

SundayTravel

WITH: NEW ENGLAND DESTINATIONS

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PHOTOS (ABOVE AND BOTTOM) BY CHRISTOPHER MUTHER/GLOBE STAFF

Dancer Eliud Xavier Melendez shows participants on a hip-hop tour a few breakdance moves.

Hip-hop turns 50

And New York is throwing an epic birthday party to celebrate



NICHOLAS KNIGHT

A mural of rapper Biggie Smalls by Spread Art NYC honors the late performer in Brooklyn's Bed-Stuy neighborhood.

CHRISTOPHER MUTHER



NEW YORK — Here's a sobering thought: if hip-hop were a person, it would be eligible for an AARP card this month.

Unlike most musical genres, hip-hop has a birthday — at least it was assigned one — and the 50th birthday party for New York's native soundtrack will be whack. Do the kids still say whack? No? How about fly? Off the hook? Never

mind. Let's just say hip-hop is having a sprawling city-wide birthday party this month, and everyone is invited, even those who still use phrases such as “whack,” “fly,” and “off the hook.”

Legend has it that hip-hop was born on Aug. 11, 1973, when Cindy Campbell enlisted her brother, DJ Kool Herc to spin at her back-to-school party in the rec room of a Bronx apartment building. Herc brought two turntables, a mas-

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Hip-hop pioneer Mighty Mike C explains the Harlem mural at the corner of 106th Street and Park Avenue in East Harlem on a hip-hop tour.

The best new camping gear out there

By Kari Bodnarchuk
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Camping season is upon us. Whether you're in the market for new camping or backpacking equipment or just a gear nerd like me who's dreaming about future adventures, here are some new gear picks that may make your trips more comfortable or fun.

Summer to three-season bags

For adventures around water or in wet environments — from rafting trips to humid hikes — consider bringing a synthetic sleeping bag (a down bag takes longer to dry and doesn't maintain its warmth when wet). One of our top picks: NEMO's new Tempo 35, a three-season, spoon-shaped bag with a roomy and relaxed fit that makes it extra comfy for side sleepers (you'll appreciate the additional space at your elbows and knees). The polyester ripstop shell and polyester taffeta liner have a water-repellant finish that helps the bag fend off moisture from condensation or humidity. The synthetic insulation offers decent loft for comfort yet packs down small. The Tempo 35, available in men's and women's versions, also has a draft collar to boost warmth, a snag-

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SPACE ACACIA

The plush and portable Space Acacia tent takes glamping to a whole new level.

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The comic and actor enjoys traveling in sweatpants and being 'an information freak'

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SALEM

SPIRITED PLACE ALWAYS CASTS A SPELL

It isn't the season for Haunted Happenings, but the Witch City is still open for business

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Who needs Disney? We have our own *haunted* (or just spooky) *mansions*

By Diane Bair and Pamela Wright
GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS

The kids might be eager to see Disney's “Haunted Mansion,” but here in New England, we've got the real thing, minus Tiffany Haddish and Jared Leto: a collection of creepy-cool castles that may well house a ghost or two. Here's a peek behind the stained-glass windows of some intriguing Gothic masterpieces — local haunts, if you will — that are open to the flesh-and-blood public. (Is that a streak of light, or a ghostly orb in

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Wilson Castle in Proctor, Vt., hosts overnights for paranormal investigators.

As hip-hop turns 50, N.Y. is throwing a party

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sive pair of speakers, and a crate full of funk and soul records. Admission was a quarter for girls, 50 cents for boys.

But Campbell's party became historic when her brother played two copies of the same record, joined them at the percussive break, and created an extended breakbeat. He worked the mic to get the crowd on the dance floor. You don't need to worry about technical details here. Just remember 1520 Sedgwick Ave. in the Bronx. That's where it all began.

It took more than a pair of turntables to birth hip-hop, and this is where I'll turn the details over to Mighty Mike C, a guide for Hush Tours. On a humid, rainy afternoon last month, I took "The Birthplace of Hip Hop Tour," which is being offered to celebrate hip-hop's transition to middle age. I was the only US resident on the tour, which went through Harlem and the Bronx. My fellow rap enthusiasts were from Denmark, Canada, Switzerland, and Italy.

We saw the neighborhoods and venues where hip-hop came of age, plus there was a stop where we could learn breakdance moves. I watched the lessons from afar, fearful that my moves would be more break hip than breakdance.

