

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD



Matt Smith and Abby Altman on Three Mile Island on Lake Winnepesaukee.

THE VIP LOUNGE | MATT SMITH

Club Passim’s managing director is about to hit the airwaves and grew up hitting the road

Anyone who’s anyone in the New England music scene knows Matt Smith, longtime managing director of Club Passim. When he’s not at the iconic Cambridge music venue, he can be found at other establishments catching live music. “I’ve been around music my whole life, and one of my passions is developing new talent and finding stage time for new talent,” Smith said. “There’s nothing like putting together an artist and an audience and seeing that magic happen.” Smith, 51, said he “cannot wait” for live music to return to his and other venues, but in the meantime, he’s making sure that Club Passim offers nightly live music. He has also picked up a new part-time gig: host of MVYRadio’s “The Local Music Café,” which airs at 9 p.m. on Tuesdays (and rebroadcasts at 8 p.m. on Sundays). Smith, who is on the board of Folk Alliance International and teaches at Berklee College of Music (online), is taking over at the Martha’s Vineyard-based radio station for longtime host Alison Hammer. “There is so much about the New England music scene — and the different pockets of it — that I love,” Smith said. “So when [the folks at MVYRadio] reached out to me, I was very excited

about the prospect of it and having another way of getting the word about these great artists out into the world.” We caught up with the Marshfield native, who lives in Somerville, to talk about all things travel.

Favorite vacation destination?
I love going to Three Mile Island on Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire. During most years I work there for a week in the spring at the Miles of Music Camp — but then my partner and I like to go in the fall and just unplug and relax.

Favorite food or drink while vacationing?
Wherever I go I do like to get a bit of the local flavor. Not the touristy spots, but the places where the locals go.

Where would you like to travel to but haven’t?
So many places. Top three in my mind — today — are Sweden, Scotland, and Australia. There’s so much great music from those places and I would love to check out the local venues.

One item you can’t leave home without when traveling?
Like so many of us, the iPhone is key. It is

my external brain that keeps travel plans in documents in one place so I don’t have to worry about it. Also, podcasts. But tethered to that iPhone is an external charging battery in case I’m without power for a while.

Aisle or window?
Aisle. Makes it easier to get up and around and stretch when I need to.

Favorite childhood travel memory?
So many. We’d go on little day or weekend trips. All drivable [and] all over the Northeast — some nature, some just fun. We used to have a yearly summer trip to Lincoln Park in Dartmouth, and that was always something I looked forward to.

Guilty pleasure when traveling?
I don’t believe in guilty pleasures. I’ll take pride in any of the pleasures of traveling. Whether it is podcast binging while en route or missing the “must see” things to just have some relaxing time. No guilt!

Best travel tip?
Pack the day before. That way you’ve got 24 hours to remember all of the things you inevitably forget.

JULIET PENNINGTON

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

Can she get a refund if she cancels her passport application?

By Christopher Elliott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Q. I lost my passport recently. I sent an application for a passport renewal to the US Department of State and paid \$116. Yesterday, I got a letter back saying that I already had a passport (which I found in the meantime) but that they have already cashed my check.
When I contacted their office, a representative told me they would refund the money. Now they are saying they won’t refund me. How can they keep my money if I didn’t need to renew?

WENDY TAYLOR,
Park Ridge, Ill.

A. When you lose your passport, you have to report it as lost or stolen to the State Department (travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports.html). You can’t just apply for a new one. When you do that, the State Department checks to see if you have an active passport. If you do, it sends your application back. But the government also cashes your check and gets to keep your money.

Why? According to Title 22 of the Code of Federal Regulations 51.51 and 51.55, passport execution fees are nonrefundable. It doesn’t matter what an official representative told you; the State Department is going to keep your money. But something about your case wasn’t right. No, it’s not that the government can take your money and give you nothing in return (I pay my taxes, so I know what that feels like). It’s that someone told you that you could get a refund but was wrong.

I run into this issue all the time. Travel companies

and government agencies expect consumers to have read every contract and regulation, which is unreasonable. I checked the State Department website, and I can see how you might think you can order up a new passport and that the government would automatically invalidate your old one. Unfortunately, that’s not how it works. The burden should be on the State Department to clearly state the need to first report your passport as lost or stolen before applying for a replacement.

Still, if you want to be an informed consumer, you should read the fine print carefully. That’s especially true when you’re dealing with a large bureaucracy like the federal government. Leave nothing to chance. You rushed through the process of applying for a replacement passport before ensuring that your passport was indeed lost.

I checked with the State Department. I’m afraid you won’t be getting a refund. But the State Department did the next

Passport execution fees are nonrefundable.

best thing, extending your passport by three years. It’s not the solution you wanted, but at least you’ll get something for your money. My advice? Keep that passport in a safe place.

If you need help with a coronavirus-related refund, please contact me. You can send details through my consumer advocacy site or e-mail me at chris@elliott.org.

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.

