

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

THE VIP LOUNGE

Shayna Seymour on Martha's Vineyard, margaritas, and needing more Italy in her life

The way Shayna Seymour sees it, she's got one of the best jobs in the world. The broadcast journalist, coanchor of WCVB's award-winning nightly newsmagazine, "Chronicle," said she loves to travel, so working on a show that focuses on all things New England — including getaways — is a dream. "From the mountains of Vermont, to the politics of New Hampshire, to the Cape and the islands' oceans, the rocky coast of Maine . . . we've got all of the resources to pull from right here," Seymour said. "And we have experts from top universities and hospitals to help us tell our stories." In addition to cohosting "Chronicle" with Anthony Everett, Seymour, who joined WCVB in 2006, occasionally fills in on the anchor desk for the station's nightly newscasts. She is also involved in several philanthropic endeavors, including The Home for Little Wanderers and Dress for Success. While the Amherst native said she misses traveling for both work and pleasure, she appreciates all of the nearby destinations that are just a car ride away — especially her favorite go-to spot, Martha's Vineyard — and don't involve quarantine restrictions. "That's the beauty of having paradise in your own backyard," said Seymour, who lives in the Boston suburbs with her husband, Steve Carr, director of admissions and enrollment at Belmont Hill School, and their children, Blake, 10, and Paige, 7. We caught up with Seymour to talk about all thing travel.

Favorite vacation destination?

Martha's Vineyard is without a doubt my favorite continuous vacation spot year after year. The island is truly my happy place. What's not to love? From beaches and boutiques to seafood and sunsets. And you never know who you'll run into. . . . While summer is my favorite season, every season is different and magical. If you've never visited in the fall . . . well then, that is a treat waiting to happen. While my love for MV runs deep, I would fancy a return to Italy one day. I went for the first time during



the summer of 2018 with my in-laws and extended family. To say it was life-changing is an understatement. I fell in love with everything about the country — from food and fashion to history and culture. The country's beauty is breathtaking, and I only saw a snapshot. I need more Italy in my life.

Favorite food or drink while vacationing?

I think it really depends on where I am traveling, but a good margarita goes a long way and can be enjoyed in various locations.

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

Spain! I was supposed to go with my family — including parents, brother, and sister-in-law — during the summer of 2020, but our trip was canceled due to the pandemic. I'm hopeful that one day in the near future we'll be able to go on our planned trip and have the opportunity to explore some of Spain's villages, browse the city shops, eat tapas, learn to Flamenco dance, and relax on one the country's beautiful beaches. South Africa and Hawaii are runners-up on my list.

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

I do not like to travel without my family; I enjoy their company. The experience, adventure, and memories are so much better to share with them. However, when I'm solo traveling for work, I can't leave home without my phone, but really, no judgment. . . . Can anyone else do this?

Aisle or window?

Eek... that's a tough one. My initial thought is window because I can peek out and I have an extra nook to lay my head down on if I want to sleep. Plus, it's justcozier. However, recently my appreciation for the aisle has grown,

[since] there's more space and I don't have to climb over anyone if I need to leave my seat, which gets old and annoying.

Favorite childhood travel memory?

Spending summers on Martha's Vineyard with my family and friends is my favorite childhood memory. It's our special place still to this day to gather and reconnect. In fact, my parents have retired to the island. Every summer my childhood best friend would come with my family to the island. Each day the two of us would meet up with friends at The Inkwell [beach] and stay until it was time to put a sweat shirt on. At night, we would hang out on Circuit Ave. in Oak Bluffs, have ice cream at Cozy's [now Ben & Bill's], or stand in line for a Back Door Donut and hope we'd run into our summer crush. I've gone to the Vineyard every year of my life; some short stays, some extended stays. It is a part of who I am.

I met two of my closest friends on the Vineyard; both were bridesmaids in my wedding. My husband and I bought our first house together on the island. I make my children promise me that no matter where they are in life, they will always try to visit Martha's Vineyard for at least one weekend a year.

Guilty pleasure when traveling?

When possible, I like to splurge a bit and stay in nice hotels. It's my guilty pleasure — I own it. It's a little treat I look forward to and greatly enjoy.

Best travel tip?

Travel lightly, although I never seem to be able to it despite my best intentions. On the few successful occasions I've managed to pack lightly, it has made all the difference in the world.

JULIET PENNINGTON

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

Overseas adventure rebooked for 2021, but we don't want to go

By Christopher Elliott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Earlier this year, my wife and I booked a trip with Overseas Adventure Travel to Greece and Turkey in late spring. When travel started to get restricted because of the coronavirus, we contacted Overseas Adventure Travel to inquire as to the status of our trip.

An Overseas Adventure Travel representative said that the trip was going to be canceled. She advised us to wait for notification of this, because when the company cancels a trip, the customer is due a full refund of all expenses. This had been specified in Overseas Adventure Travel's terms and conditions when we booked the trip as well.

A couple of weeks later, we received a notice from Overseas Adventure Travel that they had rebooked us on a trip to the same destination in June 2021. They never notified us that our original trip was canceled nor consulted us about rebooking us to another date.

When we contacted Overseas Adventure Travel customer service, a representative told us that they "changed" their policy regarding refunds and would not be honoring the refund policy that was in effect when we booked our original trip. We told them that we do not want our \$21,157 withheld by them, and we don't want to plan a future trip in these uncertain times. Can you help us get a refund?

BRUCE SHICKMANTER,
Lenox, Mass.

A. Overseas Adventure Travel should have refunded your money for several reasons. First, because it promised it would. And also because a refund is required under your state's laws.

