

WITH THE NEW ENGLAND DESTINATIONS

BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE JUNE 16, 2019 | BOSTONGLOBE.COM/TRAVEL



RAMON ESPINOSA/AP (ABOVE); ISMAEL FRANCISCO/AP (BELOW)

CHRISTOPHER MUTHER

STAY OUT OF MY TRAVEL PLANS

I won't dictate how often the president can golf at Mar-a-Lago, but he shouldn't keep me from going to Cuba

Dear Mr. President,

May I have a word with you regarding vacations?

I know you enjoy a little respite from time to time — and by time to time, I mean the 181 times you've played golf since becoming president. I don't blame you. If I owned 17 golf resorts around the world, I might hit the links at least 181 times in two years, too. If I knew how to play golf, that is. Maybe you could put in a word with Tiger Woods and ask him to give me some lessons? (I can follow how often you play golf thanks to Twitter, and as we both know, if it's on Twitter, it must be true, right, Mr. President?)



I have no say over where you go on vacation, or what you do for R and R. You can head to Mar-a-Lago every weekend if you choose. I'll even help pay for your relaxing rounds of golf since I'm one of the taxpayers who generously chips in for Air Force One flights, Secret Service golf cart rentals, and I'm not quite sure what else because I'm still waiting for that call from Tiger Woods we discussed.

So we're in agreement then, yes? I'll continue to hear about your vacations and recreational activities, and I'll also respect your right to choose what's best for you. Grand!

Now, about my vacation. You've recently tightened restrictions on travel to Cuba. For 50

years, an embargo stood against the country. I understand why: politics, communism, Bay of Pigs, Castro, etc. But your predecessor (I won't mention his name lest it ruffle your feathers, John McCain-style) decided that those old policies weren't helping matters. In fact, what they were primarily doing was making life difficult for the citizens of Cuba.

"The embargo is outdated and should be lifted," your predecessor-who-shall-not-be-named

said in 2016. He began chipping away at some of those dusty Cold War rules, including the policy that kept most US residents from visiting Cuba.

So Mr. President, let me run an idea by you. How about I don't dictate your travels, and you don't dictate mine? If I want to go to Cuba, I go to Cuba. And if you want to go to Mar-a-Lago, you go to Mar-a-Lago.

TOP Royal Caribbean is among the lines to abruptly cancel cruises to Cuba.

BELOW Taxi drivers in Havana will have fewer customers.

CUBA, Page M4



Inside

NEW ENGLAND
WORCESTER HAS
UPPED ITS GAME
It took an unexpected
detour to show me the
city's charms.

M5

Stars aligned against me in London

By Christopher Muther
GLOBE STAFF

LONDON — I stood on a corner in the Bermondsey neighborhood of London at midnight, feeling exhausted, stranded, and sniffing back a messy waterfall of tears. London

is a city that I love, but on this night it was as if it had gone from being a close friend to a snarling brute of a rugby player who appeared ready to smack the haggis out of me.

I sat on the sidewalk and put my head in my hands in defeat.

"Fine London," I mumbled to myself. "You win."

My normal travels don't involve crying on sidewalks, so before you rush to judgment, let me give you a bit of context. I came to London for leisure. The trip was ridiculously indulgent. I

bought a ticket to see my favorite band perform one of their finest albums with an orchestra. The band — called Saint Etienne — was playing 1994's "Tiger Bay" in its entirety at the Barbican. If that sentence means nothing to

LONDON, Page M4

BUMP IN THE ROAD



The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

PEACE & QUIET IN CANCUN

BY NECÉE REGIS |
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

We needed an escape from the boisterous Carnival celebrations at our winter home on the Pacific coast of Mexico. (Think Mardi Gras on steroids. For the record: I am not a Mardi Gras kinda gal.) After considering many options, a friend suggested we check out the Grand Fiesta Americana Coral Beach Cancun Resort and Spa.

Cancun? Wouldn't that also be a crazy scene? Nope, she assured us, this resort would be an oasis of calm with a beautiful private beach, amazing spa, and a variety of places to dine and chill. A place that was more family-friendly than spring-break crazy. So we figured we'd try it — why not? I'm happy to report she was right on every count.

The hotel is located approximately a half hour drive from the international airport. We arrived in the late afternoon, hot and dusty from our travels, and were greeted with large smiles and cool washcloths. The lobby is heroic in scale, with a soaring atrium capped by a colorful stained glass dome. Opposite the entrance, the pool and the sparkling sea beckoned.

The hotel offers 602 all-suite accommodations, each with a private terrace and ocean views. Our room had all the amenities I love: fluffy towels, luxury cotton bedding, a plethora of pillows, quality bath products (L'Occitane), Nespresso machine, mini-bar, couch for lolling, voluminous bathrobes, and slippers for the sleek marble floors. After settling in, we lost no time in finding a poolside bar with sultry breezes and a view of the crystalline Caribbean. That's where we first sampled their signature Golden Cadillac Margarita (Herradura 1800 tequila, Grand Marnier, and fresh squeezed lime), our drink of choice during a three-night stay.

Lounge chairs are arranged around connected, lagoon-like pools that snake along the length of the property and include two swim-up bars, volleyball net, waterfall, and fountains. Some areas of the pools have wide stepped edges where lounges rest in several inches of water. If all this sounds like a setting for a party-pool, it surprisingly wasn't. Couples quietly sipped cocktails by the bar while families played in the shallow water.

One can also lounge on the white sand beach under



PHOTOS BY NECÉE REGIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE



heat-shielding umbrellas. Beverage service and a light-dining menu are available both pool and ocean-side. An expansive area is roped off for swimming, keeping recreational vehicles away from bathers and SUP-yoga classes.

The following day, my husband headed to the gym as I checked out the sleek, 40,000-square-foot Coral Beach Gem Spa's "Ten-Step Hydrotherapy Ritual." I admit I'm a skeptic when it comes to fancy-pants spa treatments (just give a me a deep tissue massage, please) but this series of water treatments won me over, starting with the aromatherapy steam room and continuing with a rain shower, sauna, ice room, bubbling whirlpool, and more (\$55 as part of a day pass; free when combined with additional spa treatment, such as a massage). I signed up for a classic massage, as fine as any I've experienced in my travels, that left me as relaxed and catatonic as a bowl of Jell-O (a good thing).

