

VARIETY

THE DEATH OF GEORGE FLOYD



Tony L. Clark held a photo of George Floyd during a May 28 protest at the corner of 38th and Chicago in Minneapolis. JERRY HOLT • jerry.holt@startribune.com

LOVE, HISTORY, HOPE

In the wake of George Floyd's killing, three black Twin Cities authors look to the past, to their families and to the community as they make a plea for change.



MICHAEL KLEBER-DIGGS

"Peace is among many things I desire for my child, and it would take a long time to express how hard it is to carry the worry she carries for me."



SHANNON GIBNEY

"Even after 60 years, Baldwin's words still manage somehow to occupy the present tense."



JUNAUDA PETRUS-NASAH

"Overnight, our city became a phoenix, glowing and rebirthing something unstoppable and irresistible for the world."

Read their essays on **E4**

Summer of the road trip

Pandemic worries are fueling a surge in driving vacations.

By **KERRI WESTENBERG**
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Amanda and Peter VanOverbeke of Orono planned to jet off to Ireland with their two sons, Danny, 18, and Andrew, 16. The summer vacation was to be a present for Danny, who just graduated from Orono High School, and a celebration of his acceptance to Notre Dame — home of the Fighting Irish. Now, given the coronavirus pandemic, they will instead drive to a rental house on Lake Michigan for some family togetherness before taking Danny to school.

The Van Overbeks are shifting gears, from Europe by air to the United States by car, reflecting the altered reality of many other travelers.

Like no summer before, this is the summer of the road trip.

Gas prices have plunged. Unemployment has jumped, bringing an uncertainty that can quash grand vacation plans. The pandemic has scared fliers away from once-crowded planes and grounded more than half of the U.S. airline fleet. People are tired of their homes, where they have been isolating — and dreaming of escapes.

This unprecedented confluence of circumstances has accentuated Americans' long love affair with the open road.

See **ROAD** on **E12** ▶

Pour some sugar on it

You've heard of crème brûlée, but how about baked bean brûlée?

By **CHRIS HEWITT**
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Missy Weldy enjoys cooking food but, even more, she likes to burn it.

The French word for "scorched" is "brûlée," as in "crème brûlée," custard that is sprinkled with sugar and torched to create a crispy, caramel layer. But, fancy term or no, Weldy likes the thrill of almost, but not quite, lighting pickles, baked beans and other foods on fire. She translates that enthusiasm into "Brûlée Yay or Nay," a series of short videos in which she scatters sugar on random foods and then lights 'em up.

It started with a butane torch, a kitchen item the south Minneapolis woman bought a couple of months ago.

"I love my torch so much! I'm thinking of knitting it a cozy. Originally, my intention was to make crème brûlée but I didn't have the ingredients on hand and I wanted to use the torch, so I thought, 'What do I have?' And then I thought: 'Oatmeal!'" recalled Weldy, 46, whose wife, Erica Mauter, has declined to be in the weekly YouTube shows. "That's just how my brain works. I make random connections and then see if I can act on them."

See **SUGAR** on **E8** ▶

TRAVEL

Summer of the road trip is on the horizon

ROAD from El

In a survey of 1,000 Americans, more than half said they planned to visit family or friends in the U.S. this summer — and 73% of them will do so by car, according to a study by tourism research firm Longwoods International. Likewise, GasBuddy found that one-third of Americans plan to hit the road this summer. In a FinanceBuzz survey of 1,500 Americans, 48% said they plan to skip flying for at least a year. Meanwhile, True Incentive, a company that sells marketing and sales reward trips to businesses, is offering a “great American road trip” with hotel nights in the continental U.S. as clients shift away from the usual cruises and flying vacations.

At AAA Minneapolis, requests for TripTiks — printed guides and maps for driving vacations — tumbled in April and May, said Linda Snyder, vice president of travel and retail services. But in the first few days of June, numbers are nearly on par with the same period last year. Glacier and Yellowstone national parks, the Black Hills, Southern California and the Carolinas dominate the requests.

No hotel required

Whether it is because of the romance of roaming or a wariness of hotels, increasing numbers of travelers are looking to recreational vehi-



Kurt Moses, provided by Vistabule Teardrop Trailer

Kurt and Edwige Moses camp for the night in their teardrop camper trailer, built by St. Paul company Vistabule.

cles for their getaways.

Vistabule Teardrop Trailer, a St. Paul company that makes and sells custom-built camper trailers, has seen a surge of interest. “The sense of urgency that is sometimes there is much more elevated,” said Steve Corcoran, general manager. The turnaround time on an order

can be as much as five months for the luxury trailers, whose \$20,000 base model can be upgraded with solar panels, refrigerators, heating, air conditioning, and other options. Inquiries have more than doubled from pre-COVID levels, and orders were up 38% in May compared with the same time last year. Some cus-

tomers are asking if they can buy a floor model for a quick purchase, Corcoran said.

In May, RVshare, a peer-to-peer recreational vehicle marketplace akin to Airbnb, saw its highest booking numbers in the company’s eight-year history. The service recently added a filter so consumers can

search for RV rentals with flexible cancellation policies, which can ease worries about a sudden case of COVID-19 stopping a vacation in its tracks.

Before you head out

For people traveling by car instead of plane because they want to limit interactions with people, a few steps should help keep you healthy on the road. To avoid a surprise visit to a mechanic, get your car checked before you head out. Sanitize the interior of your car as you would your home after it’s finished at the shop. Pack masks, hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, soap and paper towels. Bring along a cooler to fill with drinks and snacks to limit your stops.

