



### Encounter

A Sleuth  
in South America

## Seeing what’s what

Along the remote border of Venezuela and Brazil, Ari Silva, archeologist, linguist, and more, works and lives in a single small room.

A tent is pitched on the tile floor. The wall is covered with a drawing copied from a petroglyph found in deep forest; the figure has no face and conical ears — a person, an animal?

Fast-talking Silva, blue ball cap pulled snug atop his head, clicks through files on a desktop computer and lifts transparencies to compare ancient alphabets from Crete, Iberia, and elsewhere with characters found in South America.

“And I like to write Russian, too,” Silva says. “The Russian literature is very complicated.”

TOM HAINES

### Globe-trotting

Notes from our blog

## Megabus on the double

Megabus, which offers free Wi-Fi and Internet fares as low as \$1, is introducing double-decker buses on its New York to Washington run. Megabus says it’s the first company in the United States to use double-deckers for city-to-city travel. Company representatives say that the tall guys will be available on the Boston-New York route in the next four months.

PAUL MAKISHIMA

## AAA drive packages

AAA Southern New England offers members “Drive Vacation” packages that include admission tickets, lodging, directions and marked maps, tour books, and discount partner listings. Of 30 destinations, some are as close as the Berkshires (starting at \$170 per person for two nights), others as far away as Montreal (about \$90 per person per night). For more information, call 888-222-4619 or visit [aaa.com/travel](http://aaa.com/travel).

LYLAH M. ALPHONSE

### NEWS, DEALS, DISPATCHES

[Boston.com/travel/blog](http://Boston.com/travel/blog) is where to go no matter where you want to go.

## Gearing up

## Solar-powered pack

Finding a power source is not always easy when you’re traveling. Voltaic’s solar-powered backpack lets you charge your cellphone, MP3 player, personal digital assistant, or Global Positioning System while you’re on the go. Three solar panels on the front of the pack generate power that is stored in an attached battery (or, charge the battery using the included AC adapter or car charger). Plug your handheld device into the battery and power it up.

Made from recycled plastic, the durable, lightweight pack comes with a dozen handy pockets and 11 adapter tips, including a USB plug. It retails for \$249 and is available at [voltaicsystems.com](http://voltaicsystems.com) or 877-304-6861.

KARI J. BODNARCHUK

## Destinations

FOOD



STEVEN TRAVARCA FOR CHEF’S GARDEN/FILE/2006

Melissa Kelly, chef at Primo in Rockland, Maine, has been on the all-star roster at Chef’s Garden fete in Milan, Ohio.

# Celebrating a garden of culinary delights

JULY 19  
MILAN, OHIO

**Chef’s Garden 2008 Food & Wine Celebration:** This vegetable garden for the country’s celebrity chefs opens to the public for an afternoon celebration. Thirty food stations will offer the cuisine of well-known chefs from around the country. Food demonstrations, an auction of dining experiences and resort stays, and wine tastings will be part of the day. Participating chefs include Michael Symon, an Iron Chef winner; Bravo TV’s Top Chef winner Marcel Vigneron; and John Ashton, food correspondent for “The Daily Buzz.” A Star Chef Cook-Off will round out the day. The cost of entry is \$145 with the proceeds going to Chef’s Garden’s Veggie U, which provides a five-week curriculum for schools to teach fourth-graders healthy eating habits. *For tickets, call 419-499-7500, ext. 119; [chefs-garden.com](http://chefs-garden.com).*

JULY 4-20  
TORONTO

**Summerlicious:** Boston and New York have Restaurant Weeks, and so does Canada’s biggest city. More than 130 restaurants in Toronto are offering lunch for \$15 or \$20, and dinner for \$25 or \$35 over this 17-day stretch. Eateries include Across the Road, the 5th Element, Cataplana, and Gamelle. This is a great chance to sample Toronto’s fine dining at discounted prices. *For a complete listing of restaurants and locations, visit [toronto.ca/special\\_events/summerlicious](http://toronto.ca/special_events/summerlicious).*

