

THREE hundred fountains and two thousand litres of water every second; the statistics, though mind-boggling, are trivial compared to the heyday of the Roman Empire which boasted 11 great imperial baths, 926 public baths and 1,212 fountains. The habit of bathing as a more or less full time occupation came from Greece in the 2nd century BC. Before long the citizens of Rome had learned to indulge themselves for several hours a day in steam, sand, cold, hot or tepid rooms. Then they would retire to the library, take a stroll in the gardens or recline for a good gossip with friends in sumptuous marble halls filled with statues and fountains.

Satisfying Rome's unquenchable thirst for water meant bringing millions of litres of it from the hills to the east and southeast. The first aqueduct, built by Appius Claudius in 312 BC, was followed by several others, like the Aqua Marcia and Aqua Claudia, whose distinctive arches still dot the landscape outside Rome. Money was no object for the emperors of Rome; they were obsessive creatures and liked to build their own baths as a mark of power. The remains of their extravagance are scattered all over modern day Rome, but the best preserved are the great Baths of Caracalla, whose mountainous brick walls and arches stand eerily silent now, apart from the strains of outdoor opera that fill the air here every summer.

These baths, begun in 212 AD by Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (otherwise known as Caracalla) were positioned on the eastern slopes of the Aventine Hill to take advantage of the sun. Whole forests were burned to heat water from a branch of the Aqua Marcia for Caracalla's 2,000 bathers, although this number was modest compared to the later Baths of Diocletian, which could cater for 3,000. But when the Goths besieged Rome in 546 AD and dam-

aged the aqueducts, Caracalla quickly fell into irreparable ruin.

Yet the fun of Rome is that when one bit falls into ruin, its antiques get recycled elsewhere: so the statues of Caracalla (like the Farnese Hercules now in Naples) have found their way into museums all over Italy. Meanwhile the remnants of the old imperial baths pop up in unexpected corners of the city. If you wend your way to the Campo dei Fiori, Rome's famous market place and squeeze past its stalls bursting with mouth-watering artichokes, zucchinis, peppers and fresh prawns, you will see one such object at the back of the square — an immense marble basin, once used by the citizens of ancient Rome for their ablutions. There is another by the church of Sant'Eustachio near the Pantheon. The monumental simplicity of these sinks — for want of a more elegant word — stands in stark contrast to the wild showmanship of baroque Rome's fountains built after the popes of the Renaissance began to restore in the 15th century aqueducts that had fallen into disuse a thousand years before.

There's no better way to appreciate the new exuberance of the times than to take a tour of some of these fountains. Start with one of the earlier and least fussy ones in the Piazza Mattei: the Fontana delle Tartarughe, or Turtle Fountain, sculpted by Taddeo Landini in 1585. This is a real charmer and a favourite with children: four youths each hold a dolphin poised above a giant sea shell, while giving a helping hand to four turtles clambering their way up to the top of the fountain. The turtles have been stolen several times over the centuries and are now only replicas, but the originals were made by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, one of Rome's most famous architects.

One of Bernini's most flamboyant exhibitions is in the Piazza Navona, where he

completed in 1651 his piece de resistance known as the Fontana del Fiume (Fountain of the Four Rivers). We stopped for a frothing cappuccino at the nearby Caffè di Colombe before taking a closer look at this writhing mass of grottoes, seashells, and plants beneath gargantuan figures symbolizing the Nile, the Ganges, the Danube and the Rio del Plata. The whole of Rome passes this

their mink and fox proudly.) All over the piazza, budding artists tout for business beneath displays of mediocre water colours and starchy-eyed portraits of movie stars. Meanwhile immigrant street traders attempt to sell surreptitiously a bizarre array of goods ranging from fake designer bags to carved wooden giraffes. But then Piazza

traders and go to Lettini's on the corner, which has the most impressive array of larger-than-life stuffed toys you are likely to find anywhere. Bernini lurks, all over Rome, but some of his masterpieces have to fight hard to overcome the blur and noise of both the Ferraris and the motor scooters. In the

pressure here is so low that Bernini senior had to set his barge below ground level.

