

INTER COMM

CLUB INTERNACIONAL D'ANDORRA

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CLUB INTERNACIONAL D'ANDORRA

INFORMATION / INFORMATIU

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INTERCOMM

Club Internacional d'Andorra

Quarterly Magazine
March 1996

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NEWS FROM THE BOARD

by Tony Hooper

It is very pleasant to report that the Club appears to be going through a growth period. Whilst the number of members does not fluctuate greatly, new members replacing those who leave, the various activities continue to thrive. As mentioned in the last magazine, new groups were planned following our Open Day last October. These are now starting to get off the ground.

The Association of Modellers held a first meeting on 29th January, when eight people with varying interests exchanged views. The Group intends to hold meetings at bi-monthly intervals where members can demonstrate their individual skills and interests.

Stan Jones has been contacting members to form a Computer Advice Group, where those who have knowledge can assist those who, like myself, need to learn more about working with computers (see page 5). If Stan has not contacted you, please give him a ring on 836972.

By the time you receive this issue we should have an extension of the Bridge Group in St. Julia, our first group based at that end of the country. As soon as we have more information, we shall publish it in the Andorra News Weekly.

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One group that needs more people to come forward is the Theatre Group. The loss of **Ron Richards** has been a big blow, but the group is determined to continue his work and produce a show for your entertainment as soon as possible (see page 7).

Following the success of the Open Day, plans are now being discussed for another event this year. We would like to mount an exhibition of the work of individual members, their hobbies, craft work, models, in fact anything which will show the wealth of talent that we know exists in our community. The exhibition is planned for October to coincide with the Andorran Arts Festival. Those we already know about will be contacted shortly, but if you have anything to offer please give me a ring.

Elsewhere in these pages you can find the plans for Social Activities throughout the year. **Ann Price** has been appointed director of these activities and is being ably assisted by **Josefina Martinez** (see page 4). Ann would still like to hear from members for suggestions for future events. She would also like to find someone to be responsible for the organisation of sporting events, such as White Water Rafting, and also for the Car Boot Sale which should almost run itself, but needs a hand at the helm.

Whilst normally, we do not encourage commercial activities at Coffee Mornings, Ann would like to show and possibly sell some Egyptian products (see page 5). All proceeds of sales will go to a charity in Egypt which provides education for poor children. I am sure she will explain more in the future, particularly to those who are joining her on the trip to Egypt.

Before the next issue appears, we should have held our Annual General Meeting. We would welcome some new faces coming forward to stand for election to the Board - we in fact have several vacancies. The Executive Commit-

tee normally meets only once a month, although we do encourage members of the committee to take responsibility for some aspect of the work of the Club. Those of us who are members now are quite happy to continue serving, but would welcome an influx of new bodies and ideas.

CLUB PHOTOCOPIER

May we remind everyone that the Club Photocopier at Estil Nordic is solely for the use of members of the Club Committee and leaders of the Groups. Estil Nordic have a list of names of all those people authorised to use the photocopier, and we do ask everyone to respect this list. Thank you for your consideration.

EDITORIAL

By Margaret Shaida

I have to confess that, until I came to Andorra, I had never met anybody who had been to Albania or to Madagascar. Perhaps I had led a very sheltered life! But for all of you who have led the same sort of sheltered life, we are very fortunate to have two fascinating reports about both these countries. It seems that a couple of members of our own Naturalists Group each found themselves in these two countries in recent months. Both went in pursuit of their naturalists' interests. Both discovered a lot of potholes!

Jacque Crozier and **Brian Dore** went to Albania last January in order to help the recently-formed Society for the Protection of the Flora and Fauna (ASPBM) to carry out a survey of wintering wildfowl in the country's wetlands. It is hoped that the Society will then be able to ensure that the best areas can be given a measure of protection from development and shooting. Jacque's report appears on page 12.

Dinah Baxter visited Madagascar last October on a bird-spotting trip, but found the

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wild life there almost as fascinating as the rare birds. Her report appears on page 18.

The annual Christmas Shopping trip to Barcelona last December was another resounding success for the Activities Group - a full report by **Doris and Colin Read** appears on page 17.

We also have the first of a two-part feature on the game of golf. Full of fascinating information, the report will prove invaluable to those among us who do not know a birdie from an eagle. This first part looks at the history of golf. The report (on page 11) was compiled for us by **James Shearlaw**. And this month's restaurant review was written for us by **Clare Allcard**.

A new feature in this issue *may* prove more interesting to lady members than to the gentlemen. But perhaps not! We are most grateful to **Anegrete Nissen** for allowing us to reprint her Helpful Household Hints. A number of these will appear in the next several issues of *Intercom*.

Because this issue is quite full, the promised feature on "Castles in Spain" by **Peter Dunkley** will appear in our June issue.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

THANK YOU!

The very moving church service held for **Ron Richards'** funeral last January, was made more meaningful and impressive for many of us by the splendid contribution of the CIA International Singers. At very short notice, the members of the choir gathered to pay tribute to Ron, and to show their support to Jackie. In this respect, we should particularly like to thank **Sheila Hooper** who immediately returned to direct the choir - despite the fact that she had been in France to go to hospital for a check-up.

We felt we must write to you and express our deepest appreciation. We are fortunate indeed to have such dedicated and kind people within our small community, and we're sure we speak on behalf of many others.

Yours sincerely,

Octavia and Ronnie Jones

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

International Singers

The carols and Christmas hymns sung by the International Singers in two concerts over the Christmas period came from a truly international repertoire. The two complete concerts of American, British, Catalan, Danish, Dutch, German and Welsh carols were sung in the candlelit churches of Feners in Andorra la Vella, and in Ordino. The Singers were directed by **Sheila Hooper**, and beautifully accompanied by **Binnie Segal** on the piano. The choir was joined by the soloist **Gisele Pereira Fernandez**, whose exquisite rendering of

Schubert's *Ave Maria* was most memorable.

More than one hundred thousand pesetas were raised at the two concerts, some of which was given to the charity 'Children of Bosnia' and the remainder to a local charity.

The Singers expect to be very busy this spring with invitations to sing at a Carnival Hall at the Andorra Park Hotel on 20th February; with the Orpheo Choir in Andorra la Vella on 30th March; and at this year's *Una Nit de Musica i Dansa* (see page 8) on 11th and 12th May. If you would like to join us, please call **Sheila Hooper** on 836154 or **Clare Allcard** on 836269.