ALISON ARNETT

*Events sometimes are canceled, rescheduled, or sold out; call or check online to confirm. Alison Arnett can be reached at [alacarte59@aol.com](mailto:alacarte59@aol.com).*

## Where they went

BAHAMAS

**WHO:** Janet Spurr, 52, of Marblehead.

**WHERE:** Bahamas.

**WHEN:** One week in January.

**WHY:** “I had had a death in my family, and I really wanted to get away on a retreat, something with yoga and writing, on the water. I’d done writing retreats and yoga, but never together.”

**BACK TO BASICS:** Online, Spurr found Sivananda Ashram Yoga Retreat on Paradise Island, Nassau ([sivanandabahamas.org](http://sivanandabahamas.org)), which included yoga, meditation, and a writing workshop with young-adult novelist Virginia Frances Schwartz. Based on other writing retreats she had attended, Spurr expected cushy accommodations. “I guess I didn’t do enough research,” she said. “It was very minimal. There was no coffee, but I brought my own, which people joked about.”

**DON’T DO MORNINGS:** The rooms were simple, with bunk beds and bookcases, though she was able to reserve a single room. Bathrooms were dormitory style. “The bells started ringing at 5:30 a.m., and then at 6 there was chanting and meditation. You were expected to go, but I only went once. I did go to the evening meditation four nights out of six,” she noted. “The food was all vegetarian, and it was good. But for dinner there was only tea and you had to bring your own water.”

**A NEW PLACE:** The two daily yoga classes took Spurr’s practice “to a whole new level. I’ve been doing yoga on and off for two years, and this was very challenging and



Janet Spurr, left, and writer-teacher Virginia Frances Schwartz.

really excellent. You do quite a bit of stretching and a lot of relaxation, and they really concentrate on positions. This one monk brought me to a higher level of understanding yoga and helped heal my heart after the death of my aunt. It was like physical therapy for my heart. The best part was it was outside on platforms at the beach.”

**SOME MIND BENDING:**

The three-hour daily Yoga and the Art of Creative Writing,” combined writing and yoga moves. “We learned to do basic yoga poses to open your creative energies more to writing. It definitely opened me up, and was the best writing workshop I’ve taken,” said Spurr, who recently self-published a collection of essays.

**BURGER IN PARADISE:** Spurr likened the week to “college at the beach without alcohol. I met some great people. There were no computers, no phone, no cellphone service, no TV.” Still, there was one thing she didn’t want to give up. “I needed a hamburger,” she said. So she walked 20 minutes down the beach to Atlantis, a huge resort and casino where people were drinking, smoking, and gambling. “It was so strange to see that,” she said. “I ordered a bacon cheeseburger, because one meat wasn’t enough.”

DIANE DANIEL

### SEE WHERE THEY WENT

For more photos and to share yours, visit [boston.com/wheretheywent](http://boston.com/wheretheywent). Send your suggestions within two weeks of your return to [diane@bydianedaniel.com](mailto:diane@bydianedaniel.com).

## Rave



WILLIAM A. DAVIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

# Where the Impressionists were

CHATOU, France — In the mid-19th century Parisians who wanted a day in the country began flocking to this suburban town. Here, on a small island in the Seine connected to shore by a bridge, they could picnic, fish, or go rowing — a hugely popular activity.

Among the regular visitors were many Impressionist artists, including Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, and Edouard Manet. So many in fact that what was called Chatou Island in their day is now known as Impressionists Island.

The island’s focal point was a restaurant operated by the Fournaise family, who also had a boat rental business. One of the iconic images of the era is Renoir’s sunny 1881 masterpiece “The Luncheon of the Boating Party,” depicting a group of casually dressed friends of the artist, relaxing at a table on the riverside balcony of Maison Fournaise.

