

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

Seeing the world from upside-down and all around



SOPHIE LYONS

Hannah Adams at Samadhi Sacred Valley, a retreat center in Cusco, Peru.

THE VIP LOUNGE | HANNAH ADAMS

It may be decades since you last tried a handstand, but yoga and pilates instructor Hannah Adams says it's time to rethink the upside-down position. One of the many classes Adams teaches at Down Under Yoga studios — and in private lessons — is “Handstands for Beginners.” In it, students learn body awareness and “how to use a wall as a tool to safely transition in and out of a handstand pose,” Adams explained, adding that one does not need to be upside down to “experience the shape of a handstand on some level.” The Roslindale native, who now calls Allston home, said that yoga, pilates, and other forms of body and mental awareness are needed now more than ever. “They provoke a sense of center and help us to relate better to the world around us ... which is hugely relevant right now,” the 30-year-old said. Adams hosts yoga retreats around the world and loves to travel, so much so that she just finished a poetry book, “One Carry-on Item,” about her experiences traveling and living abroad. Published by Cliff Street Books, it will be available on Amazon.com later this month. Find out about her virtual classes at www.hannahadams.fit or on Instagram @hannahadamsyoga. We caught up with Adams to talk about all things travel.

Favorite vacation destination?

Cusco, Peru. This is where I first lived and worked as a yoga and pilates teacher. I have a loving community there and go back every year to visit and lead yoga retreats. I enjoy going back, too, just to speak Spanish, eat delicious food, and be in the beautiful mountains of the Sacred Valley.

Favorite food or drink while vacationing?

Freshly squeezed juice from a local market. I will never forget drinking suco de milho (corn juice) at a market in São Paulo, Brazil. Or the tart pomegranate juice at Shuk Hacarmel (Carmel Market) in Tel Aviv, Israel.

Where would you like to travel to but haven't?

So many places: Mexico, Argentina, Iceland, Ghana, Japan, New Zealand ... just to name a few. These places have dances, lan-

guages, and landscapes that I would love to experience firsthand.

One item you can't leave home without when traveling?

A good pair of dance shoes. Whenever I travel to a new place, I will always find a local salsa dance club. It's a fun way to meet people, especially if you're somewhere you don't speak the language well. I have yet to be in a city where I couldn't find a salsa night and make some friends.

Aisle or window?

Aisle, always: two knee surgeries, restless legs, and a small bladder. I am often in the back of the plane stretching or giving impromptu yoga classes to flight attendants.

Favorite childhood travel memory?

My dad and I went to the Yukon Territory [in northwest Canada] one summer when I was 12 and experienced 24-hour sunlight. I remember being outside at 3 a.m. and it looked like noon!

Guilty pleasure when traveling?

Selfies and sugar.

Best travel tip?

Learn the language — even if it is just a few phrases. It makes a huge difference if you can show a bit of effort in adapting to your environment. It shows respect, and almost always provokes a warm and welcoming response. I once spent a whole summer studying Greek just for a week vacation to Crete. Speaking a beginner level of Greek made every element of that trip more meaningful because I could interact that much more thoroughly with the people and culture around me. Also, I love to travel, but I would rather go to fewer places and spend more time in each place, rather than complete some sort of checklist. This way, I absorb bits of the language and culture, make meaningful connections with people, and maybe even have a place to come back to [where people] will know me when I return.

JULIET PENNINGTON

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER
CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

Is my online travel agency withholding an airline ticket refund?

Q. I had a flight from Baltimore to Madrid scheduled on American Airlines, then I found out I needed surgery. So I contacted my online travel agency, AirTkt, to ask for a refund.

I filled out the paperwork and sent AirTkt a letter from Johns Hopkins stating that I would be unable to fly. American Airlines refunded AirTkt based on my medical letter. But now I can't get AirTkt to refund me. I have a credit card that provides travel insurance, but it requires that I first request a refund from the airlines. Can you help me get my airline ticket refund?

PAMELA MAZERSKI, *Ellicott City, Md.*

A. I'm sorry to hear that you need surgery. At a time like this, everyone should be sympathetic to your situation. If, indeed, AirTkt took an airline ticket refund from American Airlines and didn't send the money along, that would be unethical.

Generally, nonrefundable tickets are, as the name would suggest, completely nonrefundable. You can either buy a more expensive, refundable ticket (but those can double or triple the cost of your airfare) or take out a “cancel for any reason” insurance policy (twice as expensive as regular insurance, and you may get only a percentage of your money back). As a result, most people just roll the dice, hoping they don't get sick or that their plans don't change.

There has to be a better way. Either airlines need to offer more reasonable fares

that are changeable, or they need to loosen their strict ticket change rules. The change fees and fare differentials you have to pay are often more expensive than the ticket. Come on!

By the way, I wouldn't put too much stock in your credit card coverage. Cards normally cover specific events like lost luggage and missed connections, but you may have some trouble filing a successful claim because of your surgery. It's still worth a try.

I list the executive contacts for American Airlines on my consumer advocacy site, elliott.org. You could have sought some clarification about the status of your refund, and who had it.

It turns out no one had it, because there was no refund. I checked with the airline, and it said it had denied your airline ticket refund. Having surgery — or at least your kind of surgery — isn't a good enough reason for a ticket refund, according to American Airlines.

