

THE CONCIERGE

GEO QUIZ

The Qizilqum Desert is in Uzbekistan and what other country?

- Kazakhstan
 Turkmenistan
 Afghanistan

Answer below. Source: National Geographic Bee

TIP SHEET

Honoring black culture

BY MARY FORGIONE

In 1926 the second week in February was designated Negro History Week. Decades later, it morphed into Black History Month. Here are four places to go, including a little-known site in California, to learn about African American culture.

Memphis, Tenn.

The National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel is built around the site where the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was fatally shot April 4, 1968. The museum tells a comprehensive story, starting with slavery and the "Culture of Resistance," and continuing through the Civil War and Reconstruction to the civil rights movement.

Cost, info: \$16 adults, \$13 children ages 5 to 17; civilrightsmuseum.org

Kansas City, Mo.

Learn about the ties between America's pastime and black history at the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in Kansas City, where the first such league was founded. It tells the story of the 75-plus leagues and teams that emerged between 1920 and 1955.

Cost, info: \$10 adults, \$6 children 5 to 12; nlbm.com

Natchez, Miss.

Natchez, about 170 miles northwest of New Orleans, was the site of one of the largest slave markets in the South. Miss Lou Heritage Group & Tours explains what happened in this corner of Mississippi. The Civil Rights tour Feb. 23 and 24 tells how the activism of the '60s in this Southern town played out, and the Heritage Tour & Tasting in March and April delves into African American foods and culture.

Cost, info: Civil Rights Tour, \$20 adults; Heritage Tour & Tasting, \$30 adults; misslouheritagegroup.com

Allensworth, Calif.

In 1908 Col. Allen Allensworth and others founded a community near Bakersfield that would allow blacks to own land. The town thrived on farming and local businesses, but it faltered after Allensworth's death and other setbacks. Today, Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park, created in 1974 in rural Tulare County, tells the story of the community's early years. It has restored and reconstructed buildings, including the colonel's house, a schoolhouse, a church and library, artifacts and photos. A Black History Month Open House on Feb. 10 (\$8 per vehicle) will feature tours and live entertainment.

Info: lat.ms/ColAllenpark

GEO QUIZ ANSWER:

Kazakhstan



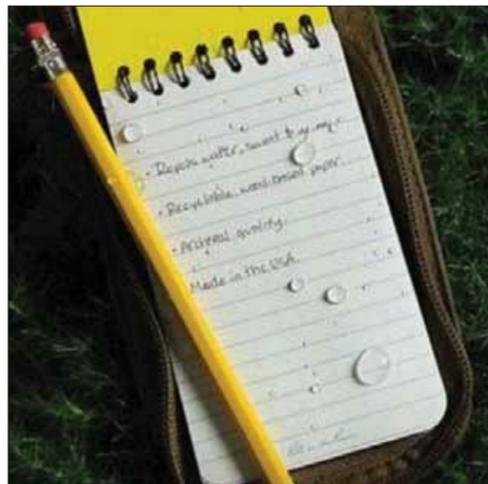
Floxsee



VSSL



Magnasonic



Rite in the Rain

MAKE TRAVEL work for you with items like, clockwise from top left, Floxsee's Tri-fold Mirror, VSSL's flashlight-plus-supplies, waterproof items by Rite in the Rain and Magnasonic's Alarm Clock Radio.

GEAR

Multitaskers do the job

By JUDI DASH >>> Think of packing as an audition. The items that get a part in your trip should be multi-talented. Ladies and gentlemen, give it up for these travel helpers.

Mirror, mirror

Imagine a mirror that lets you see yourself nearly full-length, provides a panoramic view for fastidious grooming, and fits into a carry-on bag.

You can hang the Floxsee Tri-fold Mirror vertically on a door using its adjustable-height hook, and the three hinged panels form a nearly full-length mirror when you step back.

