

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

‘BIG BIRTHDAY’ WORTHY

Hotel Viking in Newport, R.I., a renovated classic

By Necee Regis

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

This is a year of “big birthdays” for us. While some ignore the date, others plan big celebrations, as did

CHECK-IN our friends in Newport, R.I., this spring. While searching on-

line for accommodations, I avoided traditional bed and breakfast options (my personal definition of torture) and looked instead for something grand, with a spa, something befitting the momentous occasion. I found the Hotel Viking.

Those with a knowledge of Newport — at the time, not me — know the property opened to much acclaim in May 1926. Located at the top of the Historic Hill neighborhood, the hotel has gone through many transformations through the decades as it hosted dignitaries and celebrities. The latest \$6.2 million restoration aims to honor the hotel’s historic roots while adding up-to-date technological amenities, such as flat screen TVs offering Netflix in each room.

We arrived in Newport on a cool and rainy day. From outside, the five-story, red-brick structure with multicolumned portico was imposing and formal. Stepping inside the spacious lobby, the stiff-upper-lip first impression melted into a welcoming embrace.

To the right of the grand entrance, an open living room-style lounge with double-sided fireplace faced a sleek, contemporary check-in desk. Low-slung couches and cozy chairs in a blue, gray, and taupe color scheme are designed to honor Newport’s maritime heritage. Guests lounged with newspapers near oversized, multipane windows as small children marveled at the fire. (Based on observations of many guests with children, the hotel is extremely kid-friendly.)

Opposite the lounge/check-in area, a marble-topped bar and all-day lounge (with sports on the TV) leads to the hotel’s restaurant, One Bellevue. The smaller garden room, a great spot for breakfast, overlooks a patio that I imagine is hopping on warm summer days. Speaking of hopping, the bar was bustling on both Friday and Saturday nights with live music entertaining the mixed-age crowd. Thankfully, in our second-floor room, we couldn’t hear



NECEE REGIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

A \$6.2 million restoration aimed to honor the Hotel Viking’s historic roots while adding up-to-date technological amenities.

a thing. Because of the weather, we also missed experiencing the open-air rooftop bar, a popular place for cocktails and light bites.

The hotel is much larger than it appears from the street, offering 208 rooms and suites. As in many older hotels with added-on wings, its hallways meander in quirky routes, interrupted by random flights of three or four stairs. Of course, that is all part of its charm. For example, after check-in, we left our room to find the swimming pool, Jacuzzi, and spa. We descended in the elevator to the first floor, and walked down a long hallway to another elevator where we learned we were (once again) on the second floor, and descended to *another* first floor, and another hallway that led to our destination. (We later discovered a more direct route down a wide grand stairwell.)

This lower-level wing’s décor is a throwback to the Gilded Age. On damask-papered walls, gilt-framed prints and landscape paintings evoke an elegant time. Blue and gold carpets and brocade curtains line the hallway past a series of ballrooms that one night hosted a wedding, and another a high school prom. We followed crystal ceiling fixtures to the Spa Fjör, an oasis of relaxation within the busy hotel. Open seven days a week, the full-service spa’s menu of treatments include Thai, Balinese, and Javanese traditions. Coming off two stressful weeks of moving and travel, we opted for simple deep-tissue massages (50 minutes, \$125) that left us restored and ready for the weekend.

The thought of never leaving the premises is a tempting one. Guestrooms, from 150 to 325 square feet, feature sumptuous fabrics and bed linens, pillow-top mattresses, and ornate headboards. Some even have electric fireplaces. Mansion Suites boast ornate décor, including Chipendale and Queen Anne furnishings, and tapestries. There’s a \$25 per night resort fee that includes s’mores on the patio, a poolside ice cream social, and yoga classes. The classic (\$17.95) or royal (\$26.95) afternoon tea would have been divine, especially for the advertised scones with lemon curd. Happy birthday to us.

Hotel Viking Newport, One Bellevue Ave., Newport, R.I., rooms from \$199; suites from \$279; 800-556-7126, www.hotelviking.com

Necee Regis can be contacted at neceeregis@gmail.com.

HERE

JAZZY STROLL ALONG THE CHARLES

Jazz lovers won’t want to miss Jazz Along the Charles: A Walkable Concert presented the Charles River Esplanade. (Sept. 23, 2-4 p.m.) An amazing assemblage of 25 ensembles will perform at a series of connected, easy-to-stroll-to locations, interpreting the same curated list of Boston-related tunes in one collective concert. Enjoy the same songs in a variety of styles — including avant-garde, bebop, blues, Bossa Nova, chamber jazz, cool, free, funk, fusion, gypsy jazz, klezmer, Latin, New Orleans Swing, reggae, and world jazz — performed by musicians with wide levels of experience, including amateurs and those with collegiate, pre-professional, and professional backgrounds. The sets will close with each ensemble performing a selection from their own repertoire; free, www.celebrityseries.org/live-performances/public-performance-projects/jazz-along-the-charles.

