

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

VIP LOUNGE

Brandon Copeland loves Hawaii and wants to visit Africa, but could happily get lost in a bag of Airheads

BY JULIET PENNINGTON



Brandon Copeland and his wife, Taylor.

On the field he may be known as a hard-hitting NFL linebacker, but off the field, the Patriots' Brandon Copeland wears numerous hats, including mentor, philanthropist, public speaker, financial consultant, and part-time Ivy League college professor. That's right: Copeland, who is playing his first season with the Pats, teaches finance and what he likes to call "Life 101" during the off-season at the University of Pennsylvania, his alma mater. "I try to help [my students] better understand the options they have when making major financial life decisions," said Copeland, 29. "It's something I really enjoy and find very rewarding." The Baltimore native is also committed to helping young people through "Beyond the Basics," a nonprofit he and his wife, Taylor, founded in 2018. "Our mission is to help young people realize and maximize their full potential," he said. "If they lack exposure to opportunity, to mentorship and guidance . . . it's hard for them to have vision. And if they cannot create vision, it's hard to have hope." Copeland and his wife, who works in marketing at Google, live in Old Bridge, N.J., with their 14-month-old son, Bryson. Copeland said he is "excited" to be playing for the Patriots. "It's a new team, a new city, new teammates, new coaches. . . . With everything going on in the world,

it seemed like this season would never come," he said. We caught up with Copeland to talk about all things travel.

Favorite vacation destination?

Hawaii has been to date my favorite vacation destination. It is one of the few places that I can completely relax [and] re-sync my mind with my body. Hawaii has every type of geographical terrain that a person would be looking for: mountains, beaches, forest, etc.

Favorite food or drink while vacationing?

This may sound simple, but chicken wings and lemonade. I don't get to indulge with my food choices that much, but that meal hits the spot every time.

Where would you like to travel to but haven't?

I would like to travel to Africa. I want to see where my ancestors come from first and foremost, but also I would want to experience the beautiful people and land.

One item you can't leave home without when traveling?

A phone charger. I know you are supposed to disconnect while traveling, but for peace of mind, I can't leave without that. I guess the phone, too (laughs).

Aisle or window?

Aisle, because I need the knee room, but I have no issue peaking through my neighbor's window.

Favorite childhood travel memory?

We would go on 18-hour road trips to Mississippi for a family reunion every two years with my mother, younger brother, cousins, and grandparents. Back then we had to listen to the same CDs on repeat on those trips. I remember we had DMX, Usher . . . and maybe Sisqo as well.

Guilty pleasure when traveling?

The sweets. I really don't buy any at my house, but whenever I am traveling, I am susceptible to making an impulse buy. I like chocolate chip cookies, apple pie, key lime cheesecake from The Cheesecake Factory . . . and for candy, I can get lost in a bag of Airheads.

Best travel tip?

Check the weather of the places that you are going to make sure that it is warm the time of year you plan on traveling. This allows you to pack lighter and also allows more opportunities to enjoy the scenery of the destination.

JULIET PENNINGTON

TROUBLESHOOTER

If Airbnb isn't safe, can I get a refund?

By Christopher Elliott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Q. We booked an Airbnb for three weeks in Orlando. When we arrived at the property, my wife and I feared for our safety. While the apartment was nice and clean, the area around the apartment smelled of marijuana. Even with it being a gated community, there were cars sneaking around the gates and getting in and a lot of groups of people hanging around cars.

After looking further into some of the reviews at the apartment complex, we decided not to stay. At the end of the day, you don't want to stay somewhere you do not feel safe. We left within 30 minutes of checking in.

We contacted both the host and Airbnb, and both are refusing to refund the \$2,436 we spent or compensate us appropriately. Can you help?
ADAM GONIA, *Lake Mary, Fla.*

A. You should feel safe when you check into a vacation rental — that goes without saying. But do you deserve a full refund? That's an excellent question that many other guests have asked me recently.

The answer: It depends. The definition of a "dangerous" neighborhood can vary. For you, it was people loitering outside and smoking weed. I agree with that definition. I wouldn't have felt safe checking into a place like that. However, other guests might feel right at home.

It looks as if you started the research after you checked in.

Airbnb says it runs a risk assessment before confirming a property. It uses predictive analytics and machine learning to instantly evaluate "hundreds of signals" that help it flag and investigate suspicious activity. It also runs host and guest names against regulatory, terrorist, and sanctions watchlists.

The company says no screening system is perfect, and that presumably includes its own. But it seems unlikely that a dangerous vacation rental would last on the site. Guests would complain about it and Airbnb would eventually de-list it.

You also have to do your due diligence on a property. You say you read the reviews of the property, which is great. But it looks as if you started the research after you checked in and found the place less than desirable. You need to do that before you click the "buy" button.

Airbnb initially offered to refund its booking fee. I suggested that you contact someone higher up at Airbnb. I list the names, numbers, and e-mail addresses of the Airbnb executive contacts on my consumer advocacy site, elliott.org. In response, the company offered you a \$950 refund, more or less splitting the difference with you. I think that may be Airbnb's best offer.

