



John R. R. Howie found his way to the Great Wall of China.

World class

A SEMESTER IN BEIJING

John R.R. Howie, a junior at Boston College, wants to be where the action is. For an economics major, that means China, “the most exciting and opportunistic place to be in the 21st century.” At Peking University (<http://en.pku.edu.cn/>) Howie is taking courses in Mandarin, Chinese history, economics, and business. To learn more about his experiences in Beijing, go to <http://johnhowie.wordpress.com/>.

DORM LIFE: “The hot water is shut off at 11 each night until the morning. The conditions have been pretty good, although one morning mud came out of the shower and sink instead of water. Our dorms are hotel-style, and we are spoiled with a maid coming in every morning. I soon found out that international students are extremely privileged at Peking University. Most of the [Chinese] students don’t have a shower, refrigerator, or air conditioning and share a common bathroom between floors. They have to walk to designated showers on campus, which can be at least 10 minutes away, so you often see people in pajamas carrying a shower bag walking through the campus.”

HOLD THE SCORPION: “A popular street food is chuar, skewers of anything from meat to cabbage and everything in between. Of course there are the infamously bizarre chuar bearing scorpions that still squirm, eels, snakes,

and even sea horses, although those are the extreme. When going out to a nice meal, the rice will never be served until the end. This is both a sign of respect (on behalf of the establishment) and wealth (on behalf of the patron), as eating rice along with the main dishes signifies that one is filling up on the ‘cheap stuff’ rather than the meat or fish.”

STRESS BUSTERS: “Students work incredibly hard and seldom go out to have fun, often working entire weekends. Their one outlet to relieve stress is KTV, also known as karaoke. These are not just any old karaoke bars either. I went to one that resembled an affluent hotel with green marble floors, chandeliers, and a high-end buffet. During the week people often play tennis or basketball on campus.”

LISTEN UP: “Students listen to all types of bands . . . mostly pop reminiscent of Britney Spears. Chinese rap and boy bands are popular, although not many seem to listen to American music.”

MIND YOUR MANNERS: “Always extend both hands when offering something as it shows your sincerity and humility. When clanking cups and offering a toast in celebration, always push the other person’s cup up above yours, again showing your humility and respect for them.”

CHRIS MURPHY

Gearing up

An instant carry-all



Sea to Summit’s new Ultra-Sil Daypack fits in the palm of your hand when it’s in its tiny carrying pouch, and easily tucks into your travel bag or glove compartment. Yet this 2.4-ounce, super-compact bundle expands to a 20-liter backpack that’s perfect for packing up a jacket, guidebook, water bottle, and camera while you’re out exploring, or for stashing souvenirs for the journey home. Its reinforced zippers and seams and the durable Cordura fabric can support a hefty load, and its eco-friendly, siliconized finish repels water. The best part: It doesn’t require brute strength to squish the bag back into its attached stuff sack. It sells for \$27.95 at REI (800-426-4840; www.rei.com), or contact Sea to Summit (303-440-8977; www.seatosummit.com).

KARI BODNARCHUK

Escape to a winter haven

By Hilary Nangle
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Even those who embrace winter are pining for a bit of sunshine and warmth about now. Here are three destinations ideal for an escape.

Desert hiking in Cave Creek, Ariz.

About 45 minutes north of Phoenix, where Scottsdale’s tony suburbs cede to Sonoran desert sands, is Cave Creek, a funky outpost with a cowboy twang. In contrast to Scottsdale’s fancy boutiques and name-store malls, Cave Creek offers a frontier town and artsy flavor.

Cave Creek’s western heritage is well documented in the local history museum, with exhibits on prospectors and mining, cowboys and Indians, and desert flora and fauna. Winter temperatures, which hover in the 50s to 60s, are ideal for hiking to see Hohokam sites and petroglyphs. “The area was once a haven for gold miners, so you’ll see remnants of that in the hills,” says Jackie Dishner, author of “Backroads & Byways of Arizona.”

One of her favorite hikes is the Jewel of the Creek Preserve in the Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area. “It’s located in a desert wash that crosses the creek. On one side of the creek you’ll see a mesquite bosque [Spanish for forest], and on the other side a field of saguaros and other desert plant life. If you get an early start, you might see coyotes, javelinas, or rattlesnakes.”

Be wary of the cholla cactus, she cautions: “It just takes a quick and light rub against one of those little balls of furry white pricklers to have it stick.”

A bright spot amid the local dining options, which go by names such as Horny Toad, Buffalo Chip Saloon, and Big Earl’s Greasy Eats, is the splurge-worthy Binkley’s.

For homestyle comfort in a budget-friendly B&B, book a room at Full Circle Ranch (877-465-7570, www.fullcircularanch.com, winter rates \$160-\$260). For full service, complete with golf course and spa, stay at The Boulders (888-579-2631, www.theboulders.com, winter rates begin at \$239), a sprawling resort set amid impressive red rocks in neighboring Carefree.

