
EXOTIC TALES OF TRAVEL

By Lee Gerstein
Sent in by Rob Deland

Lee Gerstein climbs up to the House on the Rock

Who knew Satan was an architect? This house, a tourist trap built atop a 60 foot column of rocks, just west of Madison, Wisconsin, was supposedly built by some shmoo named Alex Jordan as a weekend getaway. Sorry, but the house is ridiculously unlivable, and filled with so much stuff (plastic stained glass, oriental figurines, lots and lots of red shag) that all the windows are covered, so you can't even look out at the view.

A recent addition is the new-agey named Infinity Room, which, with its hundreds of tiny windows, allows you to look below, even as the wind whips through the questionable construction. And since the Infinity Room juts straight out over nothing, it bounces from the weight of all the fat toothless white trash, causing embarrassing fantasies of being found dead at House On The Rock to crowd out any lesser nightmare of being found dead in torn underwear. At 14 bucks per person, you'd think they could afford to recover the couches, covered in the matted down fake fur favored by frat boys everywhere. Soon, you'll figure, "OK, I'm being ripped off, just lemme out of here." But those huge warehouses you spied from the Infinity Room are your way out. 40 acres of displays await you, having absolutely nothing to do with a stupid house on a rock. First, you're ushered through a Street of Yesterday, where dusty displays are crammed haphazardly together, demonstrating the HOTR philosophy of "More is More." While some of the crap may be genuine antiques, there's plenty of pipe cleaner and super Glue crafts thrown in, so that everything looks like junk. To me anyway, but the video camera wielding inbreeds oohed and aahed appreciatively. Lots of "Look! Those are gorgeous. I'm getting decorating ideas!" this is the truth. Next up, you're forced to wander through (or race through) a maritime museum, the center of which houses a 5 story plaster of Paris whale battling an octopus with glittery eyes, accompanied by the Beatles "Octopus Garden" played by sub-Christmas window animatronic fish. In fact, every room, every corner, every remotely empty space houses machines that play motorized instruments – for a fee. But the tank top crowd must save lots of cash living in trailers, because they shoveled out money to see the equivalent of player piano orchestras over and over and over again. Hundreds of these serenade you from every possible

angle. The only escape is the Pizza Atrium, where you are instructed to spend your money on food, and everyone does, because they've been trapped in this windowless hell, all lit like the Streets of Yesterday, for so long, that all sense of time is lost. Then comes the transportation building (old cars, trains and more portraits of the freak who built this evil place), acres of music boxes and then the "World's Largest Carousel." Yeah, if you're 3 feet tall, maybe. As the red, chandelier adorned merry-go-round spins around, reflected in mirrors on every surface, surrounded by walls covered to the ceiling in old carousel horses and a ceiling filled with old mannequins hanging from cords, their heads lolling to one side in low cut 70s gowns, your disorientation will lead you to believe you're in a horse brothel. But soon the auto-instruments will start to play, you'll snap out of it and stumble into the Organ room (the musical kind), another restaurant, acres of dollhouses and a warehouse of Woolworth-like circus figurines all arranged behind glass cases for your viewing pleasure. By this point, when a Mom told her daughter, "Can you imagine having so many dolls? And he was a man!" and the daughter asked, "Is he alive?", we volunteered, "He hanged himself." Mom was not too pleased. So we hurried through the weapons exhibit (but let's throw in a Grandfather clock and a jug cuz there's room), the Oriental Collection (another full warehouse), the Armor collection (warehouse), the so-called Crown Jewel Collection (yep, the videotape's catching every plastic sparkle), some doll carousels, framed bios of jerk who built this joint and then a guy hawking book length biographies and finally a dozen gift shops offering glass figurines and Natively American crafty things. If you can't buy 'em, you can at least videotape them. When you finally stumble past Ye Olde Fudge Shoppe, it'll take more than luck to find your car in the vast parking areas, filled with suckers. We realized our hearts were beating fast and we were covered in sweat. Racing over the red shag ramps and stairs, it had still taken us over two hours to escape. Don't forget to plan your X-mas visit, with over 6,000 Santas (plastic, no doubt), all made at the HOTR workshops. By Satan, himself.