

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

HOW TO MAKE DRIVING BEARABLE IN BAD WEATHER

ADOBE

By Christopher Elliott
WASHINGTON POST

Unless you enjoy living dangerously, getting behind the wheel in a winter storm probably isn't your idea of fun. "Road surfaces can change quickly between dry, snow-packed, and icy — all of which require a different approach to steering and stopping," says Leslie Kasperowicz, a Minneapolis driver who edits CarInsurance.org, a car insurance website.

The trick, pros like Kasperowicz say, is to stay ahead of the weather, pack the right gear, and make sure you understand the fundamentals of bad-weather driving. Downloading the right smartphone apps can help. They include:

Offline Survival Manual (Android only): This worst-case-scenario app includes helpful information on how to make a fire, build a shelter, and find food, as well as other information you might need in an emergency. True to its name, once you download it, you don't need a cellular connection to access the information.

Waze (Android/iOS): Waze is a navigation app that provides turn-by-turn directions and user-contributed information on traffic, travel times, and route conditions. Joe Gast, CEO at Truck Driver Institute, a driving school, recommends it to his drivers. "Waze allows you to leverage traffic insights from other drivers so you can stay on safe and clear roads," he says. It's particularly useful during the winter because road conditions can be volatile.

Weather Underground (Android/iOS): This app offers drivers hyper-local weather data. During the winter, it highlights weather-related traffic hazards. "Weather Underground issues ice alerts and warnings for other problematic conditions that can affect your driving during the cold winter months," says Jared Kamrowski, who founded Thrifty Traveler, a travel website.

There are also state transportation agency apps, such as Pennsylvania's 511PA Mobile App, that can help. Pennsylvania's app reports road conditions and enables drivers to monitor the state's plow trucks. If you're driving in a blizzard, that can mean the difference between getting there and spending a night stuck in a snowbank.

If you're driving in winter conditions, what should you pack in the car? For a list, I turned to Jess Larsen, who grew up snowboarding in northern Alberta and is a vice president for an ad agency in Provo, Utah. He's driven in whiteout conditions many times, and he still gets a chance to practice his winter-driving skills on the way to Utah's ski resorts.

- Here's what Larsen carries:
- Extra shoes or boots to wear while pushing yourself or others out of a snowbank. If you're wearing nice work shoes, Larsen says, "you'll freeze within 10 steps in the snow."
 - A little fold-up shovel so you can dig yourself or others out of the snow. Make sure it is metal in case you have to chip away ice under a tire.
 - A small blanket, a water bottle, and some snacks.

Take extra snacks if you have kids, because they'll get anxious in the cold — and hungry.

■ If you're planning to do a lot of winter driving, stow a box of cat litter in the car. It's a cheap way to give your tires a little traction on snow or ice.

One final item you shouldn't leave home without: a roadside-assistance program.

"Shell out the cash to AAA or something like that," Larsen says. "Then make sure everybody in your family programs the number into their phone."

All of which brings us to the best strategies for winter driving. Assuming you've downloaded the right apps and packed the car with everything you need, what now?

Practice your winter driving. Larsen recommends finding an empty parking lot after a snowstorm. "Try getting yourself into a spin and seeing how fast you can recover," he says. Also, practice turning at various speeds and stopping. Get a feel for how your car responds in snow.

"As far as driving itself, nothing can compete with meaningful repetitions," Larsen adds.

And, finally, slow down, experts say. Kamrowski, who grew up in Fargo, N.D., says that all too often, motorists will pass you on an icy highway and then "you drive a few miles down the road and see them in the ditch."

But the best advice for driving in severe winter weather is this: Don't. If you can avoid taking the car out while it's snowing, you'll save yourself a lot of trouble. You might miss the first couple of ski runs, but at least you'll be alive.

Try to stay ahead of the weather, pack the right gear, and learn the fundamentals of winter driving.

HERE

RHODE ISLAND'S FIRST HOTEL WEEK

Luxury becomes affordable in the Ocean State during the inaugural Rhode Island Hotel Week 2020 (Jan. 18-31). Jump on deep discounts offered at 22 premium hotels — featuring four flat nightly rates of \$100, \$200, \$300, and \$400 — found at a variety of hotels in Blackstone Valley, Block Island, Newport County, Providence, South County, and Warwick. As added bonus, several properties are offering complimentary amenities included in the listed rate, such as spa treatments, dining credit, room upgrades, and activities. Participating hotels run the gamut from iconic resorts to boutique properties to classic inns, as well as one antique-furnished farm. While visiting, take advantage of concurrent statewide events including Newport Wellness Week, Providence Restaurants Week, the Pawtucket Wintertime Farmers Market, and more. Book rooms directly with each hotel. Find promo codes and links on Hotel Week website. www.visitrhodeisland.com/rhode-island-hotel-week-2020/

