

The Concierge

FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

THE LIST

BEST US BIKE-SHARE CITIES
According to hotels.com

1

NEW YORK
Over 6,000 bikes at 330 stations across Manhattan and Brooklyn. Plan a day of sightseeing with unlimited 30-minute trips for about \$10. www.citibikenyc.com

2

CHICAGO
Offering 4,000 bikes at 400 stations. The 18-mile Lakefront Trail along the Lake Michigan coastline is one of the country's top city bike paths. www.divvybikes.com

3

WASHINGTON
A fleet of 1,800 bikes at 200 stations in the District of Columbia and Arlington, Va. Avoid traffic and explore Rock Creek Park or visit the monuments of the National Mall. www.capitalbike share.com

4

MINNEAPOLIS
With 1,550 bikes at 170 stations across the Twin Cities. Enjoy unlimited 30-minute rides starting at \$6. www.niceridemn.org



YOON S. BYUN/GLOBE STAFF

5

BOSTON
More than 1,100 bikes at over 100 stations in Metro Boston. Three-day access pass offers unlimited rides under 30 minutes in duration, \$12. www.thehubway.com

NECEE REGIS



PLYMOUTH AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

THE TIP

SEE PLYMOUTH BY THYSELF

PLYMOUTH — Fall is one of the busiest times of year in “America’s hometown.” It can get pretty crowded at Plimouth Plantation and around tiny Plymouth Rock. But this year visitors can strike out on their own for the town’s historic sites using their smartphones, thanks to a mobile website developed for the Plymouth Area Chamber of Commerce by Bond Web Solutions, a division of Bond Printing & Marketing in Hanover. The application includes maps, photos, and spoken descriptions for 28 prominent historical sites, including Plymouth Rock, the Mayflower II, Howland House, the Pilgrim Maiden statue, Burial Hill, Pilgrim Hall Museum, the Jenney Grist Mill, Coles Hill, and the statue of Massasoit (pictured above). The application also incorporates QR codes at each site that can be scanned for additional details. The free tour can be accessed on any smartphone, including Android and iPhone models, or on tablets. The loop, which begins at Hedge House and finishes aboard the Mayflower II, covers about 1.5 miles and takes about three hours to walk. pilgrimpathtours.mviso.com.

ELLEN ALBANESE

CHECK IN



A CHILD’S PROMISED LAND? LEGOLAND

CARLSBAD, Calif. — Bright, bold primary colors, a smoke-breathing dragon made of tiny plastic bricks perched high in a tower, and an enthusiastic staff greet visitors at the new LEGOLAND Hotel. Kids are the focus from the moment they enter the lobby and receive a lanyard with a VIP pass and welcome packet at their own arrival counter. As the parents check in, youngsters can join like-minded guests in the interactive Castle Play area right off the lobby, check out the many Lego statues, or marvel at the wall behind the reception desk created out of more than 5,000 Lego mini figures. It seems like everything in this 250-room, three-story hotel is focused on the 12-and-under set, from the disco-themed elevators where, as soon as the doors shut, strobe lights pulsate as a mirror ball spins and ’70s music blares from a hidden sound system, to the themed rooms: Pirate, Adventure, or Kingdom. A treasure hunt awaits visitors as they enter their rooms — all of which have a separate kids’ sleeping area with bunk beds and a trundle, sleeping up to three children. The alcove has its own television — with parent controls already set — and the bathrooms have built-in toddler potty-training seats. The hotel also has a pool where, during peak season, swim-up movies are offered on weekend nights, and several dining options (including Bricks, which offers healthy buffet options in multiple serving stations — one of which is the perfect height for youngsters). Located just steps away from the popular Legoland theme park — a 128-acre property that includes an aquarium and water park and more than 22,000 Lego models — the hotel offers guests early entry into the park. Rooms from \$189, with breakfast. 5885 The Crossing Drive, Carlsbad, Calif., 877-534-6526, www.california.legoland.com
JULIET PENNINGTON

THE TIP

MINIMIZE AIRPORT NAVIGATION

MiniTime, a website with information, recommendations, and trip planning tools for families, has released a comprehensive guide for navigating 14 of the nation’s busiest airports. The MiniTime Airport Survival Guide offers information designed to make the airport experience easier for parents and children. Learn which airports and terminals have the best play areas, Wi-Fi, kid-friendly restaurants, and more. At Chicago O’Hare, for example, Kids on the Fly (Terminal 2 near F1) is an aviation-themed play area featuring a miniature cargo plane, helicopter cockpit, air traffic control tower, and Lego activity table. At San Francisco International, kids can ride the air train and visit the aquarium at Terminal 1 (boarding area C, pre-security). Download the free guide. www.minitime.com/trip-tips/Ulimate-Airport-Survival-Guide-for-Families-article
NECEE REGIS