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ACTIVITIES

By the time you read this, we will already have been to the Sunday market in Organya and embarked on our Egyptian expedition. Later this month (15th March), we shall be going to *Drac d'Or*, a Chinese restaurant in Seu d'Urgell, to sample a selection of twenty different dishes. This was intended as a tasting of those dishes you've never ordered for yourself just in case "they're not my sort of thing." Closing date for bookings was 27th February.

During 1995, members "travelled with the CIA" to Madrid, Tarragona and Carcassonne, the Nuria Valley, Montserrat and Barcelona. In January, I asked for some feed-back and comments in writing. This was because although many of you make inspired suggestions during the trips, I'm usually too harrassed to remember them. So, please put your ideas in writing.

Next Year's Activities

The provisional programme for 1996 includes some of the suggestions already received:

April 27-29: three days in Barcelona

in a centrally-located hotel, sight-seeing, shopping, eating.

May: One night in Solsona

The region and the city. Intensively cultivated area interspersed with magnificent pine woods, all protecting the picturesque walled city, dating from the eleventh century. We shall be there for the feast of San Isidro, the most important festival of the year in Solsona. Two days, one night, including a dinner composed of dishes typical of the area.

Early June: three nights in Avignon

to visit the medieval splendours of the Pope's Palace, the Cathedral, art galleries and museums. Included will be a bus tour of the Camargue to

see the 'wild white horses' and the fortified Aigues-Mortes.

Early July: one day in Castellar de N'Hug

A faithfully restored village, from where we can follow the cascades at the source of the river Llobregat on an optional 'downhill' walk of about one km. Lunch after the exercise.

August: International Club international picnic here in Andorra.

Members with 'foreign' cookery skills will be pressed to volunteer.

September: Aiguestortes National park

and the scenic lake Sant Maurici. For the really energetic, walk the well-marked paths; for the less energetic, a stroll around the lake; for the just plain idle, sit and think amid the lovely scenery.

October: Figures, Girona and Besalu.

A much-requested trip to the Salvador Dali Museum in Figueres, atmospheric Girona, photogenic Besalu where the bridge changes direction half-way across the river.

November: a dinner with speaker

(Several people have now volunteered!)

December: Toulouse

A change of venue for our Christmas shopping, with an overnight stop. **Ann Price**

WINE TASTING GROUP

The February meeting featured wines from the Rioja region of Spain and was held at Can Pere Restaurant in Anyos on 29th February. There were a dozen wines to sample, from those made in traditional oak casks to those made by more modern methods. For information about the next meeting, please call **Brian Dore** on 835931.



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THE COFFEE MORNINGS

The Club meets every Wednesday morning, 10.30-12.30, at the Paris-Londres Hotel. The hotel offers pleasant surroundings, ample parking, and a constant supply of coffee and drinks. At least two members (usually more) of the CIA Committee are on hand to offer advice and guidance on what the CIA can provide and help. There is a notice board filled with information, offers of assistance, and requests for help, and up-to-date news of Club and Group activities. Bookings for the activities may be made at the Coffee Mornings, and the Weekly Newsletter is on sale (a bargain at 25 pts each), which means you get it at least two days earlier than by post. It's a pleasant morning, and entrance is ABSOLUTELY FREE!

HOUSEHOLD HINTS

from
Anegrete Nissen

Do you cry when you slice onions?
Why not hold two matchsticks in your
teeth, sulphur end outwards!
No more tears!

Once or twice during March and April, **Ann Price**, will be talking about two enterprises in Egypt which provide craft training and general education for children and teenagers. One produces carpets and rugs in the traditional designs of this area, while the other produces scatter and floor cushion covers, wall hangings and bed covers in a type of hand-craft which is a mixture of applique and patchwork. Everything is well made, colourful and unusual. Members will be invited to look at the finished products and buy, if they wish. Any profit will be returned to Egypt and re-invested in the same enterprises.

COMPUTER ADVICE GROUP

Despite all the predictions that, within ten years, the computer will change our lives beyond recognition, it is one of those strange facts that some of the most literate people take great pride in announcing that they are "computer illiterate".

It's no surprise. The complexity of the computer world and the speed with which computers have invaded our lives are daunting. Airlines and banks are run by computers; the smooth operation of shops, hospitals, most companies and governments is largely dependent on the computer. Word processing and desk top publishing have freed our newspapers. Data processing controls our lives. International communications, otherwise known as the super highway, are set to bring us new pleasures and perils.

No wonder that a number of people showed an interest in the new Computer Advice Group set up last year by **Stan Jones**. Their interests (and, it must be said, their level of computer literacy) vary greatly.

This exciting new world has brought a not-so-exciting new vocabulary. There are hard disks and floppy disks, monitors and modems, DOS and Windows, Num Locks and menus, printers and toolbars. You use a mouse to scroll, drag and save. You have defaults and fields. Unfortunately, you can also run out of memory, and even crash. The list is endless, and, to the uninitiated, meaningless.

The new Computer group hopes to be able to provide a forum for discussion and exchange of experiences. It plans to draw up a list of people with expertise and teaching abilities as well as companies dealing in computer supplies in Andorra. If anyone has knowledge of any aspect of computers (word-processing, data processing, desk top publishing, Windows, the Internet, programming, etc.) would they please get in touch with **Stan Jones** (836972).

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THE BRIDGE GROUP

The Bridge Group completed a very successful year with a resounding victory in a match against the Andorran Bridge Club.

Attendance has built up steadily during the year, and we now have an average of seven to eight tables every Monday. The standard of play has improved markedly over the past year, with a number of new players winning prizes in the weekly competitions.

The Duplicate Bridge Pairs Champions for 1995 are **Denise Godefroid** and **Henning Berthelsen**, who were presented with their trophies at the Christmas Party on 4th December.

Officers for the 1996 Season will remain: **Marilyn Duns**, Director and Group Leader; **Maurice Pilkington**, Co-Director; and **Holger Hackenberg**, Treasurer.

HELPLINE

Helpline received 175,000 pts from the 1995 Christmas Fare. In addition, many generous people are now giving a monthly donation, while others have given a single large sum. For all

these donations, we are most grateful.

It's not too late to make a single donation or, better still, to set up a monthly standing order to: **CIA Helpline A/C No. AC 1888**, Credit Andorra, La Massana (Bustia 2910)

Remember, we are here to help you, in many ways. For further information call **Dinah Baxter**, 836980; **Lilias Grassie**, 838349; or **Lyn Ayres**, 843231.

