

News, Apps, Deals, and Gear from New England and Beyond

HERE



BAY STATE APP

The Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism, or MOTT, recently announced that its Ask a Local iPhone application is available on iTunes. This free guide provides travel information, local tips, and deals from Massachusetts hotels, attractions, restaurants, and shopping destinations. MOTT also recently launched its MassFinds blog, featuring the state's hidden gems and longtime favorites, as narrated by the state's tourism mascot, MOTT the squirrel. www.massvacation.com

LIKE OPERA? TRY VERMONT

In its seventh season, the three-week Green Mountain Opera Festival, through June 24, is expanding to two new venues. In addition to complete performances of Donizetti's "Don Pasquale" and Puccini's "La Boheme," audiences can attend free lectures, master classes, open rehearsals, and an opera brunch. \$15 to \$70; some events are free. 802-496-7722, www.greenmountainoperafestival.com



ERIKA SANTELICES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

CRUISE BY THE TALL SHIPS

A fleet of 120 tall ships and naval vessels from across the world are arriving in Boston Harbor June 30-July 5, just in time for Fourth of July festivities. OpSail 2012 and the US Navy are collaborating on this event designed to celebrate the bicentennial of the War of 1812 and the writing of "The Star-Spangled Banner." Planned activities include parades of sail, free public tours of the vessels, and air shows including a flyover salute by the Blue Angels with 50 additional aircraft. To escape the crowds and get an up-close view of these majestic vessels from the water, Entertainment Cruises is offering lunch, dinner, and viewing cruises on their ships the Odyssey and Spirit of Boston. Family-friendly options start at \$56.90. 888-741-0285, www.spiritofboston.com/boston/boston-tall-ships-viewing-cruises

THERE

ATTENTION ADVENTURE TRAVELERS

The Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency has developed a new touring program in South Africa. Covering over 500 miles of pristine coastline spanning the length of the Eastern Cape, the Coastal Route is divided into eight regions that explore attractions such as the Mkhambati Nature Reserve, Addo Elephant National Park, and beaches, surfing spots, and waterfalls. At Tsitsikamma, adrenaline junkies can participate in the highest bungee jump in the world, take a tree-top canopy tour, or go black-water tubing. Those who like their thrills a little more sedate can visit one of the many five-star game lodges, play golf, go fishing, or relax at a spa. 011-27-0-43-701-9600, www.ectourism.co.za, www.openafrica.org/route/coastal-route



ANNA ZIEMINSKI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS

Ottawa's Fairmont Château Laurier marks its 100th anniversary this year. Originally scheduled for an April 1912 opening, the official launch was delayed until June after the hotel's owner, Charles Melville Hays, perished on the Titanic. To commemorate the centennial, the hotel is hosting activities, promotions, and celebrations. The monthly table d'hôte menus journey through time: June starts with a 1912-30 inspired theme; July focuses on the 1940-60 era; August features the 1970-90 era; and September reviews the last 12 years. Two centennial packages, The Centennial Tea and The Century of Memories, offer once-a-century deals. Packages from \$301 and \$337, respectively, per night, double occupancy. 800-257-7544, www.fairmont.com/laurier

EVERYWHERE

PICKED POCKETS NO MORE

After an encounter with pickpockets in China, Adam Rapp looked down at the wide-open pockets on his chinos and thought, "Why not combine the security of money belts with a great pair of travel pants?" Five years of travel and two years of development later, Pick-Pocket Proof Pants were born (a.k.a. P³ Travel Pants). Available in two versions, cotton for business travel and a cotton-nylon blend for adventure wear, the pants are equipped with all-around covered zippers and a triple-secure hidden passport-money pocket. Dual pockets accommodate a phone and camera, and expand to fit a guidebook. Bonus feature: They are treated with Teflon to repel stains and moisture. Available online as long pants or shorts, for men only; women's models debut this fall. \$79.95-\$109.95, clothingarts.com

ROLLING COMPANIONS

Skip Hop Inc., a New York design company, recently launched the Zoo Kids Rolling Luggage Collection. Featuring the bright colors and faces of the company's signature Zoo Dog, Monkey, Owl, Bee, and Ladybug, the luggage is perfectly sized for airline overhead bins, and sturdy enough for overnight or long-distance trips. If the tykes tire of pulling their bags, a detachable shoulder strap adjusts so adults can carry hands-free. Available online and at select retailers, \$38. www.skiphop.com/product/zooluggage.html



NECEE REGIS

Star-spangled bicentennial will light up Baltimore

By William A. Davis
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

BALTIMORE — There are no bombs bursting in air over Fort McHenry but the star-spangled banner still waves proudly above its ramparts, as it did after a massive British naval bombardment during the War of 1812 — the event that inspired Francis Scott Key to write the lyrics to what became the national anthem.

