tooling us down railway lines that had never seen a passenger train before—comfortable no matter how long. I joined a party in Philadelphia that once a week, while the races were on at Belmont Park, came over Saturday morning with a brace of parlor cars, and a diner (equipped with hock), and waited for us to come out of the clubhouse on our way home.

Did it all—or nearly all—have to end the way it did? Will there again be a time when the working day can wind up like this?—It is 5:15. I pick up my briefcase and bag; indifferent to the unoccupied taxicabs, I do my ten-minute walk to Grand Central. The gates are open, and I walk down a long, red carpet to my car in the Twentieth Century Limited. It is 5:25 as I walk back to the observation car and pick up the telephone (I have tried to leave a spot of unfinished business so that I have an excuse to use the train-to-shore phone). The train departs at six, and a minute later the train secretary is asking for my name and the number of my room—"in case there are messages for you en route."

I move forward through the dining car, or dining cars (the rule was that if there were more than one hundred and eight passengers aboard, there must be an extra dining car, and I cannot explain the mystique of the number one hundred and eight), into the amidships lounge car, walk into the barber-shop for a trim, and tell the man in charge that my pair of extra trousers will need pressing. In the dining car, my lobster soufflé and a bottle, then after-dinner mints and an apple to be gnawed at if hunger strikes again at midnight—compliments of the house. In my bedroom my extra trousers have already been pressed and hung in the closet. In the morning my shoes reappear, glisteningly polished, and there is a Chicago paper on the threshold; in the dining car there is a boutonniere for the lapel and strawberries and blueberry pancakes and hot chocolate. Outside sleet is doing its mightiest to get at me, but it cannot get at either me or the Twentieth Century Limited. It is 8:45, and I must walk back to my bedroom. Sleet or no, we are expected in Chicago at nine, and we are there at nine. Come back, Twentieth Century Limited! Your long and unexplained absence is forgiven! ☐

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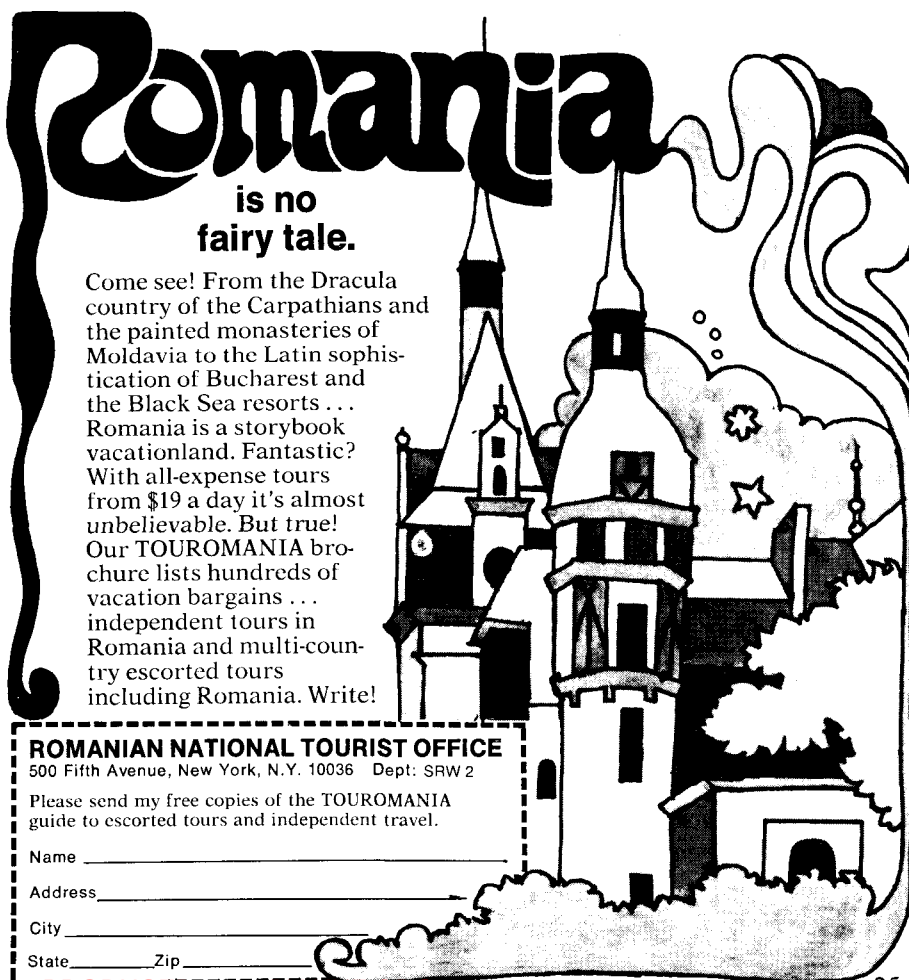
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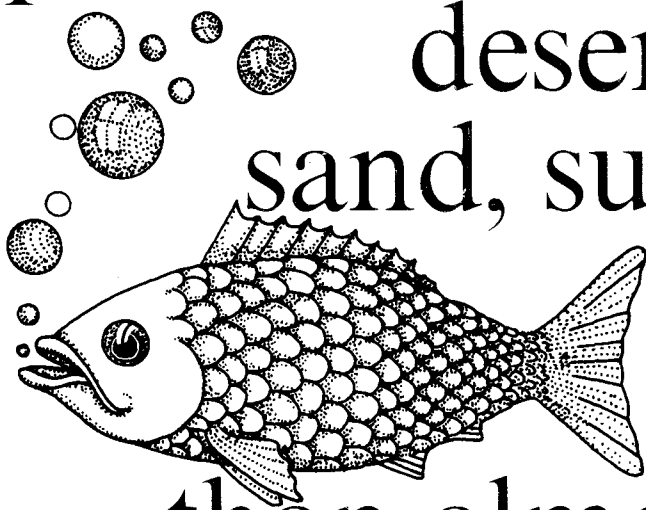
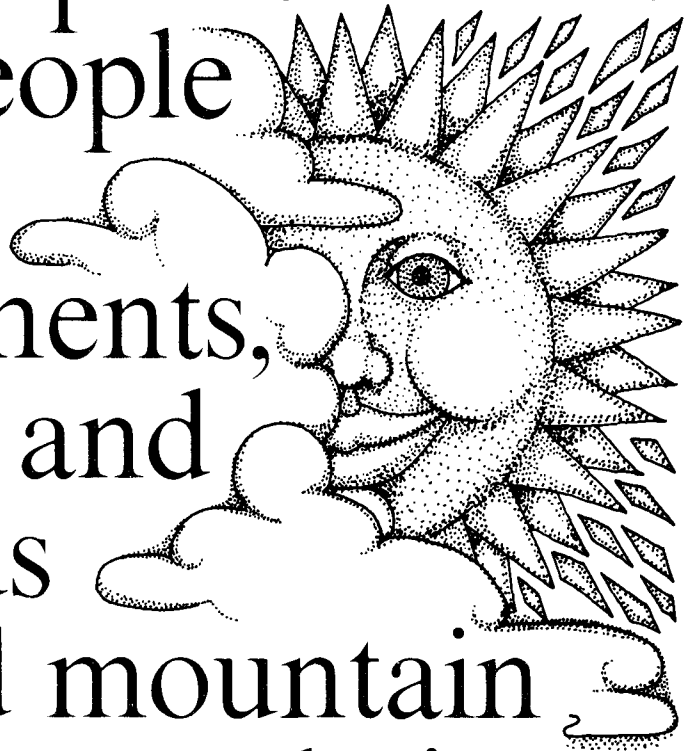
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Culver Pictures

