

# The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

## MUSEUM MARKED BY GOOD TASTE

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**A**t Chocolate Nation, a new museum in Antwerp, Belgium, you get to the good stuff right away. A dispenser filled with chocolate candies awaits visitors in the first of 14 themed rooms, putting them in the mood to learn about the country's famous export. The best part? There are even more chocolate tastings to come.

The hourlong-plus journey, which visitors do with an audio guide, starts



PHOTOS BY CAMERON STUDIO

**A production area demonstration at Chocolate Nation, a new museum in Antwerp, Belgium.**

in the cocoa plantations around the equator and tracks the bean to the world's largest cocoa storage port in Antwerp. During the technology-rich experience, which includes automatically opening doors and light and sound effects, videos show how chocolate is made and where its taste comes from.

"We decided a few years ago to give Belgium a place where this world-famous product gets the honor it deserves, in our opinion," said Jeroen Jespers, who cofounded the privately funded attraction, conveniently

located near the city's magnificent central train station. "Belgian chocolate is, after all, creative, innovative, elegant, full of traditions, and naturally very tasty."

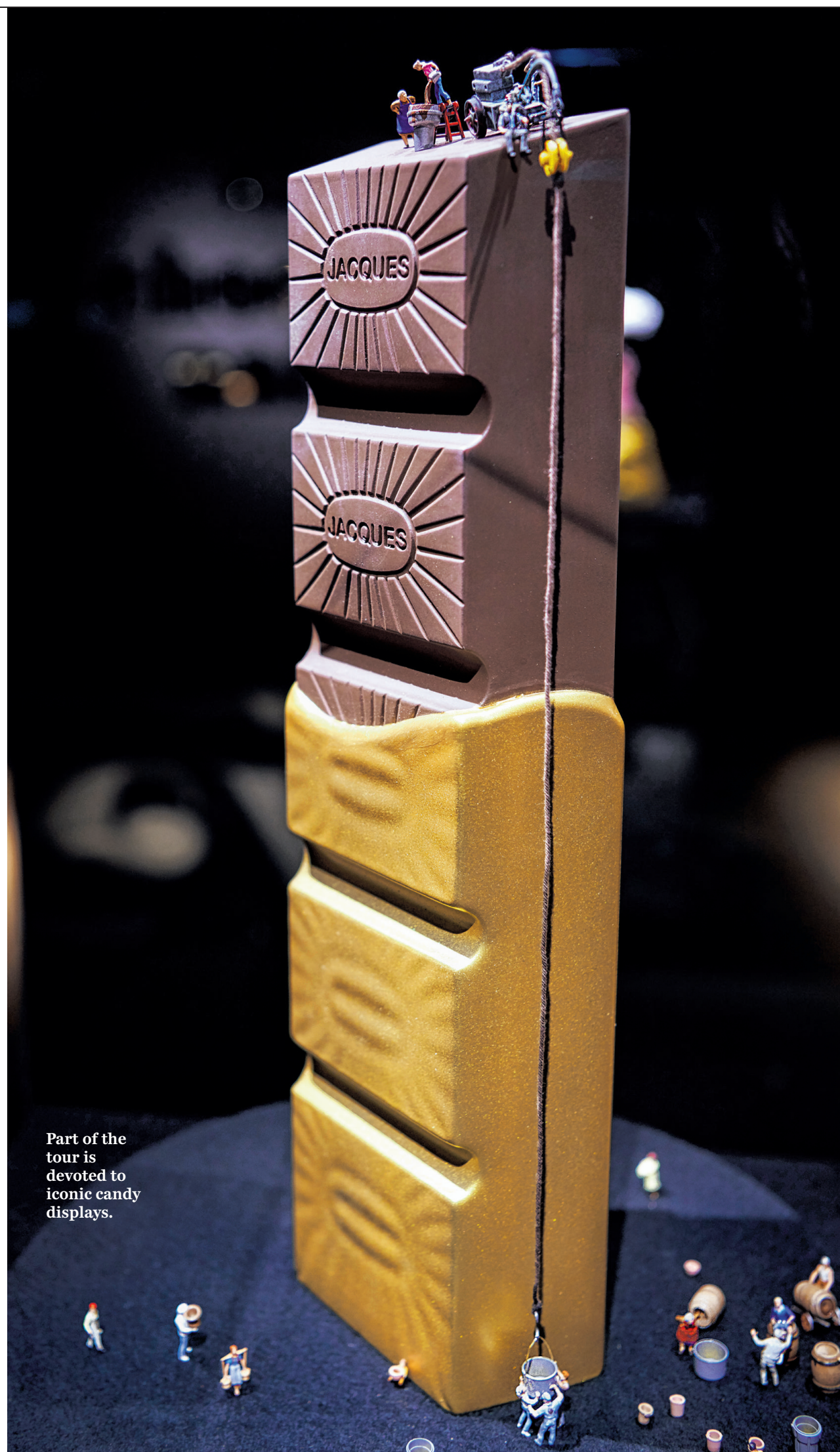
The tour also includes chocolate traditions, history, brands, products, and innovations. One area is devoted to molds and another to fantastic and sometimes fantastical chocolate sculptures and iconic candies. Not only can museumgoers view chocolate-making demonstrations in the production department, they can book private workshops in advance to learn to create pralines, mendiants, and other sweets. The chocolate department is headed up by master chocolate maker Patrick Aubrion, who worked with famed chocolatier Pierre Marcolini for many years and also helped launch Callebaut's Ruby RB1, a naturally pink chocolate variety.

