

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD



THE VIP LOUNGE | CHEF MASA HARU MORIMOTO

He's been around the world for his restaurants. Maybe the moon is next?

Since he travels more than 300 days out of the year, Chef Masaharu Morimoto's idea of an ideal vacation is staying home and relaxing. Home to the star of "Iron Chef" and "Iron Chef America" is Japan, New York, and Hawaii, where he and his wife of 40 years, Keiko, live. Morimoto, 64, said he is looking forward to the opening (albeit delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic) of his newest restaurant, Momosan, in the new Hub Hall at The Hub on Causeway, a development that includes retail, hospitality, and entertainment tenants. "I am looking forward to being a part of the all-new Hub Hall and offering the Momosan experience to locals, tourists, and TD Garden attendees," Morimoto said. "Momosan is all about enjoying ramen, grilled skewers, beer, and sake in a fun, casual, and energetic environment." Known for his seamless integration of Western and Japanese ingredients, Morimoto has launched restaurants around the world, and published two cookbooks. We caught up with Morimoto, who grew up in Hiroshima, to talk about all things travel.

Favorite vacation destination? I travel over 300 days a year visiting my restaurants around the world and don't take much vacation time. For me, a vacation is not having to fly anywhere and being home to relax.

Favorite food or drink while vacationing? I like to experience the local cuisine whenever possible, so what I will eat or drink really depends on where I'm visiting.

Where would you like to travel to but haven't? I travel so much for my restaurants and have been fortunate that those trips have literally taken me around the world. The only place that I haven't been yet, but would love to visit, is the moon.

One item you can't leave home without when traveling? I like to wear white shorts and sneakers by Nike Air Force 1 and always carry my Rimowa and Tumi luggage on flights to save time at the airports.

Aisle or window? Aisle, because I can get up and out of my seat without worrying

about interrupting other passengers on their journey.

Favorite childhood travel memory? In Japan, we have stay-over school trips in elementary school and junior high school. I always looked forward to those trips with my friends.

Guilty pleasure when traveling? I am fortunate to usually stay at hotels where my restaurants are located, such as the Andaz Maui at Wailea Resort, the Alohilani Resort Waikiki Beach, MGM Grand Las Vegas, and the Mondrian Doha (in Qatar), so those are nice guilty pleasures of mine. I also like to escape into movies and some of my favorites are "Ocean's 8" and "50 First Kisses," which is a Japanese movie based on the USA version of "50 First Dates."

Best travel tip? Travel with an open mind and be ready to experience anything. Planning an itinerary is great, but when someone is ready to embrace anything on a trip, that can often lead them to very special places they might not have seen otherwise. JULIET PENNINGTON

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER | CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

This Airbnb refund should be approved. What's the delay?

Q. My husband and I have a COVID-19 refund situation different from those you have featured that we hope you can address. We must cancel an Airbnb reservation in London due to the coronavirus. It meets the newly extended date parameters.

Online exchanges with Airbnb staff say a full refund is available, and our host said the same thing. But when you go to the "cancel" screen on Airbnb.com, first you get a choice of a trivial refund, following the host's regular policy, or a credit.

You can choose to ask for more information about cancellations, which takes you to a drop-down menu. When you choose COVID-19, it asks you to upload documents, stating that travel advisories are not acceptable. These documents are subject to some internal review. Without providing documents, you only get a credit.

I have seen reports that the internal review process is dubious. More importantly, this is an obvious Catch-22: Travel advisories are the reason no one is traveling, and disallowing them as justification precludes the refund that they say you are eligible for. This is shockingly dishonest. We have called this to their attention, and they say the website should work to provide a full refund. But nothing has changed. Can you help?

ELENA LOPEZ,
Mountain View, Calif.

A. Airbnb sure isn't making it easy to get a refund, is it? I think applying for one of those Paycheck Protection Program loans might be more straightforward. That's not hyperbole. I had

to navigate that form recently. It's no fun.

Airbnb's policy is pretty generous. If you have a reservation made before March 14 that begins anytime on or before May 31, you can cancel the reservation and get a full refund or a travel credit if you're affected by COVID-19 and can't travel.

Your London rental definitely qualified. But that doesn't mean Airbnb will fork over your money. First, I recommended that you review the entire extenuating circumstances

'This is an obvious Catch-22.'

policy as it relates to coronavirus. You can find it on the Airbnb site.

Airbnb has been asking for copies of government warnings relevant to your cancellation. To get a refund, you need to fill out the form with a link to the appropriate document, such as the US State Department's recent "Level 4" advisory to stay home. That's all.

And one more thing: You need to be patient. Airbnb is processing thousands of these refund requests. If for some reason your request gets lost in the shuffle, you can always reach out to one of the executive contacts at Airbnb, which I list on my consumer advocacy site, Elliott.org. I recommended you resubmit your claim, which you did. A few days later, Airbnb refunded your money.

If you need help with a coronavirus-related refund, e-mail chris@elliott.org.