Christopher Elliott is the chief advocacy officer of Elliott Advocacy, a nonprofit organization that helps consumers resolve their problems. Contact him at elliott.org/help or chris@elliott.org.

HERE

HOTELS OFFER OPTIONS TO WORK AND PLAY

The newest new thing from hotels this fall are work/play packages; designed for people who need a change of scenery after working at home during the COVID pandemic. At Gurney's Newport Resort & Marina — located on Goat Island with views of Narragansett Bay — a Work From Hotel package includes business butler to assist with printing and scanning needs; an "office-to-go" amenity with personalized letterhead and office essentials; daily \$60 breakfast credit; \$15 credit to For Five Coffee for a caffeine/afternoon pick-me-up; and more. When you're not working, enjoy the resort's indoor and outdoor pools, fitness center, full-service spa, and multiple dining options. Offered through Nov. 20. Rates from \$379 midweek and \$699 weekends. 401-849-2600, www.gurneysresorts.com/newport/offers/work-hotel-package

At The Whitney in Boston, check in to your guestroom — a.k.a. "your office" — as early as 8 a.m. Their office survival kit includes earbuds, spa facial mask, stress relief ball, break time meditation, and midday snacks with coffee and tea service. Cocktail time starts at 5 p.m. with a bottle of Prosecco and charcuterie board delivered to your room. No expiration date. Rates from \$410 for overnight experience; guests may call to receive a lower day rate. 888-673-3650, www.whitney-hotelboston.com



AUTUMN EXHIBITS DEBUT IN SALEM

Just in time for the witching season, a trove of authentic Salem Witch Trial materials and documents will be on view at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem. Opening Sept. 26, "The Salem Witch Trials 1692" exhibition features original documents from PEM's Phillips Library including death warrants for execution, petitions from the accused, invoices from the jail keeper, direct testimony from accusers, and personal possessions relating to those involved, such as a trunk that belonged to Jonathan Corwin, the judge who lived in the 17th-century building now known as the Witch House. (On view through April 4, 2021.) Opening the same day, "Salem Stories" showcases

26 vignettes about the people, places, and events that made Salem the city it is today with a variety of objects — structured in an entertaining A-Z format — that include a leatherback turtle, Parker Brothers' Monopoly, and even a murder weapon. (Through Oct. 3, 2021.) 978-745-9500, www.pem.org

THERE

NORWAY CULINARY TOURS IN 2021

Ready to plan your next big adventure? Up Norway, a Norwegian travel curator, announces three new culinary journeys for 2021. With new social distancing guidelines in mind, "A Springtime Journey of Nordic Wellbeing" (available March-June; from \$5,443) and "Autumn Flavours of Scandinavia" (August-October; from \$4,830) are 10-day self-guided tours that introduce travelers to Nordic gastronomy, design, and culture. They can be booked individually on request dates. "In Pursuit of Scandinavian Cooking and Living" is an exclusive guided tour limited to 15 guests. (Oct. 22 to 29 from \$3,348). In addition, travelers can enjoy peace of mind when booking in 2020 for travel in



2021 by taking advantage of new options, including a 100 percent refundable trip, Cancel for any Reason insurance, and discounts on nonrefundable bookings. upnorway.com/campaign/newscancook

VINTAGE-INSPIRED HOTEL DEBUTS NEAR CHICAGO

Those looking for an alternative to downtown Chicago hotels may want to consider The Drake Oak Brook, a newly renovated and rebranded 154-room member of the Autograph Collection Hotels. Located less than 20 miles west of the Windy City, the hotel's 1920s structure (a former key factory) launched into the limelight in 1961 when it housed guests including Prince Charles, Frank Sinatra, and golf legends Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus. Today, after top-to-bottom renovations, the vintage-inspired hotel debuts its new rooms, restaurant, bar with gramophone record player, lounge with antique photo booth and fireplace, fitness center, tennis courts, and 10 acres with gazebos, fountains, and more. Rates from \$159. 630-571-0000, www.thedrakeoakbrookhotel.com

EVERYWHERE

TRAVEL BOOK CELEBRATES AMERICAN GARDENS

Follow in the footsteps Britain's much-loved gardener and BBC television personality Monty Don and celebrated photographer Derry Moore as they visit the most famous, beautiful, and unusual gardens and parkland across America. Produced as a compliment to



a BBC television series, "American Gardens" includes 180 color illustrations of outdoor spaces that epitomize or redefine the American garden, and explore why green spaces are vital to our well-being and culture. The new hardcover book can be used as a guide for places to visit on your next trip across the USA, or simply enjoy as an armchair traveler. It includes wide open landscapes as well as city gardens including the slave garden at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello estate, New York City's Central Park, Vizcaya Museum and Gardens in Miami, and unpublished photographs of Bob Hope's Palm Springs home and the garden of renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright. \$50. prestelpublishing.randomhouse.de/book/American-Gardens/Monty-Don/Prestel-com/e570814.rhd

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