

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD



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REPLACING A PASSPORT

BY NATALIE B. COMPTON
THE WASHINGTON POST

Passport problems can elicit very real physical responses in travelers. On a blazing afternoon in Jakarta a few years ago, I realized I didn't have enough pages in my passport to get to my next destination beyond Indonesia. I had one of those skin-crawling, heart-racing moments of terror. Reason went out the window, and chaos settled in for the ride. But that kind of response is exactly what travel experts tell you to avoid.

"My first word of advice when somebody loses their passport is: Don't panic," says Michelle Bernier-Toth, the State Department's managing director for Overseas Citizen Services. The problem is more of an inconvenience and a monetary cost than a reason to implode. Instead, take solace in the fact that it happens all the time and is considered one of the most common problems for US travelers abroad.

If you've misplaced your passport or are the victim of theft, you'll need to keep a clear head and jump into action right away. The first step will be to figure out where the nearest American embassy or consulate is. It doesn't hurt to call ahead and let officials know your situation. Check the time before you head in to solve your travel nightmare; many embassies and consulates can't issue emergency passports after hours or during weekends.

Once you're in, report your missing passport to the consular section.

"We can make sure you can get through the door in time. Make sure that you have the documents you need to apply for the new passport," Bernier-Toth says. "When you come in, [if] you're fully prepared, we can take care of you as quickly as possible."

Make 100 percent sure that your passport is gone forever be-

fore you begin the process — officials are going to cancel your existing passport over the phone, and it will be unusable if you do find it.

Travel writer Ali Wunderman had her passport and a copy in the same bag when she was traveling through Europe as a teenager.

"I was in an almost-empty train station in Barcelona, a simple layover between Valencia and Interlaken [in Switzerland], when the bag with my passport, wallet, and unsent postcards got nabbed from right under my nose," Wunderman says. "I was 19 and naive enough to think the Australian girl — the only other person in the train station — would watch my bags instead of taking them, but here we are."

After an unsuccessful plea to local police for help, Wunderman went to the American consulate with her now-husband, who could vouch for her identity. Her parents did the same over the phone.

"Even though it sucked at the time, I learned a lot about being vigilant while traveling, as well as how to be resourceful when it seems like everything has fallen apart," Wunderman says. "You have to be calm, ask for help, and, most importantly, learn how to avoid that situation in the future."

Wunderman now travels with multiple hard copies of her passport, along with a digital version saved on her phone, which is exactly what the experts recommend. Keeping several copies in different places — one on yourself, one in your luggage, and one in the hotel — can also help. But although having different forms of

photo identification can expedite the process, don't worry if you find yourself without any. Officials will be able to look you up in the system either way.

At the embassy or consulate, you'll need to fill out forms and pay fees. If you've been a victim of a violent crime or disaster, the fee for your emergency passport may be waived; otherwise, you'll be charged the same as you would at home (about \$145 to \$200 for the emergency passport and fees in most cases).

"We do charge the full amount," Bernier-Toth said. "Then, the person can bring that emergency passport back to the United States and swap it out for a full-validity passport." That means that while your emergency passport is only temporarily valid, you can exchange it for a standard one without additional charges once you're home.

There are limitless things that can go wrong when you're traveling. Losing your passport is a bureaucratic obstacle, but not the most devastating tragedy. Don't let a passport setback ruin the rest of your trip.

"Bad things happen when we're home and when we travel," Wunderman said. "All that matters is that we grow from whatever we experience."

For more information on your passport, visit: travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports.html.

Passport safety 101

- If possible, keep your passport in a hotel safe.
- Know where the nearest American embassy is.
- Travel with physical and digital copies of your passport.
- Never leave your passport in unattended luggage.

