

Encounter

OKLAHOMA

Talk of the town

Stop by the visitors center in Enid, a small city on the wide-open prairie, and learn from Ginger Row.

“To describe it, we have everything from three McDonald’s to the best symphony,” Row said one summer day.

People like to volunteer:

“We have over 450 people who do everything from mobile meals to work at the police station and finger-print people.”

Curious to know more? Keep listening to Row, or to one of the others who staff the center.

“It’s a friendly community, as you can tell,” Row said. “I’m yakking. And Margie would yak, and Binny would too.”

TOM HAINES

Globe-trotting

NOTES FROM OUR BLOG

Tripper may target Hub

Tripper Bus Service last week launched regular service between Washington, D.C., and some of its suburbs and New York City. The fares on the buses, which feature reclining seats, power outlets, and free Wi-Fi, begin at \$1 and go up to \$25. Any of this sound familiar, BoltBus and Megabus fans? Why do you care? These guys are obviously chasing the same younger, urban crowd as Mega and Bolt and both of them first launched a D.C.-N.Y. run before heading here to complete the much-sought-after and lucrative Boston-N.Y.-D.C. transportation triangulation. I called Tripper and sure enough Jennifer Thomas, a spokeswoman for Tripper, said that company CEO Betty Unger sees Boston as a “target city” and plans to expand here but that it will “be a couple of months before she begins this planning process.” More competition. A good thing. Stay tuned.

PAUL MAKISHIMA

 **NEWS, DEALS, DISPATCHES**
Boston.com/travel is where to go no matter where you want to go.

Gearing up

Purity in a hurry

I’ve used a SteriPEN to purify water, from streams in the Patagonian wilderness to public fountains in Mexico. These lightweight and compact water purifiers, made by Hydro-Photon in Blue Hill, Maine, use ultraviolet light to destroy the critters in non-potable water that can make you sick — viruses, bacteria, and protozoa. Just push a button, submerge the unit’s lamp in water, and stir.

The latest version, the SteriPEN Journey, has an easy-to-read LCD display that shows the lamp and battery life, and a countdown timer: It takes 90 seconds to purify 32 ounces of water.

The unit weighs 4.5 ounces, runs on two CR123 batteries, and works with anything from a kitchen glass to a Nalgene-style water bottle. It sells for \$99 at www.REI.com and www.magellans.com. You can also go to www.steripen.com or call 888-783-7473.

KARI BODNARCHUK



More than 150 artists will perform at the Camden Crawl — from big names yet to be announced to street buskers.

London comes crawling

APRIL 24-25
LONDON
Camden Crawl: The list of performers is yet to be released, but based on previous crawls — with Ladyhawke, Robyn, Amy Winehouse — it’s safe to assume that an A-List lineup will be playing to the pie-eyed crowds at this boozy festival. The appeal of the Camden Crawl, aside from all that hooch, is its higgledy-piggledy choice of venues and its offbeat itinerary of events. As eclectic as the neighborhood itself, the Crawl encompasses everything from poetry readings to comedy to musical bingo. Big names play in the tiny pubs alongside street buskers. More than 150 artists are scheduled to perform, and once the names are announced, you can bet that tickets will sell out quickly. Two-day passes are \$86. Single-day tickets are \$50. www.thecamdencrawl.com.

Where they went

MAINE

WHO: Barry Solar, 67, of Boston, and his grandson Jack Tuttle, 5, of Brookline.

WHERE: Round Pond, Maine.

WHEN: One week in August.

WHY: “My wife and I took Jack there [the summer before] just for a weekend. He really liked it. He called it his vacation.”



Jack Tuttle at a favorite stop: Granite Hall Store in Round Pond.

JUST THE GUYS: Solar and his wife, Judith, had planned to take Jack together. But when she had to work at the last minute, it became a grandfather-grandson outing.

ON THE WATERFRONT: “I’d rented a townhouse in a complex called Spinnaker Landing. It’s on several acres on a peninsula. We were right on the water. At high tide if you looked down from the bedrooms you saw water. It’s right on a working harbor with a lot of lobster fishing.”

