

Asheville cottages make for a cozy getaway

By **ANDREA SACHS**
The Washington Post

ASHEVILLE, N.C. — Three reactions to a 364-square-foot cottage in Asheville, N.C.
Mother: “This is kind of a fun adventure.”
Daughter: “We can make this work.”
Father: “Maybe we should stay at our friends’ house.”
And one unifying consensus: The 15 minis at the Pines Cottages are cheek-pinching-cute, even if they push the concept of “close family” to its literal edge.
The self-catering cabins are scattered like Monopoly pieces on nearly 5 acres of land shaded by hickory, walnut, oak, cedar and — truth in advertising — pine trees. The structures measure 360 to 960 square feet and come in three flavors: studio, two-bedroom and log cabin. Most sleep two. Unfortunately, the math escaped me when I booked my family in Cottage 10.

On a cool evening in October, we approached the hydrangea-blue dollhouse residing on the upper tier of a hill. Relying on the car’s headlights, we stepped onto the porch and swung open the cherry-red door. None of us moved for several seconds as we assessed the situation. Three people, one room, no privacy.
“We can get creative,” my mom chirped optimistically.
The main living space was filled with a hodgepodge of furnishings, including low antique-y tables, a dresser/TV stand, a spider-legged stool and a deep-seated chair the color of margarine. A king-size



ANDREA SACHS/THE WASHINGTON POST

The Pines Cottages opened in Asheville, N.C., in 1929 to accommodate farmers driving to Asheville to sell their wares.

bed large enough to fit Henry VIII and half his wives dominated the room. Inches from my parents’ bed was the child’s lair, an inflated air mattress. One wrong turn to the bathroom, and I could end up with a foot-plant in my face.
I set out on a scouting mission for other arrangements. I followed the short hallway to the wee kitchen with a stove, tall cabinets and a full-size fridge that nearly squeezed out the other appliances. I considered dragging the air mattress into the kitchen but

worried about banging my head against the green Formica table if I heard noises in the night. (The property, sandwiched between two busy roads, is more domesticated than wild.)
Seizing lessons learned from HGTV, I pushed the mattress against the front door and positioned the chair to create a room divider.
During our three-night stay, we saw few neighbors (too nippy to grill outdoors or people-watch on the porch), though a staff member said a sense of commu-

nity often takes shape. Guests fraternize while walking their dogs or sitting around the fire pit.
We did have one gentleman caller. Allen Shumaker, the fourth owner in 85 years, came to the rescue after the pilot light in the gas furnace flickered out. I asked him about the property’s history.
The Pines opened in 1929, he told me, to accommodate farmers driving from Tennessee to Asheville to sell their wares at market. Before, the commuters would sleep in their cars on the side of the

rutted dirt road. The motor court provided them with a safer and more comfortable alternative: one-room log cabins with a bed and a community bathroom — all for a buck.
“The cottages are a kick back in time,” he said. “It’s old-school awesome.”
The property, located just 6 miles from downtown Asheville and 10 miles from Blue Ridge Parkway, rents studios, two-bedroom cottages and log cabins. Summer rates start at \$115 (www.ashevillepines.com).
Four log cabins dating to

the first year are still standing; two are for rent. The other original structures suffered fires, insect infestations or other irreparable damage and were rebuilt in a traditional stick style. Modern features — bathrooms, kitchens, insulated windows, upgraded heating, Wi-Fi, gumdrop-colored paint jobs — were also added, upturning the spartan shelters.
“This is a step up from glamping,” he said.
Shumaker preserves the vintage spirit by combing estate sales for antiques as well as repurposing old farm desks into bathroom sinks and barn wood into kitchen counters.
“We try to stay true to what was here before,” he said.
My parents and I also pledged our allegiance to simpler times. We cooked and ate in the diminutive kitchen, which required us to move like dancers on a small stage. We traced the stars from our porch. Once in bed, we talked in the dark, our voices growing fuzzier as we succumbed to sleep.
To give my folks extra space in the morning, I would stroll the grounds, studying the other cottages with the opportunistic eye of a real estate broker. I passed a housekeeper and asked her which cabin was her favorite.
“Probably 1,” she answered, referring to a 1929 log cabin with an all-white interior.
She then disappeared inside Cottage 15, which sleeps six.
I returned to our tiny house and wondered: Who needs all that space?