Helpline International Cookery Book

So far, we have received little response to our calls for recipes from around the world - not surprising since we mentioned that we intended to put the book up for sale at the Christmas Bazaar - and Christmas seems very far away.

However, it will take time to organise the recipes, to get them typeset (we have received an offer of help in this respect), and to get them printed and bound. So may I please urge you to get in touch with **Lilias Grassie**, 838349. She would like to hear from you. All proceeds from the sale of this book will go towards Helpline funds, so it's all in a good cause.



John GWILLIAM, the Personal Finance Manager (France) of Barclays Bank Trust Co. Ltd. is now permanently based in Nice, Alpes-Maritimes. However, following a number of requests from customers in Andorra, he travels to the Principality at least twice a year. Alternatively, if you are ever in the Côte d'Azur region he would be very pleased to meet you in Nice.

To arrange an appointment for his next visit, please telephone, fax or write to his office.

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A PERSONAL TRIBUTE

from Tony Hooper

This is a personal appreciation of the influence upon our community of **Ron Richards** during the past few years.

Ron was a man who lived and breathed the theatre, where he had spent all his working life since his National Service in the Navy. He had certainly led an exciting and fulfilling life.

I am reminded of a story he told me about a reunion of his school class after forty years. He was in conversation with a gentleman with whom he had been very friendly during those long past schooldays, and asked him about his life. The answer was given in five minutes, as he explained that he had gone to university, joined a firm where he was still working, married, and was still living in the same area.

When Ron was asked about his career, he decided that (a) it would take far too long to go through the whole thing, and (b) he doubted if his friend would be able to understand his way of life.

In Andorra, Ron certainly was understood. His enthusiasm affected so many people who actually took part in productions by the Theatre Group, and was appreciated by all those who were able to enjoy those productions.

He was a hard task master, aiming always for a high professional standard, but whatever he asked you to do, he could show you how, and make a better job of it. The hardest task was trying to take some of the load from his shoulders since he was a workaholic where the theatre was concerned. His skills extended to all aspects concerned with a production.

Ron's powers of persuasion were immense. Who else could have persuaded me to appear in front of an audience wearing flashing lights on my head? In the same way, he led many others to forget themselves for the entertainment of others;

in doing so many of us were privileged to enter a new world, and to enjoy ourselves doing it. Often a production was planned and then Ron went out and found people to take the roles, people who had no idea of what they were capable of achieving, but he knew and brought the best out of them.

Ron is going to be sadly missed by all those who worked with him, and by the many who were able to enjoy his productions which were of the highest possible professional standard. But do not grieve. As was said to me at the time of his funeral, Ron will be waiting for us all to join him, and you can be sure he will have a script and a project ready and waiting so that he can continue to give joy and entertainment.

Thank you, Ron, for many unforgettable years.

THE THEATRE GROUP

Ron would have been the first to say that the 'Show Must Go On'. So, as I'm sure you will have heard by now, the Theatre Group is planning to present a Cabaret evening in the middle of May this year.

The Group is looking for people who can sing, dance, do comedy skits or play an instrument, and they stress that there is no need to be shy. But if you feel you really can't get up on stage, then they also need lots of help both back of stage and front of house too. They stress that no matter what talents you have, the Group can make good use of them. Why not join them?

The next General Meeting is due to be held on 4th March, in the Parish Hall at La Massana at 20.30. Everyone is urged to come along.

For further information, please call **Rene De Knight**, 839110, or **Hans Kiaer**, 836892.



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THE NATURALISTS GROUP

The full year-long projected programme was given in the December issue of *Intercomm*. This month, the long weekend-visit planned to the Bay of Roses and the Aiguamolis Natural Park has been arranged for March 22-25. The Group promises easy walking on the flat, plenty of well-placed hides to rest in, lovely scenery - and no snow! For further information and reservations, call **Brian Dore** 835931.

SCOTTISH DANCING

Our numbers have been a bit low this winter with people away, or sick or skiing. We are also looking for a new leader. But do not let that deter you! Why not come along and help swell the Group each Sunday at 4.30 pm at the La Massana Church Hall? It's a lovely afternoon of exercise and laughter!

For further information, please call **Clare Allcard** 836269.

THE GOOD NEWS COLUMN

Three short stories to bring a shaft of spring sunshine into your hearts:

Last November, when **Britt Nielsen** came-back from New Zealand, she flew directly from Wellington to Barcelona (via Auckland, Los Angeles and London), a journey of more than thirty-six hours. Little wonder, then, that when she found the minibus to Andorra had been overbooked, she protested somewhat vigorously. However, the bus driver arranged for a Barcelona taxi to bring her to Andorra, at the company's expense. Relieved, Britt arrived home quickly and safely, bid the taxi driver farewell - and then discovered she'd left her handbag with all her cards and documents (except her passport!) in the disappearing cab.

The next morning, she called the ever-resourceful **Josefina Martinez**, who in turn phoned the central Barcelona taxi bureau. To her delight, she was informed that the handbag had been handed in, and could be retrieved from the Lost and Found Department. When Britt picked it up ten days later, everything was there - except for the loose change!

When **Stan and Joyce Jones** set off on holiday last autumn, they took the public bus (not the minibus) down to Barcelona, intending to stay the night before embarking on their long-haul flight across the Atlantic to Canada. On checking in at the hotel, Stan was dismayed to find he'd left his wallet (with money, passports, tickets...) on the bus. He rushed back to the main bus depot, and explained his predicament (in Spanish, which he himself concedes is 'very broken'). He was immediately presented with his wallet complete

with money, passport, tickets...) He was still in a state of thrilled disbelief when he told me about it in January!

And in February, one of the visitors on the day trip to Organya Market lost her wallet. Since this was the first of the many CIA Activities planned for 1996, **Ann Price** felt it was not a good omen. But, yes, you guessed it! The wallet was found, untouched, caught up between the market stalls.

Another piece of good news is that there is a unisex hairdresser in La Massana. He not only speaks some English, he will also give 15% discount on his regular prices to anyone who presents him with a copy of the advertisement below.

Lastly, there will be a new presentation of *Una Nit de Musica i Dansa* on Saturday May 11th at 10 pm, and Sunday May 12th at 7 pm in the Sala d'Actes in Andorra la Vella. Good News indeed!

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LA MASSANA

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Reports on Activities

ONE DAY IN BARCELONA

The CIA Christmas Shopping Trip to Barcelona took place on the coldest day of the year. But it is clear from the following report by Doris and Colin Read, that the weather did not detract from the enjoyment of the somewhat cold, participants.

