

Currents



YACHTS OF SEABOURN

Cruise in style on a new yacht

Yachts of Seabourn just launched its newest luxury vessel, the Seabourn Sojourn. The ship has 225 suites and carries a maximum of 450 guests. Each ocean-view suite comes with a separate bedroom and living area, a walk-in closet, a desk with personalized stationery, and a granite bathroom with separate bath and shower. You'll have free Wi-Fi and cell-phone service throughout your journey, and access to an 11,400-square-foot spa. Take advantage of special fares in celebration of the launch: Explore Scotland and Norway for 14 days, with rates starting at \$5,999; take a 12-day trans-Atlantic voyage for \$3,499; or cruise through the Caribbean for 11 days for \$3,999. Rates include round-trip airfare from Boston. 800-929-9391, seabourn.com

Fall asleep overlooking the Nile

Cairo opened its first luxury boutique hotel on the banks of the Nile this month, the 191-room Kempinski Nile Hotel. Murals and paintings throughout depict scenes from Egypt's Abu Simbel temple and from the tomb of Tutankhamun (King Tut), while each guest room contains state-of-the-art mood lighting and customizable scents. Savor contemporary French cuisine, classic Turkish dishes, and international fare at the hotel's three restaurants. Then visit the Chocolate Lounge, where you can sample tarts, truffles, and other chocolate delights. Special rates run about \$256 per night through Sept. 30, based on double occupancy (regular rates start at \$387). 800-426-3135, kempinski.com/en/cairo

KARI BODNARCHUK

Destinations

EVENTS

They're off to see the wizard

SEPT. 17-19
CHESTERTON, Ind.
"Wizard of Oz" Festival: If you're into Dorothy and her pals, you can live it up in Chesterton where people spend one weekend a year dressed up like "The Wizard of Oz" characters, participate in a "Horse of a Different Color Parade," and compete in "Oz Idol," an "American Idol"-style singing competition where extra points are given to anyone who sings a song from "The Wizard of Oz," "The Wiz," or "Wicked." You'll also probably see some "Oz"-related celebrities during your stay. Names that have traveled to Chesterton for festivals past include Robert Baum, the great-grandson of "Wizard of Oz" creator L. Frank Baum, and Margaret Pellegrini, who played the munchkin with the flower pot on her head. All events are appropriate for kids. Most of them are appropriate for their little dogs, too. Festival schedule online. 216-926-6283, www.ozfestivalchesterton.com

AUG. 27-29
MORNING VIEW, Ky.
Whispering Beard Folk Festival: This might be the best name for a music festival we've ever come across — and it's an appropriate one because almost every band participating in this year's festivities has at least one member with notable facial hair. The line-up includes the Tillers, Whiskey Bent Valley Boys, and the Rabbit Hash String Band. The music is twangy, rhythmic, and blue-grassy when appropriate. Many fans who attend this event like to camp during the weekend. You can find campsite information online. Weekend pass is \$68 in advance for adults. 800-928-5626, www.whisperingbeard.com

SEPT. 24-26
CONEY ISLAND
Coney Island Film Festival: The New York Film Festival, which runs the same week, gets more publicity than this one, but if you're there for one, it's worth heading to the boardwalk for the

other. This year's schedule has yet to be released but past festivals have included experimental movies, music videos, and films that highlight the local scenery. Try to get tickets to the opening-night party. There's usually live music. 718-372-5159, www.coneyislandfilmfestival.com

SEPT. 24-26
BURLINGTON, Vt.
Burlington Book Festival: For whatever reason, September is the month for book festivals across the country. One is in Burlington, where authors gather to talk about (and sell) their works. Two things that make this gathering especially notable: The celebration has a tradition of kicking off with a cabaret jazz show called "PoJazz," where musicians play and poets read. Very Beat-like. Also, the festival usually keeps up with market trends. Last year there was a panel on writing for teens, which was no doubt inspired by the "Twilight" craze. Panelists included Jo Knowles, who teaches at Simmons College and wrote the young adult book "Lessons From a Dead Girl." This year's schedule will be posted soon. www.burlingtonbookfestival.com

PLAN AHEAD
OCT. 29-31
ASHVILLE, N.C.
Moogfest: Indie and electronic music fans can check out Massive Attack, MGMT, and Thievery Corporation at this year's hipster extravaganza. The festival is named for Bob Moog, who invented the Moog synthesizer. Keep in mind, it's on Halloween, so the hipster fans will be wearing costumes. The schedule will be up in a few days. www.moogfest.com

MEREDITH GOLDSTEIN

Events are sometimes canceled, rescheduled, or sold out; check online. Meredith Goldstein can be reached at mgoldstein@globe.com.



TURNER CLASSIC MOVIES

Head to Indiana in September to celebrate all things "Oz."

Two minutes in the North under watchful eyes

► KOREA
Continued from Page M1

to the Joint Security Area at Panmunjom will entail entry into a hostile area and the possibility of injury or death as a direct result of enemy action." It made for menacing reading, but I couldn't help wondering why there are near-daily tours here if it were so dangerous.

IN THE ZONE
Find out more about the DMZ at www.boston.com/travel.

By the time we entered the heart of the security area after passing through Checkpoint Charlie (Korea's equivalent of the more famous Checkpoint Charlie in divided Berlin), our guide seemed a bit anxious, and mentioned for the third or fourth time that, "you can feel the tension in the air." She warned us not to put our hands in our pockets once we left the bus, lest a North Korean soldier open fire in fear that someone is reaching for a concealed weapon.

