

By David Raher
Contributing Writer

'I Take Holy Land by Storm!'

Spent three weeks in the Middle East in March competing with the presence of the Pope. I don't know of another human being with the propensity for publicity as he is. Though his canonization has long ago been assured, he is obviously leaving nothing to chance.

My visit to both Israel and Jordan was on the whole disappointing. The Holy Land (Jerusalem) has become a little like Disney World.

Tourists flock there to walk "the stages of the cross," to look at what the guides point out as "the manger" where Christ was born and then lead by unscrupulous Palestinian cab drivers to souvenir shops in Bethlehem where they are charged exorbitant prices for knick-knacks that they can happily live without.

Tel Aviv, I was told is a "swinging city." The only thing that I found swinging were the swinging doors of the 5 star hotels. The Mediterranean Sea is lovely to look at from one's hotel windows at the Tel Aviv Hilton.

Amman, Jordan, is far from being a beautiful city. Its infrastructure is badly in need of doctoring. Its sidewalks are menacing and there is little of interest to see. Though an evening promenade through its Sook (downtown shopping district) might prove exciting to those travelers who have not seen Morocco's fabulous Medinas in both Fez and Marrakech. Nevertheless, 5 star hotels abound and new ones are in stages of construction. A display of optimism no doubt inspired by its new, western-educated King.

The journey from San Francisco to Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv is a fatiguing one, so that jet-leg is the inevitable result upon arrival. If one travels from San Francisco to Israel via El Al Air Lines it entails too many "plane changes and if returning from Jordan, a five hour wait for the con-

nection back to Los Angeles.

My overall impression of the Israelis is one of cynicism, defensiveness and indifference. Understandably I suppose considering the tensions that pervade the country. The younger gener-

ation of Israelis gave me the impression of wishing to be anywhere but in that hapless nation; they exhibit a restlessness and resentment of having to be caged up in Israel when perhaps they could rather be in New York, San Francisco or London. They are prisoners by destiny of their environment.



A traditional Jordanian dance troupe brings to life authentic expressions of Jordanian social and cultural heritage.

Arabs work intimately with Jews in Israel hotels and other establishments and on the whole appear to be perfectly at ease and content.

Hotel rates, by the way, in both countries, especially in luxury hotels, are steep. In Israel one must attune oneself to a Kosher cuisine, which does not often satisfy a continental palate. It only becomes a serious detri-

ment if you happen to be a fussy eater. In Jordan it is less of a problem.

Tourism can be a problem in both these countries when dignitaries of the caliber of Pope John appear on the scene, bringing with them unscrupulous taxi drivers who will take advantage of the unwary tourist.

Points of interest in Jerusalem are the Ad Vashem memorial to the Holocaust victims and the Israel Museum. Unless you have become inured to the fate of countless children who were annihilated by the Nazis, the Ad Vashem memorial will be a moving experience.

Be prepared to spend at least three weeks on a joint visit to Israel and Jordan, as one cannot rely on perfect weather.

Of interest to me was a visit to the campus of the University of Jordan, a fifteen minute ride from the center of Amman. It is a splendid and vast array

of centers of learning surrounded by exquisite verdure and landscaping. Co-education there is the rule. Young female students, on the whole, however, wear head-coverings and floor length garments that cover their bodies completely. The atmosphere on the campus was wholly one of seriousness about studies and contentment.

As I was quartered chiefly in five star hotels, I found the services in them superior. In Israel the Dan chain of hotels Dan Pearl, Dan Panorama and the King David were comfortable and as with the King David, palatial. The Sheraton was comparable to any western, luxury hotel in my experience.

In Tel Aviv, the Hilton sits majestically on a raised abutment facing the Mediterranean offering a most refreshing vista. Amman boasts a number of upscale hotels as well, the two that accommodated me were the Intercontinental and the Grand Hyatt.

The Intercontinental, grande dame of five star hotels in Amman (built in 1962) is currently undergoing a vast renovation in its lobby and redecoration of its rooms. It boasts all facilities required by first class guests.

