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Tom Bennett, of Annapolis, and Jackson Bennett, 9, sit alone in the stands during a baseball game on Friday. KARL MERTON FERRON/BALTIMORE SUN

RENT NUMBERS

\$1.6M

Rent the Orioles paid Camden Yards' landlord, the Maryland Stadium Authority, during the 2020 fiscal year.

\$6.8M

Average the club has paid during the 30-year lease, starting in 1992 when Camden Yards opened.

\$8M

Rent has occasionally topped \$8 million in years the team has been particularly successful.

22%

Attendance this season has averaged around 10,000 in a stadium that seats more than 45,000.

2016

The last time Orioles had a winning record, finishing 16 games above .500.

- A breakdown of revenue to the stadium authority:
- 7% Ticket sales
 - 25% Net stadium ads
 - 50% Net parking
 - 9% Concessions sales
 - 10% Suite, club-level

Catherine Hinchliff never went to Camden Yards because she expected an Orioles win. She used to buy a student-priced ticket to enjoy a beer and a night in the upper deck with friends.

"It's the perfect way to spend a Friday evening," the 33-year-old Johns Hopkins graduate student said.

A Seattle native — "experienced with loss, being a Mariners fan," she said — Hinchliff adopted the O's as her "second-home" team when she moved to Baltimore in 2014, even scoring tickets to a playoff game with a friend in a lottery.

But the Charles Village resident has gone to just two games this season, contributing to the sea of empty stands seen at most home games. She is among the many Orioles fans who are visiting the ballpark less frequently amid a protracted pandemic and a roster rebuild more focused on its farm team system than the major-league product.

Turn to Rent, Page 7

ANOTHER DROP FOR THE O'S

COVID-19, low attendance have slashed Orioles' rent payments to stadium authority, records show

By Jeff Barker and Colin Campbell

'I feel helpless'

Afghan immigrants in Maryland fear for families back home amid Taliban takeover

By Alex Mann

When Ahmad learned the Taliban were closing in on Afghanistan's second largest city, Kandahar, he arranged for his family to move north to the capital, Kabul.

He said his family escaped the day before the city was captured, Aug. 13. But two days later, the capital also fell to the insurgents.

"Now that they have captured Kabul, there is no exit plan, there is no exit solution," said Ahmad, who worries for his siblings, his dad and, especially, his mother. "I talked to them but I can't do anything. I feel helpless, very



Annie Osborn, right, and other volunteers, receive, sort and pack thousands of items donated to Afghan refugee families at Lapis, an Afghan restaurant in Washington on Thursday. ANDREW HARNIK/AP

helpless, and hopeless."

Ahmad, 37, knows what the Taliban are capable of: Back home, they targeted him for his work on development funded by the U.S. government beginning in 2013. That work enabled Ahmad to come to America with

his wife and children in 2019 with a Special Immigrant Visa, which took years to process. The rest of his family was not eligible. He's safe in Gaithersburg, but their fate is less certain.

Turn to Immigrants, Page 6

CORONAVIRUS IN MARYLAND

Thousands of students left public schools last year amid COVID-19

Some choosing not to return

By Lillian Reed and Liz Bowie

Thinking back on her daughter's second grade year with school almost entirely online, Kristi Schulman felt a knot in her stomach.

The White Marsh mom said some online learning days ended with tears, despite the best efforts of Baltimore County teachers and her husband's new work-from-home arrangement. Her daughter, Harper, worked hard to learn reading and writing from a family laptop, but often needed to call Schulman at work for computer help.

With another daughter head-

ing into kindergarten this year, the parents asked themselves whether they could do it all again — especially if public schools are forced to close. The family enrolled both children in a local Catholic school.

"I just don't have the confidence they're going to stick it out and push through," Schulman said of in-person learning at public schools this fall.

The Schulman children are among thousands of Maryland students leaving public education during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the health emergency shut-

Turn to Students, Page 2

Hurricane Henri eyes Northeast

Hurricane warnings extend from Long Island, N.Y. to Connecticut and Massachusetts. **NATION & WORLD**

Ravens tie NFL record with a win

The Ravens beat the Carolina Panthers, 20-3, for their 19th consecutive preseason victory. **SPORTS**

WBAL radio traffic reporter dies

James "Jim" Bernard Russ died Wednesday of a heart attack, just one day shy of his 58th birthday. **PAGE 4**

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A ride on the WILD SIDE

Always wanted to go on a safari? This might be your year

By Anne Z. Cooke
Tribune News Service

MAUN, Botswana — “Look, look, she’s standing up. No, she’s coming over here,” whispered my nephew Eric, turning pale and clutching my hand as the lioness we’d been watching — one of 11 dozing under a tree — stood up, yawned and ambled in our direction.

“Take a picture, take a picture,” urged his sister, Sarah, next to my husband in the Land Rover’s rear seat. Fearless, eager for adventure, she leaned forward for a better look.

“Sit still, sit very still and watch. They are only curious,” said Moro, our tracker at Shinde Game Lodge, who had moved from his seat on the fender to a seat in the car.

My family, traveling together on an African safari, were lucky indeed to see so many lions. Fifty years ago there were 200,000 in Africa; today there are fewer than 15,000. As for African elephants, their numbers are worse. Ninety years ago there were an estimated 10 million on the continent, but four years ago there were just 350,000.