News to use

By **PHIL MARTY**
Chicago Tribune

Here are some of the more interesting deals, websites and other travel tidbits that have come across our desk recently:
■ Gate 1 Travel offers a Classic Thailand package that’s priced as low as \$1,887 per person, double occupancy with round-trip air from Chicago. Land-only cost is from \$999. The trip spends four nights in Bangkok, one night each in Ayutthaya and Sukhothai, two nights in Chiang Rai and three nights in Chiang Mai. Some meals are included, and touring is by motor coach. An internal flight is included in the package. 800-682-3333, tinyurl.com/j7ehemx
■ For travelers who like to explore on their own, Tripmasters offers a bare-bones

air and hotel package to visit Paris and Barcelona, Spain. The basic package spends three nights in each city and includes international air and city-to-city air. We did a search for a mid-August departure from Chicago and turned up a reasonable price of \$1,557 per person, double occupancy. Tripmasters’ website allows you to pick your dates, length of stay and hotels. 800-430-0484, tinyurl.com/gt2qpo3
■ Wyndham Extra Holidays is offering savings of up to 40 percent at resorts across the country. Bookings must be made by May 1 for travel through June 30. tinyurl.com/gvtfzgw
■ The seven Disney Springs Resort Area Hotels, near Florida’s Disney World, have a Spring Into the Magic promotion with rates as low as \$69 a night.



NANCY BROWN/GETTY IMAGES

Gate 1 Travel’s Classic Thailand package visits Bangkok, Ayutthaya, Sukhothai, Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai.

Rates are good until June 30. tinyurl.com/j26orvg
■ The Gibbes Museum of Art in Charleston, S.C., will reopen May 28 after a two-year renovation. Exhibits planned for the reopening include “The Things We Carry: Contemporary Art in the South” and “Beyond Catfish Row: The Art of

Porgy and Bess.” www.gibbesmuseum.org
■ Movie fans planning to drive through Iowa might want to take a look at the Iowa tourism folks’ listing of movie-related sites in their state at tinyurl.com/zzobjpq.
■ If you’re a bicyclist who’d like to tackle a self-guided

trip but with some help in areas like lodging and luggage shuttles, you might want to read “The Beginner’s Guide to Self-guided Cycling Adventure Holidays” from Pure Adventures. Though Pure Adventures has a vested interest, offering self-guided tours, the e-book has unbiased, worthwhile advice on how to find a company that meets your needs. tinyurl.com/hvz9osu
■ Sun Valley, Idaho, will hold a Wellness Festival on May 27-30. www.sunvalleywellness.org
■ The 16th annual Soul Beach Music Festival will be May 25-30 in Aruba. tinyurl.com/j2bo7a4
■ IndependentTraveler.com lists nine off-the-beaten-track destinations worth visiting at tinyurl.com/8aovudp.
■ Nemacolin Woodlands Resort is a 2,000-acre luxury retreat with an emphasis on active getaways in southwest Pennsylvania. Its

Adventure Center offers activities such as zip lining, a climbing wall, a ropes course and an off-road driving academy. 866-344-6957, www.nemacolin.com
■ Uniworld has new European river cruises and early booking savings for itineraries in 2017. tinyurl.com/zknnlps
Prices include taxes and fees unless otherwise noted. Deals and websites listed here have been checked for availability as of press time, but the listings are not endorsements.
Phil Marty is a freelance writer.

GEOQUIZ ANSWER

California. Founded in 1775, the mission is famous for the annual return of swallows from their winter home in Argentina.

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TRIPS, TIPS & DEALS

See Africa by luxury train

By PHIL MARTY | Tribune Newspapers

Train travel isn't the typical way to see Africa, and doing it in vintage, luxurious rail cars makes it even more unusual. Frontiers International Travel is offering two departures this year via Rovos Rail to travel across South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Tanzania. Accommodation aboard the wood-paneled coaches can be in a Pullman suite (\$11,850 per person, double occupancy), deluxe suite (\$15,300) or royal suite (\$20,550). The 15-day tour starts in Cape Town on July 2 and ends in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The reverse itinerary leaves Dar es Salaam on July 19. Tour highlights include a two-night stay in South Africa's Madikwe Game Reserve, with three game drives. A visit to Victoria Falls is on the itinerary, along with descending into the Great Rift Valley and traveling across Tanzania's Selous Game Reserve, the largest on the continent. Info: 800-245-1950, tinyurl.com/hpuftcd

