



SIGN SPOTTING
DOUG LANSKY

Scoop of soup?
Flash frozen hot soup . . . you'll love it. Taken by Mattine Hartzell in Beaver Bay, Minn.
Submit photos of funny signs via signspotting.com. Please do not send photos to the Journal Sentinel.

CHECK IN
TRAVEL BRIEFING

Hilton offers 'little extras' for a fee
Hospitality giant Hilton Worldwide may have found a way to collect extra revenue without annoying guests with hidden fees.
Under a new program called Little Extras Upgrade, Hilton's DoubleTree hotels will offer guests who are staying in a standard room a package of extras such as snacks and drinks for an added cost of \$25 to \$35 a night, depending on the package. The packages will include high-speed in-room Wi-Fi, snacks, candy, water, fruit, drink vouchers and an in-room premium coffee brewer. The food and drinks can be delivered to the room or guests can be given 24-hour access to a snack room.
Hilton announced the idea in December, saying it is now rolling out the deal to DoubleTree hotels across the nation.
Much like the airline industry, hotels are raking in hefty revenue from fees.
By the end of 2015, U.S. hotels are expected to have collected \$2.47 billion in fees and surcharges, compared with \$2.35 billion in 2014, said Bjorn Hanson, an expert on hotel fees and a professor at New York University's Tisch Center for Hospitality and Tourism.
But under Hilton's new program, Hanson said, hotels can collect extra revenue without drawing the ire of guests who hate being surprised by hidden fees.

Rule change for minors flying alone
With little public notice, United Airlines has expanded the age range of children who must use a \$150 service when flying without an accompanying adult.
For tickets sold after Dec. 14, any child ages 5 to 15 flying solo must pay for the "unaccompanied minor service." Under the service, airline employees chaperone children to their seats and ensure they are united with designated adults upon landing.
For tickets sold before Dec. 14, the "unaccompanied minor service" was required only for ages 5 to 12.
There is a better way to pull off such a change without angering travelers, said Jay Sorensen, a consultant on airline revenue and president of Wisconsin-based IdeaWorksCo.
Because the change will mean more parents must pay the \$150 fee, Sorensen suggests that United offer an upgrade to the service to ease the pain of the extra cost.
"Obviously, they are going to generate more revenue from this," he said. "They should make an attempt to improve the product."
—Los Angeles Times

TRAVEL



Windstar's newly acquired and refitted "yacht," the Star Breeze, lies dock-side at Portoferraio, island of Elba.

Exploring picturesque Tuscany



The harbor in Portofino, Italy, is one of the most photographed in the world. A stroll around Portofino reveals cheese shops, bakeries, art galleries and souvenir stands.



The Linguella Tower, built by the Medici family in the 16th century, shields the harbor at Portoferraio, on Elba, Italy.

IF YOU GO
2016 sailing dates: The Star Breeze sails to Costa Rica and Panama in January and February; in April to Morocco and the Canary Islands; in May to Spain and Portugal; in late May to Monaco (includes two days of Grand Prix events); in June-August to Italy, Sicily and Spain; in September and October to Venice and Athens; and in late October the ship returns to the Caribbean.
For prices: To compare discounted fares with listed "brochure fares," go to windstarcruises.com. For example, the fare for our 7-day cruise, Yachting the Riviera, if booked now, is \$2,799 per person. If booked later at the "brochure fare," the cruise costs more than twice as much, at \$6,599 per person.

