

Some foreign study plans hide rip-offs

By BETH VAN DEUSEN
Of the Emerald

Imagine this: After months of excited preparation, your bags are almost packed, and you are ready to confirm your charter flight reservations, only to find the rates have been raised. Or worse still, your flight has been cancelled at the last minute.

Maybe you have made it to the south of France, eagerly anticipating a year of study on the Riviera, not to mention that week you have planned at the Cannes Film Festival and that brief excursion to Monte Carlo.

But alas, you find yourself in an industrial city with more smog than L.A. You have to live in a dorm with an 11 p.m. curfew. You can't take the university courses you want. You discover your fees

have paid for an excursion you don't want to take.

And to top it all off, when you get back to the United States you are told your University won't give you credit for your study abroad.

These are not uncommon situations. But if you are planning overseas study, don't be discouraged. It doesn't have to be this way — if you are careful.

There are many reliable and reputable companies offering charter flights. And there are many valuable and highly respected foreign study programs available. So you don't have to take a chance on being ripped-off.

The director of the International Education Center (IEC), Stephanie Szedny, has some warnings for those students considering a course of study at an overseas university.

It is important, Szedny em-

phasizes, to know as much about the program you have selected as possible. Find out how reputable the program is and how long it has been operating. Check to see if anyone in your own academic department has heard of it. Find out if there is a resident director of foreign students on the campus, so that you don't have to write back to the U.S. every time you have a problem.

Check the prerequisites for the program and the courses available to you. You may find you can only take courses offered by the foreign program, and cannot take courses throughout the university curriculum.

You should be aware of the program rules and regulations. For instance, you may find the program does not make provisions for married students to live together. Or you may find your

dorm has a curfew.

Find out if you are allowed to make your own living arrangements if you don't like what is being offered.

Szedny warns that students should be aware of exactly where their money is going. You should know what the program costs include and whether there are any additional charges outside the stated costs. Find out if it is possible to waive part of the expenses. You may find the program costs include things you don't want.

Often, Szedny says, students arrive home and find their overseas study credit will not transfer to their university at home. She stresses that arrangements for transferring credits should be made before leaving to go overseas. She suggests you have every course you plan to take approved by departments here. Then take

your final course listing to the registrar for written approval. Make sure it is all on paper, with signatures from each department and from the registrar.

You should be extremely careful in selecting charter flights, Szedny warns, because there are many disreputable companies in operation. Often they will raise rates or cancel flights with no warning, leaving you stranded. There are many reputable companies, so you don't have to take chances. Check with the Better Business Bureau and with the District Attorney's office to see if the company you are considering has any complaints filed against it.

If you have any questions check with the IEC. It has information on numerous charter operators, and an entire library of information on programs in every area of the world. Don't risk wasting a lot of time and money on what can and should be a very valuable study experience.

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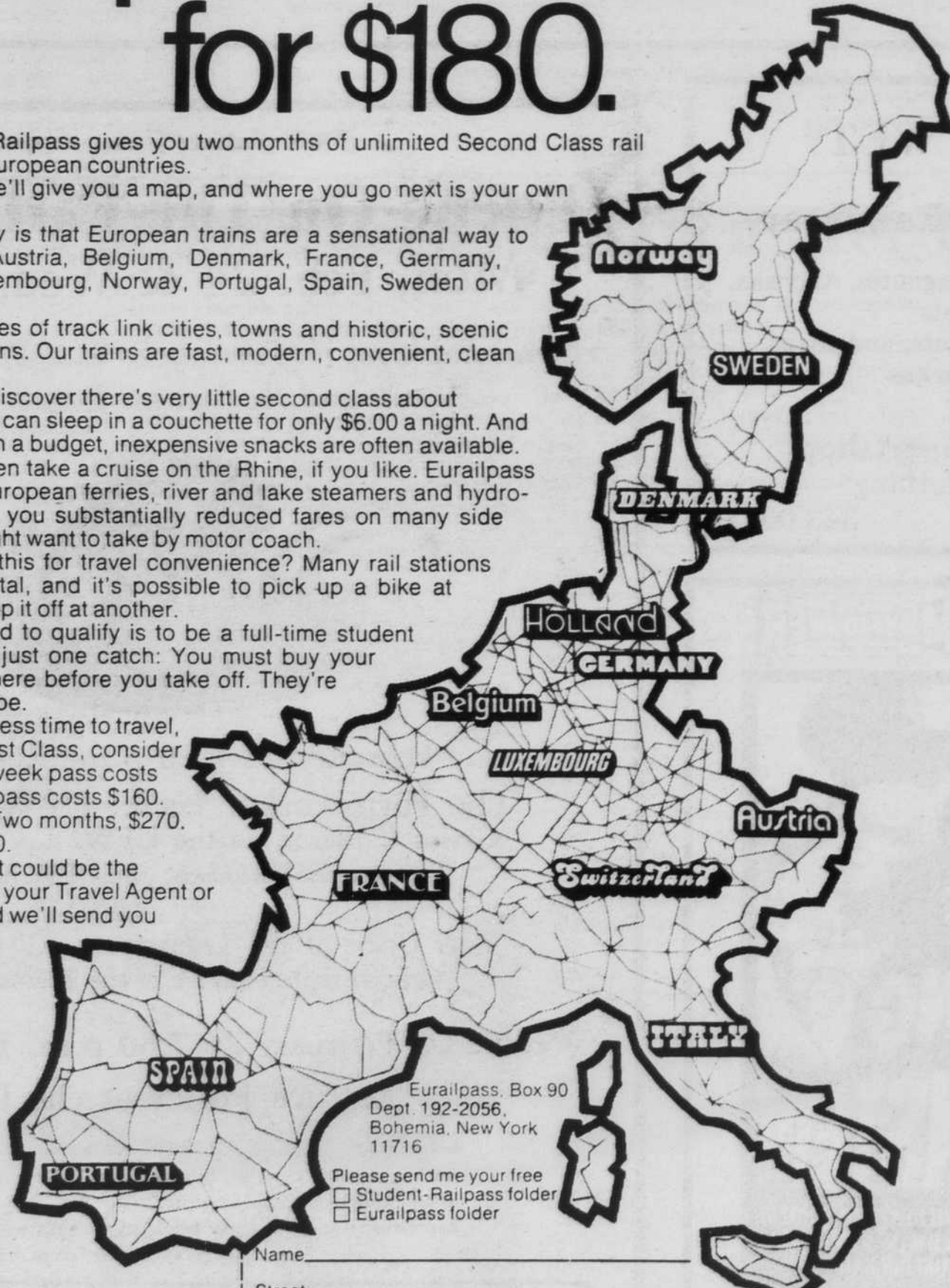
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Trabucco involved, active...

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He admits that, "the class presidency is not what I had hoped. I'm probably going to run for sophomore class president. If I can do it, the class council will be what I think it should be."

When he pledged his fraternity Trabucco says one of his friends told him, "Gee, I didn't think you were that kind of person," and the reaction made him mad.

"Being in a fraternity doesn't mean you're different from anyone else," he says, "it just means you're in a different kind of living situation. And I think there are advantages to being in a house."

Six months after coming to the University, Trabucco says, "I feel like I have a command of situations." But that doesn't mean he has all the answers. "I get mad at myself when I leave studying for a test until the night before," he says. "I'll know I should have been working on it for a week, and I won't have done it."

And there are a few secrets in Trabucco's life. If you want to see him squirm, ask him why he spends so many weekends in Astoria. Or press him for the story behind his nickname, Ostrich. It has something to do with the night of his fraternity initiation...

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