The English poet John Keats died in Piazza di Spagna in 1821, aged 25, in a house which now functions as a museum and memorial to himself and Shelley, that other great Romantic who fell in love with Rome. Both, no doubt, would turn in their graves in astonishment, if they knew that McDonald's now lurks round the corner and that the Japanese flock to eat sushi and tempura for a few hundred thousand lira in an elegant restaurant just opposite. At least the prices for Japanese food in Rome are reasonable, unlike costs at the much more famous Babington's Tea Rooms next to the Spanish Steps: scones and crumpets are all very well, but not if even the Japanese can't afford them!

The Spanish Steps were built in the 18th century and are prettiest in May, when they succumb to a profusion of pink and purple azaleas. Student artists haunt this spot too, looking for willing subjects to turn into caricatures. (They can do a wicked nose job too, as a portrait of Prince Charles testified.)

Meanwhile famous names like Versace and Gucci trip up and down the steps all day long, if only emblazoned on the side of the hundreds of shopping bags that locals and tourists alike carry to and fro between the Via Veneto and the Via Condotti. This is the very centre of designer paradise: little dogs on leads, chic leather jackets, mobile phones in one hand and delicious-looking pizza in the other.

But the ultimate designer fountain is the Trevi, without which no one's trip to Rome is complete. Setting out to find it reminded me of my first visit to the Taj Mahal: as we navigated a maze of unlikely back streets, I couldn't help fearing that not all the world's architectural wonders can live up to their reputation — until, suddenly, a glimpse of brilliant white marble whisked away all

doubts.

The Trevi is an outrageous, extravagant piece of theatre enjoyed day and night by thousands of people who, if lucky, observe it at their leisure from a seat in the stalls added by later architects, though more often than not the size of the crowd dictates standing room only. Watching Neptune come surging across the turquoise waters of the Aqua Vergine astride his chariot, pulled by two giant Tritons on horseback is quite some sight. But don't get so over-awed that you forget to throw the obligatory coin into the fountain (there is a veritable World Bank down there at Neptune's feet) or else you won't return, so legend has it. Bernini was long dead by the time the Trevi was completed in 1762, although the facade appears to have been based on one of his designs. Just don't make the mistake of thinking you have escaped him yet as you take a final walk along the banks of the Tiber to the Vatican. And yet how different the river must look now. So fed up were the citizens of Rome with the threat of flooding that they began massive engineering works in the 19th century to build up its embankments. The result is a landscape that resembles Paris more than ancient Rome, although some of the 20 bridges that span the Tiber now are not short on antiquity, like the Ponte Fabrizio built in 62 BC.

Bernini erected his great colonnade so that the nobility of Rome could drive their carriages to the door of St Peter's protected from both sun and rain. Visitors to Rome are not always so lucky: in autumn the rains may catch you, in which case the best thing is to make a dive for the Vatican Museums to inspect the gloriously restored Sistine Chapel ceiling. In summer, as the mercury pushes sky-high, there may be nothing for it but to sit gasping in the shade of a fountain with a bottle of mineral water — Emperor Claudius brand, of course!

Source: Diganto

The Waters of Rome

by Sue Thompson



Baths of Caracalla

way: nuns on their way to church, mounted policemen in splendid black and magenta cloaks and Sophia Loren look-alikes dressed unashamedly, when it's cold, in splendid fur coats. (Unlike elsewhere in Europe, the Italians have refused to bow to the pressures of animal rights' activists and flounce

Navona has always had a slightly surreal air about it: the Romans used to flood it regularly, until late last century, either to stage mock sea battles in summer, or to enable ice skating in winter. Now it's simply the hip place to hang out. But if you really want to see horses and giraffes, forget the street

Piazza Barberini, a Triton he sculpted sits dizzily in the midst of this vehicular maelstrom, blowing water defiantly into the air through a conch shell. He fares little worse, however, than the fountains in the Piazza Navona. It is fed by the waters of the Aqua Vergine first brought Rome by Agrippa in 19 BC, although the water

Pincio Hill. That is certainly the impression the Barcaccia gives as people sit on its bows to chat and eat roast chestnuts from the street vendor just opposite. Like the fountains in the Piazza Navona, it is fed by the waters of the Aqua Vergine first brought Rome by Agrippa in 19 BC, although the water

