

USA TODAY TRAVEL | 25 MUST-SEE CULTURAL MUSEUMS

GO ESCAPE

SUMMER 2019

Dive In

ENJOY CARIBBEAN'S
WARM WATERS
& SOFT SANDS

PLUS

SAVOR ICONIC
STATE CUISINE

WOODSTOCK'S
50TH JAM PARTY

COPTERS, CAVES,
CAMPS & CRUISES

FEATURED CONTRIBUTORS



A freelance writer for more than a decade, **Matt Alderton** specializes in business, culture, science, technology and travel. Originally from Denver, he now lives in Chicago with his partner, Jeff, and their Boston terrier puppy, Lucy, who accompanies him whenever possible on his adventures — whether to America's hottest suburbs (**page 54**), artsy cities in the South (**page 94**) or even Mexican wine country (**page 156**).



Cheryl Rodewig got her start in journalism more than 10 years ago shadowing soldiers during field training, where she learned the value of quick camera reflexes. Now, she's an award-winning feature writer, using her craft mostly for travel stories and the occasional Scrabble trouncing. She's always on the hunt for a nearby game café (**page 28**), her favorite new entertainment trend that combines food and fun.



Anna Katherine Clemmons is a freelance journalist, producer and media studies adjunct professor at the University of Virginia. A veteran writer for ESPN, she has published stories in *The New York Times*, *Glamour*, *Conde Nast Traveler* and *Sports Illustrated*. A longtime outdoors enthusiast and athlete, she was excited to learn more about the Pursuit Series adventure camp (**page 40**), so much so, that she signed up to attend in June with her sister.



Washington, D.C.-based freelance writer **Kathryn Streeter's** work has been featured in *AARP*, *The Washington Post* and *The Week*. She and her family have moved often, including living abroad in Germany and London, which enabled various European adventures while staying in a number of Airbnb properties (**page 168**). With her daughter in college in the U.K. and son considering studying in Europe, chances are good that she'll continue hopping the pond.

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PREMIUM PUBLICATION

EDITORIAL

DIRECTOR

Jeanette Barrett-Stokes
jbstokes@usatoday.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Jerald Council
jcouncil@usatoday.com

MANAGING EDITOR

Michelle Washington
mjwashington@usatoday.com

EDITORS

Amy Sinatra Ayres
Tracy Scott Forson
Sara Schwartz
Debbie Williams

ISSUE DESIGNER

Gina Toole Saunders

DESIGNERS

Hayleigh Corkey
Amira Martin
Debra Moore
Lisa M. Zilka

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Matt Alderton, Diane Bair, Susan B. Barnes, John W. Barry, Brian Barth, Mary Helen Berg, Kit Bernardi, Sam Boykin, Anna Katherine Clemmons, Brad Cohen, Ana Connery, Kelly-Jane Cotter, Rosalind Cummings-Yeates, Lisa Davis, Jonah Flicker, Jennifer Bradley Franklin, Erin Gifford, Aimee Heckel, Kristen Inbody, Tina Lassen, Katie Morell, Roger Naylor, Rina Rapuano, Dana Rebmann, Melanie Reffes, Cheryl Rodewig, Sarah Sekula, Kathryn Streeter, Lavanya Sunkara, Nancy Trejos, Pamela Wright, Suzanne Wright, Stacey Zable

ADVERTISING

VP, ADVERTISING

Patrick Burke | (703) 854-5914
pburke@usatoday.com

ACCOUNT DIRECTOR

Justine Madden | (703) 854-5444
jmadden@usatoday.com

FINANCE

BILLING COORDINATOR

Julie Marco

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Staying Abroad

Handy tips for a successful European Airbnb adventure

BY KATHRYN STREETER

My family recently hopscotched our way around Europe — our seventh such vacation in eight years. Instead of choosing traditional hotel lodging, we opted to stay in Airbnbs along the way. Like many other globetrotters, we were drawn to properties in historic districts. It's an attractive option — a terrific way to economize while simultaneously soaking up the authenticity Old World cities have to offer.

But while romantic, some aspects of European living could rattle travelers testing the popular short-term rental trend for the first time. It's best to learn all you can in advance to circumvent surprises that could put a damper on the fun. As Airbnb consumer trends spokesperson Ali Killam points out, "One of the wonders about traveling is discovering how others live and the standard amenities they use."

Here are some pre-emptive considerations to help keep your trip on track:



Gamla Stan pier in Stockholm, Sweden



► **Your taxi might not reach your front door** because of pedestrian zones. In Gamla Stan, Stockholm's old city, our Airbnb was embedded in the car-free district and required us to walk 10 minutes along a winding path before reaching our destination. Make sure you can handle your luggage across cobblestones for several blocks.



► **If you find a charming Airbnb on the third floor of an old building** in the historic center of town like we did in Edinburgh, Scotland, wonderful! Keep in mind this means you are actually on the fourth floor, because Europeans call the first level the "ground floor." There usually are no elevators in these lovely old city centers. We discovered our Edinburgh flat was on the top floor of a building with elegant high ceilings, making each flight significant. Expect lots of stairs (another reason to pack lightly) and plenty of walking in general.



► **You'll typically receive only one key per flat**, especially in older buildings. This means if you are traveling with family or friends, you'll need to consider your outings with the understanding that only one person will have access. Of course, it never hurts to ask in advance for more keys, Killam says. "Message your host prior to arrival to see if they can provide additional keys so all of your guests have access to the property throughout the stay."



► **Be prepared for historic buildings without air conditioning.** Europeans keep their windows open at night for fresh air, but that also allows street noises to waft in. To address the concern, Killam suggests downloading a sound machine app. My favorite is the oscillating fan setting on the White Noise app. If air conditioning is important to you, Killam recommends searching Airbnb using the filter function so only those with that amenity are listed.



Airbnb (left) where Kathryn Streeter stayed in Edinburgh, Scotland



► **European shower systems can sometimes be confusing.** Even after living in London for a couple of years — and in Germany for a time in the '90s — I found the shower in our London Airbnb perplexing. On the off chance your Airbnb host is inaccessible during your stay, request clear instructions well in advance. Killam suggests consulting the house manual if possible or messaging the owner via the Airbnb app for real-time questions that arise.



► **What if you enter your flat and the lights don't turn on?** Don't panic! In Europe, it's common for electrical wiring to be controlled by a master switch to conserve energy. It looks identical to and is often located next to an ordinary light switch, but actually turns on electricity for an entire room. Individual outlets often are also controlled by switches. So, if the coffee maker ignores you the morning after your arrival, look for a switch near the outlet to get things brewing.