Visitors can sample Ruby chocolate and many others in the final room, where vats of melted chocolate are available to taste from. Just turn the lever and let the liquid drip onto your tasting spoon. Varieties go from the very dark to blended to milk, with labels describing the process and flavors, akin to a wine tasting, though suitable for all ages.

For those left wanting more, there is of course a gift shop, partly stocked with chocolates made at the museum's production facility and an adjacent fine-dining restaurant called Octave, which features dishes that contain chocolate, as well as homemade desserts and ice cream and even cocoa-infused cocktails.

**Chocolate Nation**  
Koningin Astridplein 7  
Antwerp, Belgium  
[www.chocolatenation.be/en](http://www.chocolatenation.be/en)  
Open daily from 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.  
(last tour starts at 7:30 p.m.)  
Admission is about \$18.50 for adults; \$17 for students, youth, and seniors older than 66; \$13 for children 4-11; and free for children under 4. Prices include audio guides and chocolate tastings.

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Part of the tour is devoted to iconic candy displays.

## HERE

### NIFTY AT FIFTY PACKAGE IN THE BERKSHIRES

In a year of landmark 50th-anniversary celebrations — from Stonewall to Woodstock and more — the Red Lion Inn commemorates its purchase, rehabilitation, and reopening as a historic hotel by Jane and Jack Fitzpatrick in 1969. Through June 23, the Stockbridge hotel is hosting a series of celebrations and special events for guests and the community including a gala anniversary dinner (May 29); and pop-up front porch drinks, walking tours, collection tours, and more. Located in the heart of the culturally-rich Berkshires of Western Massachusetts, the hotel is offering a 50th-anniversary package, "Fitz's Nifty Fifty," that includes a \$50 food and beverage credit and bottle of Red Lion Inn wine on the best available rate. Available for stays through June 27, based on availability. 413-298-5545, [www.redlioninn.com/news/50th-anniversary-celebration](http://www.redlioninn.com/news/50th-anniversary-celebration).

### ROCKWELL MUSEUM MARKS A MILESTONE

While you're in the Berkshires, you can also celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Norman Rockwell Museum, one of the leading centers for illustration art in the nation. This summer, the museum debuts three unique exhibits that explore Rockwell's art, life, and legacy, and the year 1969: "Woodstock to the Moon: 1969 Illustrated" (illuminates how Rockwell and other illustrators portrayed the final year of a tumultuous decade); "Norman Rockwell: Private Moments for the Masses" (a behind-the-scenes look at the auto-



RED LION INN

biographical elements in Rockwell's work); and "Inspired: Norman Rockwell and Erik Erikson" (exploring Rockwell's creative and inspiring relationship with the developmental psychoanalyst). In addition, a special installation including photographs, digital media, and artifacts will evoke Stockbridge's Old Corner House, where the Museum was first established. June 8 through Oct. 27. Admission \$20; seniors \$18; military veterans \$17; students \$10; free for children 18 and under. 413-298-4100, [www.nrm.org](http://www.nrm.org)

## THERE

### ACADIAN STURGEON AND CAVIAR EXPERIENCES

Food tours and experiences based on cheese, wine, chocolate, oysters, and other tasty temptations are the norm these days. For something new on the culinary scene, check out the trio of gastronomic offerings by Acadian Sturgeon and Caviar in New Brunswick. In one, hosted by Canada's



TOURISM NEW BRUNSWICK

ly (\$743). Rates based on two or four minimum group sizes. 506-642-1816, [www.acadian-sturgeon.com/en](http://www.acadian-sturgeon.com/en)

### SANTA MONICA GETS SNAZZY NEW HOTEL

Iconic Wilshire Boulevard in the downtown core of Santa Monica is debuting a stylish lifestyle hotel. Officially opening on June 17, the Santa Monica Proper Hotel fuses a circa-1928, Spanish Colonial Revival building with sleek new construction, creating a new luxury hotel with 271 guest rooms and suites. The property features three restaurants and bars; fitness center with yoga terrace; rooftop pool and deck with panoramic ocean and city views; and the Surya Spa — from celebrated Ayurvedic guru Martha Soffer — offering individually curated programs with therapeutic massage, steam and oil treatments, cooking, yoga, and meditation. To take advantage of its Grand Opening Offer, book before May 31 to receive 25 percent off the best available rate and a \$50 breakfast credit for two. Rates from \$450. 833-277-0737

## EVERYWHERE

### DESIGN YOUR OWN COLORFUL LUGGAGE

Tired of the same-old solid-color luggage choices? ROAM invites their own personalized suitcases and carry-ons — with endless color combinations — on its easy-to-use website. Customizable features include

outer shell colors, wheel caps, stitching, zipper and zipper pulls, binding, carry-handle, monogram patch, and telescoping handle rods. The made-to-order cases, with lightweight polycarbonate shells, are shipped to customers as quickly as next business day from the California workshop. (Ground shipping and returns are always free.) Available in four sizes: traditional carry-on, wide-body carry-on, medium check-in, and large check-in. From \$450. Use code BostonGlobe50 at checkout for \$50 discount. 866-370-1436, [roamluggage.com](http://roamluggage.com)

### ECO-SMART BOTTLES FOR FRUIT-INFUSED DRINKS

On upcoming travel adventures, stay hydrated in an eco-friendly and stylish way with Estiva, the new portable hydration drinkware by HYDY. A member of 1% for the Planet, HYDY provides a non-plastic, environmentally sustainable way to hydrate. As an alternative to sugary juice or sports drinks, each 20-ounce bottle has a center strain filter that can be used to create your own naturally flavored, fruit-infused water and iced tea. The ergonomic handle makes it easy to take on the go. Available in a variety of colors. \$25. [www.myhydy.com](http://www.myhydy.com)



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