

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

CHECK IN

‘OLD FLA.’ ON THE GULF

HOLMES BEACH, Fla. — Beach bungalows and mom-and-pop “efficiency” cottages (with kitchenettes) line the sandy shores of Anna Maria Island, but there’s none as inviting as the Harrington House Beachfront Bed & Breakfast. Inside, the main house feels like a New England B&B, complete with overstuffed couches and a fireplace, but all similarities end when you look outside — past the breakfast parlor and heated swimming pool — to the powdery sands and aqua waters of the Gulf of Mexico. A fringe of palms and sea oats leads to one of the finest beaches in southwest Florida.

Guest rooms are spread among four buildings: the circa 1925 coquina-block main house, a 1940s Carriage House, plus the Huth House, and our favorite, the Dodt Beach House, a 1930s house with large suites and a wonderful “old Florida” feel. All rooms have private baths, central air, and free Wi-Fi; the best have balconies that overlook the gulf — and the island’s legendary sunsets. Explore Anna Maria on one of the inn’s bicycles (complimentary) or the free Island Trolley. Breakfasts are luscious, and little touches like cookies (in the main inn) and lots of books for the borrowing make guests feel indulged.

HARRINGTON HOUSE BEACHFRONT BED & BREAKFAST *From \$169 through January; from \$239 February–April. 5626 Gulf Drive, Holmes Beach, Fla. 941-778-5444, www.harringtonhouse.com*

DIANE BAIR AND PAMELA WRIGHT



DIANE BAIR FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE



SIMON HOLDAWAY FOR OPEN ACRE RANCH

SEE THE WHITES FROM YOUR OWN MOUNT

WEST FAIRLEE, Vt. — This state’s hundreds of miles of dirt roads and grassy tracks were designed for horses. But these days exploring them on horseback isn’t easy. Open Acre Ranch guides riders up into the hills and through its 400-acre spread of woods and meadow.

Owner Rebecca Guillette has been riding since she was 6, winning ribbons initially in English-style riding competitions, eventually switching to Western saddles and rodeos because, “it’s less stuffy, more fun, and more kid-friendly.”

Guillette loves kids. She has three of her own and caters to nearby summer camps on Fairlee and Morey lakes. With a total of 40 horses — Paints, Appaloosas, and Quarter Horses — and no shortage of guides, there are usually enough

rides available to satisfy differing demands. Open Acre welcomes beginners and experts alike but never, Guillette says, does she knowingly mix riders of varying abilities in the same group.

Rain was forecast on the chilly morning I found my way the few miles from Interstate 91 to Lake Fairlee, then up a farm road to the small “Open Acre Ranch” sign. The place is unpretentious and homey, and the horses in surrounding paddocks looked promising. I found Guillette in her small office, which is crammed with ribbons and trophies. The open-sided stable is up a path beyond an open riding ring.

In short order we trotted out down the road, by barns and fields, then off onto a trail leading up into woods. Metro, my sturdy mount, broke smoothly into a canter, first up a forest path and then into a high meadow. I kept one hand grate-

fully on the saddle horn as he speeded up. Finally we stopped on a knoll with views across the low Vermont hills to the foothills of the White Mountains in New Hampshire.

Guillette leases her 400 acres, a former cattle farm that abuts the town forest, all part of uplands just west of the Connecticut River. A popular ride brings you to Small Top Mountain with 360-degree views. Inquire about overnight rides, multiday treks in foliage season, and overnight lodging in the apartment above the barn.

OPEN ACRE RANCH *Trail rides are \$40 per person for one hour, \$60 for two hours, \$100 for a four-hour ride that includes a picnic. Private lessons \$45, group lessons \$35. 1478 Blood Brook Road, Fairlee, Vt. 802-333-9196, www.openacreranch.com* CHRISTINA TREE

HERE

SUMMIT MOUNT WASHINGTON BY STEAM TRAIN

Hop a ride on a coal-fired vintage steam train in New Hampshire’s White Mountains Sept. 13 on Railfan’s Day. The Mount Washington Cog Railway will offer an 8:15 a.m. trip to the summit of the Northeast’s tallest mountain, with a chance to get off at scenic Waumbek Switch and photograph passing trains, get a free guided tour of the Mount Washington Observatory Museum, and chat with the crew who run the steam locomotives. Or hop on a 12:15 or 2:15 p.m. train and ride half-way up the mountain to Waumbek Switch and back. Tickets free for children under 4 on an adult’s lap to \$66 for ages 13–64 for summit trip, and free to \$35 for half-way trip. 603-278-5404, www.thecog.com