A variety of dining options include the beachy-casual Isla Contoy, serving fresh seafood and Mexican favorites under a grand palapa by the sea; Mexican-themed La Joya, a vibrant restaurant with tequila lounge and tasting bar, vintage cinematic projections, and occasional eight-piece mariachi band; and, my personal fave, Le Basilic, a AAA Five Diamond winner serving French Mediterranean cuisine in

a grand high-ceiling dining room, complete with soothing tunes played on a white baby grand. The property is not all-inclusive, and guests are welcomed to venture into the adjacent lively business district with a wide range of additional dining and entertainment offerings. (Hello, Hooters! Or, not.)

The hotel spent \$2 million creating the Coral KidZ Club, an enormous, state-of-the-art facility offering programs throughout the day geared specifically for various age groups. Highlights include Open Play Theater featuring a stage with digital backdrop, light-up dance floor, and dressing room with costumes and makeup; arts and crafts area; Mayan-themed outdoor sand and water-filled play zone; computer zone with Xbox and Wii play-systems; and an interactive game that teaches children about the ancient Mayan culture.

Concierge services offer guests a wide range of experiences outside the resort, including excursions to theme parks, Mayan villages, the Isla Contoy bird sanctuary, pyramids and cenotes, fishing and snorkeling tours, and the nearby Mayan Museum, exhibiting more than 400 artifacts from the peninsula. We opted to take the ferry to Islas Mujeres, the long and narrow island visible from our hotel that is celebrated for its Mayan heritage, rocky coast, and seafood restaurants. Alas, our plans were thwarted when the local ferry company deviated from its online schedule at not one, but two of its docks. After missing one ferry that left ahead of schedule, we taxied to another dock only to be informed that the 11 a.m. ferry was being rescheduled for 12:30.

"Oh, drat," we said. (Or perhaps something stronger.) And then, "Oh joy," as we realized we could simply return to the resort, to the lounge chairs, to the brilliant azure water, and relax with another Golden Cadillac.

GRAND FIESTA AMERICANA; CORAL BEACH CANCUN, Seasonal rates from \$350. Add \$200 per night for Grand Club perks including VIP lounge and private sundeck. Check online for resort promotions and deals. 888-830-9008, www.coralbeachcancunhotel.com

Necée Regis can be reached at necée.regis@gmail.com.

Lagoon-like pools snake along the length of the Grand Fiesta Americana Coral Beach Cancun Resort and Spa.

A colorful stained glass dome caps the soaring atrium in the lobby.

HERE

NEWPORT HOTEL GETS HIGH DESIGN MAKEOVER

Lovers of historic Newport will want to check out The Cliffside Inn, the newest redesigned and modernized property in the Lark Hotels portfolio. Located steps away from the Cliffwalk and opulent Newport mansions, the 16-room boutique hotel's preserved historical elements harken back to the home's former identity as "Swann Villa," named by former Maryland governor Thomas Swann, who built the stately Victorian manor in 1876. Look for a palette of jewel tones, rich textures, and eclectic patterns in each of inn's 16 guest rooms and cottages that also offer whirlpool tubs and/or spa showers, gas fireplaces, and unique architectural details original to the building. Amenities include a small-plates breakfast with each stay, evening turndown service, outdoor fire pit, onsite library, and more. Rates from \$180 to \$650 for double occupancy depending on room and season. 401-847-1811. www.thecliffsideinn.com

BEER LOVERS JUST SAY WOOF

After a hard day at work, grab your pup and head to the dog-friendly Kimpton Marlowe hotel in Cambridge for Dogs & Drafts, taking place every third Tuesday evening from June through October. (5:30 to 7:30 p.m., weather permitting.) Sample a different craft beer each month from New England's finest micro-breweries — Harpoon Brewery, Night Shift Brewing, Notch Brewing, Bantam Cider, and Berkshire Brewing Company —



READ MCKENDREE

and tasty bites such as grilled gourmet hot dogs, hamburger sliders, thick cut fries, and vanilla and chocolate ice cream cones from Bambara Kitchen & Bar's executive chef, David Bazirgan. Pups can enjoy free, hand-crafted treats courtesy of Polka Dog Bakery. Each event includes fun raffle prizes for pets and their owners that benefit Last Hope K9, a nonprofit, all-breed dog rescue based in Massachusetts. New this year: a grand prize of an exclusive private Duck Tour for 16 guests and their dogs. Admission is free; beer and food available for purchase. 617-868-8000.

THERE

GET SHUCKED IN PEI

Have an oyster-licious farm-to-table experience with the Valley Pearl Oysters "Get Shucked" tour. Located in scenic Tyne Valley on Prince Edward Island, participants can practice tonging (the process of gathering oysters off the ocean floor with long rake-like

tools) with owners, farmers, and competitive oyster shuckers Jeff Noye and Damien Enman. After collecting the tasty bivalves, the group will return to the plant to learn about processing methods, practice shucking, and taste some premium PEI oysters. This experience is offered July 1 through Sept. 30, by appointment. From \$65 per person. Call 902-439-1716 or 902-954-0664. valleypearloysters.com/tour

FESTIVAL OF BEER, BBQ, AND BANDS

Celebrate all-things-summer at the Windy City Smokeout (July 12-14), Chicago's three-day extravaganza combining beer, barbecue, and bands, featuring both country music superstars and up-and-coming talent, including performances by Ashley McBryde, Old Dominion, Lanco, Chris Young, and more. Attendees can sample tasty ribs, brisket, smoked meats, and more prepared by 20 barbecue pit masters from all over the country, highlighting styles from Kentucky, Nashville, Missouri, and Chicago.