According to Mike, who was a member of the early and influential rap band the Fearless Four, there are four elements to hip-hop, and I now know them all by heart because, during the tour, we were regularly quizzed.

"You need an MC, the media changed the term to rapper," he said. "You need turntables. You need breakdancing. There's one other element, and that's graffiti. That's what happened in the summer of 1973. It all came together."

The music born in a Bronx community room is now the most popular genre in the United States and United Kingdom, according to the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry. If you're a fan of rap, or just curious to learn more, I'd say that 2023 would be the year to visit. New York City Tourism + Conventions has put together an extensive schedule and map on its website (NYC-tourism.com/hiphop) with recommendations of where you can soak up essential old-school vibes in your favorite Adidas tracksuit.

If you're in New York the week of Aug. 7, there are block parties, plus hip-hop week at Lincoln Center, and a big birthday concert at Yankee Stadium on Aug. 11 featuring pioneers of the style, such as Run-DMC, Ice Cube, Eve, Snoop Dogg, and the Sugar Hill Gang.



LAILA ANNMARIE STEVENS

"A lot of people who have never been to this part of the city will come to the museum," said Rocky Bucano, president and chairman of the board of the Universal Hip Hop Museum in the Bronx.

Even if a summer trip isn't in your future, there are exhibits continuing into the fall, such as a look at Jay-Z's Brooklyn roots on display at the Grand Army Plaza in Brooklyn or photographer Janette Beckman's show "hip-hop at 50" in New York's Seaport District. There's even an immersive "visual mixtape" called "Hip Hop Til Infinity" at the 500,000-square-foot Hall des Lumières.

Or, you can simply stroll through neighborhoods, support Black-owned businesses, and check out the murals. If you're in the neighborhood, might I suggest brunch at Sweet Brooklyn Bar in Bed-Stuy?

"Hip-hop has touched every corner of the world by this point," said Rondel Holder of New York City Tourism + Conventions. "A lot of people didn't think that it would make it this far. Hip-hop wasn't always generally accepted, but now it's celebrated almost everywhere."

One of those people who didn't think it would last was Prince Charles Alexander, a Grammy Award-winning producer and professor at Berklee College of Music. When he first heard the seminal "Rapper's Delight" by the Sugar Hill Gang in 1979, he thought it was a novelty record, not far from shtick like "The Monster Mash."

Eventually, he warmed up to the genre. He became Boston's first rapper. His band, Prince Charles and the City Beat Band, was signed to a major label, and after the group disbanded in the mid-1980s, he went on to engineer and produce records for Mary J. Blige, Puff Daddy, Usher, Jodeci, X-Clan, Babyface, Aretha Franklin, and Sting. He now teaches advanced production and mixing at Berklee. It's an impressive journey for someone who started with a funk-rap record called "Tight Jeans."

"The truth is that the 1973 to 1979 period was the incubation stage," he said. "So the more research I did, the more I realized that it was not only a New York phenomenon, but that New York was the only city that understood how to take it from its simple beginnings and turn it into a production concept that could be marketed in spaces outside of the rec hall. And so that's why all the focus and the energy goes to New York."

Alexander attributes the rise of rap through the 1980s to a combination of factors, including the reduced funding of arts programs in public schools during the Reagan administration. As school kids had less access to instruments and fewer music classes, they turned to hip-hop, where they could

make music on turntables and by writing rhymes. Between cuts to school music programs and the rise of artists such as Run-DMC, Kurtis Blow, and Grandmaster Flash, the 1980s became a fertile breeding ground for hip-hop's next generation. The advent of the drum machine and sampler made hip-hop available to even more budding rappers.

Along the way, it rolled in influences from Latino culture and then began its spread to world domination. By 1990, the first rap song topped the Billboard charts. Sadly, that song was "Ice Ice Baby," by Vanilla Ice.

"At first a lot of rap was about partying, and then it was, 'Let me enlighten you about where we live.' And then it was 'Let's push back against injustice.'" Alexander said. "In the mid-'90s you had the bling era. Every era tries to find its own voice. You can't point to one thing and say 'That's hip-hop,' because hip-hop has been evolving and every generation of hip-hop artists wants to say something different than the generation before."

Those stories are being told across events in all five boroughs through the end of the year, but soon, there will be a permanent place where the complete story of hip-hop can live. The 53,000-square-foot Universal Hip Hop Museum in the Bronx will house artifacts, host shows, and offer exhibitions befitting a 50-year-old art form. It's slated to open in early 2025.

