

LIFE+TRAVEL

Maine's oyster trail

A collection of more than 80 restaurants, farms and oyster-centered attractions stretches along the state's coast.

REAL ESTATE

A peek into co-ops

Shareholders in a corporation have the right to occupy unit in a building.



LOOK TO THE SKIES

The Chicago Air & Water Show returns Aug. 16-17 to the lakefront. Our guide has all the details. A+E

ARMANDO L. SANCHEZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE 2023

WINNER OF 28 PULITZER PRIZES FOR EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM

Final

Chicago Tribune



QUESTIONS? CALL 1-800-TRIBUNE

SUNDAY, AUGUST 10, 2025

BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM



BIODIVERSITY VS. EXPANSION

In the Quad Cities, a proposed development near a bald eagle habitat divides a community



Top: Kelly McKay, an independent biologist, conducts a survey of the species at Milan Bottoms Preserve in Rock Island County on July 31. Above: A bald eagle takes a perch at the preserve. E. JASON WAMBSGANS/CHICAGO TRIBUNE PHOTOS

By Lily Carey | Chicago Tribune

Wading through knee-deep water, Kelly McKay squinted in the evening light as the sun began to dip below the horizon. All around him, herons and other migratory birds darted between the dead trees that rose above the water, while turtles took shelter in the marsh's tall grasses.

This is the Milan Bottoms, a massive wetland near the conjunction of the Rock and Mississippi rivers in western Illinois that's home to over 150 endangered and threatened species. It's also the largest known winter nighttime roost for migrating bald eagles in the lower 48 states.

Over the past year, McKay, a biologist who has done contract work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and several state Departments of Natural Resources, has spent hundreds of hours documenting the wetland's wildlife in his free time. The wetland spans over 4,000 acres, owned by a patchwork of state and federal agencies as well as private parties. McKay, though, has limited his tracking work mostly to its southeastern edge, which backs up against Interstate 280, Illinois Route 92 and several developments — including a Bally's casino.

As the Milan Bottoms have flourished over the years, the surrounding city of Rock Island has struggled to bring in commercial revenue, leading local developers to build closer and closer to the wetland.

Turn to Wetlands, Page 8

Vaccine confusion as COVID cases rise

Mixed messages leave people unsure of what will be administered

By Lisa Schencker and Katherine Weaver
Chicago Tribune

Aaron Hardwick woke up one Tuesday in June and immediately knew something was wrong. He felt hot, and his stomach hurt. He soon tested positive for COVID-19.

"The fever, the insomnia and the chills, and the shaking, was out of this world," said Hardwick, 45, of Rogers Park. "That was something I've never had before in my life."

Hardwick said he was last vaccinated for COVID-19 in 2023. He'd like to get vaccinated again in the future to avoid reliving his recent illness. But he isn't sure if that's possible.

"I don't know what we're supposed to do," Hardwick said. "Can we get the shot? Are we supposed to? Who knows?"

With fall approaching and COVID-19 activity rising across the country, confusion over vaccines is widespread. Mixed messages from the federal government have left patients, doctors and public health leaders uncertain about how and which COVID-19 vaccines will be administered to whom in coming months, and what health insurance will cover. The shots can cost more than \$100 each without insurance.

Though COVID-19 vaccines released last year are still available at the moment and covered by insurance, the uncertainty surrounds who will be able to get updated vaccines in coming months — shots created to protect against more recent strains of COVID-19. Like flu vaccines, COVID-19 vaccines are updated regularly.

"I think there's still a lot of confusion among people who would be in the know about what to order, how much to order and the fact we don't know what's covered," said Dr. Emily Landon, an infectious disease specialist at UChicago Medicine, about ordering updated COVID-19 vaccines for the fall. "It's very difficult to make decisions about what to order if you don't know how many of your patients are going to qualify for a certain treatment or vaccine."