Get a taste of Italy

Explore! is a company that specializes in small-group adventure travel, with its adventures generally being of the soft variety rather than for the hard-core adventurer. This year it's offering four trips in Italy that combine hiking and exploring the country's cuisine. Trips take place in the Amalfi Coast, Puglia, Cinque Terre and Emilia-Romagna, a new addition to Explore!'s lineup. That trip, for instance, visits Bologna, Modena, Ravenna and the canals of Comacchio. Daily walking distances are modest, with the longest days consisting of just over 4 miles. Guests will visit a cheese-producing facility where Parmigiano-Reggiano is made and a wine estate that uses the local Lambrusco grapes. Pricing for the tour is as low as \$1,330 per person, double occupancy, including some meals, seven nights' lodging in modest accommodations and travel by bus with a tour leader. For information on all four Taste of Italy trips: 800-715-1746, tinyurl.com/zcq3w3f

Fantasy trip for the deep-pocketed

The world's going to pot, your boss has been busting your chops and the only time the kids call is when they want money. Time to blow your life savings on an around-the-world trip. Abercrombie & Kent has its new for 2017 Around the World by Private Jet: The Tropics to the Arctic. You and 49 others will spend nearly a month flying to Cartagena and Bogota, Colombia; Easter Island; Rangihoa, French Polynesia; Honiara, Solomon Islands; Cebu, Philippines; Gobi Desert, Mongolia; Samarkand, Uzbekistan; St. Petersburg, Russia; and Reykjavik, Iceland. Your lie-flat, first-class seats will help you sleep well after you indulge in the open bar and meals from the onboard chef. At destinations, you won't have to mingle with the rabble, instead engaging in events planned just for you. It'll take a nice nest egg: This trip is \$129,000 per person, double occupancy. Info: 800-554-7016, tinyurl.com/j5wbbdz

Phil Marty is a freelance reporter.

GEAR BOX

Pack some foot relief for the road

By JUDI DASH
Tribune Newspapers

Anyone who travels may need occasional foot pampering. My soles feel soothed just looking at the Moji Foot Pro massager.

Six stainless steel spheres rotate in sockets embedded in a slip-resistant rubber base, penetrating and alleviating sore or tight muscles and tissues when you roll your foot over them. The more rolling pressure you apply, the deeper the massage.

The center sphere is raised slightly higher than the other five for targeted deep massaging. The spheres, which are each about an inch in diameter, are especially effective at stretching tight spots under the arches and toes. Put the massager in a freezer for a bit, and you'll get



MOJI

an even deeper ice-cold foot rub — a refreshing pick-me-up even if nothing hurts.

The Moji Foot Pro can be used while seated or standing. It's about 4.5 inches in diameter and 1.5 inches high. It weighs slightly more than a pound, making it ideal for travel. No batteries to worry

about either. The Moji Foot Pro with stainless steel spheres costs \$39.99. There's a Moji Foot massager with plastic spheres for \$29.99, but it doesn't feel as solid. Info: www.gomoji.com

Judi Dash is a freelance writer.

NEED TO KNOW

Business travelers to S.F. need a fat wallet

By HUGO MARTIN
Tribune Newspapers

The City by the Bay is once again ranked as the most expensive U.S. destination for business travelers.

But the big surprise in an annual study of hotel, rental car and dining prices is the ladder-climbing by Detroit.

The latest report by the trade publication Business Travel News, which measures prices paid by corporate travelers visiting the country's 100 biggest cities, found that the fastest increase in hotel rates — 22.5 percent from 2014 to 2015 — was reported in Detroit,



GEORGE ROSE/GETTY

Business travelers to San Francisco, its skyline seen from the Golden Gate Bridge, spend an average of \$547 a day.

a sign perhaps that the Motor City is bouncing back from its 2013 bankruptcy.

Detroit's average nightly hotel rate of \$198 is still a bargain compared with San Francisco, the city with the highest corporate hotel rate of \$370 a night.

When hotel and car rental rates and dining costs are added, San Francisco leads the country with business travelers paying a daily average of \$547. The national daily average of \$318 rose 3.9 percent over 2014, according to the report.

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