"Judging by the enthusiasm and the numbers of people who visit our temporary space here at the Bronx Terminal Market, I imagine the museum is going to become one of the city's top global destinations," said Rocky Bucano, president and chairman of the board of the Universal Hip Hop Museum. "One of the most satisfying parts of this project is that the museum is going to be an economic catalyst for this part of the Bronx, maybe the entire Bronx. A lot of people who have never been to this part of the city will come to the museum."

Even without the museum, hip-hop has already brought an influx of visitors to Harlem and the Bronx, such as Tommaso Cafaro from Sicily. The 27-year-old, who was taking the hip-hop tour, said what he was most excited to see in all of New York was 1520 Sedgwick Ave.: The apartment building where Cindy Campbell had her back-to-school party on Aug. 11, 1973.

"Seeing this place made my spine tingle," he said. "I sensed the energy and I love it. I grew up listening to hip-hop and now I can say I've seen where it was born."

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Checking out the best new camping gear

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free zipper, and a handy sleeve up top for stashing clothes to make a pillow or for holding your camp pillow in place. \$139.95-\$159.95. www.nemo-oequipment.com

If you're like me, you want something covering you while you sleep, even on a summer night. Sea to Summit's Spark Ultralight sleeping bag liner keeps you comfortable down to 54 degrees — offering the perfect layer when the sun drops or a mountain or ocean breeze kicks up — and slips into your regular sleeping bag the rest of the year for added warmth. The Spark 0, as it's called, comes with Ultra-Dry goose down with 850+ loft, packs down to about the size of a pint glass, and weighs just 7.9 ounces (regular, for someone up to 6 feet) to 9.2 ounces (long, up to 6 feet, 6 inches). The mummy-style bag has a three-quarter-length zipper, baffled construction for keeping the down dispersed, and a drawcord at the neck for trapping heat on cooler nights. \$309 long; \$289 regular. seato-summit.com

Pre-prepared and creative camping meals

Add some flavor to your morning backpacking meal with Good To-Go's new Breakfast Hash. Company founder and chef Jennifer Scism, who's worked at and owned top-rated New York restaurants, created this savory meal from her home base in Kittery. The healthy dehydrated camp meal brings together a dozen or so ingredients that you can actually pronounce: onion, butternut



EMILY SIERRA/GOOD TO-GO

squash, feta cheese, carrot, garlic, potato flakes, and milk. Add to that salt, black peppercorn, thyme, oregano, and rosemary and you get a yummy gluten-free vegetarian meal that comes in a single-serving pouch and requires just one cup of boiling water and 15 minutes of patience. Look for it at EMS, Kittery Trading Post, and L.L. Bean or online. \$8.60 per package. <https://goodto-go.com>

First the important news: American Outdoor Products has re-released its popular Astronaut Ice Cream, which it stopped making for about a year. The freeze-dried ice cream sandwich now comes in mint chocolate chip, vanilla, Neapolitan, and cookies and cream. The company also makes a new Backpacker's Pantry Emergency Meal Kit that lets you buy three days' worth of tasty, freeze-dried breakfasts and entrées for two people in one box. Use the dozen meals for backpacking and camping or stash the kit in a corner of your garage or in your car while road-tripping, in case of an emergency. The meat-eater's option includes chicken pad Thai, fettuccini alfredo with chicken, lasagna, and potato stew with beef, while the vegetarian version offers Kathmandu curry, chana masala, veggie lasagna, and pad Thai; both feature packages of granola with bananas and almonds, blueberry walnut oats, and Rocky Mountain scramble. \$99.99 (vegetarian), \$109.99 (meat version). backpackerspantry.com



HUBI

Cushioning for the tent and trail

You'll spend many hours on the ground while camping and backpacking so make sure you bring comfortable mats for beneath you. Exped's Ultra sleeping mats blend light weight, warmth, and comfort for different seasons. The Ultra 1R works best for summer months (providing insulation for temps down to 50 degrees), while the more versatile three-season Ultra 3R works in temperatures down to 30 degrees, measures 3 inches thick when inflated, and has head-to-toe air chambers that help keep you centered on the mattress. The Ultra 3R weighs just 18.3



MARK MCINNIS

ounces (for medium-wide), is available in rectangular or mummy styles, and — my kids' favorite feature — comes with an inflation bag called the Schnozzel Pump-bag that lets you inflate the mattress quickly using fresh air versus your lungs.