Quench your thirst with a glass of beer from top American breweries, including Chicago's own Moody Tongue, Local Option, Goose Island, Pipeworks, and Burnt City. Exclusive events throughout the weekend include a BBQ brunch, tasting experiences, "the biggest happy hour of summer," and more. Purchase single-day or weekend tickets before July 9 for reduced prices. \$40-\$110. Stay in style at the nearby Hoxton Hotel, a newly constructed building in the West Loop/Fulton Market neighborhood. Rates from \$229. 312-761-1700. thehoxton.com/illinois/chicago/hotels

EVERYWHERE

INTERNATIONAL CUISINE AT HOME

Travel introduces us to cultures and cuisine we may never experience at home. A new book by Moonstone Press, "Famous Dishes From Around the World: Healthy, Tasty and Affordable," gathers international recipes in one easy-to-use collection. Compiled by lovers of ethnic food who have lived in far-flung locales, it features 30 dishes identified with specific countries worldwide, such as Colombian sancocho, French ratatouille, Indian vegetable korma, Mexican fajitas, Moroccan tagine with chicken, Polish lentil stew, Spanish paella, and more. The bilingual text (English and Spanish) features both authentic recipes and healthy variations of original dishes, such as Greek moussaka made with ground turkey in place of lamb or beef. Also includes calorie and

nutrition breakdowns; background information about each dish; and budget-conscious meals. \$14.99.

PORTABLE SOLAR-POWERED COOKERS

Take advantage of the power of the sun on your next hiking, kayaking, or camping trip with the GoSun and GoSun Sport Pro Pack solar cookers. Perfect for when you want hot food on land or sea, in summer and winter months. These portable and durable solar ovens can cook a meal in as little as 20 minutes — reaching temperatures up to 550-degrees — and can also be used to boil water. The cookers absorb a broad spectrum of radiation, and work whenever you can see a defined shadow. Weighing only 2 pounds, GoSun, is better for solo camping trips. The Sport Pro Pack is more substantial, and is touted for family camping or beach trips. The latter includes an extra cooking tray and padded carrying case. \$139/\$359. www.gosun.co/products/portable-solar-cooker

NECÉE REGIS



BARR PHOTOGRAPHY



A familial journey to Israel, launched with a cheek swab

By Debbie Spingarn
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

What started as a simple cheek swab with a Q-Tip became a long-distance trip this past March to meet family in Israel who survived the Holocaust. With home DNA kits a multimillion-dollar business that attracts new customers at an amazing rate, discovering ancestral connections in other countries is easier than ever.

When my daughter Caroline, 26, gave me a gift card for a DNA home test kit from Ancestry.com in 2017, I didn't think much of it. She was having fun figuring out where her light skin and green eyes came from (2 percent Irish), but I was positive I knew my roots. With two Jewish parents, I was comfortable with my Ashkenazi ancestry, and it turns out I was right. My data showed I was 89 percent European Jewish. Ancestry.com updated that figure to 98 percent in 2019. What I never expected was that I would also get a long list of names representing possible DNA connections. These were listed as potential family members, and most were names I did not recognize. An American Jew with European roots, I often wondered if any of my family was lost in the Holocaust, if any had escaped, and under what circumstances. I'd dabbled in a bit of genealogy, but before the Internet, the research was long and tedious, and I'd turned up nothing.

The first name on the Ancestry.com list was a bull's-eye: second cousin Lou Hirsch from Benicia, Calif. I received a friendly return e-mail from his wife, Lisa, who was helping research the Pechter family tree. Through Lou I learned of our Israeli family, who emigrated after time in a displaced persons camp at the close of World War II. At 6 years old, my cousin Frida Hirt Raz (now 76) left the cruelties of life as a refugee (she was born in an unknown camp in Salzburg, Austria), and boarded a ship for the

new state of Israel.

Frida Hirt Raz, her father, Yeshua, and mother, Devora, sailed on the ship Galila and entered the port of Haifa in 1949. They settled first in Rishon Le-Zion, which was declared a city in 1950 and is now the fourth largest in Israel. Later, Petah Tikvah, Israel, north of Tel Aviv, became home.

I connected with Frida's son Ohad, 45, a radio professional working in London and now Israel, who was delighted to hear from me. Frida and I were introduced, and, after a telephone call, we began talking online, where we continue to converse.



Top: Frida Hirt Raz (left) and her sister-in-law. Above: The author and her daughter, who bought the DNA kit that launched their adventure.

I was inspired to learn Hebrew (modern or conversational, as opposed to ancient or biblical Hebrew). My lessons started at the Boston Language Institute with teacher Ilana Benivgy. I continued my study with the Ulpan program at Hebrew College in Newton.

This March, I traveled with my daughter, Hannah, 32, to Israel. We booked a modern Airbnb in Tel Aviv, tucked Frida's phone number into my carry-on, and traveled through New York's JFK to David Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv.

Though I had visited Israel 20 years earlier with my family to celebrate Hannah's bat mitzvah, Israel looked different. The buildings looked taller, security tighter, highways busier. Most

importantly, DNA testing helped me find my family.

On a rainy March day in South Tel Aviv, Hannah and I waited for Frida's text that she, her husband, Reuven, and Ohad had arrived at our meeting place. European-style compact cars whooshed by the busy avenue near where a subway was being constructed under streets with names like Allenby (after British general Edmund Allenby).

A short, fair-complexioned Israeli walked up to me with a smile. This was my cousin Ohad. We hugged. Frida was waiting with the car a few blocks away, her husband, Reuven, in the car. We embraced.

We drove north in their tiny compact, as I was squished between Frida and Hannah, chatting like old friends. Frida and Ohad have impeccable English. Frida speaks five languages, I later learned.

Our destination was the HaZahav shopping mall in Rishon Le-Zion, where we enjoyed a delicious shwarma lunch and met Aliza Hirt, Frida's sister-in-law. We ate chicken schwarma with fresh vegetables and pita and talked for hours about family.

Israeli highways are crowded and with the subway construction in Tel Aviv, our trip back to the city was slow. With no plans for our next day in Israel, my new family offered a second day of this personal side of Israel. It was lunch with newly discovered family, a dip into my past.

