

The drinking man's guide to Western Europe

By DELBERT WILBERFARB

Since there are many people on campus who enjoy consuming John Barleycorn, and who are bored with attending the same old watering spots day in and day out, we decided to make a suggestion for bringing variety into their lives. We recommend, and we have tried this out personally, a "Drinking Man's Tour of Europe."

The tour can last as long as your money and/or liver hold out, and the alcoholic delights that await you are limited only by your ambitions and the strength of your thumb (for hitchhiking.)

Connoisseurs of booze (we consider ourselves to be numbered among these, at least when it comes to beer) must resign themselves to missing the tourist attractions that all the rich, capitalist camera-waving Americans flock to, or at least the ones that are more than one hundred feet from the nearest drink.

We landed in London, after a very satisfying plane trip, with several souvenir Air Canada liquor bottles (empty now, of course) and after busing into London proceeded to the nearest pub (not hard to do, considering there is one on every street) and ordered a "pint o' bitter" which to our disgust was warm.

English pubs are known for their warm hospitality since family drinking is a respected habit, and the atmosphere is ideal for civilized imbibing. Serious drinkers who have reached the alcoholic stage will be happy to know that Guinness beer has enough food value to live off without having to resort to wasting precious money on things like food.

Social drinking is so accepted by the English that when we stop-

ped an elderly minister one night for directions to the nearest pub he invited us to a church social where we proceeded to get pleasantly pissed on sherry with the little ladies of the congregation.

With regret (and a massive hangover) we left London, and took the ferry from Dover to land in Belgium.

Here we should mention that although we travelled alone, we always had someone to drink with since many people on a limited budget (like us) stay in youth hostels and are anxious to make friends over a brew. The hostels, by the way, are cheap and recommended, although most have a one AM curfew and kick you out at 8 in the morning.

Belgium bars are as friendly as English, but since most people there speak French or Flemish it is hard to converse. Here we were first introduced to billiards, which is played on an ordinary pool table that is notable for having no pockets for balls.

To keep our thumb in shape, we soon hit the road again, headed towards Amsterdam. Everything you've heard about this city is true. Our typical daily routine here was as follows: in the morning we took a tour of the breweries, alternating between Heineken and Amstell. Here you start at 9:00 in the morning with an hour tour of the brewery which all the regulars know by heart and two hours of free-beer, served with cheese and crackers.

After staggering out of the door at noon feeling very little pain we proceeded to walk several blocks to the student bars to drink and converse with our newly-found friends from the brewery tour.

This was not as easy at it sounds, since our bladders were full, and the enclosed street cor-

ner urinals were few and far between. Many a distinguished diner was startled by the sight of a grubby-looking Canadian running through a posh restaurant, clutching his pelvic region in agony. Nighttime saw us proceed to the tea houses where the locals, paralytically stoned, sat around watching us tourists smoke dope. Drugs, although they are illegal in Amsterdam, are liberally tolerated in certain clubs and can be used with no hassle there, although you have to watch out for knife-wielding pushers who like nothing better than to rip off foolish rich tourists.

One of the unique experiences for the tourist is Amsterdam's famous red-light district. Since our youth hostel was only one block away from it, we spent many an enjoyable evening making polite conversation with the "ladies of the night," who come in every conceivable colour, shape and age. Of course this is not of interest to us serious drinkers, but for the information of you entrepreneurs, the prices ranged from ten to twenty dollars with no discounts.

After three days of this routine, however, we woke up feeling close to death and decided to slack off. We spent the afternoon in a liqueur-tasting bar, which was stocked with a wide variety of the world's best liqueurs. This was consumed by leaning over the bar and sipping from a glass that stays on the bar.

The next stop on our sud-filled journey was Hamburg, a German port where we saw the only real drunkenness on our trip. Our impression was that Germans seemed to be extremely heavy-drinkers, whereas drinking in other countries seemed to be more moderate. We might be mistaken in this generalization, and

come to think of it, one of our fonder memories from this trip was seeing three well-dressed Londoners, complete with derbies, expensive black suits and black umbrellas, staggering drunkenly and very ungentlemanly down a street and collapsing in a tangled heap on the road.

After a week of sausages and french fries with mayonnaise washed down with good German beer, we hitched up to Copenhagen. Here we had trouble maintaining our standard of drunkenness due to the pleasant distraction of Denmark's famous females. Our stay was punctuated by tours to the Tuborg and Carlsberg breweries where the free beer was not as plentiful as in Amsterdam.

One controversy which raged throughout our trip was the question of which was stronger, North American or European beer. Although we can offer no proof of our conviction that our beer is stronger, we along with an American girl, proceeded to drink several Danes under the table while consuming their strongest beer, namely Carlsburg "elephant beer." We rest our case.

Although we did not get to Norway, we heard many stories of the legendary drinking prowess of native Norwegians. One of their quaint customs is that it is impolite to leave a half-empty bottle on the table when entertaining visitors. This country is highly recommended to serious drinkers, but take along plenty

of aspirin and alka-seltzer for hangovers.

Our tour finished in the dying city of West Berlin. Drinking establishments here range from the crowded but friendly coffee houses (yes, they serve beer) where you can be entertained by a number of folk and rock singers to the expensive night clubs and discotheques. One which we visited at night had a bar which went around in circles. At this point everything seemed to be going around in circles anyway, due to excessive alcohol consumption, and we got dizzy and fell off our bar stool to the accompaniment of our friends laughter.

One interesting side trip of our visit was a one day trip to East Berlin. This was easily accomplished by going through the thoroughly fortified Berlin Wall at Checkpoint Charlie and submitting to a thorough checking of passport, etc. After paying admission by buying East marks at twice what they were really worth we proceeded immediately to an East Berlin pub. Here the atmosphere was little different than in West Berlin, although the Canadian flag on my denim jacket elicited several strange looks and no one made any effort to talk to me, acting as if I wasn't really there.

Since East Berliners are desperate for West German marks, as well as anything western including jeans, you must be care-

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