

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

Maine talk-show host Dan Cashman on sleep, laughter, and his love of Hawaii



While there are many destinations on his bucket list, Maine talk-show host Dan Cashman said a staycation is just fine with him. “Everything from our rocky coastline, to the lakes in the interior ... Maine is so picturesque — just like a postcard,” said Cashman, 42. “And it is so beautiful in the summertime. When it’s really hot in other parts of the country, the weather here is borderline perfect — and it’s right in our backyard.” The Old Town native said he is proud of “The Nite Show With Danny Cashman,” which just celebrated its 10th anniversary and is routinely ranked the No. 1 show on Saturday nights in Eastern and Central Maine (it airs on CBS and/or Fox affiliates in the state’s three major TV markets). And while he “deeply” misses taping the show before a live audience (at the Gracie Theatre at Husson University in Bangor), he is enjoying the fruits of his labor nonetheless. “Making people laugh is one of the greatest joys in life,” he said. “We need more of that.” The locally produced show, which includes a six-piece house band and an announcer, adheres to a late-night talk-show format and features local, regional, and national guests. “I love blending local and national [talent],” Cashman said. Guests have included everyone from Weird Al Yankovic, to Patrick Dempsey, to Dr. Nirav Shah from the Maine Centers for Disease Control. Cashman lives in Brewer (just outside of Bangor) with his wife, Karen, their two daughters, who are 9 and 5, and their cat, Bob. He works in public relations and runs a nonprofit called Dirigo Reads with his wife, who is a community relations director for a health care organization. “Our goal is to get a new book in the hands of every first-grader in the state for every month of the school year by 2025,” he said. We caught up with Cashman to talk about all things travel.

Favorite vacation destination?

I cannot pick one. But I’ve narrowed it down to four. My wife and I went on our honeymoon in Hawaii. I’ve never been anywhere like it: so relaxing, so beautiful, and so unique. Great memories, despite a near-hit from a Category 5 hurricane, three earthquakes, and a tsunami warning while we were there. My favorite go-to destination is

New York City. I love the hustle and bustle of the city. I love big-time Broadway productions and live theater. I love television and the history of television. And I love the history and people of New York. I’ve been there a lot, yet I haven’t been there nearly enough. I also love Disney World. We have kids that are prime Disney ages. It never disappoints. Lastly, I live in Maine. Mainers have a lot of pride in our place. I love a good staycation. And while Maine has many nooks and crannies, as well as traditional tourist destinations, I really love the Samoset Resort in Rockport. It’s got Maine charm, incredible ocean views, and a bustling arts scene throughout the midcoast. It’s a great close getaway for a day, weekend, or a week.

Favorite food or drink while vacationing?

I tend to gravitate toward burgers while I’m vacationing. Most places don’t mess it up so much that I regret the choice. There are many local takes on burgers that it offers variety while still giving you a familiar foundation. I spent a week in [Florida’s] Key West about 15 years ago, and I couldn’t get Jimmy Buffett’s “Cheeseburgers in Paradise” out of my head, so I had at least one cheeseburger per day on that trip. I didn’t regret it then, and I don’t regret it now.

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

New Orleans and Austin, Texas — both for their vibrant music scenes. I haven’t traveled there because most of the time when I travel somewhere farther than New York, it’s either for a purpose, or it’s a big, weeklong family trip. Our weeklong family trips outside of Maine are rare, but seem to focus on Disney World. The reasons I would like to go to both New Orleans and Austin are primarily to experience the live music and scene. Someday I will get there. It might be when we’re past this pandemic and when my kids are older, but it will be someday.

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

My laptop. I’m sort of glued to it. I know it’s unhealthy, but I feel a whole lot more comfortable if I have it with me. My fear is that something will happen while I am away that will require me to do something more elaborate than something on a tablet or phone. If I don’t have

my laptop with me, I’ll agonize over it until we get home. Most of the time, my laptop sits in the hotel room unused until we get back on the plane, but it’s like my travel security blanket. I feel better just knowing it’s there.

Aisle or window?