— photo by Bruce Herrod

Travel Briefs

Dutch pilots, KLM reach deal: The Netherlands' pilots and KLM airline reached an agreement recently ending a dispute which had caused two strikes. The airline said that it had agreed with the VNV pilots union that the two sides and two independent mediators would study true cost of pilots. — *BD Shipping Times*

Singapore Airline expands facilities: SIA has taken delivery of its fourth Mega Ark freighter in August, following which it will launch an allegro scheduled service. The new aircraft will also be used to add a third freighter service to Los Angeles. — *Tourism International*

Emirates launches Beirut flights: Emirates launched twice weekly services from Abu Dhabi to Beirut on June 20. The airline now flies daily to the Lebanese capital. — *BD Shipping Times*

Emirates hopes to extend further services from Abu Dhabi to other destinations. — *BD Shipping Times*

Australia expands Asian links: Destinations in China and Japan feature in the route expansion plans for Australian Airports. — *BD Shipping Times*

Operating the Airlines 4340, the Vienna-based carrier has started a twice weekly non-stop service from Vienna to Beijing. It will also serve Tokyo non-stop from Vienna. — *BD Shipping Times*

Construction of Ctg rly station completes soon: The work on the construction of the new railway station in Chittagong will be completed by this month, said the Communication Minister. — *BD Shipping Times*

The new Chittagong railway terminal will provide various modern facilities to the passengers, the two storied terminal will include a VIP lounge, canteen, guest room and waiting rooms. — *BD Shipping Times*

The prime minister is expected to inaugurate the terminal building in October. — *Tourism International*

Emirates Launch Brochure for Asian Travellers

EMIRATES Holidays has just released its first dedicated brochure specially designed for travellers from Asia.

This is in response to the increasing demand for Emirates Holidays vacation products out of Asia, where distribution began in June 1994 and has now reached five markets in the Asia Pacific. These are Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

Hans Haensel, Emirates' Head of Destination and Leisure Management, said: "This is a market-specific brochure which highlights those destinations which are most popular among holiday-makers from Asia. Since we started taking our products into the Asian region, we have been very encouraged by the response and support from travel agents and we hope that this dedicated brochure will assist them even further in selling our

programmes."

Adapted from the mainstream regional brochures under the product line "A World of Choice", the ex-Asia brochure features nine destinations: the United Arab Emirates, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, the Comoros Islands and Kenya. There is also a special section on duo-destination holidays, combining Dubai with Egypt, Jordan, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Turkey or Kenya.

Especially suited to the modern-day traveller are Emirates Holidays' hallmark line of tailor-made tour options, enabling clients customised vacations that are suited to their individual needs.

Emirates Holidays, the largest wholesale tour operator in the Middle East, markets vacation products to 37 destinations across the world. — *Emirates*

TOURISM industry did not develop in Bangladesh, as it was expected, due to lack of government patronisation and lack of private sector participation.

There is a steady rise both in foreign tourist arrivals in Bangladesh and earnings from the tourism sector. In 1994, a total of 1,40,222 foreign tourists visited this country against 1,26,786 in the previous year. In the same year, Taka 75.94 crore was earned from tourists which was Taka 59.44 crore in 1993. The figure shows a 10.52 per cent rise in tourist arrivals and 27.76 per cent rise in foreign exchange earnings over the previous year.

Till April this year, about 56,070 tourist visited this country. But the over all situation is not encouraging for Bangladesh in comparison to neighbouring SAARC countries. In 1994, 15,602,26 visited

Tourism at the crossroads

India, 4,40,736 visited Pakistan, 4,07,511 tourists travelled to Sri Lanka and Nepal was visited by 3,26,531 tourists.

Despite being a fascinating country with rich historical heritage, Bangladesh could not become a tourist's hunt like its neighbouring countries due to poor media coverage and inadequate infrastructural facilities, said an official of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, the state-run tourism organisation.

The prospect, however, of the tourism industry in Bangladesh is very bright. Its bountiful nature with more than a millennium of cultural heritage has attracted visitors from far and wide from time immemorial. The Sundarbans, the largest mangrove forest of the world and the home of the Royal Bengal Tigers, blissful solitude of Cox's Bazar, the longest and

broadest, unspoilt and pollution-free beach in the world, purple hills, lush green landscape criss-crossed by innumerable brooks, streams and rivers, tranquil pastoral scene, its friendly and hospitable people — all these and many more can turn it into a land of unlimited attractions. But it is not attracting the desired number of foreign tourists. It had not been possible to create a positive image of Bangladesh tourism in international market due to limited media campaigns, said a report of the corporation.

