

THE VIP LOUNGE | CHRISTOPHER SWAN

Sox, 'Cinderella' make trip from NYC worthwhile

He may live in New York City, but Christopher Swan is a diehard Red Sox fan. The Barre, Vt., native, a graduate of the Boston Conservatory — where he studied musical theater — called visiting Boston to take in a game at Fenway Park a “perfect” vacation. And while the baseball season is over, Swan is still excited about coming to Boston for a two-week run (Dec. 18-30) of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s “Cinderella — The Musical” at the Emerson Colonial Theatre. Swan, 51, plays Sebastian, whom he calls the “grand chancellor . . . a father figure to the prince, but a kind of misguided one who’s stuck in the past.” He said the pageantry of the production — including the ornate costumes and set design — as well as the evolved and enlightened Cinderella (“she is a much more proactive participant in her decisions,” he said, adding that she falls in love “as an equal” with the prince). We caught up with Swan to talk about all things travel.



Christopher Swan in Alaska.

Favorite vacation destination? Boston, to see the World Series champs play at Fenway. It’s a perfect vacation for me. I’ve been a Sox fan all my

life and follow them religiously. I go to a few games every season — it’s easy to take a train to Boston.

Favorite food or drink while vacationing? Whatever the locals recommend. The great coffee and fruit in Costa Rica, the succulent beef and hot pot dishes in China, the French fries-stuffed sandwiches of Primanti Bros. in Pittsburgh. I’ll usually try anything once.

Where would you like to travel to but haven’t? It’s an odd choice, but I really want to see Easter Island [a Chilean island in the southeastern Pacific Ocean]. The mystery and beauty of those ancient giant statues really call to me. I haven’t gone because I’m busy working so much in theater . . . thankfully!

One item you can’t leave home without when traveling? A stuffed “Opus” penguin I’ve had since

high school. He doubles as a great neck pillow.

Aisle or window? Aisle now. My knee appreciates it if I occasionally stretch it out on those long flights.

Favorite childhood travel memory? Traveling to Nantucket island with my dad on his friend’s private prop plane when I was 11 or 12. With the cobblestone streets and lighthouses, I felt like I was in a book. On the trip back, we were flying through a storm [which was] thrilling.

Guilty pleasure when traveling? Beer. I’ve been trying to avoid it, but there are so many fantastic microbreweries across the country. I have to try the local IPAs when I get the chance.

Best travel tip? Sign up for TSA Precheck. It’s worth the money and can save you so much time at the airport. JULIET PENNINGTON

Holiday gifts for avid travelers during any season

By Necee Regis
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

The holiday season is almost here, and with it comes the usual conundrum of what presents to buy for family and friends. Lose your stress and add some ho-ho-ho to your holidays with these gift suggestions that are sure to delight your favorite fellow travelers.



DAVEK UMBRELLA

Stay dry wherever you roam with the compact umbrella, Davek Traveler. Don’t let the small size fool you. Its unique frame construction and mixture of steel, fiberglass, and aircraft-grade aluminum are designed to withstand the most brutal weather conditions. Every umbrella comes with an unconditional lifetime guarantee, meaning Davek will repair or replace any umbrella that fails to function properly, for any reason or at any time. Those prone to losing umbrellas will be happy to know the company’s Loss Protection card can be used to redeem a replacement at up to 50 percent off the regular price. Includes a genuine leather wrist strap with additional clip for securing your umbrella to any bag strap. Available in six bright colors, guaranteed to chase away rainy day blues. Elegant gift box included. \$89, davekny.com/collections/umbrellas2/products/the-davek-traveler



FIREBELLY TRAIL QUILT

Gear up for your next big adventure with the all-new Firebelly Trail Quilt. Designed by Kammok, makers of high-performance outdoor camping gear, this multi-purpose quilt can be a minimalist sleeping bag, hammock top quilt, hammock underquilt, as well as a go-to insulator for travel. The 30-degree down trail quilt, made for cold-weather trail-blazing, is 20 percent larger than the previous version and only one ounce heavier. Its buttery-soft, abrasion-resistant 15D ripstop nylon material retains body heat and is DWR-treated. The Firebelly integrates with your sleeping pad and has snaps and drawcords to create a footbox. An internal insulation honeycomb evenly distributes warmth and eliminates cold spots, keeping you warm and toasty throughout the night. \$279, kammok.com/pages/firebelly