HERE

SITE SPECIFIC STICK SCULPTURE CRAFTED ON CAPE

Fans of sculptor Patrick Dougherty's one-of-a-kind stick sculptures won't want to miss his newest large-scale creation on the front lawn of Highfield Hall & Gardens in Falmouth. Following three weeks of construction, Stickwork at Highfield opens on June 30 during the property's annual summer open house. Saplings from a farm in upstate New York, woven into site-specific whimsical structures, will remain on view for approximately two years. Visitors can learn more about Stickwork sculptures in an educational room inside Highfield Hall, a historic Victorian mansion surrounded by lush gardens and nearly 400 acres of conservation land and public walking trails. Open through Oct. 31. Adults \$8; seniors \$5; free for members and children. The gardens and grounds are open daily from dawn to dusk free of charge. 508-495-1878, highfield-hallandgardens.org

HIKING EVENT SUPPORTS OBSERVATORY

Grab your water bottle, lace up your sturdy shoes, and head to the White Mountains of New Hampshire for the 19th annual Seek the Peak Hike-a-Thon. (July 19-20) Touted as the nation's premier hiking event, the gathering of like-minded outdoor enthusiasts is an annual fund-raiser for the nonprofit Mount Washington Observatory. Hikers can accept the challenge of summiting Mount Washington, or opt for alternative mountain treks and shorter nature



hikes. Not a hiker? You can also support the observatory as a "virtual hiker," or simply join the weekend festivities that include a kick-off party, weather station tours, outdoor vendor expo (with product demonstrations and giveaways), and dinner and award ceremony with hundreds of prizes. Each hiker is asked to raise a minimum of \$200 as part of their participation. www.seekthepeak.org

THERE

MUSIC FEST FEATURES FOOD, HORSES, AND BOURBON

Those looking for the next new twist on a music festival may want to check out the first ever Railbird Festival in Lexington, Ky., taking place at the Grounds at Keeneland, an internationally renowned racecourse and National Historic Landmark. (Aug. 10-11) Festivalgoers can enjoy a musical mix of rock, Americana, folk, bluegrass, and more, with top talents such as the Raconteurs, Mandolin Orange, Mavis Staples, Lucinda Williams, Old Crow Medicine Show, Brandi Carlile,

WOMEN GO WILD IN SICILY

It's not too soon to plan ahead for a women-only trip this fall. Wild Women Expeditions is launching the Secrets of Sicily Multisport Adventure, a nine-night trip exploring the topography, mythology, and history of Sicily. (Sept. 16-24) Features include cycling and countryside picnics, walking tours in historic towns, kayaking and other boat excursions, hiking volcanoes, cooking class, wine tasting, chocolate tasting, and more, all led by local

female guides. Includes breakfasts; some lunches and dinners; tips for servers, drivers, and boat operators; use of kayaks, bikes, and helmets; and more. \$4,695 per person, shared occupancy. 888-993-1222, wildwomenexpeditions.com/trips/secrets-of-sicily-multisport-adventure

EVERYWHERE

WEBSITE FOR ADVENTUROUS EXPERIENCES

Tired of the same old weekend activities and ho-hum vacations? IfOnly is a new site promoting a wide range of experiences and unique connections in a dozen different categories, including music, entertainment, sports, food, and lifestyle. The curated experiences, offered by a local "luminary" in national and international locations, enable everything from true once-in-a-lifetime adventures to affordable local diversions starting at \$50 a person. Simply browse the site and choose your adventure by location and activi-

ty, then schedule your experience with your luminary at a time that's convenient for both of you. An easy way to find the perfect getaway gift for hard-to-please loved ones, the diverse range of choices include things such as a guided hike with wolves, mountain top zipline tour, traditional Chinese archery lesson, private feed the sharks tour, champagne and hot air balloon ride, fine art and jewelry lectures, and more. www.ifonly.com

CBD BATH BOMBS FOR TRAVEL

Let's be honest: traveling is exhilarating but can be exhausting. After a busy day of hiking, touring museums, or schlepping bags through the airport, a soothing bath can relieve aching muscles and reduce anxiety and stress. To help the weary traveler, Life Elements is raising the relaxation bar with its new line of mini CBD-infused bath bombs. Derived from organically grown full-spectrum 25mg CBD (0.0 percent THC), the aromatic mini-bath bombs offer anti-inflammatory benefits while softening skin. They are easy to tuck into your suitcase for an end-of-day foot soak or calming bath. Also new: as Mercury goes retrograde (July 7-Aug. 2), help quell the chaos with the Limited-Edition Mercury Retrograde Bath Bomb. It includes all the features of the mini, plus essential oils such as patchouli, palo santo, frankincense, and myrrh. Made with 250mg organically-grown Full-Spectrum CBD (0.0 percent THC). Mini 4-pack: \$18, Mercury Retrograde: \$26. lifeelements.com NECEE REGIS