We walked through an outdoor shuk or market, where we shopped for beautiful Israeli and European style dresses, tops, and shoes. Frida bought us clothes and spoke to all the shopkeepers, who knew her taste and offered the shuk's version of a big sale. Wandering with my Israeli cousin through shoes and clothing in the side streets of Tel Aviv was a new way to see Israel.

The ancient port city of Jaffa was our next stop, where pink stone shone amid twisting pathways offering glimpses of the Mediterranean. After a lunch of many small dishes of hummus, falafel, salads, tomatoes, cucumbers, olives, and more, we walked into brilliant sunshine toward the seawall. There, Ohad recorded his mother speaking about her past and how proud she was to be a Pechter.

The remainder of my 10-day trip with my daughter was spent discovering sights on our own, riding public buses, trying out my Hebrew skills, and bringing back memories to last a lifetime.

L'hitraot, Israel. Until we meet again.

Debbie Spingarn can be reached at rbgc90a@aol.com.



NICOLE HOWE

A touring production of "Miss Saigon" brings Emily Bautista (pictured in Mexico) to town.

She welcomes a return to Boston by way of 'Saigon'

Born in Acton and raised in Simsbury, Conn., Emily Bautista is excited about her return to New England as the lead in the North American tour of "Miss Saigon," which is at the Boston Opera House June 12-30. "I have lots of family and friends here, so it will be good to see them," Bautista, 21, said recently. The New York City resident said she loves playing Kim, a role she played as an understudy in the revival of "Miss Saigon" on Broadway. "She is one of the strongest women I have ever gotten to play on stage," Bautista said. Most recently, she played Epouline in the North American tour of "Les Miserables." We caught up with Bautista to talk about all things travel.

that has a beautiful view and good food. I just love the ocean.

Favorite food or drink while vacationing? Bread, cheese, wine, and any type of Asian food. A weird mix, but I think those are my favorite foods in general.

Where would you like to travel to but haven't? Japan and Italy. I think the cultures are so interesting and I'm drawn to the food.

One item you can't leave home without when traveling? ChapStick. [C.O. Bigelow] Rose Salve is my favorite [lip balm].

Aisle or window? Window. I like getting a bird's-eye perspective.

Favorite childhood travel memory? Going to the Philippines when I was 6 or 7 years

old and snorkeling in the ocean. We have a big family and we went to one of the islands with my cousins. I love the ocean and just remember having so much fun.

Guilty pleasure while traveling? Eating too much — I love crême brulee — and experiencing the night life.

Best travel tip? Don't overpack — and get packing cubes; keeps everything organized. . . . Also, bar shampoo — [it's] eco-friendly and travel-friendly.

JULIET PENNINGTON

YOU NEED THIS.

Stay with us for lasting Family Memories!



- One-night stay in a suite starting at \$129, plus tax and resort fee.
- Story Land tickets just \$25.99, book direct to receive exclusive code.
- Complimentary Smores Kit when you book direct
- North Conway Area
- Nightly family entertainment
- Two outdoor heated pools, one indoor pool

Call 1-877-564-7829 or visit nordicvillage.com

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER | CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

Why did Frontier make me pay extra for my checked bags?

Q I recently bought round-trip tickets from Madison, Wisconsin, to Las Vegas on Frontier Airlines through Lookupfare.com. The tickets included checked bags for both of us. I have the printed itinerary that shows the baggage is included.

On the return flight from Las Vegas, Frontier made me pay \$100 for the two bags. I can't get anywhere with either Frontier or Lookupfare.com. I'm wondering what to do next. There must be some way to get my \$100 back.

LORINE LASHOCK,
Caledonia, Ill.

A If Lookupfare.com sold you a ticket that included checked bags, then you shouldn't have to pay for the bags. Period.

So, why did you? I looked up your flight from Madison to Las Vegas and saw no checked bag included. You did the right thing by making a printout of the agreement; at least that got

you to Sin City without having to pay \$100.

By the way, these luggage fees are a little ridiculous. A decade ago, every airline ticket included at least one checked bag. Now, airlines are raking in billions of dollars in extra profit by charging extra — in some cases way too much — for the privilege of taking a bag or getting an assigned seat.

But that's the world we travel in. We play by the airline's rules, but we also expect the airline to follow its own rules. That's why a case like yours is particularly upsetting. Lookupfare.com sold you two checked bags and then Frontier didn't honor its agreement.

You could have contacted one of the customer-service executives at Frontier Airlines. I list the names, numbers, and e-mail addresses of the key managers on my consumer advocacy site.

It looks like you did try calling both your online agency, Lookupfare.com, and the air-

line. While a phone call is a great way to resolve an urgent problem — like when your airline cancels your flight and you need to be rebooked — it's not ideal for this type of case. I always recommend keeping a meticulous paper trail and getting every response in writing.

I reached out to Frontier to find out what happened. It turns out that you did, indeed, have two bags included in your fare. But you changed your return flight from Las Vegas to Madison.

"When she changed her flight date, it also canceled the bags and that appears to be the root of the problem," a Frontier spokesperson told me. Frontier will refund the difference between the online bag fee and airport bag fee. Hopefully, Frontier will fix its system so that in the future, a changed itinerary won't result in a dropped baggage fee.

Christopher Elliott can be reached at chris@elliott.org.

Hate to Fly?

Cruise Round-trip from Boston, MA

7-Night Bermuda
from **\$499*** pp.

35-Night Transatlantic
Visits Canada / New England + Greenland + Iceland + Ireland + Norway
Round Trip From Boston!

7-Night Bermuda
from **\$529*** pp.

Choose from **FREE Beverage Packages / Shore Excursion Credits / Internet Packages / Dining Packages / Onboard Credits up to \$350**

All offers available on select sailings. Offers vary by cruise line and category booked. Restrictions apply. Call toll free to speak to one of our cruise specialists for details on these amazing offers.

Visit www.DirectLineCruises.com/bostonglobe for more information on cruises sailing from Boston.

Call to ask about our **FREE** valuable **BONUS** offers available with all cruises!

