

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD



KIERAN KESNER

Aclaimed actor, Dorchester native, and former bad-boy rapper Mark Wahlberg founded Wahlburgers restaurant in 2011 with two of his nine siblings, teen idol Donnie Wahlberg, a member of the '80s band New Kids on the Block, and Paul Wahlberg, now the chef at his family's Hingham Italian restaurant, Alma Nove. With 27 Wahlburgers in the United States (the first in Hingham) and two in Canada, the burger chain will join competitors like Shake Shack and Five Guys when it jumps across the pond this coming spring. But it's not going just anywhere in England.

The Wahlberg brothers have chosen to make their British debut in London's West End theater district of Covent Garden, which until recently was fairly seedy but now harbors luxury hotels like One Aldwych, Tiffany and Apple stores, and cocktail bars like Champagne + Fromage.

"We created Wahlburgers in hopes of sharing some of our favorite foods and recipes that we grew up with," says Paul Wahlberg, "like my Mom's Sloppy Joe, my Dad's fries — and to give people a comfortable, friendly place to enjoy great food with their friends and family. Of course, one of my favorite foods has always been burgers, so that's a bonus for me!"

In addition to single, double, and triple Angus beef burgers (composed of brisket, short rib, and chuck), the London menu will sport a turkey burger and the veggie-based Impossible Burger. Wahl Sauce (a spicy blend of mayo, ketchup, and caramelized onion) comes with most burgers, along with a variety of toppings, including Government cheese, the orange American-style processed cheese the Wahlberg clan grew up eating.

There will be sandwiches and hearty salads, too, like smoky bacon and arugula salad available plain or topped with chicken or fish. Unique to the London location will be batter-fried fish and chips, meat pies (a beloved British staple), and a fried chicken sandwich.

For kids, there are mini burgers and grilled cheese sandwiches, along with sides like Tater tots.

Sweets range from frappes and floats to cupcakes and the Grilled Fluffanutta (sliced banana, peanut butter, marshmallow creme, and Nutella), while the drink menu features wine, beer, and cocktails, along with boozy dessert frappes.

The Covent Garden location has two levels with massive video screens throughout to "beam in" Wahlberg family members for live greetings or special wishes on occasions like birthdays.

If you can't get enough of the Wahlbergs, watch "Wahlburgers," an A&E reality show now in its ninth season offering a behind-the-scenes peek of the Wahlberg trio building their burger empire with guest appearances from their mother, Alma, other siblings, and Southie pals.

Victoria Abbott Riccardi can be reached at vabbottriccadi@gmail.com.



Above:
a BBQ bacon burger at Wahlburgers.

From left:
Donnie, Paul, and Mark Wahlberg.

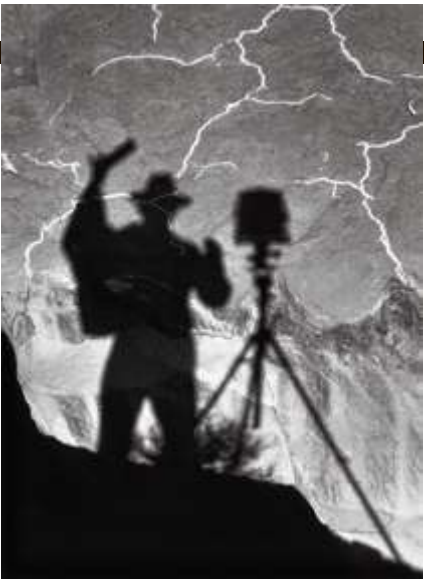
HERE

WORCESTER'S ART COLLECTION GETS ILLUMINATED

Swing by the Worcester Art Museum to check out "lumina," a floor-to-ceiling display in which animated images from the museum's collection are projected onto hanging strips of illuminated silk. Visitors walk into and through the silk strips to experience the exhibit. See "lumina" through Jan. 20, and don't miss the museum's special programs, including the Salisbury Singers, Dec. 9 (2 p.m.), the Merrimack Valley Ringers Dec. 16 (2 p.m.), the Arms and Armor Demonstration, Dec. 15 (11:30-12:30 p.m. and 2-3 p.m.), and a Lego exhibit Dec. 7 through Feb. 1, among other events. *Admission: \$14, seniors and college students with ID; \$16, adults (free first Sunday of every month).* 508-799-4406, www.worcesterart.org/events/holidays-at-wam

