

Taking off

for the summer

Making it on a shoestring

Travel.

It's a thought many minds turn to what with dreary examination schedules and the cold, blowing days of mid-February upon us. Thoughts of foreign places spring to mind; plans for trips are laid and hatched quickly, only to be shrugged off later, in light of mundane and over-looked necessities such as money and place to stay next year.

But for some people the thought remains.

Travel.

It can be the memories of lonely hours on a black ribbon of asphalt in the gathering summer dusk on the north shore of Superior or hopes of hours to be spent in *le quartier latin* sipping the *vin ordinaire* from the South - talking the same shop that Hemingway and his compatriots did fifty years ago.

It can be the visual assaults made by the vast European art museums or the aromatic effects of a walk in the peasant markets of Mexico; the new friends made in passing during the hike up the backside of one of the Swiss alps or the momentary enemy of a policeman, asking you to roll your god-damned carcass out from under the trees of the city's public park.

It can be anything.

Everyone - each individual - has their own thoughts about it and each either loves or hates it. You spend two hours going across the city on board a dirty, crowded, perspiration-sodoured bus, you'll despise the word "travel." If, however, you've spend a few days lost in the streets of a foreign city, the word - the thought - conjures up the wild images and memories best left to lie in those streets. And those streets can be anywhere - from Venice to Vancouver, from Sydney to San Francisco.

To Venice by Thumb

Suddenly you're on a water-taxi that (hopefully) is taking you to the Youth Hostel - or the bar. You've been hitching from a small town in the Austrian Alps; you've walked five miles in a snowstorm wearing every single thing you had in your pack (pyjamas on top), have been treated to a pizza (real Italian - not Boston this time) and wine lunch by a compassionate Italian truck driver (his compassion probably comes from the fact that he nearly hit you during the snowstorm) and have finally arrived in 80 degree Fahrenheit Venice in four layers of clothes!

Whew, that's saying a mouthful, but that's just how the experiences come - intense,

This article was written by Sharon Rempel, who's spent a half year in Europe and is presently working part-time at the local Hostel shop. A native of Vancouver, she's come to Edmonton to see northern life; it's just another small indication of how much she likes to travel (why else come to Edmonton in the winter?).

In any case, before setting off on her European excursion, Sharon attended a travel talk and found it to be a saving grace when later faced with the muster and fluster of foreign lands. And she's decided to try and give out some travel savvy - as a saving grace - to any travel hopefuls wandering the halls of our campus.

Thus, under the general auspices of the Canadian Youth Hostels Association she will be giving a talk entitled "Travelling on a Shoe-String Budget" on Wednesday, March 3, at 7:30 pm in the Tory Lecture B1. It's free and all who are tantalized by the discussion and few travel hints herein are cordially invited to attend.

varied, different, foreign, strange, whatever adjective you feel best. Does it sound too good to be true? Not at all. It's the typical story of a typical student who has packed a knapsack, gotten a passport, purchased a ticket - or maybe just hitched the whole way - and is out experiencing the joys of travelling.

The water taxi has stopped now, and the streets lined with ancient buildings face you; if you're wise and relatively thick skinned, now is the time to ask for life's little necessities in what little Italian you can muster. So, you heave your pack and snow-soaked body out and into the streets of Venice and approach a sympathetic-looking soul in an attempt to find directions to the bar (or the Hostel - everyone has different priorities).

What luck! You're in front of the Hostel and the bar is only two doors down the street!

The Call to the Bar

Fifteen minutes later you've got a warm bed in the Hostel - for about \$1.75 - have put on a poor facsimile of a dry outfit and are in the bar with a bottle of the local brand of wine - about 30 cents - trying to decide if the day is really as exciting as you had originally planned. (By the way, though it may appear self-evident, many people fail to realize that planned travel schedules *never* run properly; trains, feet, cycles, and thumbs seldom follow the clock.)

Europe Beckons

Europe is a popular destination for students who want to travel; it is well-served by excellent rail systems (Eurail, Britrail, Interail), has a well-developed Youth Hostelling System, and has a mass of culture and terrific people packed into a compact geographic area. The average North American traveller is overwhelmed by the European cultures and the attempt at travelling on a limited budget. It's still possible to see the

sights and enjoy the cultures and experience Europe on ten bucks a day.

