LIONS AND TIGERS AND BEARS — AND BOATS

By Diane Bair and Pamela Wright

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.

STARGAZING IN IRELAND

The nine-day excursion offers multiple opportunities to marvel at the mystical and wild side of the island. Ireland hiking journeys, experiencing the mystical and wild side of the island. Ireland hiking journeys, experiencing the mystical and wild side of the island. This nine-day excursion offers multiple opportunities to marvel at the mystical and wild side of the island. For 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 up close and personal with wildlife watching experiences, says Colleen McFadden, senior executive editor of Cruise Critic.

WHERE ARE THE LIONS AND TIGERS AND BEARS?

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

CATHERINE LYNCH/UNCRUISE

The sun never sets during an Alaska wildlife watching moment; observing sea otters cracking clams on their bellies. If Mom Nature offers up anything cuter than that, we’ve never seen it. (Say, cat videos on YouTube?) If you prefer safari and tinge-toeing 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 San of Cortez, swarms with hammerhead sharks and sea lions in the Galapagos (the sea lions were much more aggressive than the sharks), and biked alongside doves and squawking monkeys in Costa Rica’s rain forest — just for starters.

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Kayakers watch Alaska brown bears feed on fish, eat salmon and more. UnCruise Adventures.

“Hey, another orca whale!” says no body ever. Wildlife loves a little crazy in Alaska, where the daily creature feature might include whales, bears, bald eagles, seals, and sea lions. Our favorite Alaska wildlife watching moment: observing sea otters cracking clams on their bellies. If Mom Nature offers up anything cuter than that, we’ve never seen it. (Say, cat videos on YouTube?) If you prefer safari and tinge-toeing 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 San of Cortez, swarms with hammerhead sharks and sea lions in the Galapagos (the sea lions were much more aggressive than the sharks), and biked alongside doves and squawking monkeys in Costa Rica’s rain forest — just for starters.

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