



June 30, 2015

Fellow Traveler,

London-- I'm aware from news reports that **never in history have there been so many refugees fleeing their homelands due to war, famine, and dictators.**

The extraordinary lengths to which desperate people will go to avoid their hells was brought home to me during [a strike by ferry workers](#) in France and then news of the latest body to fall from the sky onto a rooftop in Richmond, a neighborhood adjacent to Barnes where I stay with my daughter and her family when I'm here in London.



Earlier this month, stories of mostly North African refugees, who huddle at the French border town of Calais, made the news when traffic backed up at the Channel tunnel due to the stoppage of those ferries. **Emboldened by the confusion and slow-moving vehicles, refugees hid above the axles of trucks and in the undercarriages of Eurostar trains headed to England.** Some die in their quest to reach England, but

most are willing to run the gauntlet of immigration inspectors and, worse, to accept the danger of being run over should they fall off the trucks or trains to which they cling.

The situation grew so serious that the deputy mayor of Calais reiterated his call for the English border to be moved to Calais. That would make UK immigration officials responsible for the migrants waiting there to slip through the Channel to England where jobs are perceived to be more plentiful.

But every couple of years, refugees make even more dramatic attempts to reach the UK by hiding in the undercarriages of commercial jets. Which is what [two men did on a British Airways flight](#) from Johannesburg to London earlier this month.

Richmond and another close-by neighborhood, Mortlake, are in the flight path of planes landing at Heathrow. **And when the landing gear of the BA flight was lowered, one of the two men fell to his death in Richmond.** The other managed to survive the landing but is in critical condition in the hospital. In 2012, an Angolan man fell on to a street in Mortlake, and sadly, locals immediately knew why.

Experts say two-thirds of men (it always seems to be men) who attempt such dangerous maneuvers die from exposure to the thin, cold air five miles above the earth. A week after the 2012 incident involving the stowaway who fell into Mortlake, a body was found in the landing gear of a British Airways jet parked at Heathrow. And in February 2014, a man's body was discovered in the wheel well of

an South African Airlines plane parked at Washington's Dulles airport.

These tragic incidents make me mindful of one of the freedoms we don't often think about when we celebrate July 4th in the United States--the freedom to travel. It's easy to forget that it's not a right or luxury afforded everyone. A North Korean or Burmese citizen for example, will find it difficult to leave the country. Even [women in Saudi Arabia must obtain permission](#) from their male guardian, or *Wali*, to travel if they're under age 45.

With few exceptions, Americans can travel just about anywhere in the world.

Something to think about over the upcoming holiday weekend.

--Rudy

PS: If you'd like to get involved with helping refugees, reach out to the [American Refugee Committee](#) headquartered in Minneapolis.

Odd lots . . .

Quick stuff you need to know. Four questions . . .

■ **Where should you visit now for bargains?** South Korea? Yes. (MERS is mostly confined to hospital personnel.) Egypt? Yes. Greece? Yes. (Take cash as ATMs may not dispense much local currency.) Tunisia? No. (Though it breaks my heart to have to say that) . . .

■ **When is big, too big?** Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines recently slid its newest cruise ship, ["Harmony of the Seas,"](#) into the water for testing. When it goes into service next May, it'll be **the world's largest cruise ship with accommodations for 6,360 passengers and a crew of 2,100.**



It's 164 feet longer than the Eiffel Tower laid sideways. To help passengers navigate, the ship is divided into "neighborhoods" whose architecture should help orient folks: "Central Park," "Boardwalk," "the Royal Promenade," "Sports Zone," "Youth Zone," and others. There are 20 dining options, multi-story water slides, two rock-climbing walls, an ice skating rink, a zip line, and a full-size basketball court. I await your reviews . . .

■ **Will this scam never die?** It was at least five years ago that I first opened an email from a person whose name I recognized pleading that he was in Europe where he'd had his wallet and passport stolen. **He couldn't pay for his hotel and needed funds to get a new passport; he asked me to wire him \$2,500.** Turns out my friend wasn't in Europe. I thought that scam had played out, but I got another one a couple of weeks ago. The subject line of the email was "Travel Problem," and the full name of a buddy, Eric, was in the "sent by" line. Eric apologized for not telling me he'd taken a trip to the Philippines, but he said he'd been mugged in a Manila alley and needed \$2,250 urgently. He said unfortunately he couldn't be reached by phone. Eric wasn't in Manila, he wasn't desperate, and neither will your "friend" be who might send you a similar email . . .

■ **No roaming charges in Europe?** Yes, if you're using a European smartphone after June 2017. The European Union proposes to end all roaming charges in the EU's 28 member states. Roaming charges are already low compared to what most Americans pay using US-based mobile phones to call home from Europe. Currently roaming charges within Europe are capped at 30 cents per minute for calls. **By this time next year, the cap will be seven cents.** While rates among US carriers have been going down for calls to and from abroad, they still aren't low enough compared to foreign competition.

Short Travel Takes . . .

■ **Taking a selfie to whole, new heights:** Two Aerolineas Argentinas pilots have been fired after letting model [Vicki Xipolitakis](#) help fly a passenger plane during takeoff. While filming a selfie video of it that captured her saying, "I'm going to accelerate and take off!" The pilots joked that since the airline is state owned, she was entitled to join in flying the aircraft. Except international rules forbid an unauthorized person in a cockpit. God help us.



