

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

THE TIP

WASH, STARCH & FOLD



DMITRI IZOSIMOV /ISTOCKPHOTO

After a few days on the road, nothing boosts morale more than a clean, crisply ironed shirt. What's more, a collared white shirt is appropriate for just about any casual or more dressy situation. It's worth the modest splurge to have shirts washed, pressed, and folded at your neighborhood dry cleaner. The compact packages take little space in a suitcase and the shirts always look fresh. This tip works equally well for women, who need only pack a few accessories to dress the look up or down. Shirts often come in plastic bags, useful for wrapping shoes or wet bathing suits.

DAVID LYON

THE LIST

WHERE TO TAKE
A GONDOLA CRUISE

1

VENICE

For many, a trip to this watery city is not complete without a gondola ride. Gondoliers (like the one below) are ready and waiting at every turn.

2

LONG BEACH, CALIF.

Passengers can even enjoy pizza as they cruise the canals and waterways around Naples Island. www.gondolagetawayinc.com

3

PROVIDENCE

Cruises along the Woonasquatucket and Providence rivers are especially dramatic on WaterFire evenings. www.gondolart.com

4

NEW ORLEANS

The Bella Mae cruises through the lagoons of City Park. www.nolagondola.com

5

BOSTON

Musicians add extra romance to many of the cruises along the Charles River. www.bostongondolas.com

PATRICIA HARRIS



ROBERTO ADRIAN /ISTOCKPHOTO

SUNDAY MORNING

ONE-OF-A-KIND VILLAGE

Pretty Hampstead Village, just a few miles from bustling downtown London, is where a small group of visitors meet for the Sunday morning tour. The setting, a pristine, preserved Georgian village set atop a verdant hill, is glorious. The group strolls the historic Heath, taking in striking views of the London skyline from Parliament Hill, while they learn of the village's colorful past. Sigmund Freud, John Keats, Agatha Christie, and Walter Gropius, among others, have lived here, contributing to the town's reputation as an artistic and intellectual hub. Today, Hampstead is home to some of the richest real estate in the United Kingdom.

The guide regales the group with tales of days past and present as they meander cobblestoned streets lined with old world cottages, country pubs, and one-of-a-kind shops. At the end of the tour, some go on to visit the Freud Museum, where you can see his famous couch, or to the Keats House Museum, where the famous poet lived from 1818 to 1820, and wrote "Ode to a Nightingale." Others grab a pint of local ale at the 16th-century Spaniards Inn, one of London's oldest pubs, toasting to a fine beginning to the day.

HAMPSTEAD VILLAGE WALKS *Hampstead Village, England, Sunday, 10 a.m., about \$11, www.walks.com*

DIANE BAIR AND PAMELA WRIGHT



ISTOCKPHOTO



INTERCONTINENTAL BOSTON

NIGHT SPOT

YO-HO-HO: UNCORK A WATERFRONT RUMBA

Sorry, you fans of "Dancing With the Stars." RumBa at the InterContinental Boston hotel has nothing to do with Latin dance. The name refers to the way Bostonians pronounce "rum bar," with a nod to the local rum trade. Hah. But that's where the cutesy stuff ends. This recently-expanded rum-and-champagne lounge is a swanky space with excellent mixologists who know their way around a bottle of rum. The bar boasts a collection of nearly 100 distilled rums, many of which find their way into RumBa's signature rum cocktails, like the RumBa Mama (dark rum, coconut rum, coffee liquor, fresh lemon juice, pineapple juice, and grenadine).

You might have done some after-work reveling at the old RumBa. That cozy bar (with the Louis Vuitton trunks for tables) still exists, but they've opened a new bar in the adjacent space, adding 42 bar seats and a communal table — the better to spread out and enjoy a new bar menu (love the lobster Cobb slider and the tempeh slider with kalamata aioli). When the weather is fine the action spills outside to patio tables along the waterfront of Fort Point Channel. It's not the Caribbean, but it's ours.