HERE

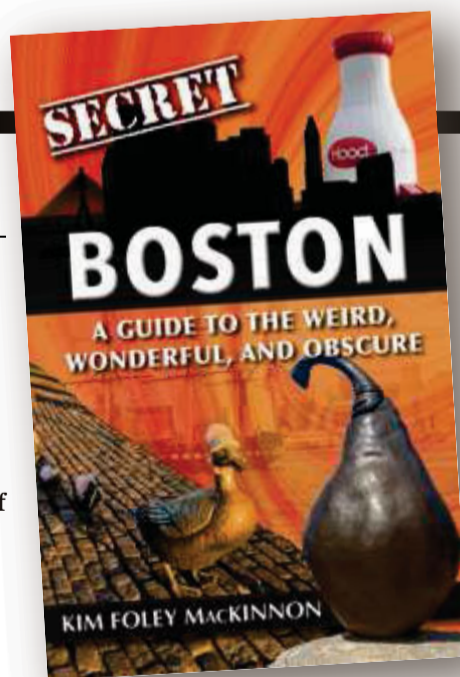
BOSTON SECRETS AND TASTY BREWS

Think you know everything about the quirky side of Boston's history and landmarks? Kim Foley MacKinnon's newest book, "Secret Boston: A Guide to the Weird, Wonderful, and Obscure," will make you think again. Filled with fun and unusual facts that reveal strange and forgotten corners of MacKinnon's hometown, Secret Boston answers questions you didn't even know you had. Ever wondered about the costumed bear playing music in the subway? Or which city nickname was originally used as an insult? How about which iconic Boston sight was created by a nun? Much more than a travel guide, Secret Boston is a perfect book to enjoy curled in an armchair while staying at home. MacKinnon has partnered with Jamaica Plain-based Turtle Swamp Brewery, which is selling her book online, along with their tasty selection of beers available for delivery or curbside pickup. \$20.95. turtleswampbrewing.square.site/s/order

THERE

DREAM NOW, ENJOY FIVE-STAR LUXURY LATER

While dreaming about future adventures, add Croatia's island of Hvar to your destination wish list. Hailed as the island in Europe with the most hours of sun per year, Hvar now also boasts its first five-star hotel, the Palace Elisabeth. Opening in June, overlooking the largest main square in Dalmatia, the newly renovated hotel dates back to the 13th century when it was



the Duke's palace during Venetian rule. The 45 rooms and suites showcase Venetian and Austrian architectural elements preserved during renovation, and offer stunning views of the Adriatic Sea. Additional amenities include yacht rentals and an indoor swimming pool. Rates from \$495. www.suncanihvar.com/palace-elisabeth-hvar-heritage-hotel.html Until international travel opens once again, enjoy a live view of the island's port and the Pakleni islands in the distance, especially stunning at sunrise and sunset. g0.ip-camlive.com/player/player.php?alias=59a019fd687c6

NORTH POLE TOUR RATES UNCHANGED IN 2021 Plan ahead for a trip to the North Pole with Poseidon Expeditions's Top of the World adventure aboard 50

Years of Victory, a nuclear-powered icebreaker. The tour company recently announced that rates for summer 2021 departures — scheduled in July and August — will mirror rates for summer 2020. Traveling to 90 degrees north latitude, the 13-day program includes activities on the ice at the North Pole; Zodiac landings on Franz Josef Land, an infrequently visited archipelago of 192 islands; one-night pre-cruise hotel accommodations in Murransk; helicopter sightseeing tours; and all transfers to/from the airport and ship. The vessels can host 128 passengers in comfortable accommodations, all with exterior views. Public spaces include dining room; aft salon for lectures and socializing; bar and lounge; library; gym, two saunas; swimming pool with heated seawater; and modern clinic staffed by a physician. The 14-member staff includes a marine biologist, geologist, glaciologist, historian, geographer, Zodiac master, visual artist, Citizen Science



organizer, musician and massage therapist. Early Bird discounted rates (confirmed before Oct. 31) start at \$29,445 per person. In addition, the crew and expedition team gratuities will be included in 2021 rates. 347-801-2610, poseidonexpeditions.com/northpole/north-pole-icebreaker-cruise/

EVERYWHERE

VEGAN-FRIENDLY SHOES FOR STROLLS

Need a break from the news? With gyms closed and social-distancing rules in place, the best option for sanity can be a stroll around the block. Those looking for an all-around walking shoe may want to check out Chukka Corduroy, the newest footwear offering for men and women by Lems. Lightweight and vegan-friendly, the comfy corduroy shoes have a wide toe box for room to breathe (and avoid jammed toes). When travel once again resumes, the flexible shoes will easily squeeze into a backpack. Available in

three colors: Green Kush, Moon Dust, and Space Jelly. \$120. lemsshoes.com/products/mens-chukka-corduroy



EASE ACHEs AND PAINs WHEN TRAVELING OR AT HOME

Hiking, biking, kayaking, and other outdoor activities — as well as travel in general — can cause all kinds of pain, from sore muscles to inflammation, cramps, and tightness. During the current pandemic, working from home, helping kids with school assignments, and other household activities can also add stress to your weary self. Find relief with the new Life Elements Ache + Pain stick, an organically grown hemp-derived CBD product with arnica, turmeric, and calendula. The roll-on applicator is easy to use in hard to reach places. Half or 2-ounce travel sizes will fit in your pocket (now), and can be slipped in your carry-on (later), when you're once again on-the-go. Available in four strengths, from 125 milligrams to 1,000 milligrams for pain levels 1-10. Prices start at \$30. <https://lifeelements.com/products/ache-and-pain-relief>

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