HERE

A NANTUCKET HOLIDAY STROLL

Wander by gray-shingled buildings, carolers in Victorian garb, and Santa Claus as he parades down cobblestoned Main Street during Nantucket’s Christmas Stroll, Dec. 6-8. On this festive weekend, enjoy hot cider and cornbread at the Christmas market-place, stop at boutiques and restaurants that open their doors to holiday shoppers, and visit the Whaling Museum for the 20th annual Festival of Trees, when local residents, merchants, and artists decorate and illuminate 80 evergreen trees. Then welcome Santa Claus when he arrives by Coast Guard vessel, Dec. 7 at 12:30 p.m. 508-228-1700, www.nantucketchamber.org

LEARN TO COOK IN AN ELEGANT B&B
Head north to The Manor on Golden Pond, a country bed-and-breakfast in Holderness, N.H., where executive chef Peter Sheedy offers cooking classes on such themes as game day entertaining, seasoning to taste, and Southern-style cooking with a New England twist. The Fork in the Road classes target novice to experienced chefs. Sharpen your culinary skills while learning about techniques and ingredients, and then sample your creations. Rates start at \$650, based on double occupancy, and include a two-day class for

one person (\$75 for an additional person), two nights’ accommodations, gourmet breakfasts, a three-course dinner for two each evening, and other goodies. 800-545-2141, www.manorongoldenpond.com

THERE

NEW LUXURY HOTEL OPENS IN DOWNTOWN DUBAI

Stay at Conrad Dubai, a new luxury hotel 10 minutes from downtown Dubai, and enjoy its outdoor yoga pavilion, fitness center with hydro pools, world-class spa, and outdoor pool surrounded by tropical palms and private cocoon beds. The 555-room hotel, Conrad Hotels & Resorts’ first property in the United Arab Emirates, offers deluxe and executive rooms and two

styles of executive suites. Use the Conrad Concierge app on your smartphone or tablet to check in, schedule wake-up calls, order room service, make pillow selections, or book a table at Ballara, a hotel restaurant run by a Michelin-starred Sicilian chef, where dishes are prepared at cooking stations. Earn Hilton HHonors points for your stay. Rate from \$272. 011-971-4-4447444, www.conradhotels.com

ROOMS WITH NYC SKYLINE VIEWS

Check in at ONE UN New York and enjoy a skyline-facing room with panoramic views of Manhattan. The two-tower hotel (formerly Millennium UN Plaza) has a new Sky-High Weekends package, which offers guests deluxe accommodations on floors 29 to 40 of the West Tower, a guided walk around the Skyline Club with a “skyscraper

curator,” complimentary tickets to the family-friendly Skyscraper Museum in Battery Park, and skyscraper-themed souvenirs. The hotel has a swimming pool on the 27th floor, and the city’s only indoor hotel tennis court, located on the 39th floor. Grab an Illy coffee and a gourmet sandwich from un café in the hotel lobby. Rates from \$294 Friday-Sunday night; includes free Wi-Fi and breakfast. 212-758-1234, www.skyhighweekends.com

NEW YEAR’S IN JAPAN

Learn traditional Japanese customs when you stay at the new Palace Hotel Tokyo this New Year’s, from Dec. 31 to Jan. 2. The hotel offers special mochi-making classes, when you learn to make traditional Japanese rice cakes, dinners featuring toshikoshi soba noodles and osechi-ryori (foods specially prepared for the holiday), and a participatory hatsugama, the first tea ceremony of the new year. Watch Japan’s top musicians and jugglers perform in the lobby, and then enjoy a front-row seat to witness the royal family’s annual appearance on Jan. 2 (the hotel faces the Imperial Palace gardens). Rates from \$3,000, double occupancy, for a two-night stay; includes accommodations, most meals, and admission to the hotel’s New Year’s Countdown Cocktail Party, Dec. 31. 011-81-3-3211-5211, www.en.palacehoteltokyo.com

EVERYWHERE

SNACKS FOR LITTLE TRAVELERS

Our children like Honey Stinger’s new

Kids’ Organic Waffles so much, we didn’t get to sample the first two boxes that came home. These organic honey-based wafer-like waffles mirror the ones you may use for training, travel, or everyday snacks, but they come in smaller sizes for kids. The half-ounce, 80-calorie treats come in honey and chocolate flavors and, like their parents’ versions, have no artificial flavors, colors, preservatives, high-fructose corn syrup, or trans fats. Each box has six individually wrapped waffles, and sells for \$4.99. Keep an eye out for Honey Stinger’s kid-size chews, coming soon. 866-464-6639, www.honeystinger.com

A MULTI-USE PILLOWY TABLET STAND



The clever GoGo Pillow successfully does double duty as a travel pillow and tablet holder. The soft, fleecy product can fit tablets up to 12 inches wide.

Just slip the corners of your tablet into the snug, slit-like openings, and then place the GoGo Pillow on your lap, airline tray table, arm rest, or hotel treadmill for easy viewing. Or attach it to a car’s headrest using the two elastic straps on back. Our tablet never slipped out, and was protected by the bean-like fill material when it did take a tumble. Sleepy? Remove your tablet, pull the attached and empty neck pillow from a zippered pocket, and then drain the beans from the tablet holder into the pillow to form a comfortable U-shaped sleep aid. Currently two for \$19.95. 877-378-4292, www.gogopillow.com

KARI BODNARCHUK