MFA SHOWCASES ANSEL ADAMS

See many of the photographer's most famous prints, from snow-dusted peaks in the Tetons to aerial shots of a knotted roadway, in the "Ansel Adams in Our Time" exhibit at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts Dec. 13 through Feb. 24, 2019. The exhibition showcases the black-and-white photos Adams took from Wyoming to Los Angeles, the works of 19th century government photographers that influenced Adams, and images by more than 20 modern-day photographers whose photos highlight the concerns of the environment, land rights, and the misuse of natural resources as heralded by Adams' legacy. *Free with museum admission, which is also free for those age 6 and*



under and for those who are ages 7-17 on weekends and on weekdays after 3 p.m., including some holidays. Museum admission is \$25 for those age 18 and older. 617-267-9300, www.mfa.org

NYC HOTEL OFFERS TOP VIEWS AND LOCATION

Stay at a new Manhattan hotel that overlooks the East River and Brooklyn, and features artwork by locally commissioned artists. The AC Hotel New York Downtown just opened on Maiden Lane in Manhattan's Seaport District. Look for the 33-story building with the wave-like geometric façade. The 274-room hotel has floor-to-ceiling windows, a suspended Italian marble staircase in the entryway, a Spanish tapas eatery called AC Kitchen, and the AC Lounge cocktail bar. From the hotel, you have easy access to the new Pier 17, Wall Street, Brooklyn Bridge, the National September 11 Memorial & Museum, and the World Trade Center. *Rates start at \$229. 212-742-1900, www.marriott.com/nyclf*

THERE

SEE FRANCE ON A SELF-GUIDED ADVENTURE

Discover France at your own pace as you wander through clifftop and fortified medieval villages in the Dordogne region on a new self-guided tour offered by On Foot Holidays. The trip takes walkers through Loubressac, Carennac and Autoire, members of Les Plus Beaux Villages de France ("the most beautiful villages of France"), and along the area's sleepy byways and backwaters. The journey begins at Beaulieu and then climbs into the hills for four days before traversing the steep-sided valley of the Ouysse River to the end of the route at Belcastel. Walkers stay at traditional inns and small hotels along the route, including a chateau, and enjoy sumptuous French cuisine along the way.



Complete the route in four, five, six, or seven nights. *Rates start at \$905 (four nights) to \$1,360 (seven nights), based on double occupancy, and include lodging, breakfasts, luggage transfers, route notes, and other information.* www.onfootholidays.co.uk

EVERYWHERE

GET A GRIP ON YOUR SKIS

Forget your roof box this ski season. Kuat's sleek new GRIP ski rack installs in minutes, firmly holds gear in place, and has an ingenious slide-out tray that makes loading skis and snowboards a cinch. The rack's Flip Mount System fits both factory and aftermarket crossbars: Attach the four mounts onto your crossbars using the adjustable cam buckle system and then install the GRIP bars. Flip open the well-designed latch handles

— easy to do, even with gloves on — and then slide out the two trays, load skis or snowboards, slide the trays back into place, and close the two top bars. The proprietary GripLock rubber holds gear firmly in place. Both the mounts and the GRIP bars can be locked using the same key (locks pre-installed). Kuat offers two different size racks, which let you load four or six pairs of skis (or two to four snowboards). Extra kudos: It's a lot less cumbersome than installing a roof box for your adventures, and easier to store off-season. *\$349-\$398. www.kuatracks.com*

STAY TOASTY WITH THESE HEATED JACKETS

Take the chill off during your winter travels with 8K Flexwarm's ingenious heated jackets. These stylish athletic-cut jackets (go one size up than usual) have front and back heating zones that are powered by a lightweight, relatively slim 7500mAh power bank that slips into an inner hip pocket. Press the jacket's built-in control buttons, located next to the left front pocket, and turn on the heating elements, which warm up to 122 degrees Fahrenheit in six minutes. Or use the Flexwarm app to control the jacket's temperature settings in the three heat zones. The multitasking power bank comes with two USB ports so you can also recharge a smartphone or other small device while on the go. Men and women can choose from a vest, or a jacket with or without a hood; boy's and girl's jackets have no hood. *\$255-\$319 adults; \$191 kid's jacket. www.8kflexwarm.com*

KARI BODNARCHUK