

'Tortoise' bus offers option

By Ken Armstrong
Of the Emerald

In light of the recent Greyhound bus strikes and the strain on the pocketbook caused by travel, Green Tortoise Travel may become an enticing alternative.

The San Francisco-based company offers commuters the opportunity to travel anywhere between Seattle and Los Angeles in a unique style for about "half the price" of Greyhound.

Originally a "hippie" organization, Green Tortoise operates in a style that is reminiscent of the 1960s.

The most obvious difference between Green Tortoise and conventional bus lines is the interior. All the seats have been replaced with a foam mattress that is eye-level with the windows. The luggage racks have been turned into sleeping lofts.

Rides are very informal, with rest stops made whenever passengers request them. The only rule onboard prohibits tobacco smoking. Anything else goes, as long as it does not infringe on others' rights.

"We're people working together to give people a choice," says Nancy Marie, one of the company's 12 employees. Green Tortoise, she says, operates under the premise that getting there is half the fun.

In this "people-oriented business," social interaction is stressed. Green Tortoise exists for those who are tired of the socially sterile atmosphere of conventional buses, Marie says.

"We try to provide a comfortable, relaxed atmosphere," she says.

A cassette stereo pumps light music into the coach via three or four speakers, which passengers may adjust.

The company's "specialty," the Seattle-San Francisco trip, costs \$49 — compared to Greyhound's \$79. Green Tortoise takes two hours longer than Greyhound, but that includes a stop at Harbor Hot Springs in Northern California and a vegetarian meal cooked for an extra \$4.

Green Tortoise makes stops up and down the Western coastline, as well.

The "Tortoise" also offers tours to such locations as the Baja Peninsula, Alaska, Mexico and New Orleans's Mardi Gras when it is in season. Tour prices vary.

The alternative bus company has been in business for about 10 years, Marie says. Started by Gardener Kent with one old school bus, Green Tortoise now runs seven buses at various intervals.

It is not terribly difficult to catch a ride on the Tortoise. During the week, a call one day prior to departure probably will insure a reservation. On holidays, a call two weeks in advance is necessary to reserve a spot. There still are spaces available for Christmas, but they are filling fast so call immediately, Marie says. Green Tortoise's toll-free number is 1-800-227-4766.

In Eugene, the "Tortoise" loads passengers behind ZooZoo's restaurant at 454 Willamette St. Loading time is 8 p.m. on Sunday and Thursday for southbound trips and 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday and Saturday for northbound trips. Reservations must be made in advance.

Music school slates concerts

A Beall Hall performance 8 p.m. Saturday by the Vermeer String Quartet will highlight music school events for the next two weeks.

The chamber ensemble will perform Haydn's Quartet in B-Flat Major, Op. 71, No. 1; Benjamin Britten's Quartet No. 3, Op. 94; and Antonin Dvorak's Quartet in E-Flat, Op. 51.

The Vermeer quartet, which performs internationally, was founded at the Marlboro Festival in 1970. The members, violinists Shmuel Ashkenasi and Pierre Menard, violist Bernard Zaslav and cellist Marc Johnson, are all artists-in-residence on the faculty of Northern Illinois University, DeKalb.

Single ticket sales for the concert are \$6 and \$4, depending on seat location, and are available at the School of Music's community relations office.

Other happenings at the music school include a concert by the University Percussion Ensemble at 8 p.m. Sunday in Beall Hall.

The ensemble, under the direction of Charles Dowd, will perform William Kraft's "Theme and Variations for Percussion Quartet;" Alan Hovhaness' "Bacchanale;" Alfred Fissinger's "Suite for Marimba," featuring University music Prof. Randall Larson as marimba soloist; and Carlos Chavez's "Tambuco for Six Percussion Players."

The Eugene ensemble "Shumba" will present traditional and original African-style marimba music.

Dec. 6 at 8 p.m. in Beall Hall, a holiday concert featuring all five University choral groups is scheduled. Performing Christmas music will be the University Singers and University Chorale, directed by Richard Clark; the Contemporary, directed by John Hakes; the University Chamber Choir, directed by James Miller; and the Vocal Jazz Ensemble directed by Jim DeBusman.

For more information on music school events, call 686-5678.

Club

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The University donated the Collier House to the Faculty Club in the mid 1940s, and the Club used its new building as an exclusive meeting and dining place for faculty members.

Financial difficulties forced the Collier House's Board of Directors to open the Club's doors to students and the public in 1972. Today the house is a self-supporting business.

At various times, the building has contained the entire University library, the biology department and unmarried faculty housing. "A lot of my customers have lived in this building," MacDonald says.

And many of those luncheon

customers, she says, come back day after day. MacDonald wrote the menu to compliment her culinary talents. A graduate of the Cordon Bleu School of Cookery in London, MacDonald has managed and been the Club's only chef for six years.

"I love it," MacDonald says of her work. "My job and I are very well-suited to each other."

In keeping with the Faculty Club's friendly, informal style, the restaurant's 16 or so tables include two "conversation tables," which are open to anyone who desires a stimulating conversation, MacDonald says.

Like its atmosphere, the

restaurant's prices are unpretentious. The most expensive food item on the menu is a Reuben sandwich (\$3.50), the cheapest a tossed green salad (90 cents). The menu also includes hamburgers, sandwiches, pate maison and a large selection of salads. A bottomless cup of Collier House blend coffee is 35 cents.

The Faculty Club does more than feed the campus' hungry, though. In fact, the dignified house has held some "killer parties" — complete with rock bands — in its day, MacDonald says. The house is usually booked solid every weekend and most weeknights, she says.

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