

This week's best travel bargains around the globe.

Land

• College students can save more than 50 percent on a Costa Rica package. The Pura Vida 2018 deal costs \$1,075 per person double and includes five nights split between Tabacon Thermal Resort & Spa in Arenal and El Mangroove resort on the Gulf of Papagayo (you can do the math); two nights at Hotel El Presidente in San Jose; daily breakfast; unlimited entry to the thermal experience at Tabacon; eight-day car rental; 20 percent spa discount at Tabacon; and taxes. Book by April 15 at sales@tabacon.com. Use promo code GRAD2018; valid college ID required. Travel May 1-June 20. By comparison, summer rates at Tabacon average \$338 a night and rates at El Mangroove go for \$220 a night. Info: 855-822-2266, tabacon.com.

• Preferred Hotels & Resorts is celebrating its 50th anniversary with a hotel credit or free 50-minute activity at more than 200 participating properties. For example, at the Royalton Park Avenue in Manhattan, receive a \$50 credit for the hotel's restaurant, Asellina; rates are from \$320 a night, with taxes. At Galeria Plaza Reforma in Mexico City, guests can participate in a Mexican cooking lesson at its restaurant, Almara; rates are from \$148 a night, with taxes. The credit is for \$50 or 50 euros or pounds, depending on the local currency. Book by Dec. 31; stay through March 31, 2019. Info: 866-990-9491, preferredhotels.com/offers/golden-anniversary-offer.

• The Red Lion Inn, in the Berkshires of Western Massachusetts, is offering a Winter Hibernation Special, with savings of 30 percent. For example, a weekend night in early March starts at \$216 (plus \$21 tax); usual rate is from \$309. Book by Feb. 11; travel through March 29. Info: 413-298-5545, redlioninn.com/travel-accommodations-offers.

WHAT'S THE DEAL?



ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Sunset at Playa Guiones in Nosara, Costa Rica. College students can save 50 percent on a package.

Sea

• American Cruise Lines is offering savings on select departures aboard its new 175-passenger American Constitution, which is scheduled to launch in April. For example, save \$100 per stateroom on the Nov. 8 and Dec. 23 departures of the 10-night **American Revolution** itinerary, which sails round trip from Baltimore. Rate starts at \$4,705 per person double, plus \$330 port charge. The ship stops in Washington; four ports in Maryland, including Cambridge, a first-time cruise destination; and three places in Virginia. Info: 800-460-4518, www.americancruiselines.com.

• Princess Cruises has an anniversary sale with up to \$600 in onboard credits plus one free night at a specialty restaurant. The deal applies to select cruises and cruisetours departing summer 2018 through spring 2019. Credit amount varies by trip length and cabin category. For example, book an interior or oceanview cabin on a cruise lasting six to nine days and receive

\$150 per stateroom. For the \$600 credit, reserve a balcony, mini-suite or suite on a cruise of at least 13 days. The specialty dining perk applies to all four guests sharing a cabin. Cruise rates vary. For example, the seven-day Voyage of the Glaciers departing Vancouver on May 26 starts at \$614 per person double for an interior cabin. Dining choices on the Star Princess include the Crown Grill (normally \$29 per person) and Sabatini's Italian Trattoria (\$25). Add \$205 in taxes and port charges. Book by Feb. 14. Info: 800-774-6237, princess.com.

Air

• Buy a round-trip international ticket to Japan and receive discounted flights within Japan on All Nippon Airways. The ANA Experience Japan deal offers three tiers of discounted round-trip fares — \$105, \$144 or \$203 — depending on route. For example, the round-trip fare between Tokyo and Shonai is \$105, down from \$303. Travel through March 24; book at least three days in advance. Travelers must reside outside of Japan and

can book the international ticket on any airline. Prices may fluctuate due to exchange rates. Info: ana.co.jp/en/us/promotions/share/experience_jp.

Package

• Ritz Tours is offering early-booking savings on its 2018 vacations. For example, save \$100 per person on the **Discover Vietnam** tour, which starts at \$2,800 per person double. Trip includes air from New York to Hanoi, with return from Ho Chi Minh City; two domestic flights; eight nights' hotel in Hanoi, Hue, Ho Chi Minh City; overnight cruise on Halong Bay; 24 meals; tours with entrance fees; motorcoach transport and tour guide; airport transfers; travel insurance; and taxes. Also, use promo code RITZ2018 to receive an extra \$50 off. Book by Feb. 28. Info: 888-345-7489, ritztours.com.

Carol Sottoli, Andrea Sachs

Prices were verified at press time Thursday, but deals sell out and availability is not guaranteed. Some restrictions may apply.

