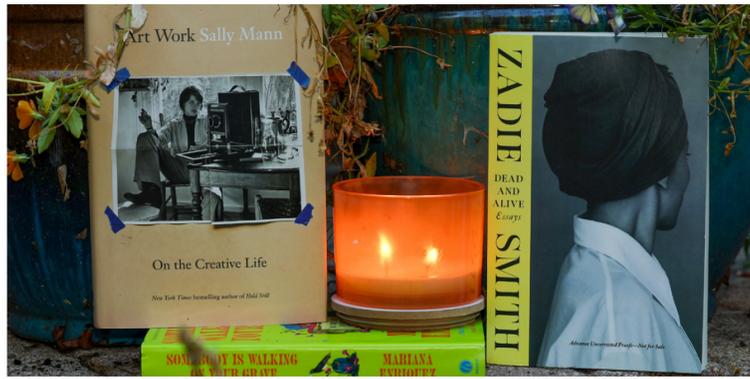


# A GREAT SEASON FOR BOOKS

Your reading list should expect company, regardless of whether you like mysteries or harrowing memoirs. Fall is a cornucopia. **A+E**



STACEY WESCOTT/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

**LIFE+TRAVEL**

## Not *that* magic school

The Junior Society at the Academy of Magical Arts in Los Angeles is home to young magicians from around the world who are passionate about their craft.

**REAL ESTATE**

## The games we play

Real estate has long been embedded into play, but now games like Monopoly and Life have taken on new meaning. They can teach us about real-life ownership.

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# Chicago Tribune



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SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2025

BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

## Ill. carbon capture project raises fears

Proximity to aquifer has some worried about water contamination

By Lily Carey  
Chicago Tribune

A little over three years ago, a representative from ethanol manufacturer One Earth Energy knocked on Sally Lasser's door.

The representative, who Lasser said was "a dear neighbor," told her his company was working on a new project to cut down its carbon footprint and handed her a yellow envelope, containing information about a complex technology called carbon capture and sequestration.

In the manufacturing process, carbon dioxide is filtered out of the air, converted into its liquid form, transported offsite via pipelines, and then stored nearly a mile underground.

"At first, I thought nothing of it," said Lasser, who owns a farm just outside Gibson City in central Illinois. "I read it. I didn't understand it. I put it aside."

Carbon capture isn't new, but in recent years it's been gaining popularity among fuel manufacturers and policymakers. Producing natural gas, oil or ethanol typically leads to a lot of carbon emissions, so companies such as ExxonMobil, Shell and Chevron see carbon capture as a way to lessen their environmental impact without significantly changing the way they make their fuel.

But if carbon dioxide leaks out of an underground well or an above-ground pipeline, it could be dangerous to humans, and companies pursuing carbon capture haven't always reported leaks. One Earth is looking to inject its CO2 just outside the borders of the Mahomet Aquifer, the main source of water for over 800,000 central Illinoisans in 14 counties.

Though leaks are extremely rare, some people, including Lasser, are afraid of their groundwater being contaminated — and afraid of trusting ethanol companies to keep that water safe.

Turn to Project, Page 14



Lina Alvarez, a retired U.S. Army sergeant first class, reacts to the support of a passing motorist as she protests in front of the main gate at Naval Station Great Lakes on Wednesday in North Chicago. During her 21 years of active duty, she was deployed four times to the Middle East. With the expanded rights of immigration agents, Alvarez is asking, "Why should I have to prove I'm American?" STACEY WESCOTT/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

# Immigration 'blitz' has suburbs pushing back

Trump's enforcement threats spark protests outside hotels and a naval base

By Jonathan Bullington and Robert McCoppin  
Chicago Tribune

She got to the base's main gate at 6:30 a.m. Wednesday, dressed in her Army boots and a red and black dress adorned with embroidered flowers, one of two identical dresses she and her daughter received from her aunt on a family trip to Guadalajara.

The boots, she said, were for confidence, the dress to symbolize her Mexican heritage.

Lina Alvarez spearheaded a protest outside Naval Station Great Lakes on Sept. 6 that drew

**IN CHICAGOLAND:** Outside ICE facility, allies of detained day laborer call for his release. **Page 3**

■ Elgin council to adopt resolution demanding ICE agents be unmasked. **Page 3**

■ Flower vendor arrested at launch of "Operation Midway Blitz" deported to Mexico. **Page 10**

hundreds of people opposed to its use as a base of operations for President Donald Trump's planned immigration "blitz" on Chicago.