Official Agency for the Cruise Industry

Call toll-free for a **FREE** Brochure & Reservations

1-877-726-3518

www.DirectLineCruises.com

* Rates shown above apply to select sailings and are subject to availability. Gov't. taxes and fees are additional.



RAMON ESPINOSA/AP

panies abruptly canceled those cruises after you said we could no longer take cruises, private yachts, or fishing vessels to Cuba.

As a result, more the 800,000 US residents who were planning to visit the island have seen their itineraries canceled or changed to other Caribbean islands. I'm wondering how much money the cruise lines will lose as a result.

The thaw in the embargo gave Americans a way to directly help the people of Cuba. When I visited a few years ago, I often tipped people, like a doctor who made more working as a tour guide than as a doctor.

Similarly, I suspect the airlines that began offering direct flights to Cuba after your predecessor-who-shall-not-be-named lifted portions of the outdated embargo will take a financial hit as well. With fewer people headed to Cuba, I can't imagine the volume of flights could hold steady. This doesn't seem as if it's helping US businesses. But I'm sure you know better than I do, as you are a very stable genius, former reality TV host, and businessman.

A quick reminder: US residents headed to Cuba are not going with the intention of lining the Cuban military's pockets with money. What was happening was that visitors from the United States had an opportunity to see a once forbidden place, and Cubans began to see that people from the US were not the monsters their government said we were for decades.

What do you say, Mr. President? How about letting people expand their horizons a bit. Let us make our own travel decisions.

Before I finish, let me remind you that Americans can still go to Cuba. Maybe not on big cruise ships, but there is still a category called "support for the Cuban people." It's a more challenging way to go, but it can be done. So despite the posturing, we still have a way to help the people of Cuba and still see a culture that is warm, beautiful, heartbreaking, and fascinating.

Cuba is no Mar-a-Lago. It doesn't cost \$100,000 to get in. Also, I can't afford a \$100,000 getaway. So please, stay out of my travel plans, and I promise to stay out of yours.

Christopher Muther can be reached at muther@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter @Chris_Muther.

Cuba policy hurts Cubans and Americans

►CUBA
Continued from Page M1

Let me be clear: I have no interest in supporting Cuba's military or its involvement in Venezuela or support of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro. I am happy to avoid anything that will put money in the pockets of that messy political situation. This kind of scenario is why your predecessor kept some restrictions in place, such as barring US citizens from big resort hotels. Instead, travel to Cuba was solely cultural in nature.

Most importantly, the thaw in the embargo gave Americans a way to directly help the people of Cuba. They could stay in people's homes (otherwise known as *casas particulares*), and eat at their home restaurants (*paladares*). They could stay in Airbnbs and hire locals as guides to show them around. That money went directly into the pockets of Cubans who often face shortages. I know because when I visited a few years ago, I often tipped people, like a doctor who made more working as a tour guide than as a doctor.

It was a system that seemed to be



In Florida: a tourist's shirt; women planning a trip before Cuba travel restrictions. Top: a Havana cruise ship.

working well. According to the Center for Responsible Travel, US citizens are the second largest group visiting Cuba after Canadians. The organization's executive director, Martha Honey, said your new restrictions, which eliminate

a category called "people-to-people" travel, is "a devastating blow to millions of Cubans, as well as US travel companies."

People-to-people visits are the most common way US tourists and Cuban-

Americans visit the Caribbean island.

During that brief window when people-to-people travel was allowed, multiple cruise lines, including Royal Caribbean, Norwegian, and Carnival, began offering trips to Cuba. The com-



PHOTOS BY BRYNN ANDERSON/AP

What could possibly go wrong? Everything.

►LONDON
Continued from Page M1

you, just know that I was as excited as a Baptist groom on his wedding night.

When I checked into my Virgin Atlantic flight to London, I asked if I had enough miles to upgrade into premium economy. The desk agent disappeared for a few minutes, informed me that economy was overbooked and that I would be upgraded to premium. It was a fantastic start. Once onboard I raised a glass, or three, to my good fortune.

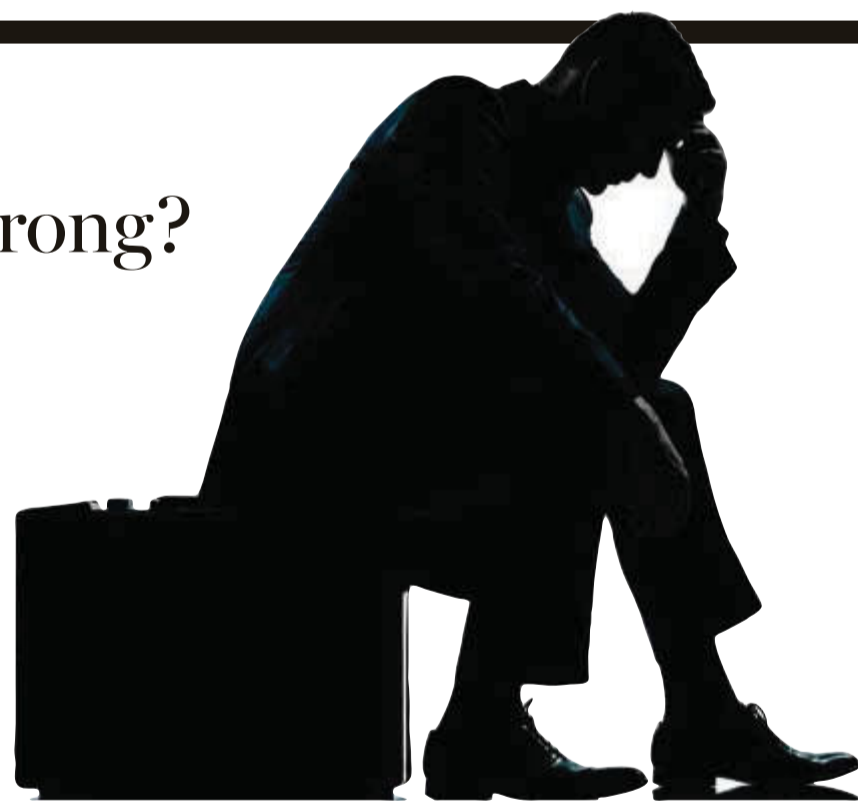
But when I landed at Heathrow, something strange happened. I stood at baggage claim and watched the suitcases glide by on the belt. All the suitcases were accounted for — except mine.