Turn to Vaccines, Page 6

INSIDE



EILEEN T. MESLAR/TRIBUNE

Football returns to the lakefront

What to watch for as Ben Johnson makes his game debut as Bears coach in preseason opener against the Dolphins. **Chicago Sports**

Zelenskyy: Ukraine won't cede any land

The Ukrainian leader dismissed the planned Trump-Putin summit, warning any negotiations must include Kyiv. **Nation & World**

Storefront sign restriction efforts debated

'Quality of life' issue for some, while others worry about overreach

By Jake Sheridan
Chicago Tribune

Driving past a gas station two blocks from her Chatham office, Ald. Michelle Harris can't see inside as bright green vinyl signs cover the station's windows, promoting pop, chips and tobacco products.

Similar obstructions abound on the storefront windows near her house. Light barely pierces through the tall orange stickers pushing items for sale inside a Family Dollar store, while massive photos of painted fingernails block the public's view into a beauty shop.

The veteran South Side alderman sighs as she drives by the stores. The signage that has popped up all over her ward in recent years has begun to cause a twofold problem, she said. It's become a safety issue that prevents the public and police from seeing inside businesses, and it's marred neighborhoods with tackiness that's bordering on blight.

"We know you do nails!" an exasperated Harris said as she drove past the salon last week. "You tell me that this would be proud to have in any community?"

So, in a move she describes as a "quality of life" issue, Harris, 8th, is spearheading a citywide effort

Turn to Signs, Page 11



The windows of a tax preparation business in the 8600 block of South Cottage Grove Avenue in Chicago are covered with ads. There is a push to reduce the amount of ads on the windows of retail stores.

TERRENCE ANTONIO JAMES/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

TODAY'S WEATHER



High 90 Low 73

Complete Chicagoland forecast on Page 18

\$5.75 city and suburbs and elsewhere
178th year No. 222 © Chicago Tribune



Bucharest's Old Town sees rejuvenation



Rick Steves

Still haunted by the legend of a vampire count and the legacy of a communist dictator, Romania is complex — with an epic history, a multifaceted ethnic mix and an unusually rich cultural heritage. It may not be the easiest place to travel, but for adventurous souls, it's exceptionally rewarding.

If you go, start in Romania's capital, Bucharest. With about 2 million people, it's a muscular and gritty tangle of buildings. It can be hard to like at first glance, but with a thoughtful look, it reveals its charms. Between the dreary apartment blocks hides an impressive architectural heritage.

The foundation of this jumble dates from the late 19th century, just after Romania became a unified country. After a building spree, it was called "Little Paris of the East." Later it was brutally disfigured by communist dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu, who left behind a starkly Socialist-style residential zone and the city's main landmark — the Palace of the Parliament. In recent years, Bucharest's citizens have rejuvenated the once-derelict Old Town, transforming it into one of the most happening nightlife zones in Eastern Europe. Taken together, the city is a fascinating place to grapple with for a day or two.

For a glimpse at Bucharest's genteel past, go for a stroll along Victory Avenue (Calea Victoriei) — with grand Belle Époque architecture that has recently been scrubbed of its communist-era grime. Pause by the horseback statue of King Carol I, across the street from the Royal Palace. Under



The Palace of the Parliament in Bucharest, Romania, is Europe's biggest building at nearly 4 million square feet — and it's 70% vacant. **RICK STEVES**

King Carol, Bucharest blossomed. He imported French architects to give Bucharest the romantic allure visitors still enjoy along this avenue.

Life changed in the 20th century. From communist times through the early 2000s, Bucharest's Old Town was deserted, dilapidated and dangerous. But now it's being systematically rejuvenated. Grand, glittering buildings (including several bank headquarters) have been washed and polished. Once-abandoned shopping galleries are newly inviting. Historical monuments — like the delightful Hanul lui Manuc, an early 19th-century inn — have been painstakingly restored. And an alfresco dining and drinking scene enlivens the traffic-free streets, making the lanes of

Old Town a revelation after dark (especially on weekends), when the entire neighborhood feels like one big, sprawling cocktail party.