INTERCONTINENTAL BOSTON *510 Atlantic Ave., 617-217-5148, www.intercontinentalboston.com*

DIANE BAIR AND PAMELA WRIGHT

HERE

PEDAL ACROSS THE PINE TREE STATE

Start preparing for a 400-mile group bike ride across Maine this September. BikeMaine, run by the 5,000-member Bicycle Coalition of Maine, takes place for the first time Sept. 7-14. Up to 350 riders will bike 60 to 75 miles a day, as they complete a circular loop from Orono that rolls through Dover-Foxcroft, Belfast, Castine, Bar Harbor, and Ellsworth. Riders will camp in less-visited rural communities and dine on local cuisine along the way. Price: \$875 per person, includes a lobster bake and most other meals, camping accommodations, and bike support. A portion of registration fees benefits



children's health, education, and sports programs, and several community groups along the route. *207-623-4511, www.bikemaine.org/events/bikemaine*

HUNDREDS OF EVENTS AT HARBORFEST

Celebrate Independence Day at Boston Harborfest, July 2-7, which features more than 200 events, from historical reenactments and sunset harbor cruises to the ever-popular Chowderfest, where you can sample New England-style clam chowder from the area's top restaurants and vote for your top pick. More than half the events are free, such as the weekend noontime concerts at City Hall Plaza. New this year, you can take a guided walking tour of Boston's most important street over the 18th century (King Street), enjoy a boat tour of its working port (the oldest continually active port in the Western Hemisphere), see performances by Primal Funk and the Boston Brass Band, and enjoy a clambake on Spectacle Island. *617-227-1528, www.bostonharborfest.com*

THERE

RETREAT BLENDS TUSCAN CULTURE WITH CHI RUNNING

Learn the health benefits of chi running and walking, and explore Tuscan culture, countryside, and cuisine during a nine-day trip to Castello di Spannoccchia, a 12th-century organic farm 1½ hours from Florence. Van-

couver-based Angela James, a senior-level chi running-walking instructor and tour guide, will teach you how to use good body mechanics, based on the principals of t'ai chi, to help you walk and run efficiently and injury-free. Then practice these techniques as you explore nature trails, medieval castles, and historic villages. Also learn how to make a three-course Tuscan meal using local ingredients, and about the history of the region's honey production. \$2,860 per person, double occupancy, includes accommodations, most meals, ground transportation, and instruction. *604-351-1140, www.angelajames.com*



A RESORT CAMP THAT CATERS TO KIDS

Children can try wake boarding, water tubing, jet skiing, and more at Paradise Point Resort & Spa, a 44-acre tropical island on San Diego's Mission Bay. The resort has introduced a new Watersports Camp and spa treatments geared for children 6 to 17. Young guests can spend their mornings

hanging out with family enjoying the resort's five swimming pools, tranquil lagoon, and tropical gardens and their afternoons at camp, where they can also try knee boarding, snorkeling, and surfing. The spa offers Mom and Me treatments, which include side-by-side 50-minute Swedish massages, followed by manicures and ice cream pedicures. *858-274-4630, www.paradisepoint.com*

CHILDREN FLY TO CUBA FOR FREE

Take a family trip to Cuba this summer and your 5- to 17-year-olds can fly for free. Insight Cuba, a licensed not-for-profit tour operator, runs its first Family in Cuba Tour, Aug. 24-31. Families will enjoy a horse-drawn carriage ride through Old Havana, a stop at the farmer's market, a visit to a papier-mâché studio, a traditional Cuban barbecue with local families, and a trip to Pinar del Río, known for its scenic national parks. Rate: \$3,395 per person, double occupancy, includes round-trip airfare between Miami and Havana for children but not for adults, accommodations, meals, guides, ground transportation, and more. One child flies free per paying adult. *800-450-2822, www.insightcuba.com*

EVERYWHERE

HARD DRIVE BACKS UP FILES ON THE GO

Western Digital's new portable hard drive, the My Passport Ultra, comes in a slim package (the 1TB drive measures 4.4 by 3.3 by 0.6 inches), offers

blazing-fast transfer speeds (thanks to its USB 3.0 connectivity), and is plug-and-play compatible. Even better, though, it comes with built-in WD SmartWare Pro software that automatically backs up your files to Dropbox when you get online or to your local drive, letting you protect updated files while on the go. The WD Security software provides hardware encryption and password protection. 500GB (\$79); 1TB (\$119.99). *877-934-6972, www.wdstore.com*

KEEP YOUR KEYS SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE

Leave your house or spare car keys in WordLock's Stor-More Key Safe when you hit the road, so you don't have to worry about keeping track of them while traveling. This durable device also comes in handy if you need to give neighbors, animal sitters, repair people, or realtors access to your home while you are away. The corrosion- and rust-resistant safe attaches to an outside door knob or wall, and has a resettable four-letter combination lock, so you can easily remember your secret word. \$39. *650-948-9673, www.wordlock.com*



KARI BODNARCHUK