Flip the Floxsee horizontally, and the panels adjust for a 180-degree view. The mirror panels folds into a 12½-by-7½-by-1½-inch-deep rectangle that weighs about 3 pounds.

Cost, info: \$69.95, Floxsee Tri-fold Tri-View Travel Mirror. www.floxsee.com

Supplies in a flash

Old-fashioned flashlights used to have big innards filled with the big batteries that powered their inefficient bulbs. High-efficiency LED lights allowed for smaller batteries and smaller flashlights.

The folks at VSSL (pronounced "vessel") have kept the old-fashioned form (9 inches long, 2 inches in diameter) and filled the empty tubular space with emergency supplies.

The First Aid model contains basic medical supplies, including aspirin, tweezers, bandages and sterile gloves. The Shelter model holds a two-person polyethylene tent in a tube. The Supplies model is a survival kit stuffed with waterproof matches, fire-starter flint and tiny kindling, a wire saw, fishing tackle and more.

VSSL also sells supplies a la carte or you can fill the flashlight with your own essentials.

Cost, info: First Aid model costs \$66.50; Shelter, \$59.50; Survival, \$99.50; empty model: \$49.50. Refills and accessories are as inexpensive as \$2 for a tiny can opener; VSSL www.vsslgear.com.

Write in the rain

Travelers needn't let a downpour put a damper on jotting down information or travel instructions. Rite in the Rain invented a process by which regular paper sheds water (the drops bead up) and lets you write legibly with a regular pencil, crayon or any non-water-based pen, even if the paper is wet. Your words or drawings won't smear or run, and the paper won't turn to mush.

Rite in the Rain comes in a variety of products, including small spiral

notebooks, pocket calendars, hard-bound journals and sketch pads.

Cost, info: From \$4, Rite in the Rain. www.rainwriter.com.

Time's on your side

Am I the only one whose cell-phone clock cancels its alarm? That's why I travel with a separate clock, and I've just discovered a doozy: the new Alarm Clock Radio from Magnasonic. When activated, a swiveling arm projects the time in bright red LED numerals on the ceiling or wall.

The clock also has a USB port for charging a cellphone or other device and a 3.5 mm jack. Dual alarms let you and your companion each choose a wake-up time and either a buzz or preset radio station to get your eyes open. You can also cycle through a calendar and inside temperature display. The projection beam runs on a replaceable included 3-volt lithium battery, which also provides battery backup if the power goes out.

Cost, info: \$34.99, Magnasonic Alarm Clock Radio with Time Projection in black or white. www.magnasonic.com.

travel@latimes.com

DEAL OF THE WEEK

Book the tour, get \$135 for a passport

Contiki thinks millennials should travel abroad so it's offering to pay for their passport.

The deal: You must be 18 to 35 years old and a first-time passport applicant, then book a Contiki trip for seven days or more. The offer, based on availability, is for the first 100 travelers who respond. Book your Contiki trip, call and note that you're a first-time passport applicant, and \$135 will be deducted from your trip cost.

Info: (866) 266-8454, lat.ms/passportoffer

— MARY FORGIONE



Contiki

BERLIN STREET ART is among the experiences offered on tours by Contiki, a travel company geared toward 18- to 35-year-olds.

TOURS & CRUISES

JAPAN

Pedal into cultural traditions

Immerse yourself in traditional culture on Ride & Seek's 12-day bike tour of Shikoku Island, the smallest of Japan's main islands. The 466-mile route follows ancient samurai roads and will take cyclists through green valleys and past villages and terraced rice paddies. Highlights include pedaling through remote Iya Gorge; ascending Mt. Ishizuchi, western Japan's highest peak; and crossing Shimanami Kaido, a series of suspension bridges that links Shikoku to Honshu Island. Accommodations include Western-style hotels and traditional Japanese inns.

Dates: Oct. 16-27, Oct. 27-Nov. 7

Price: About \$5,800. Includes accommodations, most meals, guides, van support, and private tours. International airfare and bike rental not included.