Aisle. Bathrooms. I cannot remember where I was flying back from, but I was in the middle seat on the right side of the plane. The guy next to me, on the aisle, had just broken his leg in a surfing accident, so it had to be elevated for the entire flight. I had to climb over this guy’s freshly broken leg three times on the flight — each time being more apologetic than the last. And if there had been an ounce of turbulence causing me to lose balance, it would have made a bad day for that guy a whole lot worse. Now I’m an aisle sitter as often as possible.

Favorite childhood travel memory?

It was at Disney World when I was maybe 6 or 7. We stopped in a gift shop at the entrance — I think so my mom could buy film. I left the gift shop before my brother, who was 4½ years older than me, and when he came out, I watched him roll up the Disney World map/booklet nice and tight and then wind up and smack some poor kid — who he thought was me — with it right in the behind. I was doubled over with laughter. In my family, if you couldn’t laugh at yourself or take a little good-natured roughing up, then you’d have a tough time.

Guilty pleasure when traveling?

Sleep. I pull some long nights and early mornings in general. If I could go to bed every night at 8, I would. If I could sleep until noon every day, I would do that, too. Both of those things wouldn’t allow me to create a television show every week, co-operate a nonprofit with my wife, work a day job entirely separate from the first two, work out to stay healthy, and try and be a good, actively involved dad. So when we travel, I take advantage of the relaxed nature of things, and load up on sleep as much as possible.

Best travel tip?

Research, but be flexible.

JULIET PENNINGTON

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

A visa problem on American Airlines. Who should pay?

By Christopher Elliott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

I was traveling with a friend to a wedding in Asia in 2018 and decided to make a stopover in Beijing after learning about the new 144-hour visa-free policy. I contacted the Chinese consulate in Chicago, and it confirmed the rule and said that we could travel to Beijing with one airline and have the onward ticket with another one as long as it was to a location outside of China.

On the day of our trip, I showed up at the airport, and American Airlines did not allow me to board the plane. Nobody at the Minneapolis airport knew of any visa-free policy for Beijing or anywhere in China.

I ended up having to buy one-way tickets to Los Angeles on Delta and then one-way tickets to Beijing on Air China. Air China allowed me to board without any problems. I was able to visit Beijing without any difficulties and no previous visa.

When I returned to the United States, I contacted American to request reimbursement for my tickets, which cost \$4,007. Unfortunately, American would not even address our request. It just sent generic responses that were infuriating. I have not given up. Airlines have an obligation to be up-to-date on visa requirements. I don’t want other people to fall victim to American Airlines’ ignorance. Can you help?

RODOLFO SOCA,
Washington, D.C.

A. I’m sorry you had to rebook your flights to China and that you had to wait almost two years to get a resolution on this case. But I promise we’ll have a resolution by the end of this story.

The final authority for visa rules is Timatic, a visa database published by the

International Air Transport Association (www.iatatravelcentre.com/passport-visa-health-travel-document-requirements.htm). It appears, however, that American had its own internal policies that conflicted with the visa rules. This happens every now and then. I recall a case where American denied a passenger boarding because she didn’t have enough time left before her passport expired. She was legal to enter the country, but American still wouldn’t let her board.

If you ever have a question about the validity of your visa, it’s important to check Timatic and find out how the airline will interpret the Timatic information. American happens to take a more conservative approach when it comes to visa and passport rules. I actually support that — better to be safe than sorry — but the key is communicating those policies to your passengers. American didn’t do that.

You did a great job of contacting American by e-mail and arguing your case. It looks as if the airline wasn’t swayed by your arguments. You could also have reached out to an executive at American Airlines. I publish their names, numbers, and e-mail addresses on my consumer advocacy site at www.elliott.org/company-contacts/american-airlines/.

I contacted American on your behalf. It reimbursed you for your new tickets.

Christopher Elliott is the chief advocacy officer of Elliott Advocacy, a nonprofit organization that helps consumers resolve their problems. He can be reached at elliott.org/help or chris@elliott.org.