A party of forty, mostly from the area above the tunnels, boarded the coach in the early hours of Thursday, 14th December. The members who boarded at St. Julia were evidently expecting difficulties as they appeared with ample liquid provisions. The weather could best be described as *poco fresco* as we awaited the arrival of the coach, and the warmth aboard was very welcome.

It soon became apparent, however, that there was a choice only of Mistral or Sauna conditions. These alternated throughout the journey as Ann Price skillfully fielded the conflicting demands of her either frozen, or over-heated companions. We had the usual very smooth journey with Rafael at the wheel, stopping at *Cal Tomeu* for a coffee break, and encountering the forecast Pyrenean snow at the start of the toll road close to Barcelona.

On arrival at the Marks & Spencer store, the race was on! Must get the essentials before they sell out - mincemeat, cranberry sauce, ham, Christmas Pudding, sausage rolls, etc. All safely gathered in, but no fresh sausages! Didn't M&S know we were coming? Then a good look round all the other items in the store, and subsequent purchases.

So far, so good, but oh dear, how can we visit the rest of the shopping mall with its assorted shops, fresh food market and so on, laden down with all our bags? The solution was to go off singly, leaving a companion to guard the goodies, but next time perhaps we should look round first? Then it was back to the coach, to deposit our purchases, and on to *Placa Catalunya*, where some of the party dispersed for more shopping.

We think we must have visited Barcelona on the coldest day of the year. Certainly, those of us who went with the coach to the harbour were really hardy, although we did see the Christopher Columbus statue on the way. Wiser ones visited the Picasso Museum and the Maritime Museum.

A wide choice of menus was available at the *Mare Magnum* complex on the harbour front, and some were tempted by the Chinese restaurant. Others went to the Fast Food area where about ten

different styles of cuisine were on offer. The general opinion was that this complex would be much pleasanter in the summer, as the central areas were open to the four winds. The food areas, however, were enclosed and comfortable.

The stroll up the *Ramblas* to the *Placa Catalunya* was interesting, although there were not many stalls or people about - maybe the drizzle put them off. The flower and plants stalls were colourful, and there were several stalls selling birds and animals. We felt quite envious of the baby rabbits and guinea pigs who had heaters in their cages. At last we reached *El Corte Ingles*, and recommenced our shopping, pausing only for a welcome cup of tea. We did make a note, though, to go back to the *Ramblas* soon and explore some of the side streets which looked intriguing.

We re-boarded the coach at 6.30 pm with the luggage area now full, and one or two more precious items such as a pheasant (presumed dead) and poinsettia tucked away inside. On the return journey, we again stopped at *Cal Tomeu* where dinner was ready for us. The meal was excellent - well cooked and well served.

It was nearly midnight when we arrived home, but it had been a very enjoyable day despite the weather. We certainly hope the CIA will arrange another trip next year. Our sincere thanks go to Ann Price for yet another demonstration of her first-class organisational abilities and for the steady flow of useful information which helped to make the day more pleasureable.



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RESTAURANT REVIEW

AQUARIUS RESTAURANT

Continuing our series of restaurant reviews, we go with Clare Allcard to sample the delights of the Aquarius Restaurant at Caldea

The Caldea's Aquarius Restaurant is open from 12.30 to 3.30 pm and 8.30 to 10.30 pm. Whether it is necessary to book ahead was hard to tell: we dined at the unfashionably early hour of 8.30 pm on an unfashionable Thursday evening. By the time we left, six other diners had arrived in a restaurant that can seat sixty-five.

Menus come in French, Catalan and Castellano. Prices have risen considerably in past months, with few entrees under 1,000 pts.

Nonetheless, I do advise an entree, if only to avoid a long wait before the main dish arrives, though a large bowl of olives, plus tempting canapes on slivers of wholemeal bread, help ease the hunger pangs.

We passed over an extensive wine list ranging from 1,050 pts for an ordinary Spanish rose to 7,500 pts for a bottle of *Cotes Rotie Chapoutier*, in favour of mineral water. This spa restaurant offers a separate list of mineral waters.

Faced with such delights as *Carpaccio de Serrano a l'huile de noix, et salade d'endives* and *Roule de veau aux langoustines et puree de pomme de terre au beurre d'armandes grillees*, we took ages choosing.

Finally, Edward plumped for an entree of *Turbot et Thon frais marines en lasagne de legumes, sauce gaspacho* (basically a vegetable lasagne stuffed with fresh fish) which he declared to be excellent. I had *Salade de coques et saumon mi cuit, citron vert et meli-melo legumes*: smoked salmon and shell fish sparingly garnished with vegetables. Unfortunately, the green lemon dressing, used to "half-cook" the seafood, slightly

overwhelmed the fish's delicate flavours. That said, both dishes were exquisitely presented. The Aquarius offers *Nouvelle Cuisine* at its non-rigorous best. That is, although it looks stunning you get enough to eat. Or at least, I did.

Edward next chose a super steak *Filet mignon de veau et les pates farcies au foie gras*. I decided against this as I didn't want pasta. I needn't have worried. How we laughed at the three solitary pasta shells so tastefully arranged, like snails, in an arc beneath the steak, each stuffed with foie gras. Indeed, Edward's only complaint about the whole meal was the lack of sustaining carbohydrates or health-giving vitamins. Apart from the dainty garnishes, this was a dinner of protein, lapped round the edges by fabulous sauces.

For my main dish, I chose more fish: *Medallions de lotte au veloute de Romesco*. This time the *lotte*, succulent and full of flavour, floated in flawless harmony with a creamy, velvet-smooth sauce.

Triumphal Music

At half past nine, triumphal music struck up on the far side of the plate glass windows which separated us from Caldea's bathers. Moments later the fountains shot into life. If you don't plan to take your visitors to the spa itself, a visit to the restaurant will at least give them a glimpse of the treat they have missed.

At the instigation of our waiter, I next ordered *Le chaud froid de fruits exotiques, caramel d'oranges*. Again, the sauce was exceptionally good: smooth, slightly tangy,



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NOTES FROM THE 19TH HOLE

If you do not always understand the complexities of the game of golf, then this two-part feature is for you. The first part, looks at the history of the game. We are most grateful to James Shearlaw for compiling this fascinating report of an ancient Scottish game.

It could be that some of our members watch Golf Tournaments on TV, and find that many of the terms and expressions are incomprehensible. This article is an attempt to explain the language of golf. It is not for *aficionados*. Neither is it for cynics like the one who described golf as "a waste of a good walk"!