This was the first time in 20 years that my luggage was lost. Given the law of averages and how often I travel, it was bound to happen. Logic aside, I was shaken. I went to the Virgin Atlantic counter, handed my claim ticket over to a helpful gent, and watched as he clicked away at the computer. But there was no record of my luggage. It hadn't traveled on my flight, and its location was unknown in Boston.

I took a day flight to London, so I was optimistic that my luggage would arrive on the redeye the following morning.

But, and this is a biggie, all of my medication was in my missing luggage. A rookie mistake. Complacent after 20 years of suitcase efficiency, I never thought to tuck some necessities aside in my backpack. I take something to help me sleep every night, and without it I had a long night ahead of me. I went to the airport pharmacy and stocked up on some essentials, called an Uber, and made my way to the Airbnb that I rented.

It was a self check-in Airbnb, which



SNAPTITUDE - STOCK.ADOBE.COM

"Think, Chris, think," I said to myself while slapping away the tears. "What would Rick Steves do?" I'm pretty sure he would not sit on a sidewalk crying.

was good because by the time I arrived it was nearly 11 p.m. The instructions for entry involved retrieving the key from a lockbox attached to a drainpipe on the side of the house. I carefully entered the combination on the lock box, and fiddled with the front, which was supposed to easily pop off. It didn't budge. Neighbors walked by wondering why there was a strange man on his knees in the dirt. I checked the combination and tried again. Nothing. This went on for a while. I held my phone in flashlight mode under my chin and kept fiddling with the lockbox.

A stream of obscenities that would make Caligula blush flowed from my lips. I watched YouTube clips on how to open this model of lockbox with no luck. It was too late to call the owner of the apartment, so I looked to see if

there were any hotels nearby. I found a Best Western about five minutes away and booked a room for the night. At this point I was exhausted and just wanted to sleep.

I arrived at the Best Western, but there were no available rooms. The booking system erroneously took my reservation. There were no other hotel rooms in the area.

Cut to a grown man (that's me!) on a London sidewalk near tears. "Think, Chris, think," I said to myself while slapping away the tears. "What would Rick Steves do?" I'm pretty sure he would not sit on a sidewalk crying.

Nearing midnight, I called the owner of the Airbnb out of desperation. He was sweeter than a jar of marmalade and drove 40 minutes to let me into the unit.

Once in, I immediately called the

airline. There was still no sign of my luggage. I tried to go to sleep. It didn't work. I spent the night watching "Rupaul's Drag Race."

I started calling the airline in the morning to see if my luggage was found. I kept calling until I no longer needed to introduce myself on the phone. I had confirmation around 11 a.m. that my suitcase was in London. I was tired and stressed, but hopeful. A shipping company would pick up the suitcase at Heathrow and deliver it to my Airbnb. But by 2 p.m. there was still no suitcase. Now I became a thorn in the side of the shipping company. At 4:30, my suitcase finally arrived. I was meeting a friend for pre-concert dinner at 5 p.m. and barely made it.

I showed up looking and smelling like a gargyle with a red blotch on my neck that I self-diagnosed as ringworm. But I made it. The concert was just as amazing as I hoped. I told myself it had been worth the stress and lack of sleep. I was back to feeling optimistic.

Oh, how naive I was.

The next part of my trip involved visiting a new hotel in the English countryside. It sounded lovely. I made a reservation and rented a car.

I have no problem driving on the left side of the road. I've done it throughout the Caribbean and Australia. I set out for the hotel, which was about an hour outside of London. Traffic was at a crawl, and my phone suggested a route that would shave 30 minutes off the drive. What could go wrong? I turned off the highway and was suddenly on a precariously narrow country road.

I should probably mention here that the smallest car available to rent was an SUV. I have an aversion to driving big cars in the States. Here I was in England, in an SUV, on a tiny, two-way country road. There was barely room for one car, let alone the many that were competing along as if they were competing in the Monaco Grand Prix.

I could hear branches scraping the outside of the SUV. I was clinging to the edge of the road to avoid oncoming cars. Also clinging to the edge of the road: rocks. One of them found a

front tire and I heard a loud pop, followed by the scrape and drag of a flat tire.

It took a few minutes to find a place to pull over, but I found a field, called the rental company, and in 45 minutes, someone came out to fix the tire.

In all the years I've traveled and rented cars, I've never had a flat, let alone a nick or dent. My years of good travel karma with luggage and rental cars had come to an abrupt and rude end.

What's a flat tire? Not a big deal. I continued to the country.

As soon as I pulled the SUV out of the field I noticed something was wrong, well, everything was wrong. The dashboard was lit up like the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree and the car was completely out of alignment. In order to drive straight, I had to keep the wheel at 12 and 6. I drove like this for 30 minutes, until I pulled up to the hotel and the valet looked at me as if I was driving the pickup from "Sanford and Son."

I won't bore you with the rest of the details, and there are many. Someone came to the hotel and managed to fix the alignment. I returned the car as quickly as I could at Heathrow. I cut the trip short because I didn't want to press my luck any further. England had chewed me up and spat me out. I was ready to get home.

As I checked into my flight back to Boston, the desk agent asked how my trip had been.

"Did you lose your luggage on this trip?" she asked, most likely as a way to stop me blabbering further about my disasters. She disappeared, came back, and offered to upgrade me into premium economy.

Finally onboard and sitting in a deliciously near-empty cabin, I once again raised a glass, or three, and celebrated my good luck. This time I simply felt lucky I had escaped England before suffering a nervous breakdown.

Christopher Muther can be reached at christopher.muther@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter @chris_muther.

