

ROAD TRIPS

INNOVATIONS

Tours With a Twist

Forget monotone guides and boring tourist traps. You'll see the quirkier side of five cities when you take these tours.

Voodoo Walking Tour

New Orleans, Louisiana—More than 100 years ago, everyone from the governor to slaves went into the French Quarter to consult Marie Laveau, the Voodoo Queen, about affairs both legal and romantic. Today, the ancient African religion is still a powerful force in New Orleans.

For proof, take the two-and-a-half-hour Voodoo Walking Tour. Your trip begins at the New Orleans Historic Voodoo Museum (724 Dumaine St.), where the resident priestess, Miss Black Venus, will give you a pinch of her special good-luck herbal mix. Guides then take you to Laveau's tomb in St. Louis Cemetery #1, past haunted houses, and to the Voodoo Church, filled with statues of Voodoo saints like Saint Expedite (who wards off evil spirits). You'll also see Beauregard Square. In the 19th century, it was the site of Damballah celebrations, in which women danced with snakes to entice male spirits from the heavens to earth. Tours depart from the museum daily at 1 p.m. Call 504-523-7685.

Grave Line Tours

Los Angeles, California—A former mortician founded this tour company, which offers a ghoulish look at Hollywood's late greats through scenes of scandal and death. The "tomb buggy" (a redesigned Cadillac hearse) whisks mourners past the places where Janis Joplin



Priestess Muslima holds the 11-foot resident python at New Orleans's Voodoo Museum. Snakes, used in many voodoo rituals, symbolize the cult's most powerful deity, Damballah.

and John Belushi OD'd. At one point the theme music from *Dragnet* fills the hearse, and your guide points out where Jack Webb's Sergeant Friday "turned in his badge." The \$30 ticket includes the two-hour tour, a photocopied death certificate of the star of your choice, and maps to two celebrity graveyards. You can use the maps to visit the interment spots of Jayne Mansfield and Natalie Wood.

Daily tours depart from the corner of Hollywood Boulevard and Orchid Avenue at noon; reservations are

advised. Call 213-876-0920 for a punny message, and 213-876-4286 for reservations.

Scandal Tours

Washington, D.C.—Our nation's capital gives us many opportunities to ridicule it, and the comedy troupe Gross National Product isn't about to let those moments pass without having a little fun.

In the troupe's no-beating-around-the-Bush tour, actors impersonate such notables as Dan Quayle, Fawn Hall, and Marilyn Monroe while leading gossip-mongers on a char-

ter-bus romp to sites of the city's juiciest scandals.

From George Washington to Ollie North, no figure is protected from assassination... of character, that is. Among the tour highlights are Ollie and Fawn's "shred central" (a.k.a. the Pentagon) and the Capitol Building step where Representative John Jenrette (of ABSCAM infamy) and his wife got... "passionate." Tour stops change as history is made.

The 75-minute, \$24 tours leave from the Washington Hilton where Reagan was shot. On Saturdays, tours depart at 2 and 4 p.m.; on Sundays, at 2 p.m. (in the winter, tours are usually on Saturdays only). A student ID will get you 20 percent off. Call 202-387-2253.

The Many Facets of Harlem

New York, New York—Visitors to Manhattan rarely put Harlem on their itineraries. Too bad. There's a lot here to see, and this four-and-a-half-hour bus tour manages to show all that's good about the neighborhood without sugarcoating the bad.

You'll drive by the Apollo Theater and Sugar Hill, where the neighborhood's Tudor and Romanesque architecture proves Harlem was indeed part of the Gilded Age.

It's ironic that the bright spots of Harlem lie in the middle of areas famous for other things: drugs, vandalism, and crime. But irony is nothing new to Harlem. In the 18th century, the two famous