CINEMATIC PACKAGE AT FAIRMONT COPLEY PLAZA

Massachusetts plays a starring role in the much-acclaimed new film adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's novel "Little Women." In honor of the movie, and the dazzling dance scene filmed in its opulent Grand Ballroom, Fairmont Copley Plaza has unveiled a "Little Women" Movie Package. Includes overnight accommodations for two; a decorative tin of Harney & Sons "Little



Women Orchard House Blend" green tea (created for this adaptation); official movie companion hardcover book and movie poster; and two guided tour admissions to the author's family home, Orchard House, where Alcott wrote and set her novel. Book by Feb. 25 for stays through Feb. 29; transportation to Orchard House not included. Rates from \$259. 800-514-4568, www.fairmont.com/copley-plaza-boston/special-offers/hotel-offers/discovery/little-women-movie/

THERE

BURGEONING BALKANS

Those looking for the next new not-too-touristy destination might want to consider Albania. After decades of isolation, this former communist nation — now a member of the European Union and NATO — is attracting travelers for its rich historical sites and stunning landscapes. A 14-day tour, Albania Beyond the Guidebook, is the newest offering in MIR Corporation's portfolio

of journeys at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. Limited to 16 guests, the trip traverses the country from north to south, with highlights that include forgotten remnants of Greco-Roman and Ottoman architecture; dramatic vistas in the Albanian Alps; the headquarters of the liberal Bektashi order of Sufism; a medieval Turkish bazaar; the port and resort city of Saranda; Bunk'Art Museum in Tirana (a former secret underground atomic shelter now turned museum and contemporary arts space); boat ride and mussel tasting on Lake Butrint; UNESCO World Heritage Site of



ALBANIAN NATIONAL TOURISM AGENCY/EUROPA TRAVEL

Butrint; and more. May 17-30. \$4,995 per person double. (Does not include international airfare.) 800-424-7289, <https://www.mircorp.com/trip/albania-beyond-the-guidebook/>

HAPPY BIRTHDAY LUDWIG

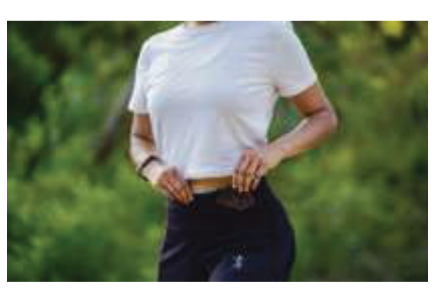
A yearlong series of concerts, exhibitions, and theater performances is taking place throughout Germany to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the birth of Ludwig van Beethoven. The Beethoven Jubilee, branded BTHVN2020, is a cooperative venture between the Federal Republic of Germany, the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, the Rhine-Sieg District, and the City of Bonn, the composer's birthplace. Taking place through Dec. 17, celebrations include a concert by the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Simon Rattle; the first Fidelio opera performance of the season in Bonn under the direction of Volker Lössch; the "Beethoven in Nature" festival — six castles, six communities, six dates — and a multitude of additional events. To see available offerings, simply enter the dates you'll be in Germany and the type of event you want to attend on the easy-to-use website. www.bthvn2020.de/en/

EVERYWHERE

APP FINDS WORKOUT LOCALES

If your New Year resolutions involve commitment to a fitness regime — even when traveling — we have an app for you. Mindbody

will locate yoga, barre, pilates, and other workout classes at studios and gyms in major cities throughout the United States and around the world. Simply enter the city you plan to visit and see a plethora of workout choices, including locations, time, price, phone number, and booking link. The platform also curates salons and other services, meaning you can get a facial or a blowout before your big business meeting, or evening dinner date. There is no commitment upfront; just pay for your service or workout of choice. The app is free. www.mindbodyonline.com/



KGB PUTS "FUN" IN FUNCTIONAL FITNESS GEAR

Love to run when traveling but worry about losing your phone, cash, or hotel key? KGB Running has debuted a functional and stylish solution for hands-free jogging with The Keep Going men's and women's shorts. The "SmartSlot" waistband is a sleek, 360-degree pocket that securely holds your stuff, including any size cellphone, eliminating the need to pack an armband, belt, or fanny pack. Moisture-wicking fabric is quick drying, and stretch design adds comfort. \$59.99. www.kgbrunning.com/

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