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Cruising Alaska

Sailing Into Fun on the Last Frontier

Travel is a great way to step beyond familiar things and expand your knowledge. I recently had a chance to do that when my dad, my older son, and I took a cruise down the Alaskan coast.

Given that October is the best time to visit our national parks, according to Lonely Planet, I suggest putting some of Alaska's eight national parks on your bucket list. We visited several of them on our journey from Anchorage, Alaska, down to Vancouver, B.C., and we had a great time!

The cruise was my dad's gift to my older son. He and my mom had taken our daughter on an Alaskan cruise two years ago, and he booked the same trip with our older son, who had just turned 13. But after Mom passed away, my dad offered me the extra ticket.

The sheer size of Alaska is amazing. You don't realize how big it is until you are there. At 665,000 square miles, Alaska is more than twice the size of the next-largest state, Texas. You really have to travel by ship to see a lot of it. Going from one port to another might take four hours on a ship, compared with 16–20 hours by car.

Among the most impressive sights was the Mendenhall Glacier near Juneau. This massive glacier, the largest one accessible by road, fractured shortly after we left, causing record flooding. The Hubbard Glacier in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park is more than five times longer than the Mendenhall Glacier, stretching for 76 miles along the coast.

In Skagway, a historic boom town from the Klondike gold rush of the 1890s, we did a little panning for gold, and my son collected \$60 worth of gold flecks. We also met some mushers who compete in the annual Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race and learned what characteristics they look for in a sled dog. Surprisingly, Siberian huskies are not their top choice. They prefer mixed-breed mutts bred for specific traits, depending on the dog's position in the lineup. And in the port city of Ketchikan, my son got me up on a zip line for the first time in a long while. The guides were a lot of fun, and we had a great time zipping from tree to tree.

Neither my son nor I had been on a cruise ship, and it was great to have that focused time together. He loved the freedom to explore the ship on his own, and my dad and I were comfortable saying,



"Go, have fun!" On a ship, there was no place else he could go! He enjoyed getting a soda whenever he liked, hitting golf balls in a simulator, and playing on the pickleball court. Passengers could earn points by participating in activities, and he earned enough points to redeem them for a visor for my wife and some golf balls and a golf towel for himself.

He also tried all kinds of new foods, including sushi and even caviar. For my part, I enjoyed getting up early and journaling over a cup of coffee at the coffee bar, looking out the window.

My dad had fun, too. The day we went ziplining, he went on a cooking tour instead. He is already talking about taking our younger son on the same trip in two years, and my wife and I are battling over which one of us will get to go along.

Alaska offers so much to do and see that I could easily have doubled our time in each port. If you are interested in Alaska, go for it!

- Andrew M. Ayers



RECEIVERS AND RHAPSODIES

The Birth of Streaming Sound

We celebrate the late Steve Jobs of Apple and Spotify CEO Daniel Ek as innovators in the world of music streaming, but the *true* pioneer of how most of us enjoy tunes in 2025 is a man who died nearly a century ago.

A lawyer by trade, Thaddeus Cahill (1867–1934) spent his free time as an innovator, a hobby that eventually led him to revolutionize sound. In 1897, he received a patent for the Telharmonium, a 200-ton organ created to turn telephones into what could be considered the world's first iPods. Looking more like a NASA control board than a musical instrument, the Telharmonium used electromagnetic impulses to create sounds similar to those of modern synthesizers and transmit them over telephone networks, essentially making the "hold music" of its time. Although bulky, the invention captured the hearts of music aficionados, including Mark Twain, who famously said, "I couldn't possibly leave the world until I have heard this again and again."

The instrument made its public debut in 1906 with the opening of Telharmonic Hall in New York City. Guests could grab one of the phone receivers placed throughout the venue and listen to the synthesized music Telharmonium operators were performing on the floor below. Soon, phone users embraced Cahill's technology at theaters, eateries, hotels, and homes nationwide.

Unfortunately, the system proved glitchy — the organ's electronic tones interrupted ordinary phone users mid-conversation — and AT&T decided not to invest in Cahill's impractical invention to expand its reach. That inconvenience, coupled with high manufacturing costs (each Telharmonium cost \$200,000, a fortune then) and operational demands (it required 2–4 musicians to play), eventually led to declining popularity and the closing of Telharmonic Hall by 1920.

Sadly, no surviving audio recordings of the Telharmonium are believed to exist, and its last known version was dismantled and scrapped in the early 1960s.

Surprising Southern Halloween Laws

Clergy, Candy, and Criminal Codes

Depending on where you live, Halloween is either a holiday for spooky fun or a one-way ticket to the wrong side of the law. Surprisingly, certain parts of the country have Halloween-related laws regulating everything from who can wear a mask to whom you're allowed to make laugh. Here are a few obscure-but-true laws in the South that, if broken, are scarier than any haunted hayride.

The Great Mustachioed Priest Menace

If you're a Halloween reveler in Alabama, be careful with your costume choice — God and the law are watching. Dressing up like a priest, rabbi, nun, or other clergy member on Oct. 31 or any other day of the year could cost you a fine of up to \$500 or up to a year behind bars. The law was established to show respect to religious institutions by discouraging citizens from impersonating faith leaders.

Additionally, Alabama's focus on maintaining a sense of decorum in religious practices extends to what citizens do in

the presence of *actual* priests. Naturally, disrupting services by prompting attendees to burst out laughing is bad form, which is why the state prohibits anyone from wearing a fake mustache in church to elicit a chuckle. Was this practice *really* widespread enough to inspire an actual law? While the law's historical origins are unclear, it demonstrates the state's commitment to religious faith and willingness to fine anyone who attempts to mock it.