The tourism development plans recommended in the last three Five-Year Plans could not be implemented due to inadequate fund allocation and lack of a balanced tourism policy.

In the fourth Five-Year Plan, there was a proposal for Taka 10 crore investment in

the public sector and Taka 25 crore by private investors and the Parjatan Corporation. But after the end of four years of the fourth Five-Year Plan, only Taka 3 crore and 25 lakh have been spent in the public sector. There was no budget allocation for the development of tourism industry since 1985, according to a report published by Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) recently.

Parjatan Corporation runs a Rent-a-car project profitably with 25 cars. The project is aimed to provide transport facilities for carrying tourists to different tourist spots.

The Tour Department of the corporation arranges various types of package and guided tours. It arranges city tours for transit passengers at ZIA. The corporation also arranges regular cruise for the tourist on its cruise ship

ML Shalook.

The corporation is running six duty-free shops to attract the tourist.

Meanwhile, a Malaysian firm and an Indian investment firm have shown their keen interest to invest in the tourism sector of the country.

India's Peerless General Finance and Investment Company Limited is keen to enter tourism business through joint venture with Bangladesh. Chanchal Chakrabarty of Peerless Travels and Tours said recently that they were mainly interested to set up joint venture resorts in Chittagong Hill Tracts.

These information centres are located at the BPC Head Office, Dhaka, Zia International Airport (ZIA), Hotel Sonargaon, Dhaka Sheraton Hotel BPC motels, Chittagong, Parjatan Holiday Complex, Cox's Bazar, Parjatan motels in Rangpur, Bogra, Rajshahi, Sylhet and Rangamati.

The tourists spots are mainly located at Dhaka, Sonargaon, Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Hill Tract districts of Rangamati and Kaptai and Foy's Lake in Chittagong Sylhet, Tamabil-Jafflong, the Sundarbans, Kuakata, Mainamati, Mahasthangarh, Kuthibari, Sagardiari, etc. There are many more spots which have not yet been developed. If developed, these would attract many more tourists and travellers from abroad", said an official of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation.

Lack of participation of private investors in the promotion of tourism facilities is identified as major hindrance towards development of tourism industry in Bangladesh. For the development of tourism industry, private sector participation should be ensured in the light of national tourism policy.

Source— *BD Shipping Times*

British Airways: The New Look

by Sharier Khan

viewed on what facilities they expect in air travels. And many designs were made and rejected before approval of the final design. The design for the changes are so radical that it has been registered under seven different patents.

"This design sets new industry standards in levels of comfort," British Airways' Group managing Director Robert Ayling said in a press

document released recently. "The new First (Class) service will be a benchmark for the future."

"In Bangladesh, the British Airways used to subsidise first class and club class tickets by offering 15 to 18 per cent concessions," a British Airways Sales official told The Daily Star, before introduc-

ing the new first class and club world, we will withdraw this subsidy, but our ticket fares will remain unchanged."

Under this programme, the British Airways takes many other measures to ensure comfort to its passengers right from the beginning of their journey from the airport.

A British Airways team will exclusively help its passengers to cut down long queues at the airport and help finish their airport formalities on a priority basis. A British Airways passenger will board the plane within few minutes of his arrival at the airport.

The economy class, which carries most passengers of BA, will be dubbed as "world tourists" and changes will be introduced for this class in

phases, afterwards.

