

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

By Natalie B. Compton
THE WASHINGTON POST

If you've been to an airport, you've probably been to a Hudson. With more than 1,000 stores across the country, the business is a fixture for the American traveler. (It's better known as Hudson News but has re-branded to the single word. We'll always think of it the former way.)

Hudson's there when you had to throw away your soda at the security checkpoint and need a new one before your flight. It's there when you forgot your headphones and can't bear the idea of flying without listening to your favorite podcast. It's there when you showed up way early and have hours to kill before boarding. This year, Hudson will even launch an app, dubbed "Hudson Blue," so you can start perusing through items and promotions before you've even gotten to the airport.

And no, this isn't sponsored content for Hudson; despite being a port in the storm, the store isn't necessarily the greatest place for general shopping. Like many things at the airport, you can end up paying a premium for convenience. Some items are marked up a little, and others a lot. We're breaking down the best and worst buys at everyone's favorite airport store so you don't have to.

GET: Souvenirs

Every Hudson is going to feel a little different, thanks to the store's dedication to stocking its shelves with local tchotchkes. There's a wealth of city-specific trinkets, like snow globes, magnets, keychains, mugs, and stuffed animals. If you're headed home and forgot to get someone a little something, the good folks at Hudson will save you from leaving empty-handed. Grab your uncle a couple Denver shot glasses and call it a day.

SKIP: Clothing

Are the souvenirs at Hudson kitschy and good? Yes, worth all \$6 to \$12. But when you're talking apparel, everything changes. Bargains they are not. Walk away from the clothing racks at Hudson, unless you're desperate for a sweatshirt on your flight and there's no other option. You do not need an "Everything is bigger in Texas" T-shirt for \$16.99. You do not need a \$29.99 Dallas armadillo baseball cap.

Hudson store at Seatac International Airport in Seattle.



MAT HAYWARD/STOCK.ADOBE.COM

THE BEST AND WORST BUYS AT HUDSON NEWS

GET: Neck pillow

Honestly, we'd buy a neck pillow at whatever cost if the alternative is a long-haul or red-eye without one. Neck pillows can be an essential crutch for sleeping on a plane, one of the most awkward and uncomfortable challenges of the human experience. A Cloudz microbead travel pillow will set you back \$19.99, and the Cabeau Evolution S3 pillow even further for \$39.99. Both are about \$10 more in the store than if ordered online. Worth it when you're in a bind, in our opinion.

GET: Postcards

Your trip is over, and you're heading home. You're ambling around the airport waiting to get going, scrolling through your phone for the seven-tril-

lionth time. Stop by Hudson and grab a postcard or two. For a buck or two, they're a cheap way to show someone you're thinking of them, and subtly drop that you got to spend time in Miami (or at least Miami International Airport).

GET: TSA-compliant personal travel kit

Did a TSA agent make you throw out your too-big toothpaste, mouthwash, or shampoo? Lucky for you, Hudson stocks a kit that passes its test and comes with things to stay fresh, smooth, and suave on the go. It includes: body lotion, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, mouthwash, shaving gel, disposable razor, comb, and toothbrush. Plus, it's only \$12.99. Cobbling these toiletries together on your own

would cost you well over \$13.

SKIP: Electronics

Unless you're desperate, do not buy electronics (on- or off-brand) at a Hudson. Two examples: Instead of paying \$29.99 on the Apple website for headphones, you'll pay \$49.99 at Dallas/Fort Worth International, or pay \$49.99 for a Belkin Lightning-to-USB cable that you could have had for \$21.

GET: Antibacterial hand wipes

Tray tables aren't always individually cleaned after every flight. Whatever's left over from the passengers before you — passengers who may have drooled or changed a diaper on that tray — is still there when you flip it down. Should you show up at the airport without wipes, pick some up at

Hudson, and clean for peace of mind. At \$1.99, they're a low-cost way to improve your experience.

SKIP: Books

It is with great sadness that we report that books are not a great buy at Hudson, despite the store starting out as an oasis for the printed word. You'll find yourself overpaying for books, like Don Yaeger's "Great Teams," by about \$10 when at the airport, vs. online before your trip.

GET: Reading glasses

Whether you lost them, broke them, or left them at home, don't try to navigate the airport without your glasses. Hudson sells basic ones that cost the same price as they would online.

SKIP: Snacks and drinks

The stakes are low when we're talking food, but know that you're paying more for concessions at a Hudson. Maybe not way, way more, but more. If you're a frequent flier keeping a watchful eye on your discretionary spending, pack your snacks at home. You can score an eight-flavor variety pack of Snack Factory Deli Style Crunchy Pretzel Cracker Crisps for about \$30 online, or pay more than \$6 for one pack (one-eighth of that bundle) at a Hudson.

