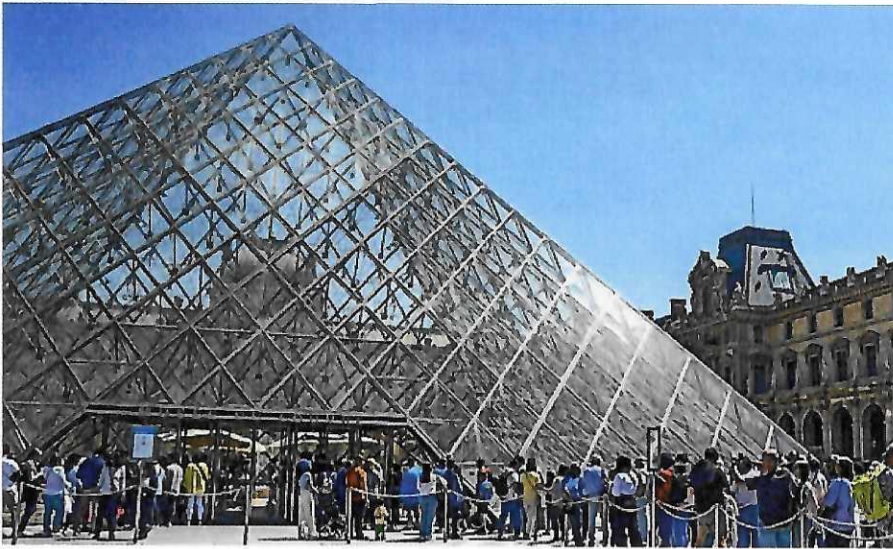


The Louvre will get a major redesign to take on overtourism



The iconic Louvre in Paris is no stranger to crowds. Since first opening in 1793, the museum has played host to millions of guests and undergone dozens of expansions and renovations to accommodate them. Today, though, overtourism has brought the historic site to a breaking point.

In a typical year, the Louvre is prepared to accommodate 4 million visitors. But in 2024, almost 9 million people—70% of them originating from outside of France—passed through its doors.

Now the Louvre will now undergo a massive renovation to address overcrowding and expand its viewing capacity to 12 million annual visitors, French President Emmanuel Macron has announced. The ambitious project includes opening a new entrance on the Seine river, and dedicating a stand-alone room to house the Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci, to give the famed Italian Renaissance painting some breathing room.

There isn't room for visitors to take a break, according to des Cars, who also assessed the museum's food and restroom facilities as "insufficient in volume." She added in her memo that some areas of the museum are prone to leaks, while others experience wide temperature variations, potentially impacting the preservation of the artwork within. The Louvre's signage needs to be redesigned as well, des Cars asserted.

The Louvre currently has only one entrance—the iconic glass pyramid by architect I.M. Pei, opened in 1989. Overcrowding of the thoroughway in recent years has led to both a greenhouse-like heating effect and unpleasant sound amplification.

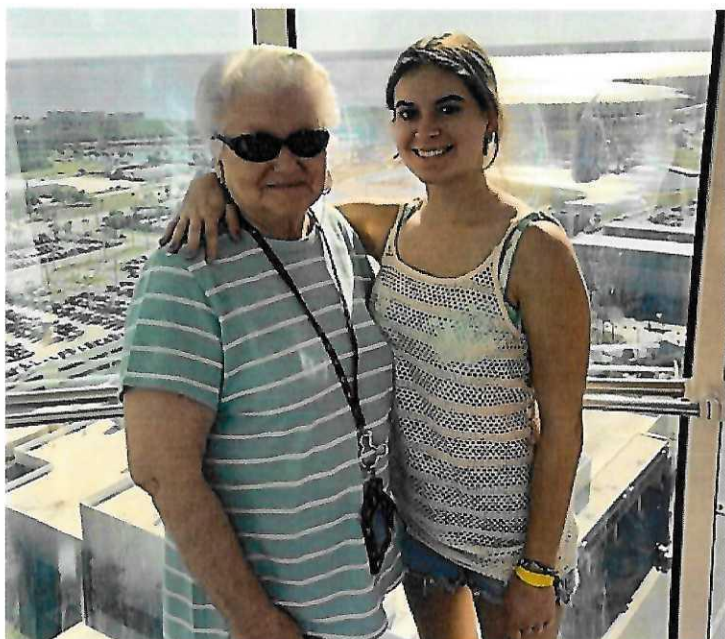
A similar issue has plagued staffers guarding the Mona Lisa. Around 20,000 people pack into the room housing the famous painting each day, resulting in massive lines and far-from-ideal viewing conditions (if you can even get close enough to catch a glimpse).

At a speech delivered in front of the Mona Lisa on Tuesday, Macron introduced a plan to bring the fun back to the Louvre. In short: improve the flow of foot traffic throughout the space in order to prevent major backups.

To start, Macron announced, the renovation will include a new grand entrance at the Colonnade de Perrault on the museum's western side near the Seine, finally adding an additional pathway for guests to enter the building, and relieving crowding at the pyramid entrance. The Louvre will hold a competition to choose the firm responsible for the addition, which is slated to open in 2031.

Several underground rooms will be added to boost exhibition space. And the museum will relocate its *pièce de résistance*—the Mona Lisa—to its own dedicated room. That room will require a separate access pass and be "independently accessible compared to the rest of the museum," Macron said.

