

CELEBRITY TRAVEL

Cellist dreams of Radio City gig

By Jae-Ha Kim
Tribune Content Agency

For cellist Derek Stein, touring is a part of his life as a member of Vitamin String Quartet. But one of his fondest memories is of traveling with his grandfather many years ago.

"My maternal grandfather took me to Germany the summer between junior and senior year of high school," Stein said in an interview from Los Angeles. "It was my first time out of the (United) States and an amazing experience. We went there specifically to look for a cello that he would purchase for me. We went all around the German countryside visiting different string shops and looking at the instruments that they had for sale. I was able to sit in on a couple rehearsals for a little community orchestra in one of the villages that we stayed in for a couple of days."

The popular quartet, now on tour, has had its music featured on the Netflix series "Bridgerton," and its repertoire includes classical covers of songs by artists such as Taylor Swift, Billie Eilish, BTS, Frank Ocean, Prince and Blackpink.

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

Q: What is your bucket-list venue that you have yet to perform in?

A: Radio City Music Hall in New York City. I haven't seen any concerts or productions at Radio City Music Hall. I just think it



Leah Zeger, from left, Tom Lea, Rachel Grace and Derek Stein are members of Vitamin String Quartet. NICK FANCHER

would be a big milestone if VSQ performed there and sold the place out!

Q: What do you remember about your first professional gig?

A: I don't know that I could pinpoint my first professional gig, but my first gig after finishing grad school was performing in a brand-new opera composed by LA composer Veronika Krausas produced by what would become the LA experimental opera company, The Industry.

Q: Have you worked on any songs while you were on the road?

A: I have spent many hours practicing in hotels but never in airports or the bus.

Q: Do you have any free time built into your tours to go sightseeing?

A: Thankfully, we do have some days off scheduled on our tours, which we try to use to explore whatever city we (are) in.

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

A: Maintain a healthy sleep schedule, try to eat well as often as possible and walk around as much as possible.

Q: Do you have any trips planned?

A: Just the upcoming VSQ tour to Europe and the States.

Q: What is your favorite vacation destination?

A: I enjoy Santa Barbara. It's close and great for a quick getaway.

Q: If you've ever gone away for the holidays, which was the best trip?

A: Christmas in New York in 2016. My sister was living in the city at the time. I was there with my mother and her fiance to spend the holiday with family.

Q: What are your five favorite cities?

A: Los Angeles, New York, London, Manchester, Reykjavik.

Q: How do you separate work from vacation trips?

A: Vacation trips are rare for me. I attempt to include some vacation in my work trips.

Q: What is your guilty pleasure when you're on the road?

A: Breakfast at greasy diners!

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

A: Take in as much as possible.

Q: Food truck or fine dining?

A: Fine dining. I like the experience, ambiance and service.

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

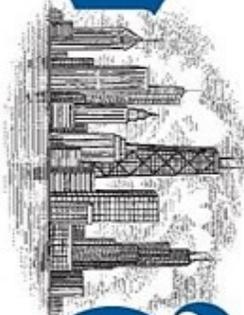


QUESTIONS? CALL 1-800-TRIBUNE

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2025

BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

Chicago Tribune



WINNER OF 28 PULITZER PRIZES FOR EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM