

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

By Diane Daniel
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

As far back as he can remember, Andy Steves traveled with his family to Europe every summer while his father, Rick Steves, researched his best-selling “Europe Through the Back Door” guidebooks, which started a multimillion-dollar travel-business franchise. The younger Steves, 30, now leads a new generation of European travelers through Andy Steves Travel tours and his own guidebook, “Andy Steves’ Europe: City-Hopping on a Budget.” This year, he’s increasing his tour offerings and is updating a second edition of his guidebook. Below are edited excerpts from an interview with Steves.

Q. Did you know from an early age that you wanted to follow your father into the travel business?

A. Not at all. I’d planned on doing something completely different. I studied industrial design and Italian at the University of Notre Dame and was planning to go into a master’s program for yacht design. In the spring of 2008, I did a study abroad program in Rome and my friends and I traveled almost every weekend. It fell to me to organize the trips because I’d already worked as a tour guide with Rick Steves’ Europe and knew how to plan a trip. What started as weekends for a few friends ended up being trips for more than 30 people. I realized there was really a need for something like that, so I started Weekend Student Adventures.

Q. You’re still running student trips and, in fact, we’re having this conversation a few days before St. Patrick’s Day weekend, when you’ll be leading 120 study-abroad college students around Dublin. How do you deal with young travelers drinking and partying?

A. It’s interesting because on these weekend trips, we’re really serving three stakeholders: parents, schools, and students. Students want to have fun and often equate that with going out to party. The minimum age for a trip is 18 and the drinking age where we go is 18. Sometimes it’s the first time they’ve been into a bar, so we try to guide them toward safe behaviors. Also, we try to reflect the local drinking culture, like a glass of wine in Paris, a Guinness in Dublin.

Q. You recently expanded your tours to include the post-college market. Does this mean you’ll be competing with your father?

A. My dad does excellent tours, but he’s going for the 45-plus market. A 27-year-old doesn’t really identify with Rick’s tours or our students tours. So I feel like there’s an opportunity for budget tours for people in



Rick Steves and 2-year-old Andy in the Swiss Alps in 1989.

FRENCH LEAVE RESORT NEW VILLAS ON ELEUTHERA

ANDY STEVES DRAWS FROM THE TRAVELS OF HIS CHILDHOOD



Andy Steves leading a tour in Budapest in 2016.

ANDY STEVES TRAVEL

their 20s and 30s. We now have weekend tours and weeklong tours, as well as Detours, which are self-guided packages that we organize. We also do custom trips and consulting, and now of course the guidebook, which was developed from the weekend tours.

Q. Your book focuses on budget travel in 13 European cities instead of on a region or country. Why is that?

A. These days, with cheap flights within Europe, people are just flying from city to city and not taking rail, whereas my dad would travel on a Eurail pass and hop off at little towns along the way. That’s really affected how people travel.

Q. I know all cities have their selling points, but what are your favorites right now in terms of value and points of interest?

A. Budapest and Krakow. I’m loving those two cities. They’re both very affordable and developing their own identities unique to other cities. Krakow is a beautiful old town with medieval walls. Budapest is bigger, with trendy food and nightlife.

Q. What do you think is the biggest difference between travel in your father’s era and now?

A. Technology. You can search for cheap flights, meet locals, keep in touch with other travelers. I find all my lodging at Airbnb and Hostelworld.

Q. Is it intimidating to be compared to your father?

A. There is no comparison. He’s an internationally known brand and I’m doing my thing on the side. I’m painfully aware of not wanting to reinvent the wheel. We’re talking now about seeing if there’s a chance to collaborate or integrate.

Q. You grew up in the Seattle area. Is that still your home base?

A. Last year I spent about eight months in Europe, with some time in Seattle, and I had an apartment in Prague, which I also rented out. But I’m now buying a place in Medellin, Colombia, as my base for when I’m not traveling. For the same price for a small place outside of Seattle, I can get a double penthouse with amazing views of the city.

Q. Does being based in South America mean you’ll expand your reach outside of Europe?

A. I know the interest and intrigue of the country is on the mind of a lot of Americans. I can’t help but look at that as an opportunity, but for now I’m staying focused on Europe.

