

SundayTravel

WITH: NEW ENGLAND DESTINATIONS

BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE OCTOBER 27, 2024 | BOSTONGLOBE.COM/TRAVEL



The happiest airport on Earth

A seven-story indoor waterfall, butterfly garden, climbing wall, and crystal garden are among the highlights at Singapore Changi Airport

A peacock greets passersby in the topiary garden at Singapore Changi Airport.

PHOTOS BY CHRISTOPHER MUTHER/GLOBE STAFF



CHRISTOPHER MUTHER



The Rain Vortex, the world's tallest indoor waterfall, is seven stories high. It's part of the Jewel at Singapore Changi Airport.



A quiet bamboo forest in the Jewel at Singapore Changi Airport.

SINGAPORE — There's danger in romanticizing a vacation destination. Be it a city, quiet country hamlet, or palm-lined beach. Where expectations run unrealistically high, travel disappointment is sure to follow.

That was my fear as I landed at Singapore's Changi Airport. Does anyone get excited about going to the airport? This guy does, and my expectations were higher than the nimbostratus clouds gathering at the horizon. I had dreamt of the day I would finally see the airport consistently named the best in the world, and I booked an extended layover there to see what all the hullabaloo

AIRPORT, Page N19



A butterfly enjoys a slice of pineapple in the Changi Airport Butterfly Garden.

Here's what to do in November in New England

By Diane Bair and Pamela Wright
GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS

AFTER the fall foliage frenzy, before winter season begins, is the quiet and highly underrated month of November in New England. We'd argue it's a perfect time to get away. It's cheaper and less crowded, and don't you crave a break before the busy holiday season hits? Here are some fun things to do in New England this November.

Take an artisan craft tour

Driving old, country dirt roads flanked by stone walls and family farms, and meandering through tiny villages is part of the joy of this off-the-beaten-path outing in southern Vermont. The other part: visiting artists' studios along the way and snagging a one-of-a-kind art piece direct from the crafter who



THE TRUSTEES

The William Cullen Bryant Homestead, a Trustees of Reservations property in Cummington, was the boyhood home of the celebrated poet and former editor and publisher of the New York Evening Post.

made it.

The 46th annual Putney Craft Tour, the oldest continuous craft tour in the country, will be held Nov. 29-Dec. 1 and will in-

clude 24 artists within a 12-mile radius. Visit painters, jewelers, potters, weavers, glassblowers, an artisan cheesemaker, a wood-

NOVEMBER, Page N20



Inside

HERE, THERE, EVERYWHERE

TRAVEL NEWS YOU CAN USE

A bike basket for your small dog, a new Boston hotel, and elegance in Arizona

N18

THE VIP LOUNGE

HE OPINES ON TRAVEL, TOO

Political strategist and podcast host James Carville comes to the Shubert Theatre

N18

Move over Moo Deng: Meet Boston's family of pygmy hippos

By Matt Juul
GLOBE STAFF

Few animals have taken the internet by storm quite like Moo Deng, the baby pygmy hippo at Thailand's Khao Kheow Open Zoo, who has won a legion of on-line followers and inspired thousands of memes and an instant-classic parody on the 50th season premiere of "Saturday Night Live."

While fans of the slippery mammal can tune into Moo

Deng's 24/7 live stream, locals can get their pygmy hippo fix in person and closer to home courtesy of Zoo New England's Franklin Park Zoo. Nestled in the tropical forest exhibit — which is also home to ring-tailed lemurs, Baird's tapirs, and western lowland gorillas — is a family of pygmy hippos that are equally as adorable as the species' now-famous mascot.

HIPPOS, Page N20

The pygmy hippo family usually munches on a lot of alfalfa, hay, and timothy hay.

DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF



At this airport, passengers welcome layovers

► **AIRPORT**
Continued from Page N17

was about. Singapore Changi has collected more accolades than Meryl Streep. At last count, Changi racked up nearly 700 awards, superlatives, and honors.