Thriving as it is, Bucharest's Old Town was lucky to survive the communist period. In the early 1980s, after an "inspiring" visit to North Korea, Ceaușescu ripped out 80% of the historical center — 30,000 houses, schools and churches — to create the Civic Center district, with wide boulevards, stone-faced apartment blocks, gurgling fountains and a Pongyang aesthetic. (Urban planners managed to save a few churches by secretly relocating them inside city blocks, where you can still find them.) This area, just across the neglected Dâmbovița River from Old Town, is worth a

stroll to better understand the scale of Ceaușescu's ambition ... not to mention his ego.

In the core of the Civic Center, rows of fountains lead from Unity Square to the massive Palace of the Parliament — the largest building in Europe (nearly 4 million square feet, with more than a thousand rooms). Ceaușescu built this monstrosity as a symbol of his power. Today it houses the Romanian Parliament, three skip-pable museums and an international conference center ... and is still about 70% vacant space. Guided tours lead gawking visitors around its cavernous, empty and dimly lit halls. (If they turned on all the lights, the palace would consume as much electricity as a small city.)

Ceaușescu, throwing

resources at his pet project like a crazed pharaoh, literally starved his people to build his dream. It finally opened in 1994 — five years after Ceaușescu was executed in a bloody revolt. The Romanian people, whose food had been rationed for years to help pay for the palace, were wonderstruck and repulsed by this huge and opulent edifice.

Traveling through countries that spent 45 years in what locals here call "the Soviet Club," it's fascinating to see how a dogma that preached "equality for all" bred megalomaniacs who pursued the cult of personality. They built gigantic monuments that literally took bread out of the mouths of the workers who their ideology was supposed to serve.

Today, Ceaușescu feels

like ancient history, with Romania a proud democracy and member of the European Union. Joining local families on a Saturday morning in a Bucharest park, you can't help but feel optimistic. While Romania's challenges are significant, it's clear that the country is moving in the right direction. Love it or hate it (and often both at once), its capital presents a powerful and memorable travel experience.

Rick Steves writes European guidebooks, hosts travel shows on public TV and radio, and organizes European tours. This column revisits some of Rick's favorite places over the past two decades. Visit his website at ricksteves.com, email him at rick@ricksteves.com or follow his blog on Facebook.

CELEBRITY TRAVEL

Musician seeks out best pho in travels

By **Jae-Ha Kim**
Tribune Content Agency

Multilingual recording artist Miist has had a busy couple years.

"I just came back from an amazing trip to Italy and France, and this past weekend to Los Angeles for recording a new single, 'I Think I Lost a Day,' with the incredible Tayte Nickols and the local band Familiar Faces at Apogee Studio," the California-based musician said. "Tomorrow I leave for Maui. I love being there. It is so incredibly beautiful and exotic and inspires me. Maui is also the home of multi-Grammy winner Kalani, who will record the Hawaiian version of my song 'Could You Lend Me a Smile?'"

Her latest single is "The Bruises Won't Ever Understand," a personal song meant to honor the survivors of domestic violence.

This interview with Miist has been edited for clarity and length.

Q: What are some of the places you've visited that you'd like to return to?

A: Singapore is an amazing place. So beautiful and eco-friendly. The Maldives, Bali, Bora Bora ... but it seems my go-to place is Hawaii or Southern France along the Riviera. We spent a week in Antibes recently, but any of those amazing Mediterranean cities are so full of history and charm. And, of course, there are the croissants, baguettes and cheese. I just can't help myself. I think it is the pace of life that appeals to me in those regions. People



An African safari is in musician Miist's future. **ANDREW FICKE**

tend to slow down and live more. I like that. I aspire to do that.

Q: What untapped destination should people know about?

A: My family and I spend a lot of time in the San Juan Islands of Washington state. It is one of the most pristine and stunning places that I've ever seen.

Q: Did you travel a lot as a child?

A: When I was 5 years old, I was put in a boarding school and didn't leave for many years, so I can't say there was a physical trip that stood out to me. But I used to daydream a lot about being in a different place. As an adult, I now get to experience that in real life, so I think that counts? Other than that, there were one or two occasions that my mom came to see me and did something with me for a day or two, usually just at her work. I suppose those memories are precious to me because it was so rare.

