

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

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HGTV STAR DAVID BROMSTAD LOVES HIS ANNUAL TAN, HIS PILLOW, AND THE CAPE

Designer David Bromstad, star of HGTV's "My Lottery Dream Home," travels the country helping jackpot winners find the perfect home. And while the Cokato, Minn., native said he enjoys exploring new parts of the country for his job, Massachusetts — especially Cape Cod — is his favorite place to be. "It's the most Americana place in America. Any time I think of American architecture and storybook houses, I think of Massachusetts," said Bromstad, 47. "I fell in love with the Cape when we filmed there. People said, 'You have to go to P-town' so one day we went and explored [Provincetown] ... and I've been obsessed ever since. I want a house there." Lucky for Bromstad, "My Lottery Dream Home" found him back on Cape Cod recently to help a Southbridge couple find a home in Yarmouth. That show — the first in a series of new episodes — airs on HGTV at 8 p.m. on May 7. The former Disney illustrator has worked for HGTV for 15 years, after winning a design competition that earned him his own show on the cable network. He hosted several shows, including "Color Splash," before launching "My Lottery Dream Home" in 2015. "One of the



David Bromstad in Mykonos, Greece.

reasons they gave me 'Lottery' is because they knew I could relate," Bromstad said. "I was a starving artist and entered this competition on a whim, not thinking I would even come close to winning because I was not an interi-

or designer — and that's what the competition was — and lo and behold, I won. It's a total rags-to-riches story." Bromstad said he loves hosting the show. "It is so exciting. I mean, how often do you get to meet lottery winners?"

I get to meet them every week," he said. "I'd never met a lottery winner in my entire life until I got this show." We caught up with Bromstad, who lives in Orlando with his French bulldog named Miss Lady Godiva BonBon (BonBon for short), to talk about all things travel.

Favorite vacation destination?

Mykonos, Greece, because this is one of the only places that I've ever been that I actually feel like I'm on vacation. It's remote, it's stunning, the food is amazing, the people are wonderful, and the weather is delicious.

Favorite food or drink while vacationing?

My favorite meal is breakfast. It's such a wonderful way to wake up and start the day. Coffee is still my favorite beverage besides water. I love an egg white omelet with goat cheese, jalapenos, peppers. . . . That's probably my favorite thing in the world.

Where would you like to travel to but haven't?

There are so many places I want to travel to but I really want to go to Norway. This is where my ancestors are from and I would love to dive deep into the culture.

One item you can't leave home without when traveling?

One hundred percent my pillow. I don't travel anywhere without it; if I don't have it I go and buy another one just like it because otherwise I won't be able to sleep. Fun fact: I also travel with a Memory foam mattress topper. I suffer from insomnia and if I don't have these two things I don't sleep very well at all.

Aisle or window?

I'm an aisle kind of a girl because I drink so much water on the plane and I'm constantly going to the bathroom.

Favorite childhood travel memory?

Getting in the motor home and traveling to wherever we were going to go. Disney, Black Hills [in South Dakota], Southern Texas to visit my grandparents as they snowbirded, and the hundreds of trips we went camping.

Guilty pleasure when traveling?

It's the one time of year I allow myself to get a tan.

Best travel tip?

Pack a day or two before you leave, plan your outfits, and don't take too many pairs of shoes.

JULIET PENNINGTON

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

Can she get a refund for her nonrefundable hotel?

Q. I booked a room at the Hotel Tzekos Villas in Santorini, Greece, last year through Hotels.com. The reservation was nonrefundable. Because of the virus, we were unable to leave the United States.

I called and e-mailed several times to cancel and get a refund or a voucher for a future stay. Neither Hotels.com nor the Hotel Tzekos Villas would refund our money. After calling several times and receiving no response, we disputed the charge with our Chase Visa Sapphire Reserve. The credit card issuer sided with Hotels.com. Can you help me get our \$592 back or a credit?

NOEMI FREEMAN, *Aventura, Fla.*

A. Hotels.com should have helped you with a refund. After all, Europe was closed to Americans at the time you were supposed to visit. And if the hotel and the booking site couldn't assist you, then your credit card should have been able to help with a chargeback. It didn't.

What's going on here? First, your case is one of hundreds of thousands of refund requests. It took weeks and often months for travel companies to sift through all of them. Yours was also a complicated case, because you paid for part of the hotel with a Hotels.com gift card. It looks as if you pushed forward with a credit card dispute relatively soon after your cancellation. I understand that you wanted your money back, but once you initiate a chargeback, it limits some of your other options.

One of the options would have been a brief, polite e-mail to a Hotels.com executive. I list all of them on my consumer advocacy site at www.elliott.org/company-contacts/expedia (Expedia owns Hotels.com).

Ultimately, the problem was the type of hotel room you booked: a prepaid, non-refundable reservation. When you agree to one of those, you're saying that come hell or high water, you'll be there. And if you aren't, the hotel can keep your money.