The War of 1812 is the conflict most Americans probably know the least about — the cause was the British forcing US seamen into the Royal Navy — and in much of the country its bicentennial will probably be ignored. But not in Maryland — and Baltimore in particular — where it will be enthusiastically commemorated.

The state claims some 500 sites connected to the three-year-long war and Baltimore is expecting more than a million

visitors for the weeklong "Star-spangledSailabration" that begins on June 13 with a parade into the harbor of more than two dozen vessels including US and Canadian warships and tall ships from around the world. There will also be an air show featuring the Blue Angels, along with parades, concerts, fireworks, ship tours, and other events and activities.

Today a national park and historic shrine, Fort McHenry is also a civic symbol for Baltimore. The anniversary of the battle, which was fought on Sept. 12, 1814, is an official state holiday called Defenders Day.

Before the attack on Fort McHenry the British had occupied Washington, the nation's new capital, and set fire to the presidential mansion (later painted white to conceal fire damage), the Capitol, and other public buildings.



KEN STANEK/VISIT BALTIMORE

Fort McHenry, built in 1798 on Baltimore Harbor, was bombarded for 24 hours by British in the War of 1812. Below is a replica garrison flag visitors can help raise.

The star-shaped fort, built in 1798, guarded the entrance to Baltimore Harbor and its

successful defense may have saved the city from even worse devastation. Because of its many privateers, who sailed as far as England to raid shipping, the British considered the city "a nest of pirates" and might have treated it far more harshly than it did Washington.

Key, a Washington lawyer and amateur poet, was on board a British ship arranging a prisoner release and witnessed the entire 24-hour bombardment. Hundreds of shells and rockets rained down on the fort but it continued to fire back. Early in the morning after the bombardment, a large flag was run up the fort's flagpole.

To Key's surprise and relief it was the American flag. On the back of a letter he immediately began writing a poem expressing his patriotic feelings. He titled it "The Defense of Fort McHenry." First published in a Baltimore newspaper, it was later set to the tune of a drinking song originally composed for a men's social club in London. Renamed "The Star-Spangled Banner," the song quickly became popular throughout the country and in 1931 was made the national anthem.

Because of its status as a national shrine, the fort is authorized to fly the American flag 24

hours a day — but it's not always the same type of flag. The kind of flag flown at night is the standard one. Those displayed during the day are replicas of the flags used at the fort during the War of 1812 and have 15 stars and 15 stripes.

The so-called storm flag, which flew through the night during the battle, is 17 feet by 25 feet. The even bigger garrison flag — which inspired Key — is 30 feet by 45 feet and one of the largest of its kind ever made.

The original flags were made

by a Baltimore flag maker, Mary Pickersgill, whose small house is open to the public. A full-scale copy of the garrison flag is painted on the outside wall of the museum attached to the house, giving visitors a chance to see how huge it was. Bigger than any room in the Pickersgill house, it had to be laid out on the floor of a nearby brewery to be sewn together. For her considerable labors Pickersgill was paid the then handsome sum of \$405.90.

There are "flag changing" ceremonies at the fort year round at 9:30 a.m. and 4:20 p.m. and also at 7 p.m. in summer. Because of its great size, the garrison flag is raised usually only on very calm days. Visitors are invited to help with the flag changes, which involve unfolding flags to their full length and then hauling on a rope to raise them to the top of a tall flagpole. It's a fun group effort.

On summer weekends members of the Fort McHenry Guard, volunteer history reenactors dressed in the uniforms of the War of 1812, give weapons demonstrations, explain the duties of soldiers at the fort, and participate in military ceremonies.

There are ranger-guided tours but visitors are free to roam the fort checking out exhibits in barracks rooms and taking in the sweeping views from atop the walls. A film shown at the visitors center at the entrance to the park dramatizes the events that inspired the "Star-Spangled Banner" and is recommended before visiting the fort itself.

On holidays such as Flag Day, the Fourth of July, and Defenders Day, the flag waves as proudly as ever above the ramparts — but what burst in the air are fireworks not bombs.



WILLIAM A. DAVIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Fort McHenry Adults \$7, age 15 and younger free, Fort Avenue, www.nps.gov/fomc/index.htm

William A. Davis can be reached at bill@davistravels.com.

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