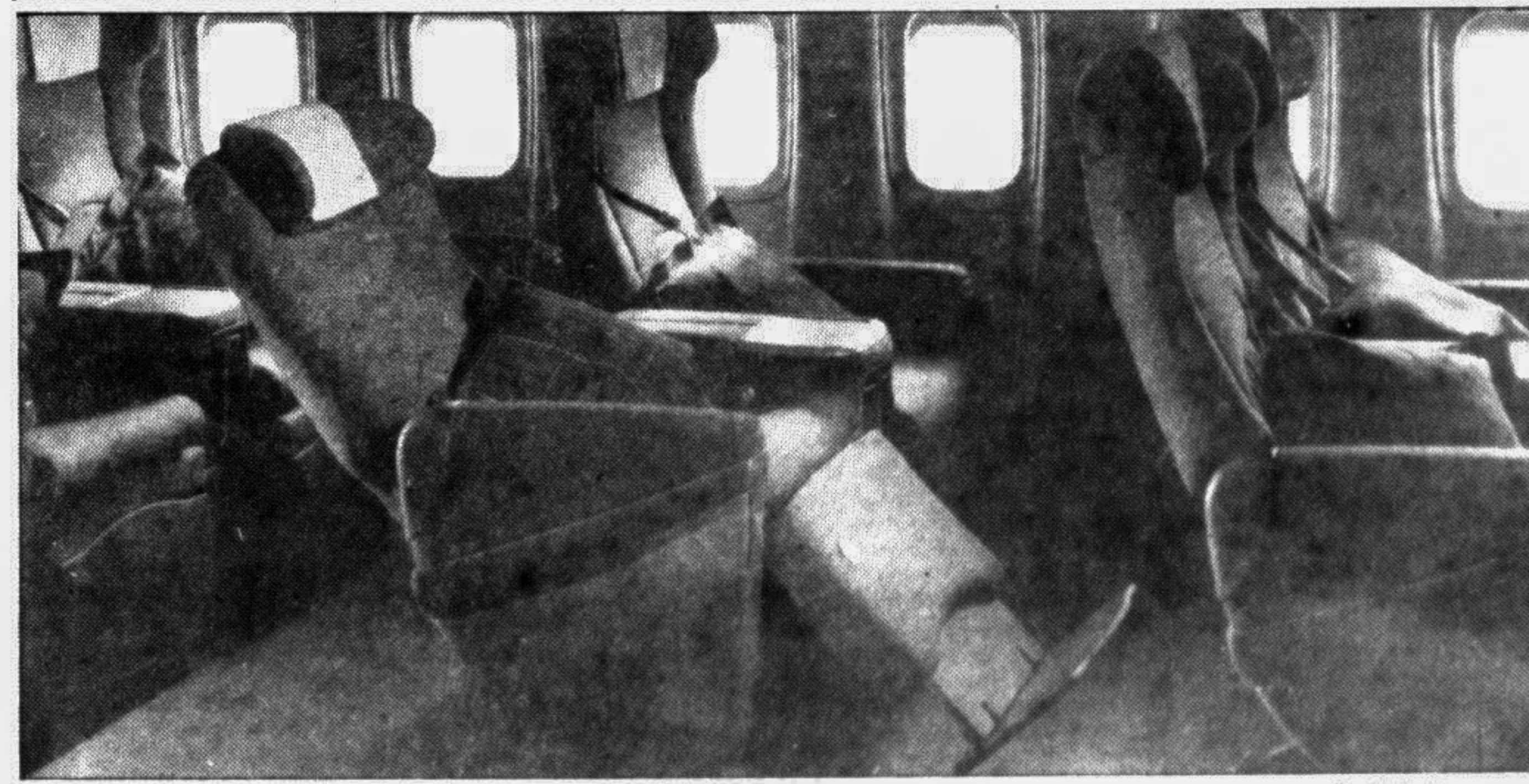
The first class seats will actually be individual cabins which can be used as a private office or mini-meeting room, an entertainment centre and a dining room for two. On Boeing 747s, there will be 14 such compartments instead of 18 in the old arrangement. There will be two double cabins for couples travelling together. All these cabins will be equipped with personal entertainment systems with a 24 channel video screen.

The Club World offers bigger seats and bigger legroom by reducing 6 seats in a Boeing 747 aircraft. Each passenger will have personal flexible reading light and a rich entertainment system. In addition, there will be a larder to raid for the Club World passengers — whenever they feel hungry, they can help themselves by picking food from the larder.

The refurbishing will be completed in all of its 240 aircrafts reaching 200 destinations in 125 countries around the world by next year.

The cabin crews are also trained with a newer philosophy to serve passengers. The BA hopes that its passengers will find the crews more friendly and interactive.

The British Airways carries a quarter of a million passengers a year in the First and more than a million in Club world.



The improved seat arrangement of Club World BA Flights

— British Airways