Four days later, the 42-year-old retired U.S. Army sergeant

first class returned to the North Chicago base alone, carrying two flags — American and Mexican — bound together as one and a poster board on which she wrote in green marker:

*IMAGINE  
4 deployments  
IEDs  
Small arms fire  
Indirect fire  
Soldier's suicide  
PTSD*

*But I must prove I'm American when they ask?*

"I came here to be a voice for people who are too scared to come out here," Alvarez said.

"I came here to try to make the world a little bit safer for my daughter. I came here because last Saturday was the first time I felt a little bit of hope."

While the Trump administration has singled out Chicago for immigration sweeps this month — dubbed "Operation Midway Blitz" — and a possible National Guard deployment aimed, he's said, at curbing the city's endemic crime, those threats have stirred considerable pushback from residents and leaders across the suburbs who have orga-

Turn to Protests, Page 4

## Complaints in limbo after closure of civil rights office



Mollie McGuire and her son spend time together at their home in Chicago after school on Sept. 5. McGuire's son experienced anxiety attacks at his former school and was diagnosed with autism, but school officials repeatedly denied him access to an Individualized Education Plan. **TERRENCE ANTONIO JAMES/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Dept. of Education redirected Midwest cases to Denver office

By Kate Armanini  
Chicago Tribune

Some days, Mollie McGuire wondered if her then 7-year-old son was dying.

The wide-eyed boy, who once raced off to school, came home from class and hid in his room. He barely spoke to his parents. For months, he ate only a handful of select foods and would experience sudden onsets of anxiety, sobbing and gasping for air.

Staff at James Otis Elementary School in West Town struggled to navigate his frequent panic attacks, according to records reviewed by the Tribune.

After her son was repeatedly denied an Individualized Education Plan — a legal document that would provide him access

to special education resources — McGuire said she filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

She was scheduled to meet with an OCR attorney in January. Then President Donald Trump was inaugurated, and the meeting never came.

Under the direction of Trump officials, work on complaints effectively ground to a halt. By March, the Department of Education's civil rights office in Chicago was among seven regional branches abruptly closed — part of a sprawling push to dismantle the agency.

The shutdown was swift, and the fallout staggering. Midwest cases were redirected to the agency's Denver office, where just over a dozen investigative attorneys were soon stacked with more than 4,200 cases,

Turn to Closure, Page 2

**INSIDE**



ARMANDO L. SANCHEZ/TRIBUNE

## Johnson's return to Detroit the storyline

The Bears and Lions renew their rivalry Sunday, and the coaching change is sure to dominate the narrative. **Chicago Sports**

## Health insurance subsidies in peril

There's bipartisan support for extending tax credits, but they may expire as GOP, Democrats clash over how to do it. **Nation & World**



# UK travel still carrying Brexit baggage



**Rick Steves**

It's been nine years since Brexit, when the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. That decision sent shockwaves across Europe, and everyone — from pundits to economists to pub regulars — loved making predictions about the impact it would have. It took years to sort out the details, but now that the dust has settled, the consequences of the referendum are becoming clear, including the ways Brexit affects travelers.

On my recent trip to England, I chatted with B&B owners, tour guides, restaurant workers, barflies, taxi drivers and museum docents — from bustling London to sleepy Ironbridge Gorge — asking how they felt Brexit has affected tourism. Here's what I learned.

First of all, Britain remains a rewarding, multifaceted destination. But compared to pre-Brexit times, visitors should generally expect longer lines, higher prices and reduced hours at sights. Some of these headaches are the result of global factors, including lingering disruption from COVID-19 and skyrocketing inflation. But many locals explained that in the U.K., they've been exacerbated by Brexit.

The impact of Brexit is apparent as soon as you land. At the U.K. immigration checkpoint, there's no longer a "fast lane" for European passport holders — meaning EU citizens now queue up with everyone else. This means longer lines.

Brexit has also changed the face of who's working behind the counter at many hotels, restaurants, shops and other businesses.



Brexit hasn't ruined your trip to the United Kingdom, but it has added some wrinkles. **DOMINIC ARIZONA BONUCCELLI**

For decades, the British hospitality scene was fueled by young Europeans, especially from Central and Eastern Europe, who eyed the U.K. as a great spot to hold a summer job while brushing up on their English. Poles, Czechs and Estonians checked you into your room and pulled pints in the local pub.