HERE

‘NUTCRACKER’ SELECTIONS UNDER SUN AND STARS

We may be celebrating the holidays a bit differently this year, but thanks to the Festival Ballet Providence we can still enjoy iconic moments from the beloved “Nutcracker.” Bundle up and bring the kids to a stunning open-air temporary performing venue, The Hope Theater, located on the East Side of Providence where professional troupes and ballet schools will perform “Nutcracker Sweets!,” featuring scenes of the holiday classic that audiences know and love. The outdoor space will offer socially distanced seating, and heating elements for the comfort of audiences and performers. Masks will be required by audience members at all times while within the venue. Feel free to B.Y.O.B. (Bring Your Own Blankets) for extra warmth. Fifteen shows available Dec. 11-27. Tickets from \$65. 401-353-1129, festivalballetprovidence.org/tickets-performances/nutcracker-sweets

THERE

TELLURIDE GEARS UP FOR SAFE SKI SEASON

Known for world-class alpine skiing within Colorado’s dramatic San Juan Mountains, Telluride (elevation: 8,750 feet) is gearing up for the winter season with new COVID-19 protocols. Plans include providing guests out over 2,000 acres of skiable terrain by forecasting and regulating visitation numbers; setting up “ghost lanes” and “maze queues” to ensure every other line and seat on lifts remain empty; requiring



face coverings/masks when six feet of social distance cannot be maintained; and the implementation of heated house structures in Mountain Village for socially distant outdoor dining. Additionally, resort employees will be regularly screened and monitored, and restaurants and lodging will remain at 50-percent capacity.

Visitors can also enjoy activities such as Nordic skiing, helicopter skiing, fat bike rides, winter fly fishing, ice climbing, horseback and sleigh rides, sledding, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, and dog sledding. New this year: JetBlue will operate direct flights from Boston Logan Airport to Montrose Regional Airport on Saturdays and select Wednesdays during the season. 888-605-2578, www.telluride.com

TINY HOUSES OFFER GREAT ESCAPES

Nothing says “socially distant getaway” quite like renting a tiny house in a remote location with Escape Vacations. Drawing on the recent popularity of tiny houses — where everything you need is available within a simple space — the website provides a variety of escapes



available from sea to shining sea. Simply select your perfect cozy abode, choose your preferred dates and book online. Choices include a tiny house tucked in the foothills of the Olympic Mountains in Washington; a custom-built home with a view of San Diego and the Mount Helix Valley; a Zen-inspired house set on 53 private wooded acres overlooking a fishing pond in Red Rock, Texas; and more. Rates vary per home, with rates as low as \$70 per night. www.escapevacations.net

EVERYWHERE

NEVER LOSE YOUR UMBRELLA AGAIN

Raise your hand if you have ever asked, “Where the heck did I leave my umbrella?” (Raise your other hand if you’ve lost more than one while traveling.) Introducing the Davek Loss Alert Sensor, an umbrella-finding product you never knew you needed. Developed by high-quality rain umbrella company Davek, this little device will prevent you from ever losing your rain protection again. Simply attach the module to any umbrella and sync to your smartphone via a free app from Apple App store or Google Play. The device becomes a digital tether, alerting you if the distance between your umbrella and your certain range. \$35. davekny.com/products/davek-loss-alert-sensor



TRAVEL BOOKS FOR ALL KIDS

Designed to inspire children, especially girls and children of color, to feel empowered to explore the world, the travel kid’s book series, “The Amazing Adventures of Aya & Pete” has released its third book in the series. Following adventures in London and Paris, Aya and Pete now travel to the Big Apple with “The Amazing Adventures of Aya & Pete in New York,” a fun adventure with whimsical illustrations. Inspired by the real-life travels of Serena Minott and her daughter Asha Gore, the books follow a little girl boldly exploring the world with her stuffed sloth, Pete, while learning about the culture of each destination such as geography, food, arts, currency, key landmarks and more. Ages 3-8. \$17.99. www.shopashima.com/collections/shop-the-amazing-adventures-of-aya-pete

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