New England Travel



ALLEN LESSELS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Onboard for a N.H. must-do

The M/S Mount Washington has been taking families on tours of Lake Winnepesaukee — informing, entertaining, and feeding them along the way — for nearly 150 years

BY ALLEN LESSELS | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

What better way to see the big lake and, well, be the lake, than to cruise Lake Winnepesaukee, the crown jewel of New Hampshire's Lakes Region, on the M/S Mount Washington for the better part of a much-more-glorious-than-predicted Saturday morning in late May?

My fellow passengers and I set sail that day on a 2½-hour tour. For those looking for any chance or reason to get on the water — sign me up every time — this is a fine way to do it, and has been for nearly a century and a half.

Marisa and John McCutchen of Strafford, N.H., the middle pair in a three-generation outing that included his parents and their own three children — Lilly, 8, Josie, 6, and Sullivan, 4 — were along for the ride, looking for glimpses of loons and turtles and fishes and perhaps, Josie hoped, even a dolphin or two.

Also on the top deck was US Army veteran John McDonough, who came up from Milton with his daughter, Christine Murphy, to sit back, relax, and enjoy the scenery.

The particulars have been embellished and enhanced over the years, but the Mount Washington, bottom line,

has been offering much the same experience to its 70,000 to 100,000 passengers a year for way longer than John McDonough, 88 years young, has been around.

Mount Washington Cruises — based out of Weirs Beach in Laconia, and including the smaller Doris E. and Sophie C. — will celebrate its 150th birthday in 2022.

The organization shares its 1872 launch date, notes captain, chief operating officer, and co-owner Jim Morash, with the Boston Globe.

“We’re basically doing the same thing we’ve always done, showing people Lake Winnepesaukee as comfortably as we can,” Morash says.

All the while informing, entertaining, and feeding them along the way. When the pace picks up in early July and through August and into October, the schedule is packed with themed events.

Mondays are for sunset dinner cruises and swing dancing with senior discounts; Saturday nights feature rock ‘n’ roll; Wednesdays are family nights with entertainment for kids on one deck and dinner for parents on another; foliage dinner cruises come along later; and lobster fests and other special outings dot the schedule throughout.

We’re looking forward to taking our Colorado-based grandkids, ages 7 and 5, on a family night outing in July. They know the Rocky Mountains. We know the Mount.

MOUNT WASHINGTON, Page M6

IF YOU GO . . . The M/S Mount Washington sails Lake Winnepesaukee from Weirs Beach in Laconia from May to October on a variety of cruises from sunset tours to Sunday champagne brunches. School bands come on the boat to perform, and it also is host to school groups, summer camps, proms, weddings, and other special events, and is available for charter.

Ports of call on assorted trips are Wolfeboro, Alton Bay, Center Harbor, and Meredith.

The general fee is \$33 per adult and \$17 per child 5-12 (ages 4 and under are free).

Mount Washington Cruises offers rides on the US mailboats the Sophie C. and the Doris E. out of Weirs Beach, visiting the islands of Lake Winnepesaukee.

More information is available at cruisenh.com or by calling 603-366-5531.

Tickets for the Luau on the Lake party put on by the “Greg & the Morning Buzz” show on June 27 are sold out, but a limited number will be given away on the show, which airs on WHEB-FM out of Portsmouth, N.H., and WGIR-FM out of Manchester, N.H., as well as several other stations, between now and then.



The M/S Mount Washington's schedule is packed with events through October, keeping the captain busy.



MEGAN LISAGOR STOESSELL FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Seeing how Worcester has upped its game

By Megan Lisagor Stoessell
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Until recently, Worcester represented the past to me. It was the long-ago place where my mother-in-law, Pam, spent her childhood. She'd told me tidbits about that phase — about working at the art museum as a teen, exposed to Andy Warhol exhibits and film. It was formative and put her on a path to the Rhode Island School of Design and a fashion job near the nation's capital. After moving to Boston from D.C. as newlyweds, my husband brought me to see her old street and his grandparents' graves. He shared

stories of Thanksgiving trips and a vague memory of a Swedish bakery beloved by him as a boy. Unsure where else to go and with nothing enticing us to stay, he drove us back to the South End before dinner, and I figured that was that.

So imagine my surprise to start reading about Worcester's renaissance. Rooting for the PawSox to remain in Rhode Island — where we lived at one point and Pam returns for alumni events — I assumed the boom was overhyped. It took an unexpected detour to show me the city's charms, which are real and worth experiencing.

Seed to Stem is a plant and lifestyle boutique in Worcester.

WORCESTER, Page M6

Plenty to see and do on M/S Mount Washington tour

► MOUNT WASHINGTON
Continued from Page M5

On my Memorial Day weekend excursion, the view up the lake included a glimpse of the other Mount Washington — the one that rules over the state at 6,288 feet tall — still dotted with patches of snow.

Ports of call for the boat — Alton Bay, Center Harbor, and Meredith included — vary by day of the week. Our journey crosses the lake to Wolfeboro, which proudly proclaims itself “The Oldest Summer Resort in America.” This Saturday morning, we get a view from afar of the Brewster Academy graduation celebration.

Want to extend your fun day a bit? The early trip to Wolfeboro on Saturdays and Sundays offers the option of getting off and exploring the tourist town on foot, or perhaps on Molly the Trolley, shopping or getting a bite to eat, and then returning to the Weirs when the Mount comes back for its next stop a couple of hours later.

A trip on the M/S Mount Washington is one of those must-do New Hampshire excursions, much like a drive up the Mount Washington Auto Road, a visit to the Omni Mount Washington Resort at Bretton Woods, or a day at Hampton Beach.

Count Greg Kretschmar as a huge fan. He’s the host of the “Greg and the Morning Buzz” radio show on New Hampshire stations WHEB-FM and WGIR-FM, among others, and ranging well into Maine and Massachusetts. He’s also been hosting one of the M/S Mount Washington’s most popular party cruises each year for more than a decade.

The Morning Buzz’s Luau on the Lake sold out in less than 10 minutes this year and sets sail on June 27.

Kretschmar fondly remembers his first trip on the Mount Washington when his grandparents brought him up for a cruise from his home in Somersworth, and he recalls jumping at the chance to get involved with the boat when the opportunity first came up.