History of Golf

Before looking at the language of golf, perhaps it might help to look at the origins of the game. Golf originated in Scotland in the fifteenth century and it has gradually developed there over the centuries. Edinburgh and St. Andrews are place names which will be mentioned a lot in this article - not simply because I was born and brought up there!

I lived within walking distance of two public courses and two private ones. Costs of a 'round' at the former were 3 old pence on the 'wee' and 60p on the 'big' in those early days. Today, it is said, there are twenty-six courses within the city boundaries of Edinburgh and eighty-eight within a twenty-mile radius.

The original game played five centuries ago was a primitive affair by today's standards. There were no set rules nor a fixed number of holes - both varying from place to place. Matches were played on a 'hole against hole' basis. 'Stroke' play came into being as recently as 1830. In those early days, the game was played by rich and

poor alike; indeed, they often teamed up in a partnership, and wagered on the results of the game.

The sport really 'took off' about 1744 when some gentlemen from Edinburgh formed themselves into a Club, the 'Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers'. They made their base at the links of Leith (now part of Edinburgh). It is still in existence and is the oldest golf club in the world. Today, this very exclusive Club is based at the world-famous links at Muirfield, some miles down the Forth estuary.

The first Club Rules

The club drew up its own rules which gradually became the accepted ones. About ten years later these rules were adopted by a group calling themselves the 'Society of St. Andrews Golfers' which, in 1833, became the 'Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews'.

Much more recently, in 1897, the Club produced one set of rules, and it thus became, the effective Guardians of the Rules of Golf.

By this time, the sport had been 'exported' to many corners of the globe. For instance, Tommy Armour, a player on the 'big', had emigrated to the USA, and even to this day, you will see top American players wearing jockey hats bearing the name of Tommy Armour III.

In 1894 the 'US Golf Association' was formed, with its own set of rules - doubtless based

(continued from previous page)

slightly warm (certainly not "hot") with just a hint of caramel on top. The whole was beautifully presented but I did feel that "exotic fruits" was an overstatement. Perched on a bed of pineapple, a scoop of vanilla ice cream (the "froid") lay hidden under a luscious covering of brightly coloured fruits such as raspberries, strawberries, kiwi and passion fruit, several of which might indeed have been considered exotic - thirty years ago.

Edward resisted the blandishments of my "hot and cold" pudding, pushed rather too keenly

by our waiter (was the exotic fruit in danger of as losing its bloom?), and chose instead *Crepes flambees a la Catalane*. Do Catalans prefer their "flaming crepes" cold? His certainly was.

Our verdict was that the Aquarius had provided us with an outstandingly attractive dinner, redolent with fabulous flavours. I particularly enjoyed eating a three-course meal without feeling bloated at the end. However, we have one rider to our recommendation. If, when paying some 4,000 pts per head for a meal without wine, you are looking for a blow-out, we suggest you try elsewhere.

on the R & A ones. Inevitably these two sets of Rules merged into one and became officially the 'Rules of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews' (The 'Ancient' refers to the long history of the club, while the 'Royal' is because all the Stuart Kings played and - ladies, please note - so did Mary Queen of Scots!)

The Caddie

Now for some facts on playing equipment and the men (and women, nowadays) who carry for their employers. Note the word 'carry'. The person engaged to carry is a caddie - there is no verb to caddie. The noun caddie was merely the Scottish spelling of the French 'cadet' which at one time meant younger sons of French nobles who were sent to Edinburgh to act as pages to Mary Queen of Scots - part of the 'Auld Alliance' - if you know your history!

Much later and in a less complimentary sense, the word was applied to any layabouts who in the eighteenth century, roamed the streets offering (for payment) to do any jobs including luggage carrying - a porter, in effect. Later he became a specific one, i.e. a carrier of golf clubs.

Here it is interesting to note that in golf, as in no other sport, a caddie is unique in that he is officially part of a 'side' and as such he (or she) and only he (or she) can give advice to his employer.

As a result, a Rule states that if a caddie commits an offence under the Rules, the particular penalty applies as if the player himself had committed it.

Playing Equipment

Now to Equipment, starting with Balls. No doubt, these were initially made of wood (probably box-wood). Then came the 'featheries' as they were called. These consisted of two strips of leather, sewn together and packed lightly with (you've guessed it) feathers. It's likely they were used up to the middle of the nineteenth cen-

tury. Then came the 'guttie' ball, so called because it was made of gutta-percha. Being completely round, they flew further than the 'featheries', and putting them became easier. They were also less destructible. In the making, they underwent a hammering process which caused a 'dimple' effect which in turn made for a straighter flight.

At the beginning of the century the Americans invented a new ball - a rubber cored one, used universally today

One problem remained, however. In Great Britain, the official size of ball was 1.62 inches in diameter; in the States it was 1.68 inches. In 1950, a uniform size was agreed upon, and approved by the R & A and the U.S. Golf Association. This size entered the Rules as 1.68.

The Clubs

Originally crudely made, the clubs gradually became more refined. All (both 'woods' and 'irons') had hickory shafts. From being very long in the shaft they eventually became reduced to the length we see today. At one time, all had distinctive names: the woods were called Drivers, Brassiers, Spoons, and Baffies, all designed for the playing of a particular shot, as were the irons which went by such distinctive names as Clack, Jigger, Mashie and Niblick. Most putters had metal 'heads'.

The big change in recent years in the making of clubs came in 1920's when steel shafts replaced the wooden ones.

One final note: the Rules state that the maximum number of clubs permitted in a match/tournament is fourteen.

The second part of this article, which will appear in our next issue, will look at the terms and expressions used in the game of golf as well as at the types of terrain and the various shots used in the game.



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ALBANIA 1996

Two members of the CIA Naturalists Group visited Albania in January to help the recently-formed Society for the Protection of the Flora and Fauna to carry out a survey of wintering wildfowl in the country's wetlands. Here, Jacquie Crozier gives her impressions of a country whose communist past is being rapidly erased.

There are 700,000 gun bunkers, one for every four of the population. They ring the capital, Tirana, sprouting out of salt-marsh and brambles like sinister fungi; they slump on the beaches like huge, concrete jellyfish; they squat in front gardens, where the enterprising grow plants over them, and in farmyards, where the hens sleep in them. There is no corner of the countryside, however far from civilisation, without several in view, dotting the landscape like dead Daleks. They are the most startling feature of Albania - after the poverty!

