

# The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD



PHOTOS BY CAMERON ZEGERS/UNCRIUSE

## LIONS AND TIGERS AND BEARS — AND BOATS

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**‘H**o-hum! Another orca whale!” said nobody ever. Wildlife lovers go a little crazy in Alaska, where the daily creature feature might include whales, bears, bald eagles, seals, and sea lions. Our favorite

**Kayakers watch Alaska brown bears feed during an expedition with UnCruise Adventures.**

Alaska wildlife watching moment: observing sea otters crack clams on their bellies. If Mom Nature offers up anything cuter than that, we’ve never seen it. (Sorry, cat videos on YouTube!) If gorgeous natural settings teeming with wildlife ring your travel chimes, here’s a tip: a small-ship cruise is a great way to go. While cruising, we’ve watched gray whales cavort with their newborns in Mexico’s Sea of Cortez, swum with hammerhead sharks and sea lions in the Galapagos (the sea lions were much more aggressive than the sharks), and hiked alongside sloths and squirrel monkeys in Costa Rica’s rain forest — just for starters.

“In many of these destinations, a small ship or expedition cruise can bring you to parts of the region that are inaccessible by land, so you can literally get that up-close-and-personal wildlife watching experience,” says Colleen McDaniel, senior executive editor of Cruise Critic

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### HERE

**TWO HOTELS ARE BETTER THAN ONE** Those who can’t decide between an urban vacation or a coastal getaway can now experience the best of both worlds with the City & Coastal Retreat Package offered by XV Beacon and the Chatham Bars Inn. The package allows guests to spend two nights at each of these luxury properties, located just two hours away from one another in Boston and Cape Cod. Guests can enjoy experiences and amenities that fuse cosmopolitan adventures — think visits to museums and world-class restaurants — with coastal wellness offerings including nature walks and spa treatments. Car transfer or rental car available on request. Available through Dec. 30; some blackout dates apply. *Chatham Bars Inn rates from \$750, 800-527-4884, www.chathambarsinn.com; XV Beacon rates from \$800, 617-670-1500, xvbeacon.com.*

### SKI BUS EXCURSIONS

Love to ski but don’t have a car? Lifthopia, an online and mobile marketplace for ski lift tickets and mountain activities, has debuted Lifthopia Experiences: curated trips that include round-trip bus transportation to ski resorts along with tickets, rentals, lessons, and more. Book experiences in major metro markets in the United States and Canada, including three New England excursions: Boston to Crotched Mountain in Bennington, N.H.; Boston to Ski Ward in Shrewsbury for snow tubing, pizza, and a brewery visit; and Connecticut ski bus to Mount Snow in Dover, Vt. Multiple pickup locations



are available for each excursion. *Rates from \$89. 415-275-6171, experiences.lifthopia.com. Additional day ski trips — to Bretton Woods, Sunday River, Killington, and more — are offered by the Boston Ski + Sports Club. Rates vary. 617-789-4070, bssc.com/ski-ride/day-ski*

### THERE

#### ST. PATRICK’S DAY FESTIVITIES IN CORK

They say that everyone is Irish on St. Patrick’s Day. With that in mind, why not celebrate in Ireland, where every town — even very small ones — have at least one parade? The annual festival in Cork, March 15-18, brings color, pageantry, traditional music, and local fun to this university city. [www.corkcity.ie/en/cork-st-patrick-s-festival](http://www.corkcity.ie/en/cork-st-patrick-s-festival). While in Cork, stay in style at the recently re-habbed hotel, The River Lee. Part of The Doyle Collection, this contemporary hotel’s renovations include a new bar and restaurant — the Grill Room and The River

Club — lobby, terrace, and hotel suites that are newly refreshed. Amenities include a 20-meter pool, gym and spa, afternoon tea with a river view, 24-hour room service, and more. *Rates from \$183. www.doylecollection.com/hotels/the-river-lee-hotel*

#### STARGAZING IN IRELAND

And speaking of Ireland, stargazers can add the Kerry International Dark-Sky reserve to their bucket list this year. One of only three officially designated “Gold Tier” reserves on the planet, and the only one in the Northern Hemisphere, means that the night



sky in the southwest region of Kerry offers astronomical sights equal to those found in Grand Canyon or the deserts of Africa. From May through October, Wilderness Travel ventures throughout this area in their Spirit of Ireland hiking journeys, experiencing the mystical and wild side of the island. The nine-day excursion offers multiple opportunities to marvel at the spectacular night sky in places like the Dingle Peninsula, Great Blasket Island, and Killarney National Park. *Rates from \$5395, 800-368-2794, www.wildernesstravel.com/trip/ireland/kerry-cork-dingle-hiking*

### EVERYWHERE

#### NON-TOXIC BUG PROTECTION

Keep pesky bugs away on camping, hiking, and other outdoor excursions with Proven, a non-toxic, DEET-free repellent recommended by the World Health Organization, the US Environmental Protection Agency, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Safe for use by children (ages 2 months and up) and pregnant women, Proven’s new lightly scented or unscented sprays and lotions repel mosquitos, ticks, black flies, biting flies, stable flies, ants, gnats, chiggers, sand flies, and no-see-ums for 12 to 14 hours. The active ingredient is Saltidin, patented with low acute toxicity and low skin absorption, making it safe for the environment and non-toxic to fish and other wildlife. *Available in a two-*

*ounce travel-friendly size, as well as regular and family sizes. \$7.95-\$12.95. provenrepellent.com*

#### POLAR FLEECE CUSTOMIZED PULLOVERS

PolarTec, creator of the original polar fleece jacket in 1981, is reviving the product for a new generation of consumers. You can now create your own one-of-a-kind fleece pullover, with a dozen-plus customization options and more than 20 color choices. Best of all, Polar Fleece’s fabric is now lighter, warmer, and made of recycled materials. Simply log onto the website and choose the easy-to-use “build your own” link. From there you can play with color combinations to create your own distinctive pullover. Orders are sewn in an old mill on the banks of the Salmon Falls River, on the New Hampshire and Maine border, and are shipped within two to three weeks. *\$120. polarfleece.com.*

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