The Grand Hyatt in much better shape, is on a par with the Intercontinental and as with the latter costly in room rates and food consumption. The service in both hostleries is irreproachable.

Even for seasoned travelers the irritating immigration officials in both countries will be troubling. Long waits for passage into new borders are the norm. Though the presence of the Pope may have exacerbated this somewhat. American passports were no exception to these processes.

On the whole, of the exploration of the two Middle Eastern nations was illuminating. Notably that Arabs and Jews live and work in harmony; and one wonders "why shouldn't they?" They have much in common: ancestry, religious sentiments as well as language similarity. All the necessary ingredients for peaceful coexistence.

Cuisine Journey

India From 'Terrace'

By Catherine Tidyman
Food Columnist

If you are looking for a novel dining experience then perhaps you should take advantage of the Indian promotion of the Terrace Cafe, Grand Hyatt. Until May 7, four chefs from the Grand Hyatt in New Delhi, and the Indian expert are spicing up the buffet.

The usual buffet is rather impressive but they have kept its strong points while incorporating a diverse range of Indian favorites. Dishes such as Mutton Vindaloo, Beef Curry and Dal Masala adorned the buffet. As the buffet caters to such a wide audience, the curries have been "toned down" to make them more palatable — but I guess you can't please everyone! And of course when you are serving yourself spoonfuls of sloppy sauce you can't expect much in the presentation department — but again that's the beauty of buffet — and what you lack in style you can make up for with quantity. Happily, the Terrace Cafe has kept its sushi bar, the roast beef and succulent salmon on the buffet — the salmon is to die for!

The Indian salads included several varieties of chaat. A chaat is a sort of chili-chutney powder that is made into a sauce? hence a chaat masala. Whether or not the flavour appeals to you, I recommend that you sample the Fruit Chaat. The chaat masala is stirred through a fruit salad which consists mainly of apple. The sweet and tangy spice is quite unique.

The use of condiments in an Indian meal is prolific, and the Hyatt does not disappoint in this department. Raita, a spiced yogurt, is apparently always served on the side and I think probably has to be eaten with the food it accompanies rather than by itself. The mango chutney is scrumptious and very enjoyable when eaten with the papadums and vindaloo. And for those of you who cannot bear to be without kimchi, you may find a similar flavour in the Indian mixed pickle.

The atmosphere at the Terrace Cafe relies heavily on the view — the lights of the Han Valley are truly spectacular. There is plenty of chatter and movement as people move around the buffet and back to their tables. It is not an easy place to impose a thematic atmosphere on but the staff have made a valiant effort by playing sitar music, importing a sari or two and including a cocktail menu with delights

such as the "Bombay Blue Cloud" priced at 7,500 won each.

If you really want atmosphere I suggest you find your way out onto the balcony. This is definitely the place to be. The chefs from New Delhi bought their tandoor and dose cooking equipment with them. It has to be used outdoors because of the smoke, but this is not your average BBQ. The chefs cook the dose virtually while you wait. The dose is like a pancake with a mushy curried potato filling. Wrapped like a fajita and fresh off the hot plate, it would be easy to make a meal of them.

The tandoor is like a drum with red hot coals in the bottom. The tikka kebabs are perpendicular to the rim of the drum. I recommend the fish tikka over the chicken as my chicken was a little underdone. If you are really wise you will ensure that you sample tandoori everything, especially the lamb chops, oysters, sausages and lobster. Naan bread is cooked for each patron on request. Not only do you get to watch the dough blister as it bakes but it is piping hot when you eat it and absolutely scrumptious.

Although I normally associate Indian desserts with sticky, almost sickly, toffees, the Hyatt has opted for bland yogurt based desserts such as shrikhand, a honey and saffron yogurt. Admittedly I'm a bit of a sweet tooth, but I think its safe to say that many of the desserts are an acquired taste. I definitely think you should try a little to complete your Indian experience, but I guess I would err on the side of caution and save some room for the cakes, ice cream or fruit that the Hyatt has kept on the menu.