Albania is the poorest country in Europe, a fact which becomes apparent as soon as you set foot in the country, either at the squalid docks where the ferry from Italy arrives or the tiny airport. Albania does not just resemble third-world countries, it seems worse off than many. There is not the conspicuous juxtaposition of extremes of wealth and poverty that is so obvious in, for example, India, Kenya or Morocco. Everyone in Albania is poor. Civil servants and the professional classes live in flats

that council tenants in Britain would reject out of hand. We stayed in Tirana with a retired vet and his pharmacist wife. Their lavatory did not flush (we never found one in Albania that did) so that two buckets of water stood beside it to be poured down when necessary. A Hall of Residence in Shkodra University had just three 'holes in the ground' at the end of each corridor for a hundred or so students, with the added luxury of a cold tap in each dormitory. Water in Tirana is turned off for a couple of hours each day. Villages do not have mains water, just a standpipe in the centre and many have no electricity. The hillside villages, built of local stone, look picturesque but with no 'mod cons' must be appalling to live in, even when shared with the animals for warmth, for Albania experiences extremes of climate, very cold in winter with snow down to a thousand metres and temperatures of over 40°C for two months in the summer.

Yet Albania is a beautiful country. Mountains cover most of it, sweeping down almost to



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the coast in the north and south, with a coastal plain that widens to some 60 kms in the centre, where Tirana is situated. So from any part of the country, mountains are always in view; stony foothills or dramatic limestone peaks.

It's wild, too. There are still wolves in Albania as well as several hundred bears and lynx in the hills. The coastline must be one of the few remaining around the Adriatic where there is almost no development. The two shabby 'tourist' resorts we saw resembled refugee rather than holiday camps.

Thousands of Birds

The positive side is that there are still long stretches of deserted, sandy beaches and vast lagoons and reed-beds, undrained and undeveloped, home to thousands and thousands of duck and waterbirds, pelicans and pygmy cormorants. Parts of Spain must have looked like this eighty years ago.

And now the water and atmosphere are unpolluted, otters are back in the rivers since the appalling factories producing chemical fertilisers, etc, built by the Chinese, have broken down totally and will never work again. They still stand, every window smashed, chimneys and pipes rusted and broken, hideous black sepulchres of a futile regime.

Other symbols of a communist past are rapidly being erased. Russian, which was taught in the schools, has been replaced by English. The Communist Party Headquarters in Shkodra is now a Business College; a book by Enver Hoxa was lying torn and trampled in the mud; we speculated on the origin of the typewritten papers in which our breakfast pies from a street seller, were wrapped, until we found some Albanian we could understand: "From the Archives of the Communist Party".

The only modern factory we saw was, yes, Coca Cola, and a Macdonald's is in the offing. This is likely to prove as popular with the Albanians as the pizza kiosks now springing up everywhere in Tirana. Pizzas, pies, either meat or cheese, bread (delicious and freshly-baked every day from 6 am) and the local, watered, wine were all we tasted of Albanian cuisine.

No Shops

There are bars patronised solely by men, selling beer and raki, which Albanians drink even at breakfast, but no restaurants, just as there are almost no shops except in Tirana, only street sellers.

In the capital, as in every little village, rickety old tables or just crates are set up along the pavements early in the morning, displaying a

FACT FILE

Albania has a surface area of 28.750 sq km and 2.9 million inhabitants, two-thirds of whom live in rural settlements. The capital, Tirana, holds some 220,000 people.

You can get to Albania:

By Air: Alitalia flies daily from Rome at midday

By Ferry: Twice-weekly sailings from Bari, returning just after mid-day.

Accommodation: One large, modern hotel, the Tirana International, started by the Chinese, finished by the Italians. Otherwise there are virtually no hotels only some very small hostels, not always well signed.

Car Hire: Available, with or without driver, is advertised at the airport. In view of the bad state of the roads and poor signposting, it is probably best to hire a car with driver (he will also guard it and your belongings!)

Petrol: Few filling stations outside the towns. Only diesel and super available, no lead-free (one or two have green pumps but they're empty).

The language: Albanian (Shpendeve) is not like any other Mediterranean language. English, Italian, Russian and (to a lesser extent) French are quite widely spoken in the towns.

Currency: The Lek, of which there are approximately 93 to the dollar. Take dollars in cash and change them on the street market in Tirana's main square. Banks are few and far between, even in towns, and have terrible queues.

Tourism: The Albanians are keen to develop a tourist industry but not to cash in on the get-rich-quick tourism culture that has destroyed so many important wildlife habitats. Together with Eco Tourism (a British organisation) and the WWF, a village-based ecotourist programme is being worked out. Visitors will fly to Corfu, and take a quick boat crossing to southern Albania to stay in private villas.

Postcards: Only one design, available only at the Airport.

pathetic little collection of a few drinks, elderly snacks, a bunch or two of bananas or a few apples. Everyone seems to be selling the same things, so it is a mystery who buys them.

A Booming Industry

The best pizzas and wine we tasted came from an American/Albanian mission. Religion seems to be the only booming industry in the country. After thirty years when any form of religious worship was a criminal offence, younger people (a young Albanian woman told me) are looking for "some meaning in life". Many are becoming Christians, the Roman Catholic churches are being restored and opulent mosques are being built in even quite small villages, presumably with Middle-Eastern money. They sit incongruously among the dilapidated apartment blocks and the shabby old houses with their crumbling walls and peeling stucco.

The Italians, when they ruled Albania before the last war, built elegant, classical-style public buildings and pretty villas. Some can still be discerned, tucked away behind flats and grim factories, surrounded by mimosa, magnolia and citrus trees, desperately in need of a coat of paint at least, like King Zog's summer palace on the coast near Durres.

Many country folk are building their own, modern homes. Since the end of the communist regime, the peasants who worked on the State farms have been given a small patch of land on which they are putting up a house, so that often

families are living in just the ground storey with plastic across the windows and doors until they can afford to complete it.

Albania is still essentially rural. Outside Tirana, one sees far more donkeys and horses (well, ponies) than cars. The cars are surprisingly large and modern, with a preponderance of expensive Mercedes. Ferdinand, the high-ranking conservationist who accompanied us, explained with a chuckle that the dealers are quite blatant, merely warning would-be purchasers that they must not drive their cars outside Albania! Many owners have not even bothered to remove the German (or Italian) stickers! Spare parts are clearly a problem, since there are dozens of scrap-yards where cars are being stripped of every conceivable item which could be sold.