The Decriminalized Children of Dublin

Dublin, Georgia, has an odd — and, depending on your age, *totally fun* — legal perspective concerning facial coverings. Although the city's rules were loosened temporarily at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, municipal laws prohibit people from "wearing a mask, hood, or other apparel or regalia in such manner as to conceal [their] identity, or in such manner that [their] face is not fully visible, or



in such manner that [they] may not be recognized." However, Dublin makes an annual exception for children under the age of 16 who "may be garbed in the usual or customary children's Halloween costumes." While parents or older siblings will face a misdemeanor charge if they're caught wearing a mask while accompanying their little ones trick-or-treating, at least children in Dublin won't be deemed juvenile criminals for covering their faces while on the hunt for neighborhood candy.

TAKE A **BREAK**



I wonder if my recorded call has ever actually been used for training or quality control purposes



APPLE UPSIDE-DOWN CAKE

Inspired by IHeartEating.com



Ingredients

Topping

- 1/4 cup unsalted butter
- 1/2 cup light brown sugar
- 3 Honeycrisp apples
- 1 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 3/4 cup milk
- 1/4 cup unsalted butter, melted

Cake

- 1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 large egg

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. In a 9-inch round cake pan, add butter for topping. Place in oven for a few minutes until melted.
3. Sprinkle brown sugar over melted butter.
4. Cut apples into half circles about 1/4-inch thick (no need to peel) and arrange them in circles, overlapping slightly until they fill the entire pan. Set aside.
5. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, sugar, baking powder, ground cinnamon, and salt.
6. Add milk, melted butter, vanilla, and egg. Whisk until combined.
7. Pour batter over apple slices, smoothing as needed.
8. Bake for 30–35 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.
9. Let cool to room temperature, invert on a plate, and serve.

STRONG STARTS

Denmark's Secrets to Raising Happy Kids



In a black-and-white world, Danes embrace the gray.

The University of Oxford's "World Happiness Report" cites Denmark as the second-happiest country behind Finland. Denmark clearly knows a thing or two about fostering a culture that prioritizes contentment and personal well-being. Not surprisingly, the rest of the world often looks to Denmark for inspiration to lead a more positive life. Regarding parenting, Danish citizens have crafted a philosophical and practical approach that could benefit children in countries far from their own.

Attitude Determines Attitude

First and foremost, Danish parenting is a practice steeped in empathy, caring, communication, and respect. While these core tenets aren't particularly revolutionary, parent-child relationships in Denmark thrive because of how they apply each. Stringently nonviolent, Danish parenting focuses on the inherent goodness in all children and encourages independence, optimism, and honesty. For example, parents eschew "helicopter parenting" to allow their children to engage in playtime and other activities with as little intervention as possible. Practitioners believe granting their little ones this high level of freedom enables them to develop greater self-esteem and leadership skills than if they constantly dictate their actions and give strict directions. Additionally, Danish parenting stresses the importance of validating a child's emotions instead of telling them *how* to feel. This ongoing encouragement to embrace and examine feelings likely enables Danish children to develop stronger self-trust and a clearer perception of the world around them.

Bad Patches and Damaging Praise

Naturally, plenty of old-fashioned tough love balances the openness apparent in Danish parenting. Parents rarely shy away from addressing negative events, feelings, and circumstances head-on with their children. Suppose a Danish parent is having a rough day or is upset about unexpected bad news. In that case, they're more likely to explain to their children *why* their disposition is darker than usual rather than bottling up these thoughts and shielding the little ones from reality.

While talking things out is the norm in Denmark, overloading children with compliments is considered bad form. For example, studies suggest that constantly praising a child's intelligence harms their self-worth when they encounter mentally challenging tasks later in life. Instead of working through these obstacles, they're more likely to give up in frustration. To that end, Danish parents emphasize *effort* over *accomplishment*, helping children gain greater confidence in overcoming hurdles.



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HALFTIME HEAT

Hype, Hits, and a High-Stakes Lawsuit

"I wanna make a move. I wanna play their favorite song, but you know they love to sue."

These were the words rap superstar Kendrick Lamar used during his halftime performance at this year's Super Bowl to introduce his song "Not Like Us." Although he may have intended it to be a joke, his words proved prophetic.

Of course, the "they" referenced in Lamar's intro was fellow rapper Drake, with whom he'd been engaged in a high-profile feud resulting in "diss tracks" and fiery public statements. Although rap battles are nothing new — the late 1990s murders of the Notorious B.I.G. and Tupac Shakur are widely rumored to have been linked to their public conflict — the Lamar/Drake schism reached epic proportions during the February sporting event, playing out in front of a global audience of more than 130 million. Most incendiary of all, "Not Like Us" features lyrics suggesting that Drake — who has sold more than 500 million units in his musical career — has a sexual interest in minors.

Lamar's performance of the track exacerbated an already contentious defamation suit Drake filed in January against Lamar's record label, UMG

Recordings, which, interestingly, also oversees *the plaintiff's* music catalog. In an amended complaint filed shortly after the Super Bowl, Drake alleges that Lamar "duped" the audience into believing he had immoral proclivities.

"It was the first, and will hopefully be the last, Super Bowl halftime show orchestrated to assassinate the character of another artist," the suit adds.

Faced with a major lawsuit filed by one of its artists, UMG quickly issued a public statement, voicing dismay over Drake's legal maneuverings in recent months.

"Drake, unquestionably one of the world's most accomplished artists and with whom we've enjoyed a 16-year successful relationship, is being misled by his legal representatives into taking one absurd legal step after another."

While the ultimate conclusion of Drake's latest move in his longstanding feud with his musical arch nemesis was unknown at the time of this writing, what is clear is that combining a bruised ego with big money often leads to interesting times for the legal world.