But now, since EU citizens need a visa to live and work in Britain, many are opting to take that summer job in Paris or Berlin instead. In their place, businesses are hiring workers from countries like India and Taiwan — because the U.K.'s Commonwealth ties and mobility schemes make it easier for their citizens to be employed. With an unpredicted twist, for a referendum that promised to "make Britain British again," an international

workforce remains ... only the nationalities have changed.

Big cities like London still attract these workers. But the countryside is getting hammered. "We simply can't get staff," said the owner of a Yorkshire B&B I've long recommended. "We used to get a lot of Romanians who liked the idea of spending a summer surrounded by York's history. Not anymore." So B&Bs are either closing altogether or trying to get by with a shoe-string staff.

When sightseeing, you'll notice how this staffing shortage extends to the U.K.'s major attractions. Britain's museums rely on international workers to help get through peak season. But these jobs often pay less than hotels and are therefore not as desirable

... so the pickings are even slimmer. As a result, opening hours are slimmer, too.

"Windsor Castle and Hampton Court Palace are now closed on Mondays and Tuesdays," explains Tom Hooper, a long-established English guide. "Even the British Museum shuts at 5 p.m. now."

Shorter hours mean fewer tourists, which leads to less income — so the staffing pinch becomes a financial squeeze for Britain's great sights, too.

After a busy day of sightseeing, Brexit will follow you to dinner. Like tourist attractions, many eateries are shortening their hours. For example, I discovered that a favorite restaurant I recommend in Warwick — which used to be open lunch and dinner — can no longer staff lunch. So, dinner it is.

And that dinner is more expensive. "Now that we're not an EU country, we pay non-EU tariffs for EU goods," Tom told me. "Your local fish and chips might still cost roughly the same. But if you want Spanish ham, Italian wine or French cheese, it'll be more."

Finally, if you're planning to take home a souvenir from your trip, you'll likely pay more for that, too. Before Brexit, non-EU visitors (including Americans) could get a VAT refund — effectively a 20% discount — on eligible souvenirs bought in the U.K. But that was an EU perk. Now, it's full price for your British scarf or soccer jersey.

In short, Brexit hasn't "ruined" traveling in Britain — but it has added some wrinkles. Chatting with

locals, I heard many takes. Some blame the referendum for everything, while others point to the role played by new technologies, global trends and the pandemic.

Of course, the truth is complicated, and each of these has contributed in its own way. But regardless of whom I spoke to — whether they voted to "remain" or to "leave" — most agree on one thing: "It's not the Brexit we thought we'd be getting."

*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](http://ricksteves.com), email him at [rick@ricksteves.com](mailto:rick@ricksteves.com) or follow his blog on Facebook.*

## CELEBRITY TRAVEL

### Singer inspired by travel, touring

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

Singer-songwriter Maia Sharp remembers what it was like when she was a struggling musician trying to get gigs. "It was on a Monday night at 10 p.m. at Molly Malone's Irish Pub in Los Angeles," Sharp said. "The booker told me I needed to bring 50 people to get called back. I brought 51."

These days, the artist — who has also written songs for the likes of Cher, Trisha Yearwood, Bonnie Raitt — has a loyal following. The Nashville resident's latest album, "Tomboy," took shape in her home studio.

"One song, 'Only Lucky,' was inspired by the road, but I wrote it at home," she said. "I may have made some tweaks to 'Tomboy' during one of the long drives, but generally I don't write much on the road."

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

**Q: What do you do to maintain your health while touring on the road?**

**A:** I bring a little cooler bag with me and hit a Trader Joe's or (someplace) similar when I roll into the first town of the tour. I stock up on as many healthy sandwiches, salads and snacks as I can hold and I always make sure I have a little fridge in the (hotel) room. If the meals provided or nearby restaurants are going to make me feel terrible after the show, I go to the cooler bag instead. It's kind of like camping, but then I get a real bed.

**Q: What is your bucket-list**



"Tomboy" singer-songwriter Maia Sharp says vacationing near mountains is perfect for her. **EMMA-LEE PHOTOGRAPHY**

**venue that you have yet to perform in?**

**A:** Red Rocks. I got to open for Art Garfunkel at Royal Albert Hall and Bonnie Raitt at the Ryman Auditorium, but Red Rocks is still to be checked off.