NEW CHARGING STATION IN MAINE

Electric car drivers can now journey to Acadia National Park without worrying about losing power. The Bar Harbor Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with A Climate to Thrive (a nonprofit organization seeking to achieve energy independence for Mount Desert Island by 2030) has installed a level 2 electric vehicle charging infrastructure at its seasonal visitors center, open from April to October. Located at 1201 Bar Harbor Road, Trenton, the new charging station is owned and operated by the visitor center and is free of use to EV owners (www.aclimatetothrive.org/evnow).

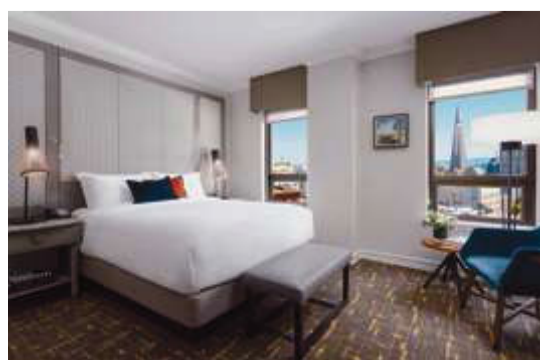


Bar Harbor, Maine is the gateway to Acadia National Park, one of the nation’s most visited national parks, and the largest community on Mount Desert Island (www.visitbarharbor.com).

THERE

NOB HILL HOTEL REIMAGINED FOR DIGITAL AGE

Tech-savvy travelers to San Francisco can now enjoy digital-age amenities along with pampered service and historic digs at the newly renovated Stanford Court. Located atop San Francisco’s famed Nob Hill, the iconic 400-room hotel has just completed a multimillion-dollar makeover of its guest rooms, lobby, and public and meeting spaces. In a nod to the town’s innovative spirit, the new guest rooms are outfitted with a mix of modern functional furnishings, high-speed internet connectivity, and in-room amenities featuring 55-inch Google Chromecast-equipped HDTVs, ample



outlets, and USB charging ports both bedside and at the work desk. Guests also can enjoy daylighted digital art installations; Kinima.fit virtual personal training and Peloton training bikes in the fitness center; a tech library complete with Jambox speakers, iPads, GoPro cameras, MacBook Air and Chromebook computers; Blix Electric Bikes; FloWater filling stations; electric vehicle charging stations; and extensive access to electronic magazines and newspapers. Too much tech? The lobby boasts a music room with an old-fashioned record player, and hundreds of vinyl albums. Rates from \$249; 415-989-3500, www.stanfordcourt.com.

ADVENTURE TRAVEL FOR WOMEN ONLY

Leave the guys at home and sign up for the brand-new high-energy offering from AdventureWomen, a women-owned and women-run adventure travel company. Italy: Cycling Puglia — A Biker’s Delight leads travelers on a range of active experiences. Biking an average of 30 miles per day, the itinerary begins in Lecce and winds its way through Puglia’s rolling hills to UNESCO World Heritage towns of Alberobello (known for its conical-shaped trulli houses) and Matera. Along the way, cycle past ancient olive groves, the Greek ruins of Egnazia, panoramic valleys, ravines, and gorges. Stops include the rock churches of San Nicola and Santa Margherita, farms making mozzarella and burrata, olive oil and wine producers, a local bakery, organic farm and more; April 28-May 6, 2019, \$5,590, 800-804-8686, www.adventurewomen.com/adventure-vacation/italy-cycling-tour-for-women/.

EVERYWHERE

ALEXA HITS THE ROAD

Need a new companion on your next road trip? Roav VIVA debuts a new car charger with Alexa integration, meaning you can now bring your favorite Amazon voice personality along for the ride. You won’t need to take your hands off the wheel as the voice activated service allows you to get directions, listen to audiobooks from Audible, play music, and more over Bluetooth, Carplay, Android Auto, or an Aux in connection. Two high-speed charging ports featuring PowerIQ technology to charge mobile devices at optimal speeds. Tap the a button to ef-



fortlessly mute and unmute the microphones, so Alexa is only listening when you want her to be. If your VIVA cannot be plugged into your car, or has connection issues, return it for a full refund in 30 days; \$56.99, goroav.com/pages/viva.

VOICE COACHING EARPHONES

Staying fit while traveling can be a challenge. Now you can take your personal trainer on your next vacation or business trip with SOUL Electronics’ Run Free Pro Bio. The wireless earphones serve as a tiny coach in your ear by providing real-time voice coaching to guide you through your fitness routine. Additionally, the ear buds measure speed, distance, cadence, step length, step width, vertical oscillation, head tilt angle, shock, maximum leg force, balance, and consistency to improve the quality of your workout. Interchangeable ear locks fit any ear. Nono-coating technology provides protection from sweat and water with an IPX5 water-resistance rating. LED light and reflective cable alert vehicles and cyclists to your presence during nighttime runs. Offers up to 11 hours of playtime with two hour charge; \$119.99, www.soulelectronics.com/products/run-free-pro-bio-sports-ai-voice-coach-earphones.

NECEE REGIS