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Tour Newport homes
Wander through a magnificent stone house once owned by actor Nicholas Cage, and five other private homes in Newport and Middletown,



PIRATE SHIP CHARTERS

The Formidable, a “pirate ship,” tours out of Rockport daily from May to October.

R.I., during the 2012 Neighborhoods of Newport House Tour, April 29. Gray Craig, Cage's former home, has a grand curving staircase in the marble-floor entryway, a bookcase-lined private library, and a helicopter pad. Chepstow, an 1860-61 Italianate villa that will open for its first-ever public tour, contains significant furniture, paintings, and decorative arts collected by the Morris family, whose Ameri-

can roots date to the mid-1600s. Tickets: \$35 if purchased by April 27, \$40 thereafter. *401-849-5970, ext. 359, www.newporthousetour.com*

Arrrrrr you on board?
Sail off Cape Ann aboard the Northeast's only traditional square-rigged tall ship, Formidable. The ship takes passengers on a 90-minute tour out of Rockport that features sea shanties and tales of patriots, pirates, and privateers. Crew members hoist the sails and portray maritime life during the Colonial days. Daily tours May through October. Tickets: \$37.50 adult, \$32 age 62 and older and students, \$25 children to age 15; free under 2. The Formidable also will join Old Ironsides during Operation Sail & Tall Ships Boston, June 30-July 5, to commemorate the War of 1812. *978-729-2929, www.pirateshipcharters.com*

KARI BODNARCHUK

Implements of war, lessons in British history

LEEDS, England — A light-filled modern building on the banks of the River Aire holds about 8,500 objects from Britain's Royal Armouries, the country's oldest museum. Remarkably scary weapons and amazing suits of armor (including one for an elephant) are displayed, but I was most taken by the modest exhibit of plug bayonets that attach to the end of a gun. I recalled a National Park Service guide at the Bunker Hill Monument describing how terrified the patriots must have felt when they heard the British Redcoats banging their bayonets against their musket barrels before marching in formation up the hill and into battle. Andy Deane, one of the marvelously titled “visitor experience coaches” at Leeds, assured me that this was indeed an effective intimidation tactic. “Banging bayonets is standard



PATRICIA HARRIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

The Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds, England, collects myriad weapons.

in history,” he said. “To beat to rhythm is to become a collective, and it drowns out the hideousness of what’s going on around you.”

A video in one of the galleries gives the British point of

view on the American war of independence. On behalf of his countrymen, Deane admitted that it still smarts to have lost to the Colonial “upstarts.” But, he noted, “We had forgotten how to fight wars and the lessons we learned in America enabled us to beat Napoleon at Waterloo.” Improved weaponry and the flexibility to fight skirmishes as well as pitched battles certainly helped.

“Plus,” Deane said, “we got the troops to lie down.”

Royal Armouries Museum—Clarence Dock, Armouries Drive, Leeds, West Yorkshire, England, 011-44-113-220-1999, www.royalarmouries.org. Daily 10 a.m.-5 p.m. (closed Dec. 24-26), free.

PATRICIA HARRIS

READER'S RAVE starts June 3. Send yours to travel_raves@yahoo.com.

Destinations

FOOD

Browse beers, bourbon, indulge in watercress

MAY 26-27

BALTIMORE

Brew at the Zoo: Lions, and leopards, and polar bears, oh my! You can make a day of it at this fund-raising event for the Maryland Zoo, which was founded in 1876 and is the third oldest in the country. Check out the 1,500 animals in their natural habitats in the morning and sample more than 50 local and national beers in the afternoon. The event is held at the Waterfowl Lake Pavilion and also features live music, crafts and food vendors, and activities for children. VIP ticket holders enjoy catered lunch and dinner, and a large commemorative tasting glass. Druid Hill Park, one-day ticket age 21 and over \$45-\$80, under 21 and designated drivers \$25-\$65. *410-396-7102, www.marylandzoo.org*

MAY 19-20

PHILADELPHIA

Italian Market Festival: This busy weekend includes a procession of the saints, crafts and games for children, even dancing in the streets. But the organizers say it really revolves around the food, including South Philly pizza, which they modestly bill as the “best in the world” with a crust that is neither too thick nor too thin. Save room for a roast pork sandwich, some macaroni with red “gravy,” a scoop of homemade gelato, and a cannoli. About 100,000 people attend the two-day event at what the city claims is the oldest outdoor market in the country. South 9th Street between Fitzwater and Federal streets, free, ood for sale. *www.italianmarketphilly.org*

MAY 20

NEW ALRESFORD, England



JEFFREY F. BILL/MARYLAND ZOO

An alligator may join the fun at the Maryland Zoo's Brew at the Zoo event.

Alresford Watercress Festival:

We fear that Americans do not give watercress the respect it deserves. The folks in New Alresford, a Georgian market town in southeast England, know how to do it right. Thanks to mineral springs and ideal growing conditions, the region is the main source of the vitamin-rich green and this annual event celebrates the harvest. Festivities get underway with a street cavalcade complete with Morris dancers and a king and queen who distribute the first watercress of the season to the crowds. Other activities include a food market, cooking demonstrations, visits to watercress farms, a watercress soup championship, and the immensely popular watercress eating championship. The record-holder, by the way, downed two 80-gram bags in 49.69 seconds. Various locations, free, food for sale. *www.watercressfestival.org*

JUNE 9

RICHMOND

Beer, Bourbon & BBQ Festival: The Richmond Raceway Complex, site of spring and fall NASCAR races, is the perfect

venue for this testosterone-infused event that features unlimited tastings of 60 beers and 40 bourbons and plenty of barbecue for sale. Highlights of the day also include live music and seminars presented by distillers, brewers, and pitmasters. Vendors offer hot sauces, brewery memorabilia, and barbecue accessories. There is even a cigar tent. Richmond Raceway Complex, 600 East Laburnum Ave., \$35-\$45, designated driver \$25, under age 12 free. *www.beerandbourbon.com*

PLAN AHEAD

JUNE 23

SACRAMENTO

10th Annual Sacramento Chef Challenge: Here is your chance to see what it is like to be a judge on “Top Chef.” Guests can watch celebrity chefs and their teams prepare a three-dish menu for a hot summer night, then taste the results and determine the winner. Guests also weigh in on the “Cupcake War,” in which three professional and three amateur cupcake-makers vie to create the best sweet bite. Criteria include taste, originality, and theatrics. Proceeds benefit INALLIANCE, a nonprofit organization serving people with developmental disabilities. 6950 21st Ave., \$25 in advance, \$35 at the door. *916-381-1300, www.chefevent.com*

PATRICIA HARRIS AND DAVID LYON

Events are sometimes canceled, rescheduled, or sold out; check online. Patricia Harris and David Lyon can be reached at harris.lyon@verizon.net. Read their food and travel blog at www.hungrytravelers.com.



jetBlue GETAWAYS