The buffet, which includes the tandoor and dose is priced at 31,000 won for lunch and 35,000 won for dinner. You can get value for money by stuffing yourself into a food coma or basking on the balcony, enjoying the spring air and learning a little about Indian cuisine and culture from the chefs, who are only too happy to share their knowledge of their home and love of its cuisine.

The Terrace Cafe is open from 6:00 am to 2:00 am every day but the Indian Buffet is only available for lunch and dinner. Reservations can be made on (02) 799-8494 and you can bring more people than you can throw a naan at. The best way there is to catch a cab from Itaewon or you can walk off those calories in advance.

Catherine—tidyman@yahoo.com

Starbucks Keen to Propagate Finest Coffee Culture

By Hong Sun-hee
Staff Reporter

The CEO of Starbucks Coffee Co., visiting on the occasion of opening a fourth store in Korea, sees a bright future for business in Korea.

"We do very little advertising and promotion, but our stores are busy and frequented in every country. There are no secret sources. It is not a high-tech industry, and Starbucks stands for an uncompromising commitment in terms of coffee quality and its relationship with customers. Every staff will try to exceed the expectations of clients. Success is not granted and we have to earn it everyday. We assure that we will earn it," says Howard Schutz, chairman of the leading retailer, roaster and brand of specialty coffee.

The new outlet located in Myongdong, downtown Seoul, is the largest in the world and offers a selection of more than 15 varieties and blends of the finest coffee.

Schutz, 47, a man behind the company's fast expansion in and outside the United States, said, "Coffee is one of the finest beverages that brings people together. Starbucks has been the third place for our guests between their home

and work. More than 10 million people visit a Starbucks every week because of their trust in the quality of coffee, atmosphere and people serving coffee."

"Koreans are very passionate about coffee and the signs are very bright for the growth of our presence in this country, which is one of the leading coffee consumers in Asia but so far has a very narrow market for brewed coffee," he said.

In Korea, 85 percent of the market is occupied by instant coffee. That means Starbucks, a premier purveyor of fine coffee, has a great market potential. In Japan, the brewed coffee market has expanded explosively in recent years and currently outperforms instant coffee in market share.

The U.S. company, in partnership with ESCO Korea Co., will increase its number of stores in Korea to 10 by the end of the year including the fifth to open at the ASEM building next month. The first three outlets are all in Seoul, near Ewha Womans University, on Taehang-ro and near Kangnam subway station. As to Starbucks' unique coffee profile,



Howard Schutz

the chairman said, "Over 30 years, we have only used finest Arabica coffee beans, roasted in a unique fashion and blended with high artistry and kept the freshness without any parallel to our competitors."

When Schutz first joined the company in the early 1980s as director of retail operations, Starbucks was a local, highly respected roaster and retailer of whole bean and ground coffees based in Seattle. A business trip to Italy opened his eyes to the rich tradition of the espresso beverage, which is now an irreplaceable element of the company.

Since 1991, Starbucks has been available throughout the United States at licensed airport locations and campuses. The company went international in 1995 and now has more than 2,900 retail locations in 13 countries.

For the past three years, his company has been chosen as one of the best U.S. companies to work for by Fortune magazine. Company policy offers stock options and medical insurance for all employees, including those working

part-time. Starbucks states that it doesn't have employees, it has partners, a difference that Schutz asserts, is critical.

The company is also known for philanthropic efforts in the communities where it does business such as a partnership alliance with Oprah Winfrey's Book Club and the largest corporate donation to CARE. The coffee king said it will adopt similar business practices in Korea to that effect. For instance, Starbucks will help North Korean children through UNICEF Korea with profits from the sale of "Grande" coffee at its four outlets and the sale of Schutz autographs which he signed during the Myongdong opening ceremony Monday.

In 1997, the businessman wrote a book, "Pour Your Heart Into It: How Starbucks Built a Company One Cup at a Time."

