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ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT MATTERS

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This week's dream: Canoeing the Maine-Canada border

Americans don't often think about the U.S.-Canada border, but maybe we should, said Porter Fox in *The New York Times*. Known as the friendliest border in the world, it's also the longest between any two nations, and for hundreds of miles, "the best way to see it is from the water." I recently set off by canoe on a 4,000-mile journey, along the imaginary line, embarking from Calais, a small town in north-eastern Maine not far from where I grew up. When the border was established in 1783, rivers and lakes were North America's highways, so the line connected them, split them down the middle, and mandated they be shared. Traveling the eastern end of that line was spooky, though, because there were often no roads or houses. "It was the end of America, and the closer I got to it the more primal it became."

I was glad my canoe had a 5-hp outboard engine. Trappers and loggers once used



Straddling two countries: An angler on the St. Croix River

long cedar shafts to pole their way up the St. Croix River, but my paddle alone wasn't enough to overcome the winds and current as I started my 75-mile cruise north to the point where the wise men of 1783 first put a ruler to the page and linked two border waterways with a straight line—Maine's forehead. On my first overnight,

at a campsite a few feet from the water, it got so dark, I couldn't see my canoe just steps away. But then a full moon rose above the treetops on the far bank, and I watched an otter slip between my feet into the river.

On Spednic Lake, I nearly capsized in choppy 50-degree water. But I crossed the border about three dozen times without a person in sight, and I was glad to reach Forest City, where a warm bed was waiting for me at a fishing camp called Wheaton's Lodge, run by a reincarnation of Paul Bunyan.

When I mentioned how I hadn't seen any border patrol agents in my travels, he guaranteed the agency had never lost sight of me. "Cameras, drones, satellites, sensors, air surveillance," he said. "One way or another, they've got eyes on you." At Wheaton's Lodge (wheatonslodge.com), lakeside cottages cost \$163 a person.

Hotel of the week



A casita's pool and cabana

Islas Secas Reserve

The Gulf of Chiriquí, Panama

Some gorgeous resorts are going up along Panama's Pacific coast, said Nikki Ekstein in *Bloomberg.com*. Islas Secas, a standout named after its host archipelago, offers "the ultimate in luxurious isolation." Each of the resort's nine "impeccably designed" casitas has its own deck, outdoor shower, and plunge pool. Communal meals are served under a thatched-roof pavilion at the edge of the sea. For now, guests can swim, snorkel, dive, and fish, but soon, the resort will also offer science-based activities, including archaeological digs for pre-Columbian pottery. islassecas.com; from \$1,000 all-inclusive per person

Getting the flavor of...

The hottest small town in Texas

"There's this city in Texas everyone wants to move to," said Matt Meltzer in *Thrillist.com*. No, not Austin—San Marcos, a small Hill Country college town 30 miles down the road, where all the artists, musicians, and eccentrics seem to have headed after they got priced out of the state capital. Any day of the week, you can walk from bar to bar and find live reggae, blues, or country music "on par with what you'd see in Austin or Nashville." The barbecue is excellent, and with a cool, clear river that's fed by an underground spring, San Marcos also happens to be a top destination for "the ultimate summer pastime: floating downriver in a tube, holding a cold beer." From the college kids who congregate around floating coolers to the deeply tanned man named Sun God who dances in front of City Hall every Monday morning, "not a single person looks like they're having anything less than the best day of their lives."

Omaha's hippest neighborhood

The Blackstone District is "just about the coolest place in Nebraska's big city right now," said David Landsel in *Food & Wine*. There is, of course, plenty to see in Omaha, from the geodesic dome at the Doorly Zoo to the grand Joslyn Art Museum. Much hipper, though, is a stretch of Farnam Street that's "absolutely packed" with restaurants, bars, and cafés. Ansel's Pastrami & Bagels honors the neighborhood that claims to have invented the Reuben sandwich with "some of the best bagels and pastrami money can buy in the Central Time Zone." Coneflower Creamery offers "farm to cone" ice creams, including butter brickle, a local favorite for nearly a century. Scriptown Brewing Co. is a popular hangout with a back patio and tasty beers, while Stirnella is famous for rhubarb margaritas and other craft cocktails. At Early Bird, a cheerful brunch spot, there are no fewer than four different kinds of bacon—"get them all."

Last-minute travel deals

August in Paris

Rates at Parisian hotels drop in August, when the city empties out. In a bid to attract guests, the four-star Hotel Monte Cristo is offering three-night stays, including daily breakfast for two, for \$466. [Email reservations@hotelmontecristoparis.com](mailto:email_reservations@hotelmontecristoparis.com)

Georgia's slow days

The Barnsley Resort, a historic Georgia estate, is offering two nights for the price of one in August for Sunday through Thursday stays. Resort activities include horseback riding, golf, skeet shooting, and fly-fishing. Rooms start at \$339. barnsleyresort.com

The red rocks of Arizona

Kimpton's Amara Resort and Spa, nestled in Arizona's Oak Creek Canyon, is offering nearly half off on midweek stays through August. The "Escape the Heat" package starts at \$259 a night and includes yoga classes. amararesorts.com