That ten bucks a day isn't deluxe tour. It means staying in *pensions* (the low-cost, less-luxurious hotels of Europe, often run by wizened old ladies with many tales to tell if you can get them talking). It means that most meals are "a-la-parc" - bread, cheese, fruits, meats, milk or wine, enjoyed without having to leave the waiter a tip. It means taking trains (third-class) hitching, (which is still a great way of meeting the Europeans on a one-to-one basis - it's accepted in most parts of Europe and the distances are short.), or driving a cheap old van and camping along Europe's network of roads.

Hostelling

A European traveller quickly discovers that Youth Hostels are a great way of meeting people. They are government supported buildings accommodating young (under 100 years) travellers, providing cooking facilities, showers, toilets, beds, and a common area to chat in. Some hostels have TVs, others just an old bookshelf - but they've all got character and only cost from \$1 - \$4 a night. An International Youth Hostel membership costs \$10 a year (valid until the end of each year) and is good in 46 countries. It is available at the Edmonton CYHA Shop at 10922-88 Avenue.

If you plan to stay in Canada, there are permanent hostels in Vancouver, Calgary, Montreal, Ottawa and more primitive log-style hostels serving the Banff-Jasper area. As well there are large numbers of summer-only hostels throughout the country, sponsored by the federal government.

Travel Needles

A student contemplating a trip, especially to Third World areas, should inquire at a city Public Health Clinic about shots (at least six weeks prior to

departure). Many countries will refuse you entry unless you have had, the specified vaccinations.

A passport is also a necessity; application forms can be had at the regional office on the fourth floor of the Cambridge Building. If you hold an International Students' Card, many discounts are available (museums, buses, ferries, etc.). These can be obtained by sending \$2, a passport or other photo, proof of student status (something signed by the Registrar) and your name, address and birthdate to the Student Travel Center, Box 100B, SUB. UBC, Vancouver, B.C.

Luggage: a packsack has certain advantages over a suitcase. The sack holds a lot, lets your back and not your hands carry the weight (if you plan on walking any distances), is a great hip slimmer and allows your hands the freedom to cling onto bus rails, people, or whatever.

Bring Your Sheets

If you're considering a hostelling style trip (in the summer), you don't need a sleeping bag, as such. Rather, you need a sheet sleeping bag (required in most European hostels) and this can be rented or bought in most hostels or made by folding a double-size sheet width-wise and sewing it along the bottom and about 3/4 the way up the side. Blankets are provided in hostels, but a sleeping bag is nice if you end up camping out unexpectedly or decide to go tenting in the Alps. If you're worried about what else to take, pick up a suggestion sheet at the CYHA office, or ask the "knowledgeable" staff.

Canadian and U.S. travel is hampered by the long distances and the rather poor transportation network (if you're not flying). Greyhound has the Ameripass (similar to the Eurail pass idea, with buses instead of trains, if you can believe it), and you can talk to the Bus people about that. The CN did have a

rail pass but it's uncertain whether it will be back this summer (there might not be any trains by that time). Hitching in North America, as anywhere, is personal viewpoint: most manage to get where they want to go - some love it, some don't.

Planes seem to have monopolized the long-distance travelling system - charter flights, Youth fares, polar flights - all have their advantages depending on the time planned for the trip. There are still a few people crossing the oceans by ship: this can be done expensively on a pleasure cruise, or cheaply on a freighter (possibly by working the freighter across).

U.S. in Brief

In the United States, the hostel system which exists is concentrated in the Northern half of the country, particularly around the Great Lakes. From what I can gather, the southern section is really lacking in low-cost accommodation, so you'd better take your sleeping bag. Universities sometimes have rooms available during the summer, and the YM/YWCAs are alternatives. I've been told you can even stay in jails overnight, if you're really stuck!

For Hawaii, the same goes as for any country or area in the world - there *are* alternatives to the tourist-ridden motels, if you are inclined to going out into the backwoods, visiting the smaller cities and towns instead of Honolulu, and camping, hiking, or hitching instead of renting a car.

Down Under

Australia is going into its winter, so if you're heading south check the climate maps. There is also a fairly rigid entrance procedure, gone are the days when you could just drop into Kangaroo Country and work your way through. Hostels serve the Aussie coastal areas; YMCAs are popular and sleeping bags are needed. Caravanning (or trailering) is great and you can rent quite cheaply.

There are a hundred things that should be touched on before taking off to travel and there are lots that I've purposely missed (either partially or totally) here. For further information about such things as hawking your passport when you're broke, border crossings and how to avoid hassles (or if caught, deny that it's yours), money matters, mail, drops encounters in the purple tropical nights, and so on and so forth, drop by the travel talk on Wednesday March 3, 7:30 in Tory Lecture B1 and we'll discuss it.