Set sail for distant shores aboard smaller, nimble vessels

By ANNE Z. COOKE
Tribune News Service
Portoferraio, Italy — When you sail on a ship like the 208-passenger Star Breeze, a vessel nimble enough to squeeze up to almost any tiny cove or narrow gorge, it's a good idea to bone up on the ports-of-call in advance.
Researching local history, anecdotal and otherwise, always adds zing to a day spent in an unfamiliar destination. If nothing else, you'll have time to decide which shore excursions — if any — promise to be that one and only magical mystery tour.
And so it was last spring, as we sailed down Italy's west coast on the Star Breeze, one of Windstar Cruises' three newly acquired and refitted all-suite yachts, a move that Windstar CEO Hans Birkholz describes as the company's "first venture into ships without sails."
Like Odysseus sailing home from Troy, we — my husband, Steve, and I — couldn't resist the lure of Tuscany's distant shores, a siren song of rugged cliffs, green hills and secluded coastal villages. After a busy first day in Monaco and a glittering sendoff at the Monte Carlo Casino, we sailed on to Portofino, the oft-photographed celebrity hideaway whose harbor and village are as famous as they are tiny.
Going ashore for a wake-up coffee, our usual vacation ritual, we set out to explore Portofino's steep streets, poking through cheese shops, bakeries, art galleries and souvenir stands. At noon we climbed the ridge behind the village for lunch at the Hotel Splendido, an annual contender for the world's best hotel award.
But later that evening, as I studied the ship's next-day port-of-call, the town of Portoferraio, I suddenly realized we were headed for the island of Elba, best known beyond Italy as one of Europe's most infamous prison sites.
If you're a fact-freak, you may know that that Elba is the island where Napoleon, self-proclaimed emperor of France and the

Please see **ITALY, 9E**

Day Out Chelsey Lewis

Wacky festivals bring warmth to our winters

Now that the snow has finally arrived across most of Wisconsin, it's safe to start thinking about the bounty of outdoor activities it brings: skiing, snowshoeing, sledding.
Oh, and turkey bowling, bar stool races and toilet seat tosses, of course.
Some might call it the effects of cabin fever. Others say it's the only way to survive the cold, dark months. Whatever it is, for many Wisconsin towns, winter festivals have become a solid source of silliness.
In Spooner, winter is ushered in with a frozen turkey slid across a frozen flowage into bowling pins. Drummond's idea of a good time in winter is slapping skis onto the bottom of bar stools and riding them

down a hill. Beds are the racing vehicle of choice in Cedarburg, while Conover prefers recliners. In Fish Creek, toilet seats take the place of horseshoes for a rousing game in the snow.
Add some wacky warmth to your winter at these festivals around the state this year.
Jack Frost Festival
Bowl a turkey with a turkey. That's the goal at this festival Jan. 9 in Spooner, where visitors hurl frozen turkeys at bowling pins on the frozen Yellow River Flowage.
Also at the festival: a family ice fishing contest, pond hockey, an antique snowmobile show, ice golf, a fat bike ride, minnow races, ice shuffleboard and chili and ribs contests. It all takes place outside of

Tony's Riverside, 524 S. River St. Most events are free. See spoonerchamber.org for more information.
Waukesha JanBoree
There's disc golf and ice golf, so why not winter foot golf? Test your foot skills on snow by kicking a soccer ball into an oversized hole at the Moor Downs Golf Course during this annual winter festival Jan. 15-17. The weekend is packed with other

activities for the adventurous, including tobogganing at Lowell Park, a kickball tournament at the Saratoga Softball Complex, an ice bocce ball tournament at the Waukesha Elks Lodge and free airplane rides for kids at the Waukesha County Airport (weather permitting). See janboree.org for more.
Fish Creek Winter Festival
Horseshoes are way too conventional for this Door County town. Toilets are much more appropriate for tossing at Fish Creek's wacky Winter Festival Feb. 5-7. As are bikes, pie tins and tubes (for the kids). Other winter games include minnow races, a snowshoe dance competition, ice bowling, winter

Please see **DAY OUT, 8E**



Sunset over the coast marks the cocktail hour on the Star Breeze's top deck.



Fine wine and attentive waiters are ever-present at the Hotel Splendido in Portofino, Italy.

From page 10

ITALY

Elba becomes pleasant surprise

scourge of Europe in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, was exiled. Why Elba? If Elba's a barren, storm-tossed rock like Alcatraz (as I'd always imaged it was), I'm not wasting my day going ashore.

But the next morning, as we sailed closer, a gentle hill appeared on the horizon with an ancient tower and walled harbor along the shore. Red-tiled mansions lined the water's edge where private yachts and fishing boats rode at anchor. Miniature cottages climbed the hill, half hidden among groves of trees. Elba wasn't a prison at all.

And the shore excursions I'd expected to blow off? Two choices offered rich dividends. The first, a visit to Napoleon's in-town quarters, the gardens, a museum and his country residence, would cure my ignorance. Napoleon, in fact, didn't live on Elba very long, escaping within the year. (More fool he, considering how things turned out.) But the second excursion, a circle-island tour, offered a chance to see the real Elba, geography, topography, warts and all.