Exped also makes the new 1.8-ounce Sit Pad Flex, a durable closed-cell sit pad that takes up little space, unfolds quickly, and offers comfort anywhere. Tuck it under your backpack lid or in a front pouch and pull it out when needed — for morning meditation at the campsite, to provide insulation on a cold ground, or during lunch stops on a lumpy or rock-strewn trail. \$139.95-\$159.95 mattress, \$19.95 sit pad. www.expedusa.com

Clean water wherever you go

Gone are the days of carrying a bulky purifier to transform water from streams, lakes, and other sources — natural or treated — to potable drinking water. LifeStraw's new Peak Solo water filter can tuck into the hip-belt pocket on your backpack, attach to any standard narrow-mouth (28mm-thread) water bottle or hydration bladder, and filter up to 3 liters of safe drinking water in one minute. Or use it as a straw to drink directly from a water source. Its microfilter membrane can purify up to 2,000 liters before needing to be replaced, and the included backwash syringe helps keep the device flowing smoothly. The 1.7-ounce device filters out at least 99.999 percent of bacteria, parasites, and microplastics — including E.coli, salmonella, giardia and cryptosporidium — and meets drinking water standards for the US Environmental Protection Agency. \$29.95. www.lifestraw.com



Lightweight packs for weeklong loads

Two new Osprey backpacks have all the features you need — and none you don't — for overnight hikes to weeklong trips carrying loads of up to about 40 pounds. The Aura (women's) and Atmos (men's) AG LT backpacks have a spacious main compartment with a hydration bladder sleeve and a lid with a large, zippered pocket with one-inch straps sewn on top for securing a camp mattress or tent. They both come with a stretchable water bottle/hiking pole sleeve on each side; a large sleeve up front for stowing a jacket, rain gear, or snacks within easy reach (with removable straps underneath that also work for securing a sleeping pad); and an integrated rain cover. Add to that two ice ax loops and two handy hip-belt pockets for holding a snack, map, and multi-tool, for instance. One of the most impressive features: the supportive, well-ventilated, and super-comfortable Anti-Gravity suspension system that can be adjusted on the fly. Both packs come in 50- and 65-liter versions. \$270-\$290. www.osprey.com

A versatile shelter for all conditions

Check out Big Agnes' new Gold Camp UL3 for one of this year's most versatile backpacking options. This three-person pyramid-style setup has three components — a tarp, a footprint, and a "mesh inner" with a floor and mesh sides — that can be configured in numerous ways. Set up the tarp with the adjustable center pole or suspend it using an external loop and you have a wind- and waterproof shelter (unlike many tarp setups, this one provides protection from all directions right down to the ground). Pitch the

Gold Camp Mesh Inner with the center pole and you have a ventilated bug-free shelter for clear skies; add the footprint with either option for more protection. Or put all three components together for a fully waterproof and bug-proof camping setup. The tarp has a peak height of up to 80 inches, while the mesh inner has a max height of 72 inches. The tent has eight mesh wall pockets and ceiling loops for a gear loft and lights. The shelter can fit into small campsites, but the sense of overhead space adds to its livability. It only has one door, but a window helps with ventilation. \$299.95 tarp, \$169.95 mesh inner, \$70 footprint. www.bigagnes.com

A tent that's out of this world

The plush and portable Space Acacia tent takes glamping to a whole new level — and is one of the coolest and most unique pop-up shelters we've tested. The tent has a durable 6-inch-thick air floor that can be used as a floating raft (it's made with the same materials as standup paddleboards) or as the tent base, creating a sleep surface that's comfortable on virtually any surface. The main tent structure has integrated fiberglass poles and a pop-up design. Setup isn't intuitive but makes sense after the first try. Use the pull tabs to pop the five wall panels into place and push the ceiling up until it clicks; then secure the tent to the air floor base. Despite the tent's cubelike design and height — 6 feet, 9 inches at its peak — it's rated to withstand winds up to 46 miles per hour. The 300-denier tent material can also handle driving rain. Secure the tent fly over the ceiling and roll the waterproof flaps down over the windows to help fend off rain, and add the winglike tent canopy for extra weather protection. The large mesh windows on the vertical walls, two full-size doors, and mesh ceiling provide awesome airflow on hot days and great stargazing opportunities. \$1,049 (3-person), \$1,399 (6-person). theacacia.com

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