From an area known as the Sunken Garden we left the bus in silence in two single-file lines, walked through one entrance of a large South Korean building called the Freedom House, and out another entrance to a terraced set of steps facing North Korea. A couple hundred feet in front of us was Panmungak, North Korea's main building in the area. Between the two buildings was a row of slender, single-room breadbox-shaped structures painted in UN-blue and bisected by the official border known as the military demarcation line.

Still silent, we were led by a military escort into one of the structures, the Military Armistice Commission Conference Room, where for decades the North and South have maintained communication and tried to hash out agreements. Guarding the far exit, the door leading into North Korea, was a South Korean soldier in black aviator sunglasses standing in a modified "junbi" (ready) stance from Taekwondo.

"You will notice a row of microphones running down the middle of the table," said our guide, noting that the microphones are left running 24 hours a day and continuously monitored by officials on both sides. "This is the official border, so half the room is in North Korea. You may walk around and take pho-



PHOTOS BY RUSS JUSKALIAN FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Tourists take photos of one of the many fences at the DMZ as South Korean soldiers keep watch.



Above: A military watchtower is part of the scenery on the road back to Seoul. Below: A barbed-wire fence at the DMZ is covered with colored ribbons left by visitors.



tos for a few minutes. But please don't touch anything."

I had roughly two minutes to mill around in North Korea. It may only have been inside a one-room building with an armed guard blocking the exit, but the

combination of nerves and excitement blurred the experience. Paul and I were still taking turns posing for photos in the North when our escorts urged us back into single-file lines and back into South Korea.

For another few minutes we were allowed to stand on the steps of the Freedom House. A lone North Korean soldier stood on the steps of the Panmungak building, with binoculars trained in our direction.

The second half of the day was more relaxed, and included a visit to the Third Infiltration Tunnel, a nearly mile-long, 6-foot-diameter tunnel allegedly built for invasion by the North Koreans. We also stopped by the Dora Observatory, a small hill from which one can see the closest North Korean city, and the world's tallest flagpole, a 525-foot tower hoisting a 600-pound flag built to exceed a nearby South Korean flagpole that stands 330 feet tall.

These last sites had a much less serious tone. Though the area beyond the parking lot at the infiltration tunnel, for instance, was marked off as a minefield, the whole scene felt a bit like Disneyland meets the Korean War, with children running around and posing next to cartoonish statues of military police.

I was left with more questions than answers after the tour, particularly about what the DMZ means for families on both sides longing for reunification. To the south, in Seoul, are millions of young people seemingly more concerned with the latest fashions and bands than the various threats from the north, which now may include functional nuclear weapons. And to the north cycles of famine and oppression

If you go . . .

A number of organizations provide **half- and full-day** tours to the Korean Demilitarized Zones sites and the Joint Security Area. One cannot visit the JSA independently, and there are **strict daily limits** to how many tourists can enter the area. People of some nationalities may not be allowed to visit the JSA on the South Korean side without extensive **background checks**. Plan ahead and ask about restrictions, including dress code and age limits. The concierge desk at large, international hotels in Seoul can also help book a tour for you, though Booking through USO/KoriDoor directly is the least expensive. **USO** affiliates.uso.org/korea The USO tour fills up early and is available only certain days of the week. Call or e-mail in advance. USO tours are booked through KoriDoor, and there is a 50 percent discount for members of the military: www.koridoor.co.kr. Combined DMZ/JSA tours cost \$70 plus 10 percent tax and do not include lunch.

Korean Veterans Association/JoongAng Tour jsatour.com/eng/dmz/main.asp Combined DMZ/JSA tours cost \$100, including tax and lunch. **Panmunjom Travel Center** koreadmztour.com/english/tour/tour2.htm Combined DMZ/JSA tours cost \$100, including tax and lunch.

are said to threaten the population.

Then there is the fact that the DMZ is an accidental ecological reserve. There are plants and animals thriving here that survive nowhere else in Korea. There have even been calls to protect the wildlife in the DMZ in the future: to keep people out once there is no longer a need to keep people from crossing.

It's a lot for a visitor to consider, especially while standing with a foot on either side of the line.

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Rave
Beauty amid the ruins

SHANNONBRIDGE, Ireland — Not far off the main road between Galway and Dublin is the ancient monastic settlement of Clonmacnoise. First settled by St. Ciaran about 545 AD, the site was destroyed by fire 13 times and was attacked over 40 times by Vikings, Anglo-Normans, and the Irish before being reduced to rubble by the English in the mid-16th century. Three hundred years later, it was designated a national monument.

You don't have to be a fan of history or religion to enjoy this scenic landscape located high above the banks of the River Shannon. The walled grounds are like a large and lonely churchyard, with many graves scattered amid the ruins of a cathedral, seven churches, two round towers, and several high crosses of the early Christian and medieval periods.

The small on-site museum displays a timeline of the site, as well as a short film on Ciaran and the original settlement. It also exhibits some of the original, monumental sandstone crosses, and early Christian grave slabs. If you haven't packed a picnic, there's a small cafe on the property.

Clonmacnoise, Shannonbridge, Athlone, County Offaly. 011-353-90-967-4195, www.heritageireland.ie/en/MidlandsEastCoast/Clonmacnoise; adults \$8, children and students \$2.75.

NECEE REGIS



NECEE REGIS

Clonmacnoise in Ireland was first settled in 545 AD.