SIGNATURE 2.0 TROLLEY LUGGAGE

Nothing says “Happy holidays!” quite like a new suitcase — preferably one with a ticket to an exciting destination tucked inside. Vessel, maker of high-quality lifestyle bags, has introduced a new item to its collection, the rolling, carry-on certified Signature 2.0 Trolley Luggage. Made of microsuede synthetic leather, the stylish bag features four 360-degree wheels for easy maneuverability. Multiple pockets offer ways to organize



accessories, including a front zip pocket with padded sleeve for a laptop or tablet. Available in four colors, black, caramel, navy and rose gold. Includes three year warranty. \$295, vesselbags.com/collections/trending-1/products/signature-2-luggage?variant=7824882761788



SELECT WATER FILTERS AND PURIFIERS

Having clean, safe water to drink on hiking, camping, kayaking, fishing trips, and other outdoor adventures is a necessity, not a luxury. Sawyer offers three models of Select Filters and Purifiers — S1, S2, and S3 — that remove most contaminants found in fresh water, reducing chemicals to 0.5 parts per billion (400 times lower than the EPA’s maximum allowed level) while also improving taste and odor. To use, simply unscrew the filter and fill the durable silicone bottle with water. After screwing the filter back on, squeeze the bottle for 10 seconds and then drink. A foam membrane in the bottle, and a 0.1 micron hollow fiber filter at the top, remove bacteria, protozoa, chemicals, pesticides, cysts, dirt, and sediment. Choose the best model for your destination and for also filtering out viruses and heavy metals. \$59.99-\$89.99, sawyer.com/products/select-filter-and-purifier

SLEEP EARPLUGS

Light sleepers rejoice! Flare Audio is introducing Sleep, a new earplug that uses ground-breaking technology to dull sleep-interfering sounds, making it easier to doze in planes, trains, and hotel rooms. (And even at home.) Rather than absorb sound like traditional foam earplugs, Sleep’s two models block noise using metal. Basic Sleep is made from aerospace aluminum, available as Natural Aluminum or Silver Pink. The pro model, made from grade 5 titanium, attenuates lower frequencies for maximum sound reduction. Both models come with a range of super-soft and durable memory-foam tips. \$38.47 and \$64.13, www.flareaudio.com/collections/sleep



CBD HEMP SKIN AND BODY CARE

Dry skin, aching muscles, and stress are downsides to the wonders of travel. Perhaps the perfect stocking stuffers for weary travelers are the hemp-derived CBD skin and body care products offered by Life Elements. The trendy (and now mainstream) Cannabidiol, or CBD, is said to have a wide variety of medicinal and therapeutic effects as an anti-inflammatory with antioxidant and anti-aging properties. The Ache & Pain Relief and Everyday Skin Repair roll-on sticks (available in two sizes) are easy to tuck into your carry-on to provide relief from dry skin, bug bites, and sunburn as well as help soothe achy muscles and inflamed joints. And it’s hard to resist the Bliss Ball Bath Bombs, eucalyptus-scented, muscle-relaxing pods to drop into a soaking tub. Made with hemp seed oil, calendula flower extract, olive oil, and other yummy ingredients (no harsh chemicals here), the Bliss Balls are available in three strengths. From \$14, actionwipes.com/collections/life-elements-plus

NOT FOR NAVIGATION

Looking for a unique way to remember — and celebrate — a favorite destination? In Essex, designer Heather Jernegan founded Not For Navigation, a line of custom-designed bags, pillows and other home accessories (including shower curtains and fleece blankets) adorned with images of nautical charts and topographical maps. Simply choose the item you’d like to purchase, and add a description of your cherished location, including specific details you’d like to see, such as a favorite beach or nearby mountain range. You’ll receive a digital mock-up of the design, ready for you to revise or approve before the final order is made. Custom orders can take two to three weeks to complete. \$54-\$150, www.notfor-navigation.com



HEATED TRAVEL PILLOW

Add a new level of comfort to your travel accessories with Volt Heat’s 5v Heated Travel Pillow. The cozy, fleece-covered pillow adds warmth at the base of your neck to keep you warm in chilly airports, planes, and trains. As the high-density memory foam heats up, it contours to your neck, helping to cradle and support your head as you relax and snooze. A built-in thermostat controller regulates the temperature, allowing you to choose one of three power settings at the push of a button. Includes a rechargeable battery and USB charging cord that also operates as a backup charging device for a cellphone. The soft fabric can be removed, and is machine-washable. \$50, voltheat.com/collections/heated-misc/products/heated-travel-pillow-by-volt



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