SUMMER SCHOOL: Solar had some important things to teach Jack: rock skipping and bike riding. “Every day I showed him how to skip rocks. We’d go down to the little rocky beach.” In a large grassy area near their townhouse, he helped Jack cycle without training wheels. “I do a lot of biking and I’m encouraging him to learn how to ride a two-wheeler. I had to keep saying, pedal, pedal. He couldn’t believe he could ride.”

NIGHT LIFE: Almost nightly, they’d eat at the Anchor Inn Restaurant. “It’s right on the water, with a screen porch. It’s fabulous,” Solar said. “[On the earlier trip] Jack

fell in love with this waitress, named Paige. She still works there, and they hugged when they saw each other. We always sat at her table. She would let Jack help write up the check on the computer. After dinner, Jack, who can’t see stars in Brookline, loved finding the Big Dipper from the parking lot.”

BEFRIENDED: They toured the Damariscotta region daily, taking in sights on land and at sea. “One day we took

the Maine Eastern Railroad from Wiscasset to the end of line in Rockland. Jack started talking to a boy his age and they played all day.” The same thing happened on a boat tour. With Hardy Boat Cruises out of New Harbor, they motored to Eastern Egg Rock to view puffins. “You think they’re going to be huge from the pictures, but they’re very small,” Solar said.

FROM THE OLD DAYS: One of Jack’s favorite stops, remembered from the previous summer, was Granite Hall Store in Round Pond. “We went a couple times,” Solar said. “It’s a really old store and has candy and toys and gifts, and on the side there’s an ice cream shop.”

DIANE DANIEL

 **SEE WHERE THEY ALL WENT**
For more photos and to share yours, visit boston.com/travel/wheretheywent. Send suggestions within two weeks of your return to diane@bydianedaniel.com.

FEB. 28
MONTREAL
The Montreal All-Nighter: The title of “the city that never sleeps” moves north for a night as Montreal collectively takes a big gulp of Red Bull, drinks a few extra cups of coffee, and stays up all night to party. Art galleries stay open until 3 a.m., hotel swimming pools open to the public and stay open until 5 a.m., and bars and restaurants keep their doors open until the wee hours. Look online for a list of venues. Many events are free or ridiculously inexpensive. www.montraleenlumiere.com.

MARCH 28-29
MIAMI
Sunday School for Degenerates: A 24-hour dance party in Miami for fans of underground techno, Sunday School

brings together everyone from Detroit techno magnate Matthew Dear to Israeli producer Guy Gerber. There will also be US debut sets from Greece’s Argy and Argentina-based DJ Barem. It’s all part of the annual Miami Winter Music Conference, which features the biggest names in international dance music. Tickets are \$40. *The Ice Palace, 59 Northwest 14th St., www.madeevent.com.*

APRIL 17-19
INDIO, CALIF.
Coachella Festival: One of the biggest music festivals in the United States, this year’s Coachella offers an incredibly diverse slate of performers, including old-timers such as Paul McCartney, Leonard Cohen, Morrissey, and the Cure, performing alongside whipper-snappers like Girl Talk, the Ting Tings, Los Campesinos!, and Lykke Li. Onsite camping is available for \$55 per person. Three-day passes are \$269. Single-day passes are \$99. www.coachella.com.

APRIL 18-19
AUSTIN, TEXAS
Austin Reggae Festival: Held at Auditorium Shores, the festival focuses on reggae culture with music, Caribbean food, and arts and crafts. Bands include the Wailing Souls and the Skatalites. Tickets are \$10 a day. www.austinreggaefest.com.

PLAN AHEAD
NOV. 12-16
BAHAMAS
Rick Springfield and Friends Cruise: Picture it: One cruise ship, one 1980s soap opera heartthrob, and hundreds of rabid fans floating together in the Atlantic. When the former “General Hospital” hunk and pop star takes to the seas to perform, diehard fans will have opportunities to meet him. The “friends” have yet to be announced (our fingers are crossed for Kim Carnes and John Stamos), but several cabins have already sold out. Prices start at \$939. www.rose-tours.com/springfield.