Poaching for skins or meat, habitat loss and conflicts with farmers are the killers. But in recent years, a handful of Africa’s 54 countries have realized that wildlife has value, for tourism if not for cultural or ecological reasons. Parks and preserves are saving savannas and forests and wildlife conservation is taught in school. But success is still a question.

Which is why my

husband and I decided to treat our family to an African safari in Botswana, South Africa and Zambia, three countries where wildlife conservation is at the center of public policy. We wanted the kids to experience the African bush the way we have, while there’s still time.

If you’ve been thinking about going yourself, you are sure to have questions. Is African travel safe? Which countries have the most wildlife? What are game lodges like, and how do they find animals? Do you stay in a tent, or in a lodge, and do they have bathrooms? What about visas, clothes, the weather? Where can you learn about game lodges and safaris?

Where to start looking

Since most safari lodges now have websites, comparing them is easy. Treat yourself to a leisurely tour through Uyaphi.com and Go2Africa.com, travel and touring companies that book family, individual, group and customized safaris. The websites are a treasure trove of photographs. Descriptions include locations, indoor and outdoor areas, gardens, views and extras, from mokoro (canoe) rides to spas and swimming pools. Prices per-person per-night vary widely because they include not just full-service game lodges but area hotel rooms.

My favorite lodges

My Botswana favorites, all in the Okavango Delta, are traditional lodges with eight to 10 spacious tent cabins bolted onto wood decks, per conservation regulations. Shinde is close to water and open plains; Kanana, near water, adds mokoro (canoe rides) to birding islands. Chiefs’



Lions ignore game-drive vehicles, as long as passengers sit still. STEVE HAGGERTY/COLORWORLD

Camp and Stanley’s Camp explore a mix of wooded islands and surrounding lagoons.

In Kruger National Park, my favorite is Londolozi (www.londoloji.com), highly rated and a sentimental destination. Now enlarged and divided into four different lodges, it remains true to its origins as the country’s first leopard conservation project.

In the Sabi Sands Preserve, also in Kruger National Park, Bush Camp (www.sabisabi.com) is a big, lively lodge that would fit best in the resort category. It has 25 luxury suites and is an ideal place to meet other travelers and their children. Activities include daily game drives, cultural community visits, swimming pools, a spa, an exercise gym, a child-care play center, a gift shop, and a waterhole near the dining

room, where guests sip tea as the elephants come to drink.

In Zambia, the Bushcamp Company Group, in South Luangwa River National Park, is unique (www.bushcampcompany.com). The main lodge, with an open-air lounge, casual restaurant and 12 adjacent cabins, is a 30-minute drive from Mfuwe town, thus a handy getaway for passing travelers who come to watch the elephants that walk through the lobby. More importantly, this is headquarters for eight distant lodges, intimate, isolated and rustic hideaways sleeping no more than eight. At cozy Bili-mungwe, you’ll meet the elephant family. At Chamilandu you can spend a morning up in the “Hide,” as it’s called, waiting for the parade of animals that comes daily to drink.

Why choose southern Africa?

Not only do these countries have many animals, but they use 4x4 vehicles with open tops and bench seats for game drives. Open-air seats allow unimpeded views and better photography while sitting. In East Africa (Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya) most parks permit only minivans or enclosed cars with open tops, limiting viewing.

Reasons to book through a tour company

It’s possible to book your own plane flights, game lodge reservations and ground connections. But many North American travelers would rather spend more for a trip they can plan on the phone with an experienced representative from a full-service tour company. It’s a relief when a local employee meets you

upon arrival, helps with luggage, drives to your hotel or lodge, and drives you to the next day’s lodge or flight.

A partial list of top-rated companies includes Sanctuary Retreats (www.sanctuaryretreats.com); Ker & Downey (www.ker-downeyafrica.com); Wilderness Safaris (www.wilderness-safaris.com); Bushcamp Company in Zambia (www.bushcampcompany.com); Abercrombie & Kent (www.abercrombiekent.com); and SabiSabi Company (www.sabisabi.com).

When to go

June through August (winter) are dry months, with chilly nights and mild, sunny days. September and October are warmer and dry with less foliage on the trees, but they offer better game viewing because of it.

ASK THE PEDIATRICIAN

How parents can prepare for a road trip with their baby

Dr. Dina DiMaggio
American Academy of Pediatrics

Q: We are avoiding airplanes for now because we have a baby. How do we travel safely with her on a long road trip?

A: With vaccines easing the COVID-19 pandemic in some areas, a lot of families are planning trips again. But because children under age 12 can’t get the vaccines yet, many parents



DREAMSTIME

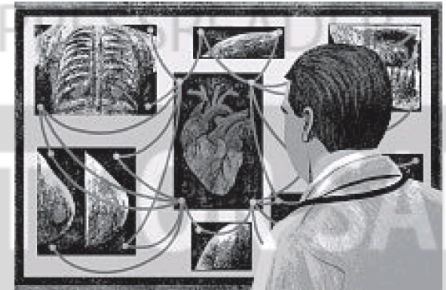
Research suggests heart failure tied to increased risk of cancer

By Nicholas Bakalar
The New York Times

People with heart failure may be at increased risk for cancer.

Cancer patients are usually monitored for heart failure because some cancer drugs can damage the heart. Now a new study suggests that heart failure patients, who may live for many years with the condition, might benefit by being monitored for cancer.

Researchers used a



CHLOE CUSHMAN/THE NEW YORK TIMES