

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD



HERE

BRITISH AUTOS ON PARADE IN BRISTOL, R.I.

Calling all Anglophiles! The British Motorcar Festival, an event for British car aficionados and lifestyle enthusiasts, debuts at Colt State Park in Bristol, R.I. (June 13-14; spectator admission \$15; children under 12 free). The show will feature displays of more than 60 classes of British motorcars (pictured below) plus motorcycles. Saturday events kick off with a royal canon salute announcing the arrival of the “queen” in a horse-drawn coach. A marketplace offers all-things-British, including motoring accessories, food and beverages, clothing, jewelry, music, and more. To purchase your own motoring classic, visit

the New British Motorcar Dealer display. Other events include a judged Concours d’Elegance competition (for cars 25 and older); People’s Choice awards; Tailgate Picnic competition; and whimsical events like the British Attire and Ladies Hat competitions. Want to join the fun with your own classic vehicle? Register online by June 1 to participate in more activities. www.britishmotorcarfestival.com

GET ACTIVE ON CAPE COD’S OYSTER FRONT

Beginning Memorial Day Weekend, Ocean Edge Resort & Golf Club in Brewster launches a new series of experiences for its summer guests. Oyster lovers will enjoy the Brewster Flats and Oyster Farm Walk, a weekly complimentary educa-

tional tour of local oyster farms at low tide (pictured above). During select times, guests may even help harvest oysters. Other new programs include free instruction in the classic sport of croquet, offered on a regulation court on the resort’s front lawn; complimentary golf lessons, including clubs, taught by PGA professionals on the Nicklaus Design golf course (Mon-Thu 4:15 p.m.); a new fleet of Freedom Flyer bicycles to rent for use on property or the nearby Cape Cod Bike and Rail Trail; and later this summer kayak and paddleboard rentals will debut at Blueberry Pond, the resort’s first freshwater activity center. Rates from \$275 at The Villages (June-August); from \$375 (June) and \$485 (July-August) at The Mansion. 508-896-9000, www.oceanedge.com

THERE

PARIS HOTEL DEAL TAKES YOU TO THE MAX

Ooh-la-la. Savvy travelers in Paris this summer can take advantage of a special deal offered by the stylish 3-star boutique Hotel Max. Guests who stay two nights receive 50 percent off on every category room (July 24-Aug. 31; from \$92). All 19 rooms are equipped with high-tech devices; free Wi-Fi; revers-

ible air conditioning; and individual Nespresso machines. Some rooms have a private terrace overlooking a quiet street. The hotel is smokefree, handicap accessible, and offers multilingual concierge services, breakfast buffet (\$12.80), outdoor garden, and business corner. Located in the heart of the 14th Arrondissement, steps from Place d’Alésia — between Metro stops at Montparnasse, Porte de Versailles, and Denfert Rochereau — the hotel provides easy access to favorite tourist sites while offering a quintessential Parisian neighborhood for end-of-the-day relaxation. If fully booked, check out Max’s nearby brother, Fred Hotel. www.hotel-max.fr/en/

RECHARGE IN FINLAND, BODY AND SOUL AND . . . IPAD

Need some shuteye between flights? If you are transiting through Helsinki this summer, you are in luck. Finavia, operator of Finland’s airports and air navigation systems, has introduced GoSleep sleeping pods at the Helsinki-Vantaa Airport — making Helsinki the first European airport to offer this service. Designed to provide passengers peace and privacy in a hectic terminal environment, the pod is an egg-shaped ergonomic seat that can be turned into a bed. Simply stow hand luggage under the seat, and

pull down a movable, breathing shade to be isolated from light and noise. The pod has USB and charging outlets for phones and laptops. Program an alarm to wake you up before your flight. Accepts credit card payment. (Approximately \$9.50 hour; \$6.33 pillows; \$9.50 blankets.) unisolutions.fi