BREAKFAST-LUNCH-DINNER

Before the desolate canyon, a cuisine oasis

BY DINA MISHEV

Don't just push through Flagstaff, Ariz., and on to the Grand Canyon, a 90-minute drive away. Grand Canyon National Park might be one of the seven wonders of the natural world, but its culinary options are about as limited as water along its South Kaibab Trail. In Flagstaff though, a college and railroad town of 70,000 located at 7,000 feet on a mountain surrounded by extinct volcanoes, the food scene is booming. Restaurants not only cater to locals looking to refuel after a long day of hiking, biking or skiing in the nearby Coconino National Forest but also to sophisticated international visitors. Between meals, take time to wander around downtown, which is bisected by Route 66 and active railroad tracks, and has streets lined with historical, sandstone brick buildings.

BREAKFAST



MACY'S EUROPEAN COFFEE HOUSE AND BAKERY

From mismatched tables and chairs to double pastry cases, well-worn wood and linoleum floors, a chalkboard menu hanging from the ceiling, and the vibrant photography of founder Tim Macy hanging on all the walls, **Macy's European Coffee House and Bakery** (macyscoffee.net; 14 S. Beaver St.; 928-774-2243) is the anti-Starbucks and one of Arizona's oldest coffeehouses. Order a Macy's Special — steamed hot chocolate and espresso — with a bowl of yogurt and house-made granola (almonds, walnuts, cinnamon, nutmeg, peanut butter, vanilla, grains and sesame and sunflower seeds sweetened with honey at \$5.25) before sitting at a table and taking in Macy's photographs, which usually have a multicultural vibe or are collages of patrons from the cafe's 38 years in business. Just as diverse are the cafe's pastry cases — the raspberry cheesecake bars have chunks of raspberries in them — and clientele, which range from river rats to college kids and professors, professional runners, astronomers, hippies and tourists.

LUNCH



MARTANNE'S BREAKFAST PALACE

Upon walking into **MartAnne's Breakfast Palace** (928-773-4701; 112 E. Route 66), it's easy to wonder what you've gotten yourself into. Walls are redder than a fire engine, the linoleum floors are a black-and-white checkerboard, chairs are upholstered in glittery vinyl and hanging everywhere are paintings — some on wood, others on canvas, most with Dia de los Muertos-inspired subjects and all by local artist Emma Gardner. If this outside decor doesn't intimidate you, the portion sizes you'll see coming out of the kitchen while you wait for a table will. One order of the house specialty, chilaquiles (\$9.25), fried corn tortillas tossed with green onions, cheese and scrambled eggs, and topped with red or green chili sauce, is enough to feed two people — but everyone still orders their own entree. MartAnne's may be "The House That Chilaquiles Built," as stated on a colorful sandwich board outside the front door, but there's so much more, whether you're studying the menu for lunch or all-day breakfast, including Cindy G's Posole and pork green chile, which is still made from the recipe of the cook, Alice Flemons, better known as "Ms. Alice," who helmed the kitchen for five decades under three owners and for as many name changes.

DINNER



BRIX

Tucked into a residential neighborhood several blocks north of Route 66 in what once was a dirt-floored, brick carriage house, **Brix** (brixflagstaff.com; 413 N. San Francisco St.; 928-213-1021) is fine dining without any fanfare, even if it was included on Condé Nast Traveler's "Top 95 New Restaurants in the World" list the year after it opened (2007). Specific dishes change based on the season and what's available from local producers, but generally the menu is American comfort food, executed well and with imagination, such as hibiscus and Gorgonzola ravioli accompanied by a blueberry-green chili jam and pear sherry sauce (\$24) or beef tenderloin with asparagus and foie hollandaise (\$38). When weather keeps the herb-and-flower-ringed outdoor patio from being used, which, sadly, is more than half the year — Flagstaff's at 7,000 feet, remember, and there's a ski resort just outside of town — reservations can be tricky; there are only about eight inside tables (although there are seats at the bar). If you can't get in at Brix, try sister restaurant **Criollo Latin Kitchen** (criollolatinKitchen.com; 16 N. San Francisco St.; 928-774-0541). It has the town's best happy hour (3 to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday).

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TRAVEL

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Don't lose it when airlines lose your luggage



The Navigator
CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

After Delta Air Lines lost Dan Collins's luggage on a recent flight to Lihue, Hawaii, he didn't know what to expect. Few people do, actually.

Two of his checked bags vanished during a multi-connection trip that originated in Baltimore. And when they didn't show up at the luggage carousel in Kauai, Collins felt like he'd jumped on a figurative merry-go-round of his own.

"We had to submit separate reports — one for my wife, one for myself — detailing what each bag looked like and whether each had some form of identification," says Collins, who works for a hospital in Baltimore. "We couldn't get a definite answer as to if and when the bags would be delivered or what would happen if they were never found."