**Q: Do you have free time built into your tours to explore the cities you're in?**

**A:** I was just talking to my friend (the musician) Kim Richey about this. She does always build in days off and planned activities. I can never bring myself to do that even though I see the value in it. I get antsy on days off, but I also look back now and realize I drove by and through some really cool places that I didn't let myself get to know.

**Q: Does the music you hear in a particular city or country inspire your work?**

**A:** The music that's getting made in Nashville definitely helped draw me out of Los Angeles six years ago. You don't have to spend much time here to realize it's not just country. Everyone in my writer and artist community is making their own recipe of Americana-rock-soul-jazz and a little country, but it's mostly impossible to categorize and it's unapologetic about that, which I love.

**Q: What is your favorite vacation destination?**

**A:** Kauai, Hawaii. As of the last time I was there, it had everything I look for in an

escape — tropical climate, mountains, water and places you can still go that have no crowds or lines.

**Q: What was a trip as a child that stands out?**

**A:** Yosemite National Park, where we stayed at the Ahwahnee Hotel. It felt so rustic chic. I loved it. I was maybe 10 years old and I already knew by then that the mountains are my happy place.

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

**A:** Alaska. I've been to every other state and I would love to see a glacier before they're all gone.

**Q: What is your best and/or worst vacation memory?**

**A:** They may have been on the same trip. The last vacation was with a group of friends to hike in and camp in the mountains near Sparta, Tennessee. The hike through the trees and up the mountain to the campsite was beautiful and energizing. We swam in the lake and talked about things we don't usually have the time to get to in our everyday lives and then I had what was possibly the worst night of sleep I've ever had. But then in the morning, we had campfire coffee and a swim in the creek and a beautiful hike back. So that vacation covered all the bases.

For more from the reporter, visit [www.jaehakim.com](http://www.jaehakim.com).

## TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

### Booking.com cancels hotel, vows refund, then goes mum

By **Christopher Elliott** | King Features Syndicate

I reserved a hotel on Australia's Gold Coast through Booking.com for a family reunion, but they canceled my reservation because of an overbooking.

Booking.com promised to refund the difference if I rebooked a pricier room, so I paid an extra \$655.

After months of unanswered emails and failed phone calls, I still hadn't received the money.

Booking.com's customer service has gone silent, and I can't reach anyone.

What should I do to hold them accountable? — *Frances Dooley, Jannali, Australia*

**A:** Booking.com should have honored its promise to refund the \$655 price difference immediately. Under Australian Consumer Law, businesses must fulfill guarantees that are made to customers. The company's own policies also say it will cover costs if it cancels a reservation. But most importantly, you had Booking.com's promise in writing. (Nice job in securing this promise, by the way.)

You did everything correctly. You kept detailed records and followed up repeatedly. Always save correspondence like emails and screenshots — they're critical evidence. If a company ignores you, escalate your case to executives. I publish key contacts for Booking.com on my consumer advocacy site, [elliott.org](http://elliott.org).

It's not clear why Booking.com ghosted you, but this kind of thing is becoming more common. A company will make a promise, then go silent, pretending it never had the conversation. And this

leaves you in a difficult position. You can drop the matter, or you can take it to court.

But did Booking.com really promise you a refund? I reviewed the paper trail, and it looks like the company used a few weasel words in its "promise."

A representative told you: "If you have any additional charges at the new place, please send us an invoice after your stay so we can look into a refund for you. We may need to share this with the accommodation in order to confirm your claim."

This is a half-hearted promise. My recommendation would have been to seek clarification from Booking.com before proceeding with the new reservation. You want to make sure that you're covered. If not, you can always look for less costly accommodations.

In some consumer disputes, you can also file a credit card chargeback, but not in this case since Booking.com already refunded your first hotel. It knows

that your only option is to take it to court, and for \$655, I think the company knows that you're unlikely to do this.

A win for Booking.com? Not necessarily. You applied polite and persistent pressure. I see that you called Booking.com, which was minimally effective. Writing is always better because you have a paper trail and proof that you tried to resolve this.

Remember, silence from customer service isn't the end. It's just time to level up. I reached out to Booking.com. A representative confirmed that they'd "investigated" your complaint but would not elaborate on what went wrong. Booking.com issued a full refund of the extra \$655 you had to pay. Now this is what I call a win!

*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](http://elliott.org/help) or [chris@elliott.org](mailto:chris@elliott.org).*