

Sooner Scene

"IT'S A SMALL WORLD" MAY BE TRITE BUT IT'S ALSO TRUE
AS A SUMMER ALUMNI TOUR PROVED TO THIS TRAVELER

It's a small world. The astronauts prove it with a dramatic swish. The idea means even more, however, when you can personally jet across the Atlantic in six hours, then fly from capital to capital around Europe, taking just a few minutes for each hop. Three groups of O.U. alumni went touring this summer. Two groups were in Europe and one in the Orient. It was surprising how everywhere we went our paths crossed those of other Oklahomans who were touring or Sooner alumni who live abroad.

Eleonore and I went to church early one Sunday morning in London and found ourselves sitting near Mr. and Mrs. Don S. Kennedy of Oklahoma City.

Imagine what a small-world feeling I had in Italy when I heard someone remark amid the ruins of ancient Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli, "That looks like Boyd Gunning." We discovered the speaker was Merle Harris from Oklahoma. He and Mrs. Harris were beginning an extensive tour, but as they said, they hoped to be home in time for the Texas game.

On another day in Rome we met Professor Leslie Smith and nine O.U. students who were on the move, seeing as much as possible, before winding up their trip and heading for home.

Being in the middle of the main stream of tourist traffic, it is easy to believe that twelve million Americans visited other countries this season. These are Americans from all walks of life, teachers, farmers, lawyers, doctors, and bakers. Students were in Europe in great numbers, most of them touring very inexpensively, by bus or bicycle and stopping at student hostels or pensions.

Most travelers look first for the major historical sites: Westminster Abbey, the Louvre, the Vatican, St. Peter's Cathedral, and dozens more, depending upon where they are touring. These are vivid memories illustrated and described by travel books and pamphlets and collected by every traveler. But the tone and flavor of a trip comes from the incidental associations, the coincidences, and most of all from the in-

teresting and friendly people you have the opportunity to meet everywhere.

The people we came to know best were the guides who accompanied us in each city. Several of these were teachers who do this work during the summer vacation period. They were well-informed, articulate people who were as interested in our country as we were in theirs.

In London we had asked especially for Jean Brasier to be assigned to our group as guide because of the wonderful impression she made on the O.U. group that had been in England earlier this summer. Jean is from South Africa and has lived in London for seven years. She has specialized in English history and teaches in a secondary school in London. She is an ardent advocate for the preservation and appreciation of the historic sites and monuments of Britain. On our bus ride from London to Stratford-on-Avon, Jean gave us a very knowledgeable talk on agricultural products of the region and the economic problems of the English land-owners. When I complimented her on her knowledge of this subject, she beamed and said that she had learned it all this summer because the first O.U. tour had asked so many questions about the farms which she could not answer.

Our guide in Copenhagen, Rita Jensen, was also a teacher and she too had been with the earlier O.U. alumni tour. Rita Jensen was an excellent representative of the admirable, creative and busy people of Denmark. She explained the reason why all Danes are bilingual and many of them

speak more than two languages. They believe it is important to communicate with their neighbors and the other people of the world. She pointed out that since there are only four million Danes, to speak only Danish would limit them to a very narrow existence.

In Madrid our guide, Pedro Villalba, asked, "How will Oklahoma do against USC in football this fall?" This interesting man who brought the history of Spain to life for us so vividly knew quite a lot about Oklahoma. He learned it all from his brother, Jose, who was graduated from the University of Oklahoma in 1962 and married an Oklahoma girl. The idea of a family tie with a girl from such a new and remote part of the world as Oklahoma did not appeal to the older members of this Castillian family, but as Pedro explained, they have now become quite international-minded and proud of their Oklahoma connections.

Pedro made us feel that we understood the people, the country, and its turbulent history better than ever before. His frank observations about the recent revolution and the present political situation were enlightening. He took us to the new campus of the University of Spain in Madrid. This is an American style campus of 25,000 students who come to Madrid from all the Spanish speaking countries of the world. We were told the school of medicine is of particular quality but that with a surplus of medical doctors in Spain, there is now an emphasis on science and engineering.

Our guide, Carlo Pizzaroni of Rome, was a scholarly young man with an easy, eloquent manner. His sense of history gave a new reality to the Colosseum, the Forum, the Villa d'Este, but he was most impressive in the Vatican museum where unin-

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errupted centuries of stewardship have brought together one of the most precious collections in the world.

OUR guide in Vienna was a wonderful little lady who, because of the hat she was wearing, kept reminding me of Chico Marx. She was proud of the fact that she had been official guide for the U. S. Army forces during the years they were in Vienna. I am not sure how much she taught them about Vienna, but they certainly taught her a great deal about all parts of this country.

She helped us catch the beauty of the Vienna woods and taught us to think of the Danube as a silvery ribbon winding through the Austrian hills and not as a muddy river.

I gained a new appreciation for one of the great ladies of history when we visited Schonbrun Castle in Vienna and saw the exquisite taste Maria Theresa had used in decorating and furnishing it more than 200 years ago. Much of the original interior is still intact. The Hapsburgs occupied this castle until after the death of Emperor Franz Joseph during World War I. Unlike so many European castles, Schonbrun still gives the impression of being very much alive, even though it stands as a symbol of the past.

In all the fast-moving walking, looking, listening, reading of a tour, there are always a few fleeting moments that are magic. One beautiful morning we flew at 30,000 feet over the Bavarian countryside and across the Bavarian Alps from Vienna to Munich. After a few minutes stop at Munich we went over the breathtaking, snowcapped peaks of the Swiss Alps past Zurich, then down into the rich Po Valley of Northern Italy, finally landing at the great modern industrial heart of Italy, Milan.

Our total flying time that trip was 110 minutes. We saw unmatched beauty from a vantage point that has been available only to our generation.

You know, I like the small world idea. Meeting all these people and learning to laugh together with them and to appreciate the good we find in one another will surely eventually lead to better understanding even on the national level. —RBG

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