

Travel

Editor Karen Feldman, Mon. - Fri., 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., 335-0368

trip tips

State Department updates Vietnam travel info

Anyone planning a trip to the budding tourist hot spot of Vietnam should check out the State Department's recently revised information sheet on the country, which includes numerous warnings to consider after arrival.

The advisory says crime is a serious problem in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon), most of it involving pickpocketing, snatch-and-grab incidents and theft of unattended bags.

Other concerns: Security personnel may

at times place foreign visitors under surveillance, including listening in on hotel phone calls; foreign visitors have been arbitrarily arrested, detained or expelled for activities that would not be considered crimes at home; and the Vietnamese government has seized the passports and blocked the departure of foreigners involved in commercial disputes.

For more information on travel to any country, contact the State Department information line at (202) 647-3223.

Vietnam

Chicago courts African-Americans

In recent years, many cities and states have produced publications designed for African-American visitors.

The new "Guide to Black Chicago: A Resource Guide to Black Chicago's Historical and Educational Points of Interest" stands out for its thoroughness and professional appearance.

The 80-page booklet has 22 categories of listings, including performing arts, nightlife, shopping, museums, restaurants and landmarks, and would be useful for any visitor regardless of ethnic origin.

The price is \$6.95, and it can be ordered by calling toll-free, (866) 840-2343. It is also available in Chicago bookstores.

Protect your wallet during hectic holiday travel

With all the distractions of the holiday season, Citibank reminds travelers to follow these trip tips to safeguard your money.

For Citibank's "Travel, Mind and Facing Financial Fraud" booklets, call (800) 669-2635.

1. Protect your credit card, calling card and ATM personal identification from the eyes of strangers.
2. Be sure it is your credit card that is returned to you following all transactions. Save your credit receipts, too.
3. Track credit card spending while traveling.
4. Carry only what you need. Before leaving home, remove credit cards from your wallet that you won't be needing on your trip.

Magazine picks country's top tennis resorts

The 10 greatest U.S. tennis resorts, as selected by Tennis magazine in its November issue:

1. The Colony Beach & Tennis Resort, Long Beach, Calif.
2. Sea Pines Plantation, Hilton Head Island, S.C.
3. Klawah Island Resort, Klawah Island, S.C.
4. Ponte Vedra Inn & Club, Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.
5. Litchfield Beach & Golf Resort, Pawleys Island, S.C.
6. La Quinta Hotel, Golf & Tennis Resort, La Quinta, Calif.
7. Topnotch at Stowest Resort & Spa, Stone, Va.
8. The Greenbrier, White Sulphur Springs, W.Va.
9. The Broadmoor, Colorado Springs, Colo.
10. Rancho Valencia Resort, Rancho Santa Fe, Calif.

Tampa's top attractions offer ticket package

Buy one ticket and get into four of the Tampa Bay area's attractions. The tickets are available until Dec. 31 and must be used by Jan. 31.

The ticket - \$35.99 for adults, \$30.99 for children 3 to 9 - permits you one day's entry to each.

of the four: Busch Gardens, the Museum of Science and Industry, Lowry Park Zoo and the Florida Aquarium.

The Tampa Ticket is available at all the attractions' main entrances and at Tampa hotels.

Foreign currency exchange rates

As of Nov. 21, 1996 / Per U.S. \$1

Australia (dollar)	1.14	Israel (shekel)	2.67
Brazil (real)	.87	Italy (lira)	1400.56
Britain (pound)	.57	Japan (yen)	104.47
Canada (dollar)	1.28	Mexico (new peso)	6.90
France (franc)	4.79	Norway (krona)	5.86
Germany (mark)	1.43	Spain (peseta)	117.91
Greece (drachma)	211.73	Sweden (krona)	6.12
Hong Kong (dollar)	7.18	Switzerland (franc)	1.20

SOURCE: Thomas Cook Foreign Exchange, Fort Myers

California Inggeerots



WEST WORLD: What was once a beauty parlor is now Mary Gaffney's home in the small town with a population of 300.

By LAURALEE ORTIZ
Gannett News Service

Constance Walsh was proud of her latest treasure: the back end of a 1951 Studebaker.

She found it in the wash near her home and had a town official haul it to her yard.