Info: Ride & Seek, lat.ms/shikokuisland

— ANNE HARNAGEL

ITALY

Amalfi adventure

Explore one of Europe's most celebrated landscapes on an eight-day tour of Italy's Amalfi Coast. The trip, organized by REI Adventures, combines hiking and kayaking and focuses on culture and history. Highlights include visiting some of the region's oldest wineries, exploring Pompeii and Mt. Vesuvius, cooking lessons in Capri and hiking the Path of the Gods.

Dates: Throughout 2018, including March 24, Sept. 29 and Oct. 21. Availability may be limited.

Price: From \$3,799 for REI members; from \$4,199 for nonmembers. Includes accommodations, meals, cooking class, wine tasting, excursions and gear. International airfare not included.

Info: REI Adventures, (800) 622-2236, lat.ms/amalfihiking

— ROSEMARY MCCLURE

HUNGARY AND GERMANY

Passion Play

It's not too early to reserve a spot for the once-every-decade Oberammergau Passion Play, which will take place in 2020, on the itinerary of two excursions planned by CroisiEurope Cruises. The eight-day tour includes a Danube cruise from Budapest, Hungary, to Passau, Germany, followed by a stop in Oberammergau, Germany, where guests will have orchestra seats for a performance of the play, which commemorates Christ's journey into Jerusalem, his death and resurrection.

Dates: June 17 and Aug. 26, 2020

Price: From \$3,831 per person, double occupancy. Includes six-day Danube cruise, meals and drinks onboard, two days in Oberammergau and seats for the performance.

Info: CroisiEurope Cruises, (800) 768-7232, lat.ms/passionplay

— ROSEMARY MCCLURE

AIRFARES

| | ATLANTA | CHICAGO | DENVER | HONOLULU | LAS VEGAS | NEW YORK/NEWARK, N.J. | PHOENIX | SAN FRANCISCO | SEATTLE | WASHINGTON, D.C. |
|-----|---------|---------|--------|----------|-----------|-----------------------|---------|---------------|---------|------------------|
| LAX | \$310 | \$232 | \$166 | \$497 | \$88 | \$292 | \$116 | \$98 | \$192 | \$320 |
| SNA | 322 | 240 | 228 | 516 | 88 | 392 | 173 | 98 | 216 | 358 |
| BUR | 365 | 298 | 228 | 520 | 98 | 404 | 183 | 113 | 214 | 378 |
| LGB | N/A | 329 | N/A | N/A | 86 | 325 | 156 | 95 | 198 | 348 |
| ONT | 329 | 231 | 184 | 610 | 114 | 354 | 178 | 131 | 198 | 322 |

| INT'L | AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND* | CABO SAN LUCAS, MEXICO | LONDON* | PARIS* | SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA* | TOKYO* | VANCOUVER, CANADA |
|-------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| LAX | \$991-\$1,255 | \$244 | \$603-\$902 | \$502-\$856 | \$941-\$1,216 | \$602-\$890 | \$237 |

Restricted round-trip airfares are researched on Thursday, the day before the Travel section goes to press. Fares change daily, and availability is not assured. Fares, which may involve a change of planes, are for airlines serving Los Angeles International (LAX), Orange County/John Wayne (SNA), Burbank/Bob Hope (BUR), Long Beach (LGB) and Ontario (ONT). Domestic fares and international airfares include taxes and fees. *These international fares vary because of differing fuel surcharges on different airlines. Sources: Sabre reservation system, airlines and Web.

\$659 TO TOKYO

Fare: \$659 round-trip, including all taxes and fees, to Tokyo Narita from LAX, on Singapore Airlines.

Restrictions: May be booked through Dec. 31. Subject to availability. May be scarce during cherry blossom season and summer dates. Other airlines may be matching this fare.

Info: (800) 742-3333, www.singaporeair.com
Source: Airfarewatchdog.com