I was so jazzed to see Singapore Changi that I even added it to my official Where to Go in 2023 list. A year later, I was finally here. But would it live up to my dreams? Pinning your hopes on the perfect beach is one thing; expecting an airport to make you happy is quite another.

The airport's first terminal opened in 1981, and three others followed. A fifth terminal is currently under construction. But what makes Changi unique is a structure called the Jewel that connects three of the four terminals at the airport. Calling the Jewel a structure is actually an insult. It is more like a piece of art that is toroid-shaped. The Jewel was designed by Boston-based architect Moshe Safdie and is made up of 9,000 pieces of specially-made glass and held together by 24,000 pieces of steel beams and nodes. It's the size of 25 football fields and was constructed for \$1.2 billion.

The building is 10 stories, five above ground and five below. The centerpiece of this architectural wonder is the Rain Vortex, the world's tallest waterfall, rising 130 feet in the center of the Jewel. I booked a room at the Yotel, part of the Jewel's 280 shops and restaurants, and a two-minute walk to the waterfall and surrounding forest. Yes, you read that correctly. The Jewel has a total of 2,000 trees and 100,000 shrubs, plus a canopy park on the fifth level, which is chockablock with family activities. Perhaps now you can understand my excitement. I had a lot of ground to cover and a scant 36 hours to conquer it.

"Deep breaths, Chris. Deep breaths," I chanted like a mantra as I checked into my micro Yotel room, itching to get started. Go ahead and dismiss the mega-mall surrounding the rain vortex and forest. Still, I was drooling, literally and figuratively, over the massive Fuji store, along with shops selling Asian brands I had never heard of but was desperate to explore, plus more restaurants than I could shake an Apom Berkuah at.

I think it's important to mention the immigration process for entering the country. It includes filling out a questionnaire in an app, scanning a QR code, and walking through an automatic gate that uses biometrics to confirm your identity. There was no standing behind a line as immigration officials probed you about the purpose of your trip. My entrance into the country took approximately a minute. Singapore Changi was near and dear to my heart, and I had barely entered the country.

First impressions are essential, and my first impression of this airport was that I should have booked another day or two to cover all 10 floors plus tour the city.

There was no question that I would begin my exploration of the Jewel by hanging out near the Rain Vortex and surrounding forest. I arrived early on a Saturday morning before the crowds took over, sat down, and listened to the waterfall's roar as it dropped from the large oculus in the ceiling. I breathed deeply as the water and plants refreshed the air. I was pretty confident this was the first time I slowed down and breathed deeply at an airport.

Food and shopping were essential parts of the experience, so for my first round of breakfast, I went to Dunkin' (of *course*, there was a Dunkin') for a mochi donut. Then, I decided on a quick round of Kaya balls (dome-shaped buns filled with Kaya — a coco-



PHOTOS BY CHRISTOPHER MUTHER/GLOBE STAFF



A bluebird topiary (top left) waves in visitors to the Canopy Park at Singapore Changi Airport. Children play in the Foggy Bowls (top right) at the airport. The airport's butterfly garden (above) is home to 1,000 butterflies; it also features a 20-foot waterfall and a koi pond. Students (left) learn to make Chocolat Knot and Sausage Fleur at the ABC Cooking Studio in Changi Airport.

nut egg jam) and butter sugar crackers from Ya Kun Kaya Toast.

Onward! Next, I pre-booked a cooking class at ABC Cooking Studio, a stylish demonstration kitchen where instructors walk you through a dish you can create. The two-hour class was about \$26, and I made gâteau au matcha. I wasn't thinking that tea-flavored cake would rock my world, but when I tasted it, I was a believer.