"There were two reasons for the book. First, I thought it was really important to illustrate that a company can be built in a different way. I wanted to make sure that the story of Starbucks as told in the book demonstrated that a company can lead with its heart, be benevolent and at the same time accomplish the fiscal responsibilities which we had as a private company and which we have now as a public one."

uhunt@koreatimes.co.kr

Seoul Hilton

Marking its 3rd year, the Seoul Hilton is once again taking its proactive role in the community by hosting the Hilton Children's Day in partnership with UNICEF. On Friday, May 5th, a fun-filled day for the entire family awaits at the National Folk Museum located in the Kyongbok Palace. This year we aim to exceed 13,000 visitors recorded last year and increase our donations to various UNICEF projects and endorsed



educational sponsorships. There will be an International Food Festival where the chefs from the ASEAN countries and a team of Hilton chefs from around the world will present the authentic dishes of their respective countries. Other activities include the award ceremony for our nationwide children's drawing, painting and essay writing competitions, exciting live entertainment throughout the day, games, pony rides and a lucky draw including more than 30 airline tickets with accommodations at the respective Hilton hotels, 250 other fabulous prizes and much more. If your company would like to be a sponsor contact Nils-Arne Schroeder at (02-317-3379). Voucher booklets can be purchased in advance at 10,000 won each, which can be exchanged for food, beverage or lucky draw tickets on the day, by calling our Public Relations Department at (02-317-3014)

Hotel Lobby



Express your love and appreciation to your parents at The Ritz-Carlton, Seoul. In celebration of parents' day, The Ritz-Carlton, Seoul is holding a special dinner concert at 6:30 p.m. on May 7th and 8th featuring renowned Korean folk singer, Sul Un-do. The evening will include full course gala dinner, entertainment, and exciting door prizes. Tickets are on sale at 150,000 won per person (including tax and service charge). For reservations call (02-3451-8217/8)



The fun doesn't end when the sun goes down at Grand Hyatt Seoul swimming pool. The ever-popular Poolside BBQ opens its grills for the season starting May 6 through September. Enjoy char-

coal-grilled lobsters, shrimp, steaks and chops, complimented by a bounty of salads, fresh vegetables, a decadent dessert bar and more. Open daily from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., buffet pricing is 39,000 won for adults and 22,000 won for children (excluding tax and service charge). For reservations call (02-799-8495/16).

* Holiday Inn® Seoul



For a truly refreshing, light and nutritious summer meal, nothing could be

better than a bowl of noodles at Wang Fu (02-710-7286), the famed home of Cantonese cuisine located in the Holiday Inn Seoul. The choices include: Sharyang noodles served with sauteed beef and sea cucumber, steamed prawn, fresh cucumber julienne and sliced pickled ginger served with a delicious Chinese-style sauce - 9,000 won; Zulu noodles served with sauteed beef and scallions, steamed prawns and chilled beef soup - 12,000 won.



With Children's Day and Parents' Day coming around the corner, the Deli Plaza (02-310-7358), French style bakery of the Seoul Plaza Hotel is presenting you with special cakes. Special car shaped cakes with children's beloved characters like Pikachu and Sailor Moon riding inside will be sold for a price of 28,000 won to celebrate the Children's Day on May 5. In addition, children may choose their favorite character to add to ordinary cakes free of charge at 25,000 won. The sale period: May 3-5. Also, to commemorate the Parents' Day on May 8 special cakes decorated with carnations will be sold for 23,000 won. Besides we provide you with free photo scanning decoration

on cakes with memorable photos you present to us free of charge. The sale period: May 7-8.



Sheraton Walker Hill

To celebrate Parents' Day, renowned Korean vocalist Patti Kim will be performing in Kayagum Hall. Patti Kim has performed internationally including at the renowned Carnegie Hall and sings a repertoire of favorite international and Korean songs. To guarantee an evening of fantastic entertainment, the new Walker Hill Show, "Las Vegas Magic Express" will also be performing over a fabulous dinner. Las Vegas Magic Express, produced by celebrated master magician Kevin James, is a world class act of magic and dance that is truly a thrilling spectacle. Show times are Saturday the 6th and Sunday the 7th of May 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. The tickets are 120,000 won per person. For reservations please call (02-4555-000).