Book a direct flight from Boston to Phoenix, then rent a car.

Golfing in St. George, Utah

St. George may be best known as home to Zion National Park, but there are 12 golf courses within a 15-minute drive. “People are amazed at how good the golf is here at such an affordable price,” says Randy Cassidy, an avid golfer and former resident.

Cassidy thinks the two best options for serious golfers are Coral Canyon, a public course with views of Bryce and Zion national parks, and Entrada, a private, 18-hole Johnny Miller signature course open to those staying at its inn. “Both are spectacular courses, especially for those coming from the East Coast and willing to spend some money to play.” Coral Canyon, a Keith Foster-designed 18-hole course, is his favorite. “If you pick the right tee box to play from, you’ll have a fantastic day.”

Bloomington is a good choice for those who favor Eastern-style courses. “You’d think you were

playing back East. It’s an older course with an old country club feel,” Cassidy says. “It’s a bit of a throwback, because it was built before water usage was an issue.”

While golf is the big draw, the red rock canyons are a lure for hikers and mountain bikers, especially in winter, when temperatures hover around 60. Add spas, and St. George makes a good choice for any group’s non-golfers. “There are quite a few very nice fitness spas; Fitness Ridge, in nearby Ivins, has received attention from the TV show ‘Biggest Loser,’” Cassidy says.

As for night life, he says most folks drive 30 minutes south to Mesquite, Ariz., for a cheap meal and to play blackjack or slots.

The Inn at Entrada (435-634-7100, www.innatentrada.com) also has a full-service fitness center and spa. The Experience Entrada Golf Package includes two nights in a studio casita, two rounds of golf, a \$50 restaurant voucher, and gift basket, with rates beginning at \$499. Another option is Red Mountain Resort & Spa (877-246-4453, www.redmountainspa.com). The Signature package includes accommodations, meals, and healthy options, including guided hikes, unlimited fitness classes, and more, beginning at \$189 per person, per night, through Feb. 28; room only with breakfast begins at \$149, single or double.

Book a direct flight from Boston to Las Vegas, then rent a car or arrange a shuttle, or fly to St. George through Salt Lake City.

Girlfriends’ getaway in Delray Beach, Fla.

Delray Beach on Florida’s



THE BOULDERS

Guests at The Boulders, a resort in the red rocks of Carefree, Ariz., can hike, golf, or go to a spa.

“Gold Coast” delivers sand, sun, and shopping. Back in the 1940s, Delray was a hip arts colony, and that spirit lives on. Boutiques and galleries line downtown’s Atlantic Avenue, spilling over to Pineapple Grove. On the coast, palms fringe two miles of sun-drenched public beaches, with cabana and umbrella rentals for a song.

When girlfriends visit spa-travel specialist Judy Kirkwood in her adopted hometown, she guides them to the sites the guidebooks don’t reveal such as Second Time Around on SE 4th Avenue. “It’s great for Lili, Ferragamo, Louis Vuitton, and Dooney & Bourke,” she says. Sometimes she ventures farther north. “It’s always fun to walk out of Goodwill in Palm Beach, 20 minutes away, with a \$20 Coach purse.”

Another plus is the multitude of spas and yoga studios. Kirk-

wood is a fan of the Seagate Hotel and Spa, a new boutique hotel on stylish Atlantic Avenue. “It’s heavenly. I love the exfoliating rain massage. And afterwards, dine on ‘the Ave.’ in the hotel’s patio restaurant.”

Her favorite yoga classes are at Simply Yoga on Federal and YogaFox, which offers Sunday morning yoga with live music at the Colony Hotel and classes at The Buddha Lounge on Federal. For a total workout, Kirkwood recommends Powerbarre in Pineapple Grove. “Its combination of yoga, ballet, and Pilates is guaranteed to make you walk taller, with a tighter butt.” Reward yourself afterward with a glass of wine and a Southwestern chicken wrap from the Brulé Gourmet Market and Bistro.

For those whose flights arrive late, DaDa is open for outdoor dining until 2 a.m., and for those

in town on Sunday morning, brunch at the Sundy House, a historic boutique inn, is a must.

Old-style Florida grandeur is the hallmark of the Colony Hotel and Cabana Club (561-276-4123, www.thecolonyhotel.com/florida), an elegant and historic gem located in the downtown shopping district; winter rates begin at \$209 in February, including breakfast and parking. The Seagate Hotel and Spa (877-577-3242; www.theseagatehotel.com), a swank, luxury boutique hotel, opened in November; winter rates begin at \$349 in February. Both are on Atlantic Avenue and both have private oceanfront beach clubs.

Fly direct from Boston to West Palm Beach, then rent a car.

