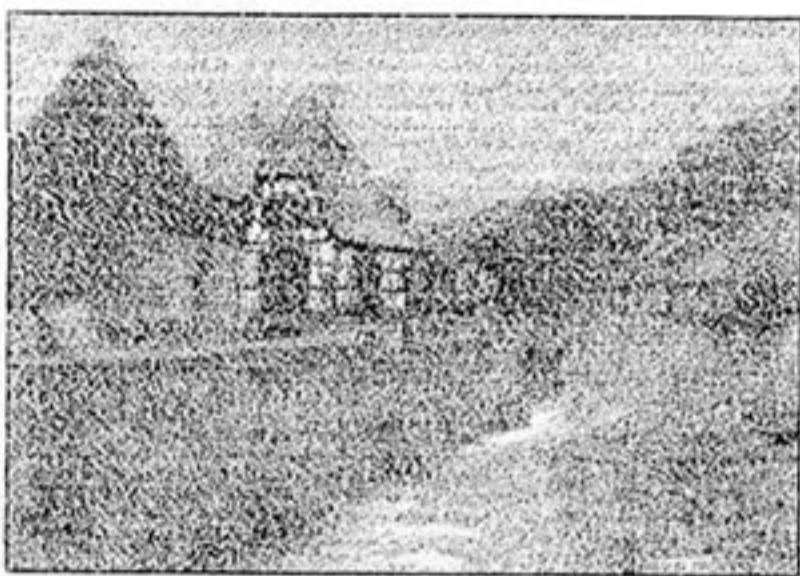


WALKING THE WORLD



A WALK THROUGH THE VINEYARDS OF ALSACE

-with only a knapsack on your back

In 1940, during the German occupation of France, the vine growers of Alsace awoke to the sound of saws and hatchets. The Hitler Youth were tearing down their vineyards.

For years the French government and more recently Berlin, had urged the Alsacians to get rid of the high yielding but low quality vines and replace them with more traditional varieties.

Such a step was expensive and difficult to enforce.

But on one such morning with a single stroke, the deed was done.

Today, the gentle vineyards unfold along the eastern flanks of the Vosges Mountains producing some of the finest white wines in Europe. Alsacian towns are

tucked in the folds of the foothills with narrow cobblestoned streets and half-timbered houses reminiscent of miniature toy villages used for Christmas decorations. Alsace is marginal France in many ways with its German style architecture, German based dialect, and hardy German style food, yet possesses the hospitality and flair for life that makes France such a wonderful place to visit.

You can visit Alsace in many different ways, but if you want to really see it, to get a closer look – the best way of course is by foot. Sound daunting? Stay with me– this may change the way you travel for life.

Horizons D'Alsace, a group of 10 hotels, have the perfect plan to give you the adventure of a walking vacation, with a local team of experts to help you along the way. You arrive at your first night's lodging in the lovely town of Kaysersberg. Gingerbread houses line the streets that abound with Christmas ornaments, local wine stores and Alsacian

next night's destination. Maps and good directions have all been furnished– all you have to do is open the door and go. But

don't forget your lunch which by the way, is not a brown bag affair with granola bars and gorp. As Mrs. Keller said, "We have for you a picnic". Inside we find fresh baguettes with gigantic slices of brie cheese, fresh fruit, a plastic container of carrot salad, crème brulee for dessert, mineral water, even a bottle of

wine– after all, this is France. Don't be surprised if the knowledge of what's in your pack causes you to eat lunch as early as possible.

The week of hiking begins in the rolling vineyards, averaging around 8 to 10 miles a day. As the days go on, the route makes its way into the valleys of the Vos-

ges Mountains where cows and sheep graze along the green hillsides. Each night your lodging is a small family-owned hotel with cozy rooms and elegant dining.

After venison, lamb, or potatoes

au gratin with ham smothered in local Munster cheese, which of course is topped off with a local Pinot Blanc or Riesling, you may decide this is the best hiking in the world. Not only can you enjoy some of *the* best food in Europe, on such a walking vacation you may lose a few pounds in the process. If you find the day too rainy or your feet too sore- no problem. The hotel will be glad to take you to the next destination along with your luggage. You can even book extra nights in any of the lodges along the route to throw in a rest day or two.

With great hiking, great food, a week of hearty exercise, and someone waiting for you at the end of the day, this may indeed be the perfect way to start your walking vacation career.