Piling into the bus we were off, following a winding two-lane road across the island, stopping here and there for photos, heading for La Chiusa vineyards and a wine tasting served with fresh bread, local olive oil, cheese and fruit. Hillsides planted in pines and olive trees gave way to pastures, milk cows and vegetable gardens; seaside rental cottages perched above sand and pebble beaches.

The tour ended with an hour in another tiny seaside town, Porto Azzurro nearby, leaving enough time to stretch our legs on narrow cobblestone streets, shop for



Visitors absorb the best of "La dolce vita" at the harbor in Portofino, Italy.



The best way to see Portofino is to get out and take a stroll.

souvenirs and postcards and to sit in the sun with a glass of wine. Elba, it seemed, was the kind of no-worry paradise where novelists go to find inspiration and the rest of us can only dream about.

Sitting on the piazza, watching the slow pace of life, the residents shopping, tourists carrying backpacks and fishermen tying their boats to the dock was so pleasant I wondered why Napoleon wasn't tempted to stay. But the day on Elba was a testimonial to Windstar's conviction that small ships and offbeat destinations are the answer to the growing demand for more innovative and authentic cruises.

On the Star Breeze, luxury set the pace. But it was the

ship's size that felt so manageable. It took me just an hour to explore from top to bottom, learning my way around every space from the decks and the dining room to the lounges, library and the gym.

With fewer than 200 passengers on this cruise, meeting people and learning names was easy. The crew members, too, made a point of remembering not just our names but our preferences. And the longer we were onboard, the more comfortable it felt.

But it was a couple of sad-tears days for the Seabourn Cruise Line fans on board, passengers who'd sailed on the ship before Seabourn sold it to Windstar.

"We've celebrated some very special birthdays and anniversaries on this ship," said Sarah Miller, as we stood in line to pick up our passenger identification cards. "It's been a tradition since 1994. It meant a lot to us. And now, just like that, everything's changed."

Miller's family knew the ship and their favorite stateroom so well that they felt like owners, she told me. When Windstar announced the Star Breeze's new itineraries, Miller decided to take her chances with a one-week voyage from Nice to Rome. By our last night on board, she'd had a change of heart.

"I guess the ship really needed a face lift," she reported as the waiters began to serve dessert. "The new color schemes work and the upholstery is elegant but unobtrusive. This room, especially, seems brighter."

"I can't get used to the new name or why they call it a yacht. But it's the same ship, same polished brass and teak decks. The bathrooms still have those gorgeous marble counters and big tubs. And the walk-in closet that I don't really need."

For most of us, the Star Breeze was still a ship. But as Birkholz explained, the "yacht" classification is part of a cruise industry shift toward more narrowly focused cruise experiences.

In the early days of cruising, ships were a one-size-



Pleasure and fishing boats share the harbor at Porto Azzurro, on Elba Island, Tuscany coast, Italy.



Locally bottled olive oil enhances a wine-and-cheese tasting at La Chiusa winery, near Portoferraio, Elba.

fits-all product. If you were sailing on the Muddy Duck, you and every other Muddy Duck passenger boarded the ship in Port A and disembarked 10 days later in Port B.

Students and bargain hunters bought inside staterooms on D Deck, sometimes called third class; middle class travelers booked second-class, or "Cabin Class" staterooms; and celebrities and corporate millionaires booked first-class suites, with a separate first-class dining room.

But with today's larger pool of frequent cruise travelers looking for new destinations, cruise lines are targeting more narrowly defined demographics. Passengers' ages and income levels still matter, but their interests come first.

Expedition ships can be Spartan or deluxe, but they

invariably offer demanding or even strenuous shore tours and single-themed trips: polar bears and Arctic ice; the Amazon jungles, coral reef health.

The biggest, most affordable ships, the 2,000- to 4,000-passenger giants, sell onboard vacation fun as low as \$100 per person a day, with poolside parties, loud music, drinks by the pitcher, glittery theater shows, casinos and basketball courts.

And in the yacht category, the Star Breeze adds a new dimension to the Windstar fleet, continuing to offer authentic experiences in offbeat places, with all the creature comforts anyone could want: spacious suites, fine cuisine, personal service and kindred spirits to share the pleasure at every turn. "So far, it's a winning combination," Miller said as we disembarked.

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