Q: What's the most important thing you've learned from your travels?

A: That people are generally kind, generous and just like me. We all want to smile, to laugh, to have friends and feel loved. Some cultures express that better than others, like Italy, and that difference makes me want to be more like them.

Q: If you could only pick

one place to eat, would you prefer a food truck or fine dining?

A: Food truck, every time! I love tasty, unpretentious food. Pho is always a good option, and it's fun trying to find the best pho in every place I visit around the world.

Q: Where are your favorite weekend getaways?

A: Wherever we are, we love to go on walks in the forest or along the ocean. As long as it's not too hot, if I'm with my family and there is nature, I'm good.

Q: What are your favorite cities?

A: Vancouver, where I lived for many years before coming to the U.S. (And) Paris is so much fun!

Q: Where would you like to go that you have never been to before?

A: My husband wants to take us to Africa on a safari. Not sure I want to tempt all those animals. I want to see everything. Actually, I want to touch everything. Especially animals and plants, so wherever I can do that, I'm in!

Q: When you go away, what are some of your must-have items?

A: Ha, shoes! But I don't bring many, given that I like to use carry-on luggage only. (So) a cute hat, my dog, my husband and my daughter.

For more from the reporter, visit www.jaehakim.com.

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

JetBlue's offered amount fails to cover cost of items after bag lost

By **Christopher Elliott** | King Features Syndicate

JetBlue lost my all-important bag for 43 days as I left on my 50th anniversary trip to Greece with my children and grandchildren.

The bag contained necessary medications for our 30-day stay along with my hearing aids, clothes, my wedding dress for my vow renewal, and heirloom items for the ceremony.

The loss of this bag caused extreme stress and ruined what was supposed to be an epic trip of a lifetime.

My husband called almost every day and sent 26 emails through their message board. JetBlue has offered \$181, and this doesn't even cover the clothes and medications (not all were able to be filled) that we had to scramble to find before our cruise.

Can you please help?

— *Jean Michielli-Pendl, Dunkirk, New York*

A: JetBlue should have found your lost luggage quickly and returned it. Why didn't it? I can see that you had a busy itinerary in Greece.

Based on your correspondence with JetBlue, it looks like the airline had a hard time coordinating a delivery.

Still, JetBlue offered you only \$181, which did not even cover the costs of the clothes and medications that you had to purchase while you were in Greece. It should have done better.

Your right to a refund is outlined in the Montreal Convention, an international treaty that establishes rules and limits regarding airline liability for baggage. When dealing with a loss on an international flight, you'll want to refer directly to the convention text if you think your airline isn't compensating you appropriately.

Article 22 of the convention sets the liability limit at about \$1,700 for damages that are associ-

ated with delayed passenger baggage. JetBlue's offer was well below this.

You say that the loss of the bag caused extreme stress and ruined your trip — and that you are seeking reimbursement for the \$2,445 you spent trying to survive in Greece for a month. You provided a detailed timeline of your communications with JetBlue, which included requests for the bag to be delivered to your hotel in Athens, then later to your home.

JetBlue asked you to submit receipts for your out-of-pocket expenses, and you also provided a list of the contents of the bag. So, what went wrong?

You've repeatedly mentioned that losing the bag caused you distress. Unfortunately there's no provision in the Montreal Convention for pain and suffering. You also mentioned that you lost an heirloom — your wedding dress. Airlines often exclude items like heirlooms from their liability,

which may have caused some confusion during your claims process.

And never ever check essential medications or hearing aids. Always put these in your carry-on luggage. I have more on luggage reimbursement in my free guide to finding your lost luggage.

You might have appealed this to one of the executive contacts at JetBlue. I publish the names, numbers and email addresses of the JetBlue customer service managers on my consumer advocacy site, elliott.org.

I contacted JetBlue on your behalf. The airline agreed to review your claim and revised its offer. It offered you an additional \$900 with a \$400 JetBlue credit.

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.