HERE

BLACK HISTORY TOUR IN RHODE ISLAND

Take a self-guided tour that explores Providence’s Black history from the early days of the Rhode Island colony to today. The city’s Early Black History Walking Tour provides insight into the city’s role in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, racially motivated riots, and the contributions of local Black farmers and other residents. The tour takes you to the North Burial Ground where you’ll find the tombstone of Patience Borden, who donated all of her money in 1811 “to the relief of poor people of color”; the Snowtown Riot Plaque, which recalls the 19th-century riots in which white mobs destroyed Black-owned homes and businesses; and the Old Brick School House, a reminder of the days of segregation in schools. Also stop at the Mount Hope Sharing Garden, a community garden in a historically Black neighborhood, to honor the contributions of the state’s Black farmers. Download a printable map from the Go Providence website. www.go-providence.com

BOSTON’S SCIENCE MUSEUM REOPENS

Discover the Arctic in a new permanent exhibit, revisit “The Science Behind Pixar,” and learn about trains at the Museum of Science, Boston, which just reopened to the public. After a two-month closure, the museum has opened its doors to visitors, offering timed tickets to exhibit halls and theaters. In the museum’s newest exhibit, “Arctic Adventure: Exploring With Technology,” see a 20-foot wall of ice and interact with the tools and technol-



ogies researchers use to understand human impact on the Earth’s climate and landscapes. Also enjoy the Pixar exhibit, which has 50 interactive elements that teach you about the filmmaking process, and a train exhibit that showcases powered model trains of all sizes. Tickets free for under 3 to \$29 for 12 and older. 617-723-2500, www.mos.org

THERE

ENJOY A WOMEN’S WELLNESS RETREAT

This June, head to a 2,700-acre historic ranch on Oahu’s North Shore for a new Women’s Wellness Retreat. The Coconut Traveler, one of the island’s luxury tour operators, launches Journeys of Renewal and Transformation June 19-25 for up to 10 participants. Mornings start with guided meditation, mindfulness practices led by a specialist from the University of Hawaii, and yoga. Then enjoy a variety of guided activities including Shirin-Yoku (forest bathing); yoga at a private lake; hiking on ranch trails to a waterfall; and a paddle or kayak to an island for swim-

ming and hiking. For the adventurous, choose from several add-on activities, such as skydiving, a circle-island helicopter tour, or swimming with sharks with a renowned conservationist. Also learn about Hawaiian cultural and medical practices, including the practice of forgiveness and traditional methods for treating, healing, or curing ailments and injuries. Rates start at \$11,295 per person, which includes accommodations, meals, and activities. www.thecoconuttraveler.com

DINE IN A GONDOLA OR YURT

Heading to Colorado ski country this year? You can still eat “out” at many ski areas thanks to creative new dining op-

tions. Mountain Village near Telluride has opened 20 dining cabins made from refurbished gondola cars (complete with heating and ventilation systems) and 20-foot yurts and pavilions, while Mountain Tap Brewery in Steamboat Springs offers private dining in three heated bright-purple gondola cars. Aurum Food & Wine has also set up private yurts outside its restaurants in Breckenridge and Steamboat Springs; enjoy duck confit and a Manhattan with up to seven other friends in one of these cozy, heated yurts. Bin 707 Foodbar in Grand Junction (near Powderhorn Resort) set up small greenhouses with heat lamps to accommodate private parties. Other ski towns, such as Vail, have added outdoor fire pits, warming igloos, or heated outdoor tents so you can enjoy après outside with friends. www.colorado.com

EVERYWHERE

SLEEP WELL ON THE ROAD

Finding a comfy travel pillow for your adventures can prove challenging. HEST’s new pillow works well whether you’re going car camping, on a long-haul flight, or to a vacation cottage or hotel. The pillow, made of temperature-regulated memory foam and polyester, packs down and stores in an attached zippered stuff sack but springs back to a traditional rectangular pillow shape when unpacked. The memory foam pillow cradles your head and makes for a great night sleep. It measures 22-by-15-by-8

inches when unfolded and packs down to 14-by-9-by-7 inches so you can toss it in a suitcase or the car without taking up precious space. The removable dirt- and water-resistant cover can be machine washed. \$79. hest.com

A VERSATILE LAPTOP YOU’LL LOVE

Computers blend work and life more than ever these days, meaning one device that can handle multiple demands works best. Lenovo’s new Yoga 9i 14-inch laptop proves robust enough to tackle work needs while offering features you’ll appreciate for home school, travel, or keeping entertained. The Yoga 9i has a fingerprint reader for quick and easy log-in, a night light to dim the display (great for planes or working at night), built-in Alexa for voice commands, and a nesting pen that works well on the responsive touchscreen. It offers stunning screen resolution (choose from 1920x1080 or 4k) and a fast 11th Generation Intel Core i7 processor. The standard model comes with 16GB of RAM (plenty for multitasking), Windows 10 Home or Pro operating system, and a 512GB solid state hard drive. The 720-pixel high-definition camera works great for video calls, but you’ll really appreciate the rotating soundbar, which spans the length of the laptop and distributes more even sound when you’re enjoying music or movies. Add to that Thunderbolt 4 USB ports for high-speed data transfer, Wi-Fi 6 capability, and a battery that lasts up to 15 hours. My favorite feature: The versatile laptop can be configured in laptop, tent, or tablet mode — perfect for travel. Prices start at \$1,109.99. www.lenovo.com

KARI BODNARCHUK