“I said, let’s give it a spin,” Kretschmar says. “It kind of exploded. Everybody comes in loose and ready to have fun. It’s a little crazy, but not too crazy. The boat is iconic, really. It’s kind of synonymous with Winnepesaukee, if you ask me.”

Luau on the Lake delivers a bit of an amped-up version of what the M/S Mount Washington features most days and nights during the summer.

“If people want to be down with the band and dance and rip it up, that’s great,” Kretschmar said. “If they want to be on the middle level with karaoke,



PHOTOS BY ALLEN LESSELS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Clockwise from top: Passengers wait to board the M/S Mount Washington; co-owner and captain Jim Morash, left, with fellow captain Denis Finnerty; John and Marisa McCutchen of Strafford, N.H., take in the views.

that’s fine, too. And if they want to relax and enjoy the lake from the top level, they can do that. We’ve had some beautiful sunsets up there. Two or three years ago some jets flew over the top of us and it was like a precision fly-over. And it’s all on one boat.”

All on one very, let’s call it, “experi-

enced” boat.

A Mount Washington tour includes history lessons on the lake and its islands as well as the ship itself, starting from the late 1800s, when a dozen such ships plied the waters of Winnepesaukee at first under railroad ownership with a primary mission of get-

ting cargo and people from one point to another, later as tourist attractions themselves.

This is the second Mount Washington, in fact, and it’s not a native of New Hampshire. It started life in 1888 in Vermont as the Chateaugay, worked its early years shuttling passengers, and

later automobiles on Lake Champlain and was docked in semi-retirement as a clubhouse for a yacht club before being called back to active duty.

A fire in December 1939 that started in the railroad station at Weirs Beach and roared down the dock and destroyed the “Old Mount” sent boat owner Leander Lavallee shopping.

In short order, he had purchased the Chateaugay. A crew from Boston General Ship & Engine Works was dispatched and cut the boat into 20 sections. It was shipped by flatbed railroad car from Shelburne, Vt., to Lakeport, N.H., where the boat was reassembled.

The M/S Mount Washington is one of those must-do New Hampshire excursions, much like a drive up Mount Washington Auto Road, a visit to the Omni Mount Washington Resort at Bretton Woods, a day at Hampton Beach.

On Aug. 12, 1940, eight months after the fire and without missing a season, the Mount Washington was back on the water. This boat differs a little from that one — it was cut in half in 1982 and 25 feet were added to its length, bringing it to 235 feet.

Morash, after starting out as seasonal help, was in his early years with the company then and worked on that project. This is his 40th season. And oh yes, he met his wife, Carol — the company’s accountant and human resources director and also a commercial boat pilot — when he was piloting the Sophie C., a mailboat, and delivering mail to Camp Lawrence on Bear Island, where she was volunteering.

A couple of my favorite historical Lake Winnepesaukee tidbits from the tour: The Diamond Island House was moved across the lake to be part of the New Hotel Weirs in the late 1800s; there has not been a rattlesnake found on Rattlesnake Island since 1946.

Thus, no rattlesnakes to be seen on our trip. And, sorry Josie, no dolphins this time around, either.

Allen Lessels can be reached at lessfam321@gmail.com.

‘Brooklyn of 2000’: 4 blocks of Worcester

► WORCESTER
Continued from Page M5

I wound up in Worcester this winter, following a morning of skiing with a friend and our sons at Wachusett Mountain. Call it fate or a bad sense of direction, but I’d been paying more attention to our conversation than the Highlander’s navigation system. Kelly had just been telling me about an Instagram for a shop in the city’s Canal District.

It happened to be a mile away, so we stopped. I quickly realized Worcester had upped its game. Described as a plant and lifestyle boutique, Seed to Stem looked like it belonged in Brooklyn’s Boerum Hill — forget Beacon Hill. We spun through the succulents as our patient fourth-graders lingered in their long johns.

With more time to explore, we went again this rainy spring. Seed to Stem, it turns out, operates in a bustling building that once housed a loom manufacturer and that embodies the city’s changes. In fact, the store is only one reason to hop in the car on a summer weekend and head west to Crompton Place.

“Our Worcester is pretty much these four blocks,” co-owner Kristian Solfiell said while ringing me up, describing it as “Brooklyn of 2000” and dressing the part with sunglasses hooked to a neckerchief. With its popular bars and restaurants, the district has become a destination.

Seed to Stem moved into its current location in October, expanding its offerings. The space, awash in white, green, and beige, felt both calming and cool as the Alabama Shakes sang from the speakers on our visit. Kelly and I perused the natural decor and terrariums, putting plants, candles, and national park posters in wire baskets.



A search for succulents at Seed to Stem (left); items on display at Bedlam Book Cafe.

From there, we walked across the hall to Bedlam Book Cafe, which opened in November. The cozy store sells used copies and remainders from the familiar to the unexpected with one section devoted to “miscellaneous printed matter.” Kelly paid for a book on beer-can collecting as I eyed spirals titled “Je Me Souviens La Cuisine,” settling for French press coffee from the juice bar.

That’s not all. In other parts of the building, shoppers can browse antiques at the Crompton Collective, find

Free People blouses at Haberdash, and eat at busy BirchTree Bread Company, where we had a lunch of salad and wine. I also bought a bottle of local sriracha, bringing Brooklyn back to mind, as did the many versions of toast.

Sure to further satisfy hipsters, a food hall and lofts are coming to the same street. That development is next to the seven-way intersection in Kelley Square, best known for its darting traffic and gas stations. Even that landmark of sorts will soon see improve-



PHOTOS BY MEGAN LISAGOR STOESELL FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

IF YOU GO ...

Seed to Stem (138 Green St., Suite 3, Worcester; 508-890-0933; www.seedtostemhome.com)
Bedlam Book Cafe (138 Green St., Suite 1, Worcester; 508-459-1400; bedlambookcafe.com)
BirchTree Bread Company (138 Green St., Suite 5, Worcester; 774-243-6944; www.birchtreebreadcompany.com)

Megan Lisagor Stoessel can be reached at Megan.Stoessel@jwu.edu.