Putting the Cart before the Horse

Civil servants cannot, of course, afford cars, nor can the farmers, so one sees small scraggy ponies pulling horrific loads or being whipped along at a canter pulling a cart-load of people. One thin little pony was carrying a load of concrete blocks (a demolished bunker?!) when suddenly the load tipped and the pony was hoisted off its feet and hung dangling patiently between the shafts. Towards dusk all the roads, narrow and potholed at best, are crowded with cows, sheep, dogs and children as all the family bring the animals back to stall or byre. In Shkodra we could hear cows and cockerels all night quite near the city centre. Shkodra, on the Montenegrin border, has benefited from the recent trade embargo against ex-Yugoslavia and has more stalls selling food than anywhere else in the country.

Our final view of Albania as the plane took off from Tirana airport was of herds of sheep and cows grazing on the grass right beside the runway, watched over by a lackadaisical cowherd and a solitary soldier standing by a bunker.



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THOUGHTS ON LEAVING ANDORRA

A voice from beyond

When Lawyer Tony Gee and his wife decided to leave Andorra, Tony Hooper asked him if he had any thoughts to pass on to people contemplating a similar step.

If you do not have any real estate in Andorra, there is in fact nothing to stop you simply getting on your bike. With nothing to sell, you settle all bills (e.g. rent due under any tenancy agreement), decide whether or not to close your Andorran bank account, get a certificate from your local *Commu* that you are leaving, and go. If you have furniture to take out with you, this *Commu* certificate is needed. My strong advice is to use a carrier familiar with the paperwork, as this will save you a great deal of time and possible anxiety. Casa Servei (Peter Hancock) is good at cutting through the red tape. It is important to remember that you will continue to be liable for certain taxes until you have personally deregistered with your *Commu*. If you decide for some reason to keep your bank account, it will be debited automatically until you deregister. What other documentation you need will depend on the country to which you are going and advice on this is beyond the scope of this article. Bear in mind that Andorra is not a member of the EC and you will, for example, be liable for duty if you import an Andorran plated car into the Community. You might find that it is more economical to sell your car in Andorra than

pay import duty.

If you have real estate in the Principality matters will be more complicated, and depend on whether you are going to keep the property, or sell, and whether before or after you leave.

If you are going to give up permanent residence but keep your property, say, as an investment or holiday home, it is essential to leave a bank account with sufficient funds to service all outgoings. While this may seem obvious, problems could arise through the account being automatically debited with various taxes and expenses, some of which may be imposed after you have left, and about which you have had no notice (e.g. the way the car tax was introduced a couple of years ago).

The Govern has to do something about Andorra's financial problems and is determined to get money in one way or another. It will be a long time before Andorra's finances are eased by the President's plans for an international airport at Seu and the advent of foreign banks and businesses. The recent furore over proposed taxation has irritated some of the Establishment, sensitive to people using the country as a convenience. The proposal to make *Residencias* depend on an annual eight-month stay in the country was aimed at such people. An Andorran said recently that people who want to share in the country's future prosperity should remember the words of another president and think not what Andorra can do for them but what they can do for Andorra. Taxes of some kind, direct or indirect,

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are inevitable. The Govern could, for example, increase the take from the various *Commus*, who would pass this on by increasing already existing "tributes" payable by residents and property owners. It may therefore be difficult to budget, so keep in touch with your Andorran Bank regularly, and top up your account as necessary.

A charge could be registered against your property for unpaid liabilities, causing an unpleasant surprise when you eventually come to sell. Indeed, you might have matters taken out of your hands by a sale ordered by the Court if payment is delayed.

If you decide to sell before you leave then you will also be concerned with getting your furniture and possessions out, and will have noted what I have already said about this. It is conceivable that your particular *Commu* may raise a sales tax based by underdeclaring the price. Don't be persuaded to do this in order to help the purchaser minimise any purchase tax liability. Discovery of such action is bound to result in criminal prosecution.

With the state of the property market, you might leave before you have found a buyer for your property. If so, don't forget about keeping a healthy bank balance. As for the mechanics of sale, you can give a Power of Attorney to someone to do the business for you in your absence once you have a purchaser. This document should be prepared by an Andorran notary, as it must comply with Andorran Law. The Notary dealing with the sale may also be willing to act under the Power of Attorney, or suggest someone in his office to do so. Do not forget to leave the *escritura* with the notary. Write a letter to the notary giving full details of the bank you want credited with the sale proceeds, account number, sort code, etc. and stress that you want the money sent without delay, to prevent him sitting on the proceeds inadvertently. Keep a

sitting on the proceeds inadvertently. Keep a copy of such letter. It is surprising how many people forget to do this.

It may be that for certain reasons you do not have an *escritura*. You may, for example, have entered into a private contract. I strongly advise that in such a case you appoint an independent person, i.e. someone not connected in any way to the vendor, to act under the Power of Attorney to look after your interests. Do not appoint the same notary acting for your vendor under the private contract in case there could be a conflict of interest between you, the original vendor, and the purchaser to whom you are selling. As there is not a great choice of notaries in Andorra, you might in the circumstances have to appoint an *avocat* to act under the Power of Attorney.

If you have joined CASS don't forget to tell them you are leaving. If you are already in receipt of an Andorran pension they will need to have details of where to pay this. If you have not reached pension age the accumulated pension points will be frozen at the time you leave the scheme, and the pension paid at a reduced rate when the time comes provided, of course, you remind CASS when you have reached sixty-five.

Though tax advice is beyond the scope of this article, please remember that the timing of either your "going home" or entering any other country as a permanent resident, is important. I cannot overstress this. Get the advice of a good tax adviser in the country where you intend next to make your home, and don't be penny-wise when it comes to his fee.

Lastly, you should look to remaking your Will. On a note of somewhat macabre comedy, David LeMaire told me it had been put about that the Reaper had already come for me (hence the somewhat cryptic title of this article). Rita and I are also supposed to have been driven out of the country, though whether before or after I was supposed to have died, is not clear. It is a sorry truth that silly people in possession of too much time, will make up stories - a dangerous habit which can rebound against them to the profit of lawyers.

Rita and I enjoyed our time in Andorra, and experienced only courtesy and help from the various Government agencies we dealt with during our time there. Nevertheless, for us the Principality has lost the quaint charm that first attracted us, and now we enjoy the tranquil beauty of the Gers.

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FROM ONE POT HOLE TO ANOTHER

There are several species of birds, animals and trees unique to Madagascar. When Dinah Baxter visited the island last autumn, she found the flora and fauna more interesting than the food and facilities!

