

Panama

Sent: Monday, April 01, 2002 11:21 PM

Subject: turnaround day



it is probably no coincidence that, after 6 months on the road, the day I finally decide to look for ways to get back to Canada is April Fools Day. indeed, my efforts so far today to find a way out has generated a few meetings with fools: one dope tried to sell me a ticket to Canada via Europe (clearly a translation problem).

Panama City is clean and modern, thus, not an ideal travel destination. but the canal is worth seeing, better yet was seeing the Southern Cross for the first time. Steven Still even wrote a song about that. rather than hit you with my thoughts today, I'd like to share a few quotes that summarize the travel experience for me. they are from a book called Chasing Che: a motorcycle journey in search of the Guevara legend by Patrick Symmes, he saw a lot of things I've seen. for example, here is the town of Miramar, Argentina (which could be any of the beach resorts I've passed through;

'vehicles of every sort tried to move in every direction at once, a Ford Falcon jammed with an extended sunburned family backing out of a beach-side parking spot into the path of a Mercedes that was in turn swerving around a boy carrying a surfboard toward a waiting dune buggy while clouds of impossibly young motorcyclists riding impossibly loud dirt bikes swept through every channel of pavement more than a foot wide, anyone at any moment liable to be skewered on the end of a 12-foot-long fishing rod shouldered indiscriminately by a wandering grandfather who found walking on the side of the road too painful on his bare feet and therefore used the middle."

and Symmes has another comment that so describes the food at times: "they bought me the worst lunch that I have ever succeeded in eating." and perhaps best of all is the feeling that hits after awhile on the road: "the stop-and-go life of a thousand glancing friendships and the

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permanent instant had come to seem normal, a sense of disorientation--not knowing what day it was--yielded to a sense of reorientation--not caring what month it was."

but enough of another guy's thoughts. I will leave you with my summary of the travel experience in the form of JOHNNIE'S TOP TEN LIST OF THOUGHTS To SURVIVE TRAVEL (some borrowed and some not, and subject to further editing):

17. if you don't like this place, then there's always another place to go.
16. the itch from bed bugs and chiggers only lasts a short time.
15. like many people, cockroaches only look ugly; if you buy them a beer they often have great stories.
14. throw away anything (except stomach medicine) that you haven't used in 4 weeks.



This is An Image of the Southern Cross (Crux) Image by R. Scott Ireland. Normal lens image taken 4/10 - 4/11/86. 50mm f/1.4 lens; piggybacked on a C-8 and guided through the telescope for a 3 minute exposure. 3M 1000 print film. Eta Carina is very prominent at the lower right side of the image.

13. if you find yourself without a weapon, then order a long-neck beer and rethink the situation.
12. a foot to the face is worth two shots to the gut.
11. no one said you have to be here (or there, or wherever it is you are).
10. on a round world, all roads lead back home.
9. sometimes the cleanest rooms hide the most bugs,
8. sometimes the cleanest bugs hide in the dirtiest rooms. 7. it doesn't take much to be clean and dignified.
6. when in hostile territory switch your phaser from stun to kill.
5. if you want to gauge someone's penchant for telling the truth, ask them how many times they've had a bloody nose.
4. hit first and answer questions later.
3. if you hope for nothing and fear nothing, then you can be free.

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2. prepare for the worst, and then go find it.
1. what doesn't kill you, doesn't kill you.

well that just about wraps it up for central America, the next message will be from who knows where. until the next...