COMPACT TSA-FRIENDLY EMBEDDED LUGGAGE

Gadget-toting travelers tired of having to unpack electronic devices when passing through airport security may want to check out the new TSA Friendly FastPass technology offered by ECBC’s premium collections of luggage, laptop bags (pictured above), backpacks, and messenger bags. At airport checkpoints, simply unzip the FastPass compartment, lay it flat on the conveyer belt, and send the bag through the scanner without having to place devices and valuables into bins. Each carry-all design is constructed of water repellent ballistic nylon and Kodra fabrics, known for their resistance to tearing, punctures, and abrasions. In addition, all rolling luggage comes with portable power pack to keep electronic devices fully charged. \$119.99-\$399.99. 951-894-1482, www.ec-bc.com

EVERYWHERE

FIND YOUR DREAMY AMERICAN VACATION

Just in time for summer travel: Historic Hotels of America has launched American Dreams, a new website that makes it easy to peruse a variety of different vacation travel ideas. Categories include family getaways, road trips, national parks and sites, culinary destinations, heritage and culture, and urban adventures. Click on photos to discover feature stories on select destinations, including “must see” attractions, and links to participating historic hotels and packages across the United States from Puerto Rico to Hawaii. Before hitting the road: Check out the classic road trip song list for a travel-inspired playlist. 844-735-3348, americandreams.historichotels.org/index

NECEE REGIS



BEIRUT

Where the world relaxes: at table

By Elizabeth Kelsey
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

I first visited Beirut in early 2009 when my fiancé Maroun gave a talk at the university. As an American, I was overwhelmed by the experiences I had on this trip, my first to the Middle East. I’d always associated Lebanon with the images I’d seen on television: hostages, bombings, war. I couldn’t reconcile it with the Lebanon Maroun cherished.

But that week I had understood: I’d danced with Lebanese on tabletops at late-night parties, relished my mother-in-law-to-be’s baba ganouj and sambousek, been enchanted by the extended families and sense of community I’d experienced. The Lebanese seemed to live day-to-day instead of worrying about the conflicts that plagued their country, and I’d nearly forgotten to be afraid until that day in Beirut.

When Maroun finished his presentation, we left campus to explore the surrounding area on foot. The Hamra neighborhood’s narrow streets seemed more chaotic than they had felt that morning. Tension hung in the air like humidity. Journalists and videogra-

phers interviewed people on the street. Pedestrians walked at a brisker pace.

A companion told us the militant group Hezbollah had fired a rocket into Israel, and Lebanon was waiting for possible retribution. I strained my ears for the roar of fighter jets in the distance, braced myself for a bomb. I gave Maroun a frightened look.

“Let’s get something to eat,” he suggested. I was surprised to find myself agreeing, but then again, my appetite is always the last thing to go.

He led us to Malak el Batata, “The King of the Potato,” a humble sandwich shop where young men in paper hats stood behind at the counter, stuffing flatbread with a heady mixture of french fries, coleslaw, and ketchup. Once we ordered and took our seats, lunch in hand, I looked around the restaurant.

Students sat at tables, eating, talking, and laughing as if nothing were amiss. I bit into my sandwich and the juxtaposition of salt and sugar, crunch and softness mingled on my palate. The rush of carbs, the ultimate comfort food, transported me back to picnics in the Southern town where I’d

grown up. I had a feeling that everything would turn out OK — and it did.

French fries in flatbreads can be found in food stands throughout the Middle East. Wassim Chaar, Malak el Batata’s manager, says he got the inspiration for his potato sandwich after working in several Beirut restaurants in his youth, including the Hard Rock Café.

“Ketchup tastes great, and everyone likes hand-cut fries, so I imagined what it would be like to bring the three ingredients together,” Chaar says. What I had thought was coleslaw was actually a Lebanese cabbage salad. According to Chaar: “We don’t put sugar in it. There are no carrots. It’s an essential dish in Lebanese food. We even use it to top off our burgers.”

From its ingredients, I had imagined the King of the Potato to have American origins. Its history was more complex. But certainly, being able to live in the moment, to savor the sandwich and hope for a good outcome, made it an authentic Lebanese meal.

Elizabeth Kelsey can be reached at elizabeth.kelsey@gmail.com.



ELIZABETH KELSEY