

and the homey **Virginia: Off the Beaten Path** (East Woods Press, \$7.95). Of course, there are cities: you can take Manhattan in the short-and-sweet **New York: A Rand McNally Pocket Guide** (\$5.95).

General guides work for travelers who want the bare essentials as they whizz through 10 unfamiliar places in 12 days. The Michelin green-guide series—with its 87 titles—goes one step further, offering bite-size history and cultural lessons. **Michelin Tourist Guide: Spain** (\$9.95) reveals that "there is another Madrid, a city apart with little to do with concrete, neon lights and the new fangled . . . the old Madrid of concentric, narrow streets, steps and vaulted alleys." Better travel books transcend basic facts with bits of useful wisdom. The **Let's Go** series (10 titles from St. Martin's), for instance, directs you not only to banks but also to afterhours black markets where you can exchange those traveler's checks you'll never leave home without.

Some books are clearly written for the budget-conscious, such as the comprehensive **South America on a Shoestring** (Lonely Planet Publications, \$14.95), while others, including the uppity **Alexis Lichine's Guide to the Wines and Vineyards of France** (Knopf, \$14.95), cater to the traveler with more expensive tastes. The most useful are multifunctional, providing information for the visitor with disposable income as well as the backpacking student. **PARISACCESS** (ACCESSPRESS, \$10.95), for instance, is a color-coded directory with capsule descriptions and ratings of Parisian parks, shops, galleries, hotels and restaurants; both the shopper and the history student are served. In addition, "ACCESS" squeezes in bits of charming trivia, such as the fact that the Louvre Museum gift shop sells 5 million postcards a year.

Almost every guidebook will tell the

reader that no trip is complete without sampling the regional fare, as in "Don't miss the beer in Munich." But the more useful books list restaurant addresses and suggest dishes to order. Michelin's fabled red-guide series (10 titles) is dense with data about food and hotels. **Fodor's Fun in Montreal** (\$5.95) advises that the soufflés in one trendy spot are not what they used to be and that another restaurant offers a medieval feast banquet style. "No eating utensils are supplied," the guide warns, "which supposedly adds to the fun."

The more foreign the country to the Western traveler, the better the guide should be in explaining local customs. **The Traveler's Key to Northern India** (Knopf, \$18.95) reminds visitors that they will be asked to leave all leather articles—including belts, purses and shoes—outside when entering a Hindu, Jain or Sikh temple. Good guides also tell you when and how much to tip.

Some books cultivate in the first-time visitor an appreciation of a country's history. **The Rough Guide to China** (Routledge & Kegan Paul, \$12.95) tells us about Shanghai's revolutionary past. **Daytrips and Budget Vacations in New England** (Globe Pequot Press, \$8.95) peppers its itineraries with ghost stories and literary accounts, including "Paul Revere's Ride" by Longfellow. **Frommer's Dollarwise Guide to the Northwest** (\$10.95) leads visitors to the summer Oregon Shakespearean Festival.

For the more active, there are the guides that take an adventurous route. **Cyclist's Britain** (Hunter Publishing, \$12.95) provides maps of highways and back roads with distances la-

beled in both miles and kilometers. The driver thumbing through **Motoring Mexico** (Doubleday, \$12.95) can find information on road conditions, insurance—even bilingual service crews. Hikers can find the best nature trails, sun worshipers the remote beaches and snorkelers the craggiest reefs in **Hidden Hawaii: The Adventurer's Guide** (Ulysses Press, \$12.95). **Frommer's Dollarwise Guide to Skiing USA West** (\$10.95) points out the coolest slopes and the warmest cabins while **Birnbaum's Florida For Free** (Houghton Mifflin, \$5.95) offers gratis spots, from the Civil War fort in Fernandina Beach to baseball spring-training camps.

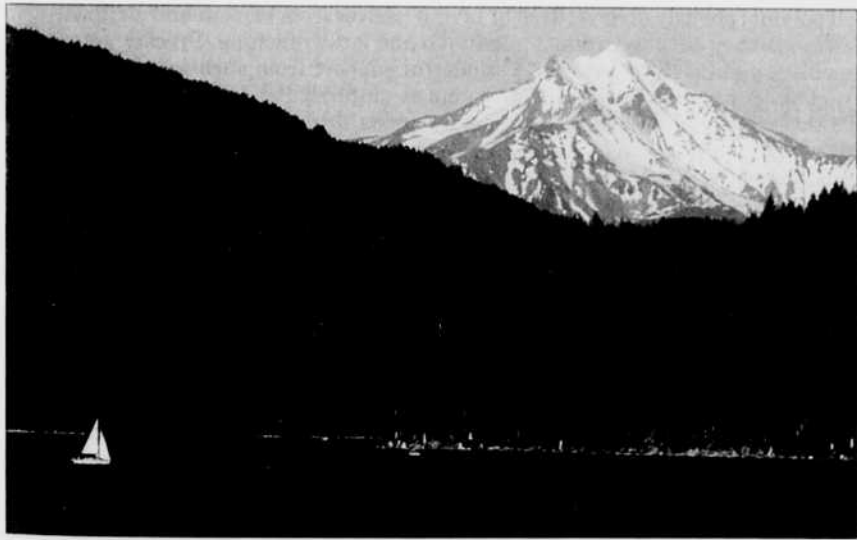
And there's a lot more where these came from. Which is the best? That's up to you; only you know what matches your interests and experience. So mount an expedition to your local bookstore. Reading about travel really can be the next best thing to being there.

CHRISTOPHER M. BELLITTO



DAVID POLLACK—STOCK MARKET

Getting away from it all: Camping in Maine



PETER A. MAULE

Sights and sites: Sailing amid Oregon's Cascade mountains (above), sculptural detail (right) from Madurai Temple outside Madras, India



LUIS VILLOTA—STOCK MARKET