■ **"Thanks, I'll have another!"** I've always had mixed feelings about all-inclusive resorts, fearing the all-you-can-eat-and-drink offer means all the mediocre food and drink you want. But *Conde Nast Traveler's* readers says **there are some adult-only all-inclusives worth considering**, and [here's](#) the magazine's slide show of contenders . . .

■ **United Airlines bids adieu to JFK:** United threw in the towel as far as competing with Delta and American at New York's JFK airport is concerned. Effective Oct. 25th, United will consolidate flights at Newark's airport where it dominates the market. This presents an opportunity if you're looking for an award ticket on United between New York and LA or SF. **There's an unusually large number of award seats available on United's flat-bed, trans-con flights out of Newark for the fall**, according to Scott Grimmer's [MileValue.com posting](#). How much does United "own" Newark? For the year ending last February, United flew more than 24 million passengers out of Newark; in second place was Delta with only 1.7 million, and JetBlue followed with 1.5 million . . .

■ **A Blue Zone to call your own:** A few years ago, *National Geographic* writer and explorer [Dan Buettner](#) identified five regions in the world where people not only live



the longest but also have a better quality of life through old age. He dubbed them "Blue Zones," and his best-selling books, [Blue Zones](#) and [The Blue Zones Solutions](#), launched a nationwide effort to change Americans' view of living healthier by making minor changes in environment and lifestyle. You can visit a Blue Zone, the Greek island (pictured) of Ikaria, through two, Blue

Zones-curated tours Oct 4-10 and Oct 18-24. Details [here](#).

■ **Hilton Honors participants can pick up double United Airlines FF miles** when staying in any Hilton Portfolio hotel or resort until the end of August. Yes, you must pre-register to be eligible. [Here](#). **And for American Airlines frequent flyers, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts offer double American miles** for stays through Sept. 20th. Details [here](#).

■ **Cathay Pacific offers up to 24% off biz-class fares to Asia and Australia** if you buy your ticket 90 days in advance of travel and purchase by Sept. 30th. Sample fares for mid-week travel: \$5,222 to Thailand; \$5,262 to Tokyo; \$5,216 to Shanghai, Beijing, and elsewhere in China. Here's a more thorough [list](#). Maximum stay is one month . . .

■ **United offers 20%-25% discount on award tix to Hawaii:** As long as you're willing to travel on a Mon, Tues, Wed, or Thursday, United is discounting the number of award miles you have to cash in for a round-trip ticket to Hawaii from mainland US and Canada. The discount is 20% for MileagePlus members, another 5% if you're a MileagePlus Premier member *and* hold a United, Chase-issued credit card. That means a round-trip, "saver" award that usually requires 45,000 miles is only 33,750 miles at the 25% discount, 36,000 miles at the 20% discount. **Travel is good between Aug. 8th and Dec. 15th, but you must book by July 6th.** There are some black-out dates, such as around Thanksgiving, so check out the details [here](#).

■ **It was a dark and stormy night: But it was hail that could well of doomed a Delta 747 flying from Detroit to Seoul, Korea.** The news is just beginning to reach the States of the June 16th flight that landed safely in Seoul with holes in the plane's wings and tail and a destroyed nose. The 26-year-old plane is still on the ground in Seoul and may be declared a total loss. One passenger told the local press the pilot had asked Chinese air controllers for permission to go around the storm but never received clearance. Chatter on aviation chat boards question how the plane made it safely to ground, and these photos make me wonder, too.



Deals & More



The Perfect House Guest:
How to Behave So
You're Invited Back



All Hail the Blobfish!
World's Ugliest Fish To
Get London Cafe



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One of my favorite radio show guests is Charles MacPherson, operator of a [Toronto-based school](#) for hotel and personal butlers.

Each summer I invite him on my weekend [travel show](#) to advise on how to get invited back next summer by being a considerate house guest this summer.

--Arrive on a Friday afternoon, leave after Sunday lunch.

--Call ahead to see what you can bring to help your host or hostess.

--At least arrive with a potted plant or bottle of wine.

--Don't be a coach potato. Help with dishes, setting the table, etc.

--Don't monopolize the bathroom and leave it cleaner than you found it.

--Send a handwritten thank-you note with a gift such as an appropriate book. If you have young children, they might draw a picture of their holiday weekend for your hosts.

Check out [The Pocket Butler](#) for MacPherson's advice on manners and etiquette.

Two years ago, an Internet poll chose the deep-sea blobfish as the world's ugliest fish. Outraged, an entrepreneur known only as "Robbie" wants to educate the world about the noble blobfish so is **opening Blob Fish Cafe in East London next year.**

Three blobfish (Barry, Lorcan, and Lady Swift) will be in residence (though not on the menu), and, don't worry, the little fellas don't look as sad as the photo above. The mouth of a blobfish naturally droops at its sides.

What? Yes, of course you can be notified when the cafe opens! Just follow the [website](#) or @blobfish on Twitter.

They used to be called "hot-sheet" hotels, but now a number of **upscale hotels in major cities offer day rates for six or more hours** use of a room through a new app and website called [HotelsByDay](#).

Example: Check into the hip, Shade Hotel in the heart of Manhattan Beach, CA, (pictured above) at 9 am and check out by 7 pm for \$175. That'll allow you to change for the beach and then nap and shower before dinner at [Petros](#), the cool Greek restaurant just out the hotel's door.

First-time bookers who receive this newsletter receive a 10% discount at HotelsByDay by using code RMW10 through 9/29.

Looking overseas? Check out [Between 9 and 5](#) with similar, though slightly more downscale, offerings in 50 countries.

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