So what if it was rusted and full of holes? Its trunk would make a perfect planter for desert trees.

Besides, it had character, she said. Just like the quiet house she lives in, the street she lives on and the town she calls home.

Walsh is one of about 300 residents of Pioneertown proper: a square-mile community in the hills near Yucca Valley, in Southern California's high desert near Palm Springs.

Walsh's street, in the hub of town, is a place that time has not touched in 50 years. Wood buildings and false front erected as part of a movie set for Hollywood westerners line the half-mile stretch called Mane Street.

The residents have modern conveniences, but most prefer wood-burning stoves over electric ones and fans and cross breezes over air conditioning. Many have interiors to match the old-timers - antique furniture, black-and-white original photos, old dolls.

Some, like Mary Gaffney, don't have phones or television sets. "I come here to escape all that," she says.

Gaffney, a makeup artist for celebrities, including Bob Hope, has a postoffice in Hollywood but calls Pioneertown her home. She owns two adjacent houses on Mane Street.

She and other residents say Pioneertown is a place where residents are involved with conversations rather than attorneys, and bake sales and crafts are the subject of town meetings.

"It's isn't a get-rich place," says Walsh, a writer. "It's a get-happy place."

It's the old West, Hollywood style, complete with a marshal's office, saloon, town church and hand-painted directional signs on wood sticks pointing every which way.

Tiny Pioneertown shows how the West was once



MODERN PIONEER: Mary Gaffney stands in the doorway of her home with the cantina sign that hung at her mother's place in early Pioneertown, Calif.

It's "how the West was once," the townspeople proclaim.

And, if they have anything to say about it, that's how their West will remain.

Pioneertown was created in 1946 by people in the entertainment industry who wanted a permanent set for western movies away from smog, power lines and airport flight paths.

Western movie stars Russell "Lucky" Hayden, Dick Curtis and Roy Rogers and his music group Sons of the Pioneers were among 17 partners who formed a corporation, each putting up \$500 to buy 32,000 acres of desert.

The town, originally called Pioneertown Village, was named after Rogers' signing call.

As soon as the first building went up in 1947, Los Angeles real estate agents started hauling loads of potential home buyers to the area.

The corporation forbade people from buying land for businesses. That didn't discourage 23 business owners from leasing property there.

For awhile, the town was hopping with movie crews and west-

ern film celebrities. Dozens of movies, including "The Gay Amigo" with Duncan Renaldo and "Last of the Pony Riders" with Gene Autry, were shot in and around the town.

In the early 1960s, the boom went bust when westerns were no longer the "in" thing, Walsh said.

Pleas to the county board of supervisors for road improvement funding to attract visitors went unanswered. Frustrated, many people moved away.

Then came Golden Empire Development, a firm with grandiose plans for a housing development. It hit the trail when it learned there was not enough water to sustain the project.

Postmaster Michelle Lowry, who runs the one-woman operation out of the far end of Mane Street, took it a step further.

"Everybody knows everybody's dog,"

Gaffney credits her mother, Frances Aloha, for bringing Pioneertown back to life when she opened a bar called the Cantina at the Mane Street entrance in the early 1970s.

IF YOU GO

■ **WHAT:** Pioneertown

■ **WHERE:** Yucca Valley in Southern California, near Palm Springs

■ **GETTING THERE:** From Interstate 10 in Southern California, take Highway 62 through Morongo Valley to Pioneertown Road. Go left and follow a winding stretch of highway. Turn right on the dirt road at Pappy and Harriet's Pioneertown Palace.

■ **COST:** Free



When she retired, her daughter Harriet Allen and her husband, Pappy, turned the place into a western nightgown called Pioneertown Palace.

Pappy was the town patriarch until his death in 1994.

These days, the Palace and the post office are the town's anchors.

For good eats, cold beer and "great blues music" performed by locals and drop-in celebrities, residents head to Pappy and Harriet's, Walsh says.

Every so often, a movie crew comes through.

Recently, the town was the set for a Taco Bell commercial.

"Some people who come here think it's just a bunch of unmaintained buildings," Gaffney says. "Consistency and I see it as a treasure - a part of California history."

Italy Remove New Spots.

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