Normally, airlines refund nonrefundable tickets for serious, life-threatening medical problems or when a passenger dies. And they make few exceptions.

Fortunately, after I brought this case to the airline's attention, it decided to make an exception for you. You've received a full refund of the \$585 you had to pay for your ticket to Madrid. I wish you a speedy recovery.

If you need help with a coronavirus-related refund, please contact me. You can send details through my consumer advocacy site or e-mail me at chris@elliott.org.

HERE

NEW ZIPCAR SERVICES FOR SUMMER ROADTRIPS

Regional road trips are expected to be a popular and safe way to vacation this summer. But what if you don't own a car? Car-sharing network Zipcar is introducing Instant Access to the Boston area, allowing new members to join and access Zipcar's fleet of vehicles within minutes with only a selfie and a valid driver's license. Each eligible member will be reviewed and, if approved, can instantly access Zipcar vehicles across the United States via a smartphone. Considered an essential service during the coronavirus pandemic, Zipcar has also adjusted its offerings to meet the need for affordable, on-demand access to a vehicle during the crisis. With that in mind, Dedicated Zipcar offers exclusive use of the same vehicle for five or seven days a week, and a Stay Local Plan which offers up to 50 percent reduced hourly rates plus a fee for mileage as a cost-efficient option for short-distance local trips. www.zipcar.com

CARHOP ICE CREAM

Adapting to the current COVID-19 environment has some local shops returning to business models of yesterday. (Hello drive-in movie theaters!) In Rhode Island's Blackstone Valley, traditional ice cream stands have adapted to carhop style operations for the summer. Located on the same farm where their milk and cream come from, The Wright Scoop's carhop-uniformed servers will bring your order of farmstead ice cream scoops straight to your car. Choose from a



changing selection of flavors, toppings, classic sundaes, and weekly specials to enjoy in your car or take to go. 401-767-3014, www.thewrightscoopri.com

THERE

PARMA'S CULTURAL ROLE EXTENDS THRU 2021

Poor Parma! The city in Italy's Emilia-Romagna region, designated as the Italian Capital of Culture in 2020, has suspended most of the planned exhibitions, concerts, workshops, and panels designed to celebrate Parma's culture and identity. The good news? The Italian government recently announced it will extend Parma's designation as the Italian Capital of Culture through 2021, meaning visitors will have another year to plan a visit to the city famed for its Parma ham and Parmesan cheese, and historic buildings such as Teatro Regio, a 19th-century opera house, and the Parma Cathedral, where a fresco by

Correggio adorns the cupola. Until then, the Municipal Theatre of Regio Parma is offering an immersive 360-degree look at the annual Verdi Festival. Through panoramic audio and video recording techniques, at-home viewers will feel like they are sitting in the center of the stage for past performances of “Stifellio,” “Aida,” “I Masnadieri,” and more. www.teatroregioparma.it/en/spettacolo/festival-verdi-immersive-360_copola



HAMPTONS LUXURY ESCAPE DEBUTS

Those looking for a luxury retreat may want to consider The Roundtree, Amagansett, a newly opened, year-round boutique hotel in the Hamptons, on the eastern end of Long Island, New York. Set on two-acres of land, steps away from the village of Amagansett and the white-sand shores of the Atlantic, the property's renovated 15-rooms and suites are housed within one- two- and three-bedroom private cottages and barn. Complimentary amenities include continental breakfast; minibar stocked with favorite snacks and beverages; full-size Grown Alchemist bath products; Frette linens; Matouk towels; beach passes; evening s'mores at the fire pit; morning yoga; and more. The Summer Sojourn package, for guests staying five nights or more, includes 15 percent off the nightly rate, and additional complimentary amenities

including laundry service, grocery shopping, food pickup at local restaurants, and the comforts of home such as Netflix streaming. Summer rates from \$595. 631-267-3133, www.theroundtreehotels.com.

EVERYWHERE

REEF SAFE SUNSCREENS

Former ocean beach life-guard Brian Guadagno's desire to create a sunscreen that replaces harsh chemicals with all-natural ingredients started on his kitchen table and culminated in

a new company, Raw Elements Sunscreen. Not only are the company's toxic-free products designed to protect



your skin — with biologically active antioxidants, vitamins and minerals — they also aim to raise awareness for the decline of the world's fragile coral reefs. Product offerings include tinted and non-tinted SPF sunscreen in tubes, tins and pumps, as well as lip shimmer and protection, and lotions specifically for kids. Reef safe; biodegradable; never runs or stings eyes. Individual items and combo packs available. \$5-\$43. www.rawelementssunscreen.com.

PEEL, STICK, AND SLEEP PATCHES

The stress of traveling (and nowadays, not traveling) affects your ability to get a good night's rest. The sleep-assist company Klova has developed a nature-inspired Zpatch to ease you into slumber. Engineered for optimal absorption throughout the night, each patch contains 10 sleep-assisting ingredients, including melatonin, hops, valerian, L-theanine, magnesium, gaba, and more. Safe for skin and dermatologist approved, the patch can be worn anywhere on the body. When you're ready for serious travel, the lightweight easy-to-pack patches can be helpful for battling the negative effects of jetlag. For adults 18 and older. Four-week supply (28 patches) \$30.99. NEECE REGIS