Knowing of any restrictions and quarantines in place for your destinations will also be key. AAA has a map of the country with that information at tinyurl.com/yccjkero.

VanOverbeke said that she feels comfortable with her drive across Wisconsin to the lake house and then on to Notre Dame, in Indiana.

“We have our protocols down pat: masks, wipes, what we can touch and not touch,” she said.

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VIEWFINDERS ITALY



Hard work leads to heavenly view in Dolomites

THE TRAVELER: BRIAN TELL OF EDINA

Above the clouds, morning casts a rosy glow in Tre Cime di Lavaredo, a nature park in the Dolomites of northern Italy. Tell’s wife had warned him to get in shape before the trip, he wrote in an e-mail. “Although in my 60s, I figured that walking the golf course a few times a week kept me in reasonably good shape. Boy, was I wrong.” They hiked 45 minutes, then climbed for 30 along a narrow, rocky path to reach this view. “It turned out to be my best shot of the week,” wrote Tell, who made this picture 40 minutes after sunrise, using a Fujifilm X-Pro2 camera. He processed the long-exposure shot in Adobe Lightroom using the Velvia film profile, “which imitates the colors of Fuji’s old Velvia film stock,” he noted. Simple chalets offering food and overnight accommodations called refugios line the mountain paths, though they must be booked months in advance, Tell warned. He and his wife stayed at a hotel in the mountain town of Cortina d’Ampezzo.

SHARE YOUR PHOTOS: To submit your travel photo for consideration to Viewfinders, share it on Instagram tagged with #STtravel, or e-mail a jpeg to travel@startribune.com.

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

Southwest’s EarlyBird option gets no refund

Q: Southwest Airlines canceled my flight from Baltimore to Las Vegas in April. I was supposed to be there for a convention. The airline offered me a voucher, but I’m not sure if I’m going to be able to use it. My client also holds another much larger event in Las Vegas in August, but it’s not clear if it’s going to happen this year.

Southwest couldn’t have been nicer. A representative immediately agreed to a refund. But they didn’t include the EarlyBird purchase I’d made. Instead, they offered a \$50 voucher, which I could use for a future EarlyBird purchase.

I’d like to get a full refund, including the EarlyBird purchase.

A: I’m not surprised that Southwest Airlines offered a quick refund. That’s the kind of customer service people expect from the airline. But converting your EarlyBird purchase into a voucher is something of a gray area.

First, let’s talk about the refundability of your ticket. When an airline cancels a flight, federal regulations say it owes you a quick refund. It may offer you a voucher. But if you don’t want it, you get your money back.

You paid extra for the EarlyBird option, which gives you automatic check-in before Southwest’s traditional 24-hour check-in. EarlyBird gives you the benefit of earlier boarding, which means you can select your

preferred available seat and have earlier access to overhead bin storage.

I think these fees should be included in the refund of your ticket purchase. But it’s not clear if the government’s refund rules apply to them.

Airlines are trying to conserve cash during these difficult times, so I can’t blame Southwest for offering you a voucher. But I think the representative should have given you a choice between a voucher and a refund.

Two days after Southwest offered you the voucher, it followed up with an e-mail that claimed you had initiated the cancellation. “We are unable to refund your nonrefundable EarlyBird Check-in purchase,” it added.

You had not canceled the flight and you interpreted the government’s refund requirement as I do — that a full refund is due, including any fees. You reached out to the Southwest contacts on my advocacy site, noting that you had not canceled your flight.

You received a personal apology from Southwest agreeing to a refund of the EarlyBird fees. Southwest also told you to keep the \$50 voucher. Now that’s what I call a resolution.



Christopher Elliott is the founder of Elliott Advocacy, a nonprofit consumer organization. Contact him at elliott.org/help or chris@elliott.org.

IN BRIEF

Grand Canyon is open

Grand Canyon National Park has reopened as rangers put plans for the summer in place, despite pandemic cases and deaths. The park’s popular South Rim south entrance is now open daily, all hours, and the South Rim’s Mather campground is open for campers with reservations. The park’s remote North Rim is open for day use. Its campground is expected to open July 1. Beginning June 14, the park will phase in commercial and noncommercial Colorado River trips. Xanterra, one of the park’s concessionaires, said that it would reopen Grand Canyon lodgings in steps. Many park features remain closed, including the east entrance on the South Rim, Desert View Watchtower area and Desert View campground. Rangers have compiled a list of openings and closings at nps.gov/grca.

LOS ANGELES TIMES



MATT YORK • Associated Press
Grand Canyon selfies are back.

Delta keeps its distance

Delta Air Lines has committed to extending social distancing on its flights, and blocking middle seats, through at least Sept. 30, the carrier said Wednesday in a press release. The largest airline at Minneapolis-St. Paul will cap seating at 50% in first class and 60% in Main Cabin and the Comfort+ section. Middle seats (or select aisle seats on smaller aircraft) will continue to be unavailable when booking. If demand hits the caps on a given route, Delta said that it will consider adding flights or changing to larger aircraft. Customers and employees are still required to wear masks throughout the flight, and passengers will board from back to front in order to reduce incidental contact.

SIMON PETER GROEBNER

Touchless boarding

Flying has always been a high-touch exercise, so think about all those points and how you can minimize them. Most airlines suggest that travelers download their apps for touchless boarding, which will minimize the number of times you have to hand over documents or touch screens. Think about whether you want to check a bag or if you can make the trip with a carry-on (experts don’t necessarily think one is better than the other). Some airlines have shut down self-service kiosks, and others, like United, have begun rolling out touchless kiosks that allow customers to print bag tags using their own devices to scan a QR code.

NEW YORK TIMES