CHRISTOPHER MUTHER

Events are sometimes canceled, rescheduled, or sold out; check online to confirm. Christopher Muther can be reached at muther@globe.com.

Rave



Pittsburgh goes with the flow

PITTSBURGH — It calls itself a “playground of historical proportions.”

Pittsburgh’s Station Square began its life in the late 1800s as a hub for the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad. The complex boasted an opulent passenger terminal, freight facilities, and warehouses on 52 acres at the confluence of the Monongahela, Allegheny, and Ohio rivers.

Over the decades, planes, cars, and trucks eroded the passenger rail business, and the area fell into disrepair. The Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation began redevelopment in 1976, eventually leading to the transformation of the empty railroad buildings into an entertainment district of chic hotels, restaurants, and shops.

One of the featured attractions of Station Square can be found at the

Bessemer courtyard and fountain. There stands a giant steel object shaped like R2-D2, a Bessemer converter that dates to 1856.

Today this relic of one of Pittsburgh’s mills — where it was used to convert molten pig iron into steel — serves as the backdrop for a state-of-the-art fountain shooting jets of colored water 40 feet into the air. Daily at 20-minute intervals the fountain performs shows choreographed to the music of Frank Sinatra, Celine Dion, ABBA, the Beach Boys, and Pittsburgh’s own Christina Aguilera.

Station Square, 125 West Station Square Drive, Pittsburgh, 800-859-8959, www.stationsquare.com. Fountain shows daily from 9 a.m. to midnight, late April to mid-November.

FRAN FOLSOM

A little Miami on Plum Island, a lot of Picasso in Provence

Blue, the Inn on the Beach, may be nestled in the dunes of Plum Island, Newbury, but it takes its styling cues from the boutique hotels of Miami’s South Beach. This is the first year the inn is open year-round, so to encourage off-season visits, a 2-for-1 special is being offered through the end of March. Stay two nights and the second night is free, resulting in a nightly rate beginning at \$122.50.

Visit www.blueinnn.com and click on Special Promotions or call 978-465-7171.

REAL DEALS

Provence and Picasso

How would you like to see 3,000 Picasso paintings illuminated on giant limestone walls in an underground quarry? The dramatic show is one highlight of a Provence Escapes seven-day, villa-based tour hosted by travel writers Judi Janofsky and Rich Steck and limited to 10 participants each trip. The dates are May 23-30 and May 30-June 6, and both tours include seven nights of villa accommodations, transfers from and to the Avignon high-speed train station, local ground transportation, breakfast and lunch or dinner daily, tours and admission tickets, wine tastings, a cook-

ing class, and other amenities. The price is \$3,175 per person. Book before Feb. 28 and get a discount of \$200 each.

Visit www.provenceescapes.com or call 770-998-7800.

Escape with the kids

The Renaissance Boston Waterfront Hotel has an escape for both parents and pint-sized travelers: the Kids Just Wanna Have Fun package. Included are room-service delivery of root beer floats for all the family, two adult and two children’s tickets to the Boston Children’s Museum, free dining for youngsters under 12 at the 606 Congress restaurant with

two paying adults, an in-room movie, and use of the health club and lap pool. Rates start at \$199 a night and the package is available through April 5. Reservations must be made 72 hours in advance.

Visit www.renaissanceboston.com or call 617-338-4111.

Jumping perfect puddles

Winvian, an upscale resort in Connecticut’s Litchfield Hills, is featuring a Puddle Jumper package through April 30, which includes accommodations for two in a cozy cottage, all meals and snacks, all open bars (excluding wines) and an in-cottage wet bar; one spa treat-

ment per person, a Winvian umbrella; and two tickets to a show at the Palace Theater in Waterbury. Rates per couple for a two-night minimum stay are from \$2,200 midweek (a Sunday-Wednesday arrival) and \$2,700 weekends (Thursday-Saturday).

Visit www.winvian.com or call 860-567-9600.

RICHARD P. CARPENTER

Most prices quoted are for double occupancy, minus taxes and fees. Offers are subject to availability. Richard P. Carpenter can be reached at carpenter@globe.com.