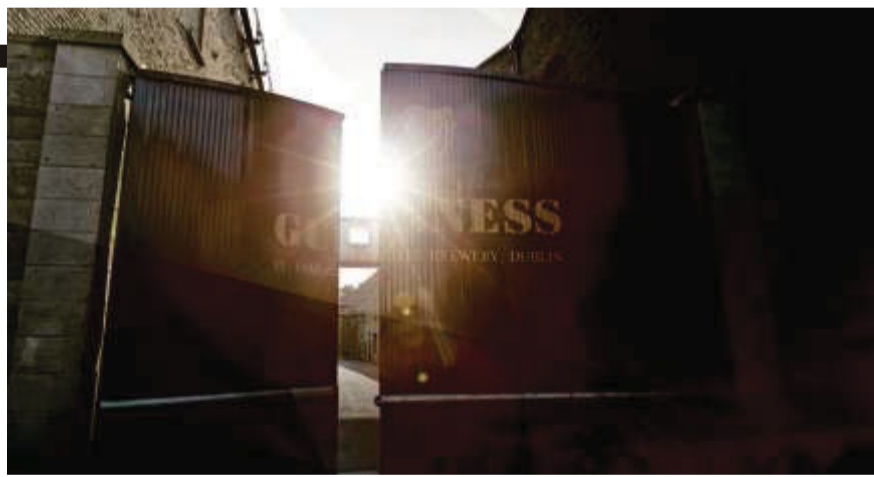
HERE

EARLY BLACK HISTORY PROMOTED IN PROVIDENCE

Just in time for Black History Month, Providence has expanded its renowned self-guided walking tours with an Early Black History Walking Tour. Launched as an act of remembrance by a city that participated in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the tour — covering the period between 1636 and 1865 — honors the lives of little-remembered citizens such as Thomas Howland, the first Black man elected to public office in 1857; Emmanuel "Manna" Bernoon, who founded and ran the first Oyster and Ale House; George Henry, who escaped from Virginia and became a community leader and sexton at St. Stephen's Church; and many more. Includes more than a dozen points of interest, including historic houses, churches, and burial grounds. Maps available at Providence Visitor Center locations; a printable version can be downloaded from the Go Providence website. www.goprovidence.com/things-to-do/providence-walking-tours/early-black-history-historic-walking-tour

LEAP FOR THESE DEALS

Take advantage of an extra day in February and snag one of the Leap Year Packages offered by Main Street Hospitality's collection. Now through the end of the month (the 29th, of course!), book a stay at one of five New England hotels and get 29 percent off nightly room rates and a bonus \$29 credit at The Red Lion Inn (from \$129); The Porches Inn at MASS MoCa (from \$129); Hammetts Hotel



(from \$229); The Briarcliff Motel (from \$70); and Hotel on North (from \$129). Suite upgrades and late check-outs based on availability at time of arrival. Limited travel dates vary by property, through May and July, so check details as listed on each hotel website via provided links. www.mainstreethospitalitygroup.com/hotel-specials

THERE

URBAN SAFARIS IN AFRICA

You've seen magnificent lions and stately giraffes, battling rhinos, and lumbering elephants. Now what? Timeless African Safaris, a company that runs luxury wildlife wilderness excursions, is adding new experiences to its roster: Urban Safaris. Designed for travelers interested in immersing themselves in the continent's diverse and vibrant culture, the city-centric tours offer opportunities to mingle with locals at artisanal craft markets and contemporary art galleries, street-food vendors and hip dining spots, community education and training centers, music and dance venues, and

more in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Kigali, Nairobi, Dar Es Salaam and Arusha. Rates vary by city and length of stay. For example, two nights in Kigali, Rwanda (from \$835); and four nights in Cape Town, South Africa (from \$2,030). www.tasafaris.com/experiences/urban-safaris-in-africa

ERIN GO BREW

Attention beer lovers! The Guinness Storehouse in Dublin is debuting "Behind the Gates," a premium experience exploring the past, present, and future of this famed brew. Led by beer spe-



cialists, the three-hour tour starts where it all began with Arthur Guinness in 1759. Walking among tracks of historic railway lines, guests will see some of the oldest parts of the site, including the 200-year-old Vat Houses where the beer matured. Visitors are then guided to the Roast House, where barley is roasted to 232 degrees Celsius, before proceeding along an underground tunnel to Brewhouse 4, the state-of-the-art facility where Guinness is brewed today. Includes guided food-and-beer tasting; exclusive sampling of limited-edition brews only available at the on-site experimental Guinness Open Gate Brewery; and a commemorative gift. Reserve online to guarantee a spot on your desired date. \$105. www.guinness-storehouse.com/en/guinness-brewery-tour

SNAZZY HOTEL DEBUTS IN AUSTIN

The bustling Campus District in Austin kicks up its luxury quotient with a new hotel debut. The Otis Hotel, Autograph Collection, located one block from the University of Texas, welcomes guests this month to its new 191-room property, including 29 suites. In a nod to Austin's vibrant music scene and the nearby university, each room sports vinyl record players, vintage schoolroom clocks, and cork and chalkboard-colored walls. Amenities include a Vinyl Library, a curated collection of records you can peruse and choose tunes to play in your room; Otopia rooftop pool and lounge; walk-up

streetside burger bar; open-air wine and Spanish tapas bar; and full-service restaurant featuring classic American dishes. Rates from \$289. 512-473-8900. www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/ausak-the-otis-hotel-autograph-collection

EVERYWHERE



ALL-IN-ONE COFFEE MAKER AND TRAVEL MUG

Traveling java junkies can now brew a perfect cuppa joe anywhere on the road with Wacaco's new Pipamoka nomadic coffee maker. Working without batteries or electricity, you can brew and drink from the same device, and there's no need to purchase wasteful paper filters or pods. Simply add your own coffee into the reusable microfilter, and drop into the stainless steel thermo cup that you've filled with boiling water. A unique twisting mechanism creates vacuum pressure that makes a full cup of balanced coffee in two minutes. Lightweight (only 0.94 pounds) and sleek (2.85 inches by 7.16 inches), the Pipamoka keeps your beverage hot for three to four hours — if you can wait that long for your caffeine fix. Free shipping. \$46.90. www.wacaco.com/pages/pipamoka

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