Madagascar is a tropical island, about 350 miles off the coast of Mozambique. The first people arrived from Polynesia, about 500 AD. With golden brown skin, almond shaped eyes and straight hair, they seem out of place in what one thinks of as an African country. They are still in the majority, occupying the Haute Plateaux (with the best climate). The language, Malagasy, is related to Indonesian. Most of the educated people speak French as well.

The whole island was once covered with forests - rain forest on the east coast, deciduous on the high plateau, and spiny forest in the dry south west.

Unique Flora and Fauna

When I went to Madagascar in October 1995 with a bird watching group, I found it interesting but depressing: interesting because of the people, the unique flora and fauna and some of the landscape; depressing because so much of the land has been burnt, either on purpose or by mis-management

A greater part of the highlands is now savannah. Here one can see innumerable herds of zebu (humped-neck cattle). The dry grass is burned in October, so that when the rains come there will be plenty of fresh green grass for the skinny zebu. Burning dry grass is a common practice everywhere, but when the fires burn over

hundreds of square kilometres, they get out of control, and each year a little more forest, both native and secondary Eucalyptus, is destroyed. While eucalyptus can regenerate, if not too badly damaged, the endemic forest is destroyed for ever. One guide book says that only thirty per cent of native forest is left; another says seven percent. Most of this is in the inaccessible northern end of the island.

Once the undergrowth has been burnt, the people move in and cut down the remaining trees for fuel and charcoal. "Slash and burn" was obviously practised for centuries to make grasslands and to clear land for growing rice, cassava, bananas and other crops. It is no longer necessary.

Rice Paddies

In many of the valleys the soil is heavy clay, some of which is removed for brick-making while the remainder is turned into paddy fields. It was fascinating to see rice cultivation in all its stages. The heavy soil is dug by hand, or ploughed with zebu-power. The first seedlings are a brilliant green. These are transplanted into bigger irrigated paddies. The climate is such that simultaneous harvesting and threshing, and planting can take place. Threshing is done by making small bundles of the rice straw and beating them on the ground.



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Most people are very poor, but there is little visible sign of malnutrition - children do not have the pot bellies, sores, runny noses or infected eyes familiar in so many third world countries. There are almost no flies in Madagascar, but plenty of vicious mosquitoes!

The country people live in adobe houses, which mostly have window openings with wooden shutters, wooden doors, and roofs thatched with straw, dried grass or thatch-palm. There are no chimneys. Inside, the walls are black, as are the window and door openings. Most people have no furniture. They sit on the ground and may have some straw on which to sleep.

Everyone has a *Lamba* - a cloth or blanket. Babies are carried on the mothers' back in a *lamba* - it is worn as a wrap in the chilly mornings and used as a blanket at night. In the

daytime the women cook outside; clay or tin pots are used.

They use wood in the country and charcoal in the towns. Soon there will be no more wood, then all the rice and zebu meat in the world will be of no use to the people if there is no fuel. There is a desperate need for a solar cooking pot. (I am hot on the trail of one!)

Pot Holes and Ruts

Travelling by road is tedious and hazardous. Most of the *Routes Nationales* and all other roads are full of pot holes and ruts. We almost never went faster than 25 kph. Although we had several flat tyres, we never actually had to get out and push the vehicles. One day it took us twelve hours to go 300 kms. On that day, we passed spectacular scenery, jagged limestone rocks jutting out of the savannah, finally turning towards the mountains - no trees or snow!

As we approached the mountains, we looked for a very rare bird called Benson's Rock Thrush, only found in Madagascar, and even there, in only one small area. We scanned the rocks, high and low. Our guide said a pair had been seen near a very new "Eco-tourist" hotel, built on the edge of a dry river bed; so well built into the desert-like area, that the only sign of a building was a red tile roof. We hadn't even got out of the buses when we saw a pair of these thrushes, nesting in a space under the roof. They were flying in and out of a small ventilation window, carrying food for their young. Another pair was found on some rocks near the hotel. The pot holes were all worth it!

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Chameleon



For several of us, it was as exciting to spot the lemurs and the chameleons as the birds. Lemurs are primates found only in Madagascar. Some of the smaller lemurs resemble bush babies or marmosets, but their evolution has been quite different. Only fourteen species are left. We saw ten. The most entertaining of these are the Sifakas, which leap, upright from tree to tree. On the ground they travel in huge jumps on their hind legs, with their front legs raised above their heads. Being mostly white, they look like a creature out of a ghost story.

Miniature Dinosaurs

If the lemurs look like ghosts, the chameleons are like miniature dinosaurs, positively prehistoric, their globular eyes moving independently, and their feet looking like primitive hands with two inside claws fused together, then a gap, then three outside claws fused into the other half.

Many of Madagascar's trees are endemic, and quite extraordinary. Baobabs are called the upside-down tree because above their bulbous,

smooth trunks, they have only a few branches that look like roots. In the spiny forests of the dry southern tip of the island, there are trees that resemble cacti, with square trunks and huge thorns, four to

six inches long (which make very good tooth picks!) The small green leaves grow straight off the trunks without any stalks. Some of these un-tree-like trees bear spectacular flowers in shades of yellow, orange and red.



Boabab

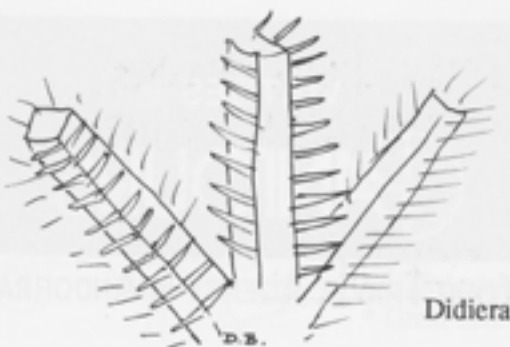
Lack of Facilities

During our stay of eighteen nights, we slept in twelve different hotels. The Hilton in the capital of Tana was of a high standard, but most of the others rated at minus three stars. In one, there was a hundred-year-old mattress with springs almost through the ticking.

There were two loos for about forty people, and the floor of one was flooded most of the time. Either there was no water in the basin, or only a trickle in the shower, or the loo did not flush, or there was no light.

Good Food

In only one hotel, apart from the Hilton, did all the mod cons work. However, the food was very good in all the hotels and better than at the Hilton. All in all, an interesting experience, but Madagascar is one country I will not be visiting again. It is too depressing, and too uncomfortable.



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