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Destinations

ARTS

The show that rocks Chicago

THROUGH MARCH 28

CHICAGO

“The Nature of Diamonds”: They’re a girl’s best friend, the king of gems, and truly on the cutting edge. Or at least the most fabulous product of the cutting edge. This Field Museum exhibition features more than 700 objects, tracing diamonds’ past and present, as well as the science of their making and their various cultural roles. Beginning in geology, the exhibition moves through mineralogy to art, fashion, and technology. The highlight of the show is “The Vault,” a treasure house displaying pieces owned by such famed wearers as Catherine the Great, Mae West, Joan Crawford, and Elton John. There are also such one-of-a-kind jewels as the 128.54-carat Tiffany Diamond, among the world’s biggest and most exquisite fancy yellow diamonds, and the Incomparable Diamond. Justifying the latter’s name are its being the largest flawless diamond graded by the Gemological Institute of America and the third-largest cut diamond ever recorded. 400 South Lake Shore Drive, 312-922-9410, www.fieldmuseum.org

JAN. 31-JULY 31

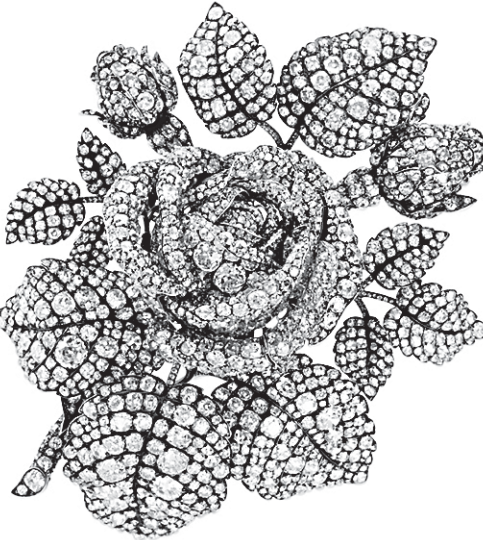
WASHINGTON

“From Impressionism to Modernism: The Chester Dale Collection”: Dale, who made his fortune in the Wall Street bond market, left the National Gallery of Art an extraordinary bequest in 1962. It included one of the country’s richest collections of 19th- and early-20th-century paintings. The museum highlights those works in this exhibition, with 84 paintings by Corot, Manet, Renoir, Monet, Cezanne, Picasso, Matisse, and others. 4th and Constitution Avenue NW, 202-737-4215, www.nga.gov

FEB. 2-JUNE 6

LOS ANGELES

“A Record of Emotion: The Photographs of Frederick H. Evans”: Evans (1853-1943) made some of the greatest architectural images in the history of photography. His



A 6-inch rose made of 2,637 Brazilian diamonds, crafted for Princess Mathilde, niece of Napoleon Bonaparte.

pictures of English cathedrals were, he said, an attempt at “a record of an emotion.” Those photographs, along with rural English landscapes and portraits of Evans’s family and such contemporaries as Aubrey Beardsley and George Bernard Shaw, are in the show at the Getty Museum. 1200 Getty Center Drive, 310-440-7300, www.getty.edu

FEB. 18-JUNE 6

LONDON

“Irving Penn Portraits”: Irving Penn (1917-2009) set a standard for portrait photography that remains unsurpassed. This National Portrait Gallery retrospective includes work from seven decades: 120 photographs of subjects ranging from Truman Capote and Christian Dior, to Alfred Hitchcock and Al Pacino. St. Martin’s Place, 011-44-20-7306-0055, www.npg.org.uk

FEB. 24-APRIL 25

PHILADELPHIA

“Picasso and the Avant-Garde in Paris”:

This extensive Philadelphia Museum of Art exhibition looks at Picasso’s key role in driving artistic change in Paris, which was then the world capital of art, in the years between 1905 and 1945. More than just a great artist, he was greatly influential as well. The show is as much about Paris as Picasso, including work by such contemporaries of his as Marc Chagall, Jacques Lipchitz, Patrick Henry Bruce, and Man Ray. More than 100 items, including paintings, sculptures, and works on paper, will be on display. 26th Street and Benjamin Franklin Parkway, 215-763-8100, www.philamuseum.org

MARCH 5-JULY 4

NEW YORK

“The Grateful Dead: Now Playing at the New-York Historical Society”: Central Park West will be Deadhead Central throughout the spring and into the summer, as the New York Historical Society hosts this first extensive exhibition based on holdings from the Grateful Dead Archives at the University of California Santa Cruz. Items to be displayed include posters, album art, stage props, banners, documents, and fan mail. 170 Central Park West at 77th Street, 212-873-3400, www.nyhistory.org

PLAN AHEAD

APRIL 23-MAY 2

New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival:

Hundreds of acts are scheduled to perform at this 41st version of America’s most jubilant annual musical gathering. They range from traditional jazz bands to Aretha Franklin and Anita Baker, Pearl Jam and Van Morrison. The big news is the reuniting of Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel for their only announced US appearance this year. 504-410-4100, www.nojazzfest.com

MARK FEENEY

Events are sometimes canceled, rescheduled, or sold out; call or check online. Mark Feeney can be reached at mfeeney@globe.com.