MAKE CIDER ON YOUR VERMONT STAY

Learn how to make fresh apple cider at Lake Morey Resort in Fairlee, Vt., any Saturday from Sept. 21 to Oct. 19. Pick apples from orchards near the resort or use the ones provided, and then discover how to smash and sip at the cider press. Enjoy a cider hour social in the lake-view Steamboat Lounge on Saturday night, with hot mulled cider, Woodchuck Cider, and a variety of seasonal local brews and complimentary apple-themed hors



d’oeuvres. From \$398 per adult, \$130 ages 13–17, and \$80 ages 3–12, based on double occupancy, for two nights’ accommodations, some meals, cider pressing, and lesson. 800-423-1211, www.lakemoregresort.com

THERE

MEXICAN RESORT OFFERS COOL SPACES FOR KIDS AND TEENS

Riviera Maya’s all-inclusive Grand Velas resort just opened a new high-tech teen lounge and expanded its kids club for ages 4 to 12. The teen lounge has special seats with built-in speakers to enhance Xbox and PlayStation games, individual cubicles with 40-inch LED TVs, karaoke with 45,000 songs in multiple languages, and a disco dance floor with surround sound and special lighting. Add to that billiards, air hockey, foosball, arcade games, and a bar that serves kid-friendly concoctions. The kids club now has video

games, movies, board games, and plenty of craft projects. From \$379 per person per night, double occupancy. 888-407-4869, www.grandvelas.com

A TOUR HIGHLIGHTING JAPANESE TEA CEREMONIES

Learn the cultural significance and history of the traditional Japanese tea ceremony during a tour in Kyoto, Japan, offered by local tea scholar Randy Channell. The tour offers insight into the role the tea ceremony plays in modern-day Japanese culture. Channell takes participants from first sip to dessert, and uses interactive lessons to highlight key aspects and the differences between a formal and informal ceremony. The program, organized by Philadelphia-based Context Travel, runs 2½ hours daily. About \$66.60 per person for group tour; \$307.50 per party for private tour up to six people. 215-392-0303, www.contexttravel.com

A DEAL IF IT RAINS ON YOUR HOLIDAY

If the weather turns before you take off for vacation, one Puerto Rican hotel will let you cancel your stay with no penalty or fees. La Concha Resort in the heart of San Juan offers a “risk-free sun-spree guarantee” for its Weather Proof package, meaning you can either cancel without losing a penny or, if it does rain, you can go on your vacation and receive the fourth night free, 50 percent off local beer refills, a 15 percent discount on all food and drink purchases, and one in-room movie per stay. Rates from \$229, double occupancy, through Oct. 31 for an oceanfront room; mention FLP when booking. 787-977-3399, www.laconcharesort.com

EVERYWHERE

A WATCH . . . THAT ACTS LIKE A SMARTPHONE

Keep tabs on your e-mails, Facebook

messages, texts, and favorite sports teams, and even make phone calls using the sleek and stylish i’m Watch. This smartphone-compatible watch links to your phone via Bluetooth and tethering, letting you stay connected while keeping your phone in your bag when you travel. The watch has a 1.54-inch easy-to-read touch screen that displays the features and favorite apps on your phone. Using Bluetooth, you can also sync the device with your heart-rate monitor, pedometer, or other fitness sensor. The Italian-made watch works with iPhones and Android phones. Currently \$299. www.imsmart.com/en

PACK A ONE-OUNCE LIBRARY NEXT TIME YOU TRAVEL

Bring Hammacher Schlemmer’s new audio library with you on your next trip and listen to 100 literary classics using a device that’s smaller than a pack of Trident gum. The palm-sized, one-ounce MP3 player, called The 100 Greatest Classics Audio Book, comes preloaded with audio versions of unabridged texts by Henry David Thoreau, Charles Dickens, Virginia Wolf, Mark Twain, and many others. The digital collection also includes short stories by Rudyard Kipling, plays by William Shakespeare, and philosophical treatises by Friedrich Nietzsche, for instance. Or enjoy 50 classical music favorites by Mozart, Chopin, and other composers. An included plug lets you listen through your car radio. \$99.95. 800-321-1484, www.hammacher.com

KARI BODNARCHUK