Marilyn Monroe and friends in Bus Stop—"They've come a long way since the dark days of that other gas shortage."

Leave the Driving to Them

Not since Marilyn Monroe stopped the bus has there been such a turn toward the coach, a revived form of travel that beats the gas impasse.

by Patricia Brooks

Buses are hardly new, but they've come a long way since the days when I last rode one, back in the dark ages of that other gas shortage, during World War II. My mother and I would board a Greyhound in Minneapolis, along with all our summer baggage, and travel the four hours (and 112 miles) north to Brainard, where we had a summer home on a nearby lake. I can still recall the tedious, bumpy ride, the uncomfortable seats, the narrow two-lane highway, and one lunch or rest stop at a tacky diner in St. Cloud, near the state reformatory. During this one brief interlude, passengers would scramble to the limited bathroom facilities and the less than adequate lunch counter. My most vivid memories focus on the lack of facilities, the school-girl agony-by-kidney of a seemingly end-

less ride. It is not my favorite childhood memory.

Since then I have ridden rickety open-sided buses in the wild mountains of Luzon in the Philippines, equally ramshackle closed buses throbbing with human, animal, and bird life in Morocco and Lebanon, and luxury tour buses in Finland. With one exception I have not been on a long-distance bus in the United States since the Forties. The exception was a chartered bus that took dozens of anti-war protesters to Washington, D.C., last year, but that stripped-down, minimal-comfort excursion was not organized with cherry-blossom time in mind.

I NOW TAKE IT all back—all those associations of buses with deprivation, kidney crises, and "Bus Stop" down-on-their-luck-lonesome-cowboy types. The reason for my new awareness of the potentials of bus travel is a recent consciousness-raising outing on one of Continental Trailways' Five-Star Golden Eagles. I boarded the New York-Los Angeles luxury coach with a certain amount of trepidation, Minnesota mem-

ories still lingering. I wasn't going the full distance but thought even a partial trip would demonstrate what cross-country bus travel today is all about.

The Golden Eagle is one of the line's six daily coaches from New York to Los Angeles. The other five are Silver Eagles, identical in body (except for the paint job) to their golden cousin but with different interior designs. Both silver and gold coaches have comfortable foam-cushioned reclining seats; footrests; rest rooms with washbasins, mirrors, and electrical outlets; wide windows; blankets and pillows for passenger rest. There are fourteen fewer seats, a total of thirty-two, thus more legroom, on the Golden Eagle, two lounges for card games or letter writing, a galley and a red-and-golden uniformed hostess to run it, ready to offer coffee, tea, or snacks at the wave of a hand.

Only four of us were on the first leg of this cross-country ride, and we took off at 11:15 A.M. to the minute, as scheduled. Our hostess, or "Golden Eaglet" as one of the four quickly nicknamed her, was a pretty and animated young woman, who, as soon as the motor purred, introduced herself on the loudspeaker: "I'm Elaine, your hostess till we reach Pittsburgh, and your driver is John. As soon as we get beyond the city limits, I will be serving you your choice of coffee, tea, cocoa, or soft drinks."

Elaine was a genuinely cheerful girl, addicted to gentle banter, a far cry from

Patricia Brooks took her first bus ride at eight, has since traveled by bus around the world. A free-lance contributor to many magazines, she is co-author of How to Buy Property Abroad, coming this spring.