It was time for shopping, so I headed to Muji, a two-story shop called Hands, which sells everything from

beauty products to stationery, and a local chain called the Shirt Bar. As the day wore on, it was evident that the Jewel was not just for travelers but also locals who wanted to take advantage of the shops, various restaurants, and movie theaters. Speaking of restaurants, I stopped at a cafe overlooking the Vortex for lunch and tried the smoked duck carbonara. It was a significant improvement over my Logan fare of Wahlburgers. Sorry, fellas. No hard feelings, OK?

I noticed a line at Birds of Paradise, a boutique gelato shop, and assumed it

was either exceedingly excellent or big on TikTok. I ordered their most popular flavor, white chrysanthemum, which they describe as a "floral infusion of chrysanthemum florets sprinkled with cacao nibs." At first, I thought the floral was a bit overwhelming, but as I kept going and my palate adjusted, it was delicious.

I could have spent the rest of the day eating and shopping and may or may not have returned to those pursuits (Shhh!), but I needed to turn my attention to the Canopy Park that circles the

top of the glass structure. Here, you'll find a hedge maze that includes flowers with motion sensors. There are also nets suspended over the park where kids can bounce and another net for walking five stories over the Jewel. Although it looks innocent, walking on it is terrifying if you fear heights. There's a topiary garden and an area called Foggy Bowls. It's a playground and relaxation area where occasional puffs of mist rise out of the bowls, giving the impression that you are up in the clouds.

Back in the mall portion of the building, there's an IMAX theater, a full supermarket, and another recreation area called the Studio Experience. Participants can take part in a virtual bike race along the runway and learn about airplanes.

If you're itching to explore outside the airport, you can ride the super-efficient Singapore public transit into the city to see popular destinations. I ducked out to visit the Gardens by the Bay. Even if you're not staying over the way I did, the airport offers several free sightseeing tours of the city for passengers with long layovers who are not passing through Singapore immigration. I can think of no other airport that offers free, easy trips to local destinations for passengers who would otherwise spend hours eating Cinnabon and Chik-fil-A on uncomfortable seats with people talking loudly on their phones nearby.

The next day, I reluctantly dragged a suitcase to my boarding gate, sadly departing this aviation oasis to make the long flight home. I thought the fun was over, but wait! I spotted a sign for a butterfly garden. Is there anything more calming than watching butterflies at the airport? The answer is no, except when one lands on you, then it's calming and fun. I ducked into the space, home to 1,000 butterflies, a koi pond, and a five-story waterfall. When I thought this place couldn't get more magical, I walked into a rain forest. I also noticed a movie theater that's open 24 hours a day and shows free films 24 hours a day.

I made the rounds at the airport gift shop, which sold local ointments and liniments such as bee venom and crocodile oil. I reluctantly boarded with sweet memories of Basque burnt cheesecake sourbombs, Michelin-starred Imperial Treasure Super Peking Duck, and a Singapore Sling at Harry's Bar. I will recall it all fondly the next time I'm scarfing down an order of spicy cheese and bacon tots at Wahlburgers in Logan and wondering why we can't have a Rain Vortex of our own.

Christopher Muther can be reached at christopher.muther@globe.com. Follow him @Chris_Muther and Instagram @chris_muther.



STAY · PLAY · LIVE · JOIN

THE MOST AMENITY RICH SPORTING CLUB IN AMERICA

Discover the enchantment that awaits at the most amenity-rich sporting club in the nation, The Preserve Sporting Club & Resort, located in Richmond, Rhode Island. Here, nature's beauty and modern luxury intertwine to create an unparalleled lifestyle experience. Join our community to experience over 3,500 acres of woodlands, upland fields, outdoor adventure, and wonderfully manicured waterways, making it New England's only 4-season sporting destination.

CLAYS SHOOTING | FISHING | GOLF | SPA | EQUESTRIAN | DINING | EVENTS



Inquiries: ThePreserveRI.com
401-330-8613 | sales@thepreserveri.com
1 Preserve Boulevard, Richmond, Rhode Island 02898
All rights reserved. The Preserve Sporting Club & Resort reserves the right for price change, errors, and misprints. Rates and availability are subject to change.