Why would Overseas Adventure Travel rebook

you the way it did? Easy. It wants you to keep your travel plans. That benefits the tour operator and all of its suppliers. So, of course it's going to do everything it can to prevent a refund.

Overseas Adventure Travel can't renege on its refund offer. You could have reached out to someone higher up at Overseas Adventure Travel to appeal your case. I list the names, numbers and e-mail addresses of the executives at Grand Circle Travel, which owns Overseas Adventure

Overseas Adventure Travel can't renege on its refund offer.

Travel, on my consumer advocacy site at elliott.org/company-contacts/grand-circle-travel.

But there's also the legality of the tour operator's actions. Under Massachusetts state law, a tour operator must offer a refund when it cancels a trip. You could have complained to the attorney general as well. You can find the form at www.mass.gov/how-to/file-a-consumer-complaint.

What if that doesn't work? I might have gotten in touch with your credit card company. Overseas Adventure Travel's e-mail offering a refund would have made your credit card dispute an easy win.

I contacted Overseas Adventure Travel on your behalf. It refunded the \$21,157, as promised.

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

MONOPOLY-INSPIRED HOTEL PACKAGE

Going stir crazy at home? Kick your game-playing skills to another level with Kimpton Marlowe Hotel's Game Night package. Inspired by the new Cambridge edition of the popular Monopoly game — featuring local historic landmarks, including the Kimpton Marlowe — the game-cation package is ideal for couples and families, and is a great holiday gift idea. The package includes an overnight stay in a newly renovated guestroom (overlooking the Charles River and Boston skyline); your own Cambridge edition of the Monopoly game; top hats filled with popcorn and candy; free parking for one car; and more. Bring the family dog along to enjoy pet-friendly amenities including plush dog bed and doggie treats. If you're traveling with a Scottish Terrier (one of Monopoly's iconic game pieces), a 50-percent room discount will be applied at checkout. Rates from \$200 per night, for 2 or 4 guests, allows you to bring the kids. Available through April. 800-825-7140, www.hotelmarlowe.com/exclusive-offer/?p=monopoly

THERE

NEW BUILD/NEW HOTEL IN FORT LAUDERDALE

When you're ready to travel again, take a chic sunny vacation — without breaking the bank — at Hyatt Centric Las Olas Fort Lauderdale. As Las Olas Boulevard's first new hotel in more than 70 years (it debuted in April), the full-service, 238-room property is located inside the new-build 100 Las Olas tower, downtown's tallest building in the heart



of the city's business district. Travelers can lounge by a rooftop pool with expansive deck and the Elev8 Rooftop Bar with sweeping skyline views; enjoy international fare and hand-crafted cocktails at lobby-level Harborwood Kitchen & Bar; and venture out to some of the area's best beaches, parks, and restaurants with outdoor dining. To ensure the safety and wellbeing of guests, the hotel follows rigorous safety protocols, requiring face masks or coverings in hotel indoor public areas and when moving around in outdoor areas. Rates from \$127 to \$187 per night. 954-353-1234, www.hyatt.com/en-US/hotel/florida/hyatt-centric-las-olas-fort-lauderdale/flct

D.C. MAKEOVER

Those heading to Washington, D.C., for festivities in January and beyond may want to check out the newly refurbished The Dupont Circle hotel. A

member of The Doyle Collection, a family-owned luxury Irish hotel group, updates include a cutting-edge bar and restaurant by designer Martin Brudnizki that combines contemporary style with a 1950s aesthetic that pays homage to the building's midcentury beginnings; and new lobby and penthouse suite that reflects a sense of nostalgia inspired by Irish designer Clodagh's childhood in the west of Ireland. Additionally, all guest rooms have been redesigned to echo the newly launched spaces with natural materials and soothing earth tones. Located on Dupont Circle, you'll find ample outdoor seating set in lushly landscaped terraces, complete with umbrellas, heaters, and all-weather awnings. Room rates from \$325; penthouse suites from \$1,500. 202-483-6000, www.doylecollection.com/hotels/the-dupont-circle-hotel

EVERYWHERE

UV-C LIGHT POCKET STERILIZER

Whether traveling to the store or a great distance from home, now more than ever it's important to keep surfaces and personal items clean. UV Care USA has introduced a pocket-size UV-C light sanitizer that's easy to take on the go. Eliminate harmful germs, bacteria, viruses, allergens, and molds at the restaurant, on the airplane, in the classroom, on your phone, laptop keyboard, door knobs, and more using UV-C light technology, a chemical-free way to clean. Simply flip open the unit, press

the "on" button for five seconds, and shine the light within one-quarter inch of the surface area or object to disinfect. Powered by four AAA batteries or mini-USB cable. \$42.99. theuvcare.com/products/uv-care-pocket-sterilizer

PLAYSET TEACHES TOTS ABOUT ART

We may not be taking our kids and grandkids to museums these days but that doesn't mean we can't introduce them to the imaginative worlds of fine art and culture. Adding to its Museum Tour Playsets (featuring classic works of art), Citispots is introducing its new Modernist Edition, teaching kids about iconic artists and their works, including Jacob Lawrence, Frida Kahlo, Piet Mondrian, Jackson Pollock, and more. Includes a flexible magnetic whiteboard for displaying six magnets of famous paintings; 20-page board book about



the art and artists; double-sided playmat so kids can follow along with the book and "visit" each artist in their studios; and two wooden museum docent characters. Ages 3-7. \$45. Add-ons include coloring books, sticker packs, magnet extension packs, and books. \$6-\$20. cityspotsonline.com

NECEE REGIS