Travel insurance might have helped you recover some of your losses. But I think Hotels.com could have done better, too. I've heard from other travelers who said Hotels.com took good care of them during the pandemic by pushing for refunds or vouchers. It doesn't seem fair to make you eat that \$592. I also think Chase Sapphire could have fought harder for you during the dispute. Those pricey credit cards advertise themselves as the traveler's best friend, but they don't always come through for you when you need them.

After months of back and forth, I contacted Hotels.com on your behalf. The company refunded all of your money.

Christopher Elliott, chief advocacy officer of Elliott Advocacy, can be reached at elliott.org/help or chris@elliott.org.



HERE

Sweeping hotel makeover debuts in May

Nothing says "It's Almost Summer!" like the reopening of a beloved resort on Memorial Day weekend — especially following a \$3.5 million renovation and redesign. Such is the case at New Hampshire's White Mountain Hotel, where visitors will find all 80 guest rooms and suites outfitted with new furniture, mattresses, TVs, doors, lighting, and bathrooms designed in colors and fabrics that take inspiration from views of the surrounding mountains. Amenities include a full-service 120-seat restaurant and tavern, function facilities, outdoor year-round heated pool and hot tub, game room, gym, Finnish saunas, nine-hole Hales Location Golf Course, and recreation courts featuring pickleball, shuffle board, corn hole and basketball. Conveniently located near North Conway (for shopping and dining), the hotel is also a great spot for accessing miles of hiking and biking trails in nearby Echo Lake State Park and the White Mountain National Forest. Rates from \$149. 603-356-7100, www.white



mountainhotel.com

Package supports LGBTQ+ youth

In support of the LGBTQ community in Connecticut and nationwide, Delamar West Hartford is offering a rainbow-hued True Colors package. Available now through Dec. 31, the package includes overnight accommodations for two in one of its 114 elegantly-appointed rooms and suites; 10 percent spa discount for couples massage or facial; \$25 dining credit at its farm-fresh Artisan restaurant; two hand-beaded Free2Luv custom rainbow bracelets; in-room bottle of wine; and — worth noting — the hotel will donate 10 percent of the package to True Colors, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving the needs of sexual and gender minority youth. Rates from \$289. 860-937-2500, delamar.com/packages-special-offers/true-colors

THERE

New visions of centuries-old glassmaking

There's no need to travel to Italy to see provocative works of contempo-

rary glass art. From now through Sept. 5, the Boca Raton Museum of Art debuts "Glasstress Boca Raton 2021," a showcase of 34 international artists who created works in collaboration with master glass artisans at the Berengo Studio on the island of Murano in the Venetian lagoon. The museum's Senior Curator, Kathleen Goncharov, traveled to Italy in 2019 to handpick work, many that are being exhibited for the first time. More than 6,500 square feet of exhibition space is dedicated to this collection, with new works exploring some of today's pressing subjects such as human rights, climate change, racial justice, gender issues and politics by world-renowned artists including Ai Weiwei, Vik Muniz, Monica Bonvicini, Jake and Dinos Chapman, Thomas Schütte, Erwin Wurm and more. 561-392-2500, boca-museum.org/art/glasstress-boca-raton-2021

able straps allow for flexibility in ways you choose to wear the bag, around waist or shoulder. Accessory pockets can be used for cellphone, keys, passport, wallet, or whatever you need in your travels — whether to the grocery store or airport — and weatherproof fabric keeps valuables dry and protected. Both the men's and women's bags include a ring bottle opener for when you're ready for a thirst-quenching beverage. Available in four colors. Hip-ster Bag, \$45. obermeyer.com/catalog/mens/hip-ster-bag?v=35945 Her Hip-ster Bag, \$39. obermeyer.com/catalog/womens/her-hip-ster-bag?v=33617

Buy a lighter, plant a tree

Portable lighters, particularly wind-proof models, are an essential part of camping trips. Those looking for an eco-friendly way to avoid using plastic disposable models might want to check out the Buy One, Plant One collection offered by Zippo in part-



ALL-ABOUT-LOUISVILLE ONLINE

Louisville, Ky., known for Bourbon and the Kentucky Derby, wants visitors to know there's more to explore in this historic destination. For the very first time, Louisville Tourism's annual Visitor Guide is being published in a digital format. The virtual-only guide offers information on some of the city's most interesting activities, attractions, and history, and also includes listings of accommodations, restaurants, shopping and entertainment, with links to an event calendar and maps. Highlights of the 2021 guide include features showcasing new Black Heritage programming (including exhibits at the Muhammad Ali Center); award-winning culinary scene; arts around town; specific neighborhood offerings; urban Bourbon experiences; and more. View in your browser or download a PDF file. www.gotolouisville.com/travel-tools/visitor-guide

EVERYWHERE

Travel light with Hip-ster bag

Your next adventures will be a bit easier with the new Obermeyer Hip-ster and Her Hip-ster bags. Adjust-



nership with Woodchuck USA. For every lighter sold, the program is committed to planting a tree to help restore and protect the forests of the world. Features all-metal construction with laser-cut emblem designs made from 100-percent real wood, with materials ranging from classic cedar to mahogany, and includes a code to keep track of your planted tree after purchase. Lifetime guarantee. Available in 14 designs, from \$48.95. www.zippo.com/pages/buyoneplantone

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