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HERE

HIPPITY-HOP AND SKI

Hit the slopes for spring skiing and hopping-good Easter festivities at Bretton Woods Ski Area in New Hampshire (April 14-16). Weekend activities include an Easter egg hunt — with more than 4,000 eggs! — cookie and egg decorating workshops, crafting Easter bonnets, marshmallow roasts, family-fun egg toss, and more. Meet the Easter Bunny at the Omni Mount Washington Resorts Easter Tea Party as you enjoy crafts, games, a bunny hop, and refreshments from the tea menu. (April 15, 2-3 p.m.; \$35 ages 6 and up; ages 5 and under free.) Easter Sunday Brunch includes complimentary lift ticket for skiing and riding at Bretton Woods. (April 16, 12-8 p.m.; \$65 for adults, \$30 for ages 6-12, ages 5 and under free.) Don’t miss the Easter Bunny reading Easter-themed books on Sunday. Reservations required for the tea and brunch: 603-278-8989. brettonwoods.com/easter

EARTH DAY KICKS OFF ART & SCIENCE SUMMER IN MAINE

Celebrate Earth Day, April 21, at the Wells Reserve at Laudholm, a center for coastal science with nature trails, historic buildings, and a pristine beach on Maine’s southern coast. This year, the Wells Reserve hosts its first-

ever “Summer of Art & Science,” a season of exhibitions and programs debuting on Earth Day with family-friendly bird and nature walks, sing-along music concert, crafts and learning games, and beach cleanup. Among featured summer events are a craft beer workshop (April 29), concerts in the barn (July 13, Aug. 3), and the 30th annual Laudholm Nature Crafts Festival (Sept. 9-10). An outdoor sculpture exhibition and sale, Power of Place, features more than 40 works by New England artists. (opens June 7). Admission: ages 16 and over \$5; ages 6-16 \$1. 207-646-1555, www.wellsreserve.org/

THERE

LUXURY VILLAS DEBUT IN ELEUTHERA

Be among the first to experience the new luxury villas at French Leave Resort, part of Marriott’s Autograph Collection. Located along limestone cliffs on the Bahamian Out Island of Eleuthera, overlooking the crystal clear waters of Governors Harbour, the secluded 270-acre property has just expanded its one and two-bedroom villa collection from four to 12. Each villa offers spacious living areas decorated with British colonial décor, covered verandas with beachfront views, LCD TV screens, and in-room iPad you can use for weather reports, room service, pre-ordering a picnic

lunch, and more. Some villas also feature a washer/dryer and fully-equipped kitchen. Drive your own personal golf cart to the nearby pink sands of French Leave Beach, or stay at the pool for cocktails and sunset views. Other amenities include fitness center, kayaks, and SUPs. Dine on fresh island cuisine onsite at 1648 An Island Restaurant. Rates from \$479. <https://frenchleaveresort.com/>



EASTER ISLAND DISCOUNT = YOUR AGE

If you want to check Easter Island off your bucket list but are procrastinating, this deal from Hangaroa Eco-Hotel + Spa may tempt you to act fast. From April to September, each guest who chooses the Dream Bed & Breakfast program will receive a discount equal to their age. So if you are 65, you

will receive a 65% discount on whichever room you choose. An 80-year old gets an 80% discount. Includes pick up and drop off to and from Mataveru airport, breakfast at Poerava Restaurant, welcome flower necklace and juice, minibar, daily sunset cocktail, access to pool, gym, and Wi-fi. Upgrades to half/full board (with additional meals and excursions) are available for \$90/\$150 surcharge per person per night. (Not subject to discount.) Valid ID must be presented at check in. Dream B&B rates from \$320 per night for two people. www.hangaroa.cl/en/your-age-your-discount/

EVERYWHERE

PORTABLE WATER FILTERS

LifeStraw, a company dedicated to making contaminated water safe to drink, has introduced two new portable filtration products ideal for hiking, camping and all kinds of travel. The portable LifeStraw Steel (\$54.95), approximately eight-inches long and one-inch in diameter, is a metal straw that uses a replaceable activated carbon capsule to reduce bad taste, chlorine and organic chemical matter. LifeStraw Go (\$44.95) is a refillable water bottle. Both products feature a two-stage filtration process that removes 99.9999% of waterborne bacteria, including E. coli, and 99.9% of wa-

terborne protozoa, including Giardia and Cryptosporidium. <http://lifestraw.com>

WORLD’S MOST ROMANTIC DESTINATIONS

Planning your own romantic vacation just got easier. Whether dreaming about a magical honeymoon, 50th wedding anniversary, or sojourn with your newest soul mate, you’ll want to consult National Geographic’s new book, “The World’s Most Romantic Destinations: 50 Dreamy Getaways, Private Retreats, and Enchanting Places to Celebrate Love.” Penned by award-winning writer and editor Abbie Kozolchyk, the book features more than 200 colorful photos of locations across the globe from Paris to Kauai to Mozambique and beyond. Each section offers seasonal suggestions — springtime getaway in Marrakech, Morocco, summer walk in the Scottish Highlands, autumnal visit to Big Sur, winter wonderland at an ice hotel in Sweden, and many more. Every destination includes smart travel tips on where to stay and play, where to find the best local cuisine and how to arrange relaxing or adventurous excursions. \$25. <https://shop.nationalgeographic.com/product/books/books/new-books/the-world-s-most-romantic-destinations>

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