Eventually, boating went out of fashion, the artists moved on, and the

restaurant closed. After years of neglect the building was restored and now houses a popular restaurant — with the same balcony terrace Renoir painted — and also a small but interesting museum. Renoir’s original is in The Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., but there are copies on a signboard by the riverside footpath and in the museum, which also has dozens of original paintings by gifted but lesser-known Impressionists.

*From Charles de Gaulle-Étoile Station in Paris it is a 15-minute train ride to Rueil-Malmaison Station. The bridge to Chatou crosses the island. Restaurant de la Maison Fournaise, [restaurant-fournaise.fr](http://restaurant-fournaise.fr), 011-33-1-3071-4191, open for lunch and dinner. Fournaise Museum, [musee-fournaise.com/fournaise/us/index.asp](http://musee-fournaise.com/fournaise/us/index.asp), 011-33-1-3480-6322, open Wednesday-Sunday, adults about \$6, children under age 12 free.*

WILLIAM A. DAVIS

# Hail the season with a lush summertime getaway

By Richard P. Carpenter  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

No matter the calendar, many people consider July 4 the start of summer vacation. What better way to celebrate than with a glorious getaway. Like these?

## Real Deals

■ The Inn at Essex in Essex, Vt., has a lofty package for June 29-July 4 that includes a hot air balloon ride for two, along with accommodations, a chef-in-training dinner for two, two rounds of golf for two with a cart at Vermont National Country Club, a dinner for two at Butler’s Restaurant, and daily continental breakfast for two. The cost: \$590 a person. The inn has a four-diamond rating from AAA.

To book, call 800-727-4295. For information about the inn, visit [vtculinaryresort.com](http://vtculinaryresort.com). This offer was found on [travelzoo.com](http://travelzoo.com).

■ You can soak up the luxury for two nights with a 1776 Package at the Lodge at Woodloch, a spa in Hawley, Pa. Included are veranda deluxe accommodations for two, three gourmet spa cuisine meals per person, all scheduled group fitness and adventure activities, and a \$230 spa treatment allowance with a personal spa concierge to assist. The package costs \$1,776 for two and is valid July 3-7.

Visit [slh.com/lodgeatwoodloch](http://slh.com/lodgeatwoodloch) or call 800-525-4800.

■ With its revolutionary history, Lexington seems an appropriate place to

spend the holiday, with the nation’s first aloft hotel slated to open July 1, according to its website. Aloft is a new Starwood Hotels brand with urban-influenced design, new technologies, and playful public spaces. Rates begin at \$169 a night.

Visit [aloft-hotels.com](http://aloft-hotels.com) or call 877-GO-ALOFT (462-5638).

■ Las Vegas celebrates the Fourth with fireworks over the Strip, along with partying at the clubs and star-spangled shows. Vegas.com has a page devoted to what’s going on over the holiday, including hotel rooms and show tickets at a variety of prices. For instance, it lists a two-night, 2-for-1 Show Package at the Flamingo, July 4-6, for \$289. You get to buy tickets for a choice of shows on a 2-for-1 basis and also

get a free monorail ticket.

Visit [vegas.com/july4th](http://vegas.com/july4th).

■ The Liberty Hotel in the Beacon Hill neighborhood has a nice (and pricey) holiday offer. Starting at \$1,515 per night, the Independence Day Perfect View package features accommodations in a one- or two-bedroom Escape Suite with floor-to-ceiling windows and views of the Charles River, up to four seats on the Community Boating Dock for the Boston Pops performance and Charles River fireworks display, dinner for up to four at Clink, Veuve Clicquot champagne and dessert at turndown, and late checkout at 2 p.m.



STEVE MARCUS/LAS VEGAS SUN

The Las Vegas Strip adds to its sizzle for July 4.

Visit [libertyhotel.com](http://libertyhotel.com) or call 617-224-4000 or 866-507-5245.

*Hotel taxes can add significantly to the price of a trip. Most prices quoted are for double occupancy. Offers are subject to availability. Richard P. Carpenter can be reached at [carpenter@globe.com](mailto:carpenter@globe.com).*