More bags are lost than airlines are willing to admit. When luggage disappears, passengers are often pulled into a baffling world of forms, phone lines with prerecorded messages and endless waits. But you have more rights than you realize when your bags disappear, and there are long-term solutions to this irritating aspect of air travel.

Collins waited for his missing bags. And waited. Finally, he called Delta out on social media and connected with a customer-service representative who helped him track down the bags three days after they'd gone missing. Eventually, the airline cut him a check for \$230, the amount of money he and his wife had to spend on clothes and toiletries.

"It was a big hassle," he says.

There's some good news for passengers who are worried about losing their luggage. It's less likely to happen, according to the government. In September, U.S. airlines posted the lowest monthly rate of mishandled baggage reports — 1.99 reports per 1,000 passengers — since 1987, the first year the government began reporting that number. The reason? The major domestic airlines are upgrading their systems to prevent future losses, adding tracking technologies that automatically notify customers when a bag didn't make a flight.

But there's a problem: Not only are the lost luggage categories a little confusing, but when bags are delayed, they may not get reported to the Department of Transportation (DOT), which means the airline's lost-luggage numbers look lower than they actually are. Consumer advocates are pressuring the DOT to fix this loophole. "We are monitoring this matter," says DOT spokeswoman Caitlin Harvey.

Even if the agency does close the loophole, it'll be hard to tell which airlines are likely to lose your luggage and which are likely to take it on a lengthy detour. That's because the DOT, which requires airlines to report their numbers monthly, doesn't distinguish between lost, stolen and delayed luggage. Rather, it makes the airlines report a single number for "mishandled" luggage, a category that includes lost, pilfered, damaged and delayed baggage. Add the fuzziness of the numbers from the new automated systems, and it's really difficult to know how

responsible — or irresponsible — an airline will be once you entrust it with your property.

You have rights when a bag goes missing, which is something few passengers seem to understand. If you're flying domestically, your airline's liability under DOT regulations is \$3,500 per passenger. But to collect, you'll need to fill out two forms, including an initial lost-luggage form and a second claim in which you show proof of your loss. The claim process can take weeks — often longer. Airlines typically wait several weeks to be sure your bag is actually lost. For international flights, the claim procedure is virtually identical, but your rights are governed by a treaty called the Montreal Convention. Your liability limit is roughly \$1,600.

There are also standard procedures that most airlines follow. For example, if your checked or carry-on bags are damaged while in the care of airline personnel, the carrier is generally responsible for repairing, replacing, or compensating you for the bag, at their discretion, according to AirHelp, a company that helps passengers with airline compensation.

"If your luggage doesn't show up on time at your destination, the airline is responsible for providing you with up-to-date information on where your bags are," says Henrik Zillmer, the founder and chief executive of AirHelp. "In the meantime, if you need to replace essential items that were in your bags, like toiletries, the airline should reimburse you for those costs as well."

As always, a good travel agent can help you recover a lost bag; agents often have insider airline contacts or baggage-claim numbers that may not be publicly listed. But so can some common-sense precautions, like labeling your bags or just packing light and carrying them on board. You can also review the few consumer rights you have on the DOT's new Fly Rights brochure. AirHelp can assist in certain circumstances, such as when your flight is delayed and you're entitled to compensation; the firm is also considering adding a lost-luggage service.

Another fix: A new company called Blue Ribbon Bags offers a delayed-baggage service that costs \$5 per passenger. If an airline loses your luggage, the service will help locate and expedite delivery of the checked bag. If it's lost more than 96 hours, it will pay \$1,000 per bag. "We will get your bags back to you," says Gabriel Menkin, the firm's CEO.

Of course, none of this should be necessary. Airlines should report their lost luggage — including the number of bags that are temporarily misplaced, pilfered and permanently lost — in the interests of good customer service and without any prompting from the government. Your rights and the recovery procedure ought to be clearly spelled out, not just online, but when you discover your bag didn't make the flight. And airlines should quickly reimburse you for your lost bag, as opposed to the months-long wait to which passengers are subjected.

Elliott is a consumer advocate, journalist and co-founder of the advocacy group Travelers United. Email him at chris@elliott.org.

SIGN LANGUAGE



JOE SACCO

Spotted by Joe Sacco of Germantown, Md., in June at Griffith Observatory in Los Angeles.

Have you seen an amusing sign in your travels? Read on. Photos may be color or black-and-white and should be no more than a year old. Send high-resolution JPEG image to travel@washpost.com with "Sign Language" in the subject line. Be sure to include your name, contact information and a proposed caption. Photos become property of The Washington Post, which may edit, publish, distribute or republish them in any form. No purchase necessary.