In response to the issue of overtourism, the museum will also institute higher prices for foreign travelers. Starting on January 1, 2026, Macron announced, all guests from outside the EU will be required to pay a higher entrance fee.



MaryAnn and Gabbi's Cruise

March 2025

Grandma and I ma and I went on a 7-day Bahamas cruise aboard Royal Caribbean's Odyssey of the Seas. It was a wonderful experience, from the ease of check-in to the cleanliness of my stateroom and overall ship amenities to the friendliness of the staff, to the ship's stops and excursions. I had the most amazing time, most of all spending time with my Grany. We made so many memories while on this trip that I will cherish for a lifetime.



One of my favorite things that we did was the dolphin excursion in Nassau, Bahamas on the Blue Lagoon island. This was one of the things that I was most excited about since I had never met a dolphin in person before, and my expectations were far exceeded beyond what I could've imagined. We also went on a Snorkeling excursion while on Royal Caribbean's private island CocoCay which was awesome. On this one, I was able to see so many different kinds of fish, including a pufferfish and even a barracuda (which swam away, phew), a sunken plane wreck, and a small reef.

Thank you Nancy and Hometown for this unforgettable experience.

Gabriella R of Jackson, NJ

BE YOUR **REAL ID** SELF

DEADLINE: **MAY 7, 2025**

Join the Manahawkin Elks Lodge

To San Juan and a seven-night all-inclusive cruise to the Southern Caribbean
on the Grand Princess.

October 25th-November 2, 2025

You vacation will start in San Juan where we will transfer as a group for a pre night at the Embassy Suites Hotel and Casino before the cruise. The Embassy Suites is located 2 miles from the airport in the beautiful area of Isla Verde and two blocks from the beach. Included for your one-night stay is a complimentary cocktail reception from 5:30pm to 7:00pm, cooked to order breakfast buffet, portage service for one bag and use of beach chairs, umbrellas and towels. The next morning, we will transfer as a group to the cruise terminal to start your southern Caribbean adventure.

Visit the ports of call of: Tortola, BVI, St. Kitts, Dominica, Grenada, Barbados and one day at sea to experience cruise ship life. This eight night package includes: Round trip non stop air on American Airlines out of Philadelphia, transportation in San Juan to hotel, cruise ship and back to the airport, one night pre hotel at the Embassy Suites, cruise accommodations as selected, **Princess Plus** covers all drinks alcoholic and non-alcoholic, all meals except specialty dining (surcharge), pre-paid gratuities, two casual dining meals, two premium desserts, two fitness classes, room service, WI-FI, all government and port taxes plus some Home Town perks. Not included is optional travel insurance, which will be provided. Transportation locally will be provided for nominal fee to the airport.

You will need a valid US passport with a validity date of more than 6 months to the date of return. A deposit of \$250.00 per person would be required to book by **April 25th**. **You do not have to be a member of the ELKS to travel.**

Rates per person based on double occupancy start at **\$2239.00 for an Ocean View** cabin (partial obstructed) and **\$2639.00 for a balcony cabin**. Single rates available upon request.

Tara Bihlmier at Home Town Travel,

Email: t.l.gaffney@comcast.net

(609) 597-5100

GROUPS FOR 2025-2026

UTAH'S MIGHTY FIVE AND THE ROCKIES, SEPTEMBER 9-17, 2025, with Collette Vacations, Highlights include Rocky Mountaineer, Glenwood Springs, Moab, Arches National Park, Canyonlands National Park, Dead Horse Point State Park, Capitol Reef National Park, Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, Bryce Canyon National Park, Zion National Park ending our tour at Paris Hotel Las Vegas. The tour includes round trip transfers to/from Newark, airfare, air taxes, fees and surcharges. Insurance is available at \$429.00. Book now and save \$200 per person. Rates \$6,549.00 (double), \$7,749.00 (single) and \$6,449.00 (triple) and must be booked by January 20, 2025.

OLD WORLD SICILY AND MALTA, NOVEMBER 5-16, 2025, with Collette Vacations. This is a small group departure for Home Town Travel with a maximum of 24 passengers on this adventure. These legendary isles are nestled amongst the deep blue water of the Mediterranean. Discover how ancient traditions blend into modern society as you travel along timeless Italian Maltese and Sicilian towns. This eleven-night tour begins with a four-night stay in Malta with a ferry to Sicily where you will stay three nights in Ragusa and three nights in Taormina. This package includes round trip transportation to Newark airport from our office, round trip air from Newark airport with an overnight flight to Malta, 10 breakfasts, 1 lunch and 4 dinners, professional escort throughout the trip and all accommodations and entrance fees. The rate per person based on double occupancy is \$5,399.00. Cancel for any reason insurance is optional and at a rate of \$549.00. Please call for more information.

NOVEMBER 25, 2025-ICONIC CHRISTMAS MARKETS ABOARD AMA REINA (Nuremburg to Budapest)

Travel back through centuries as you walk along cobblestone streets through grand cities and historic towns bedecked with twinkling Christmas trees and lined with wooden huts gleaming with handcrafted treasures. Nuremberg's festive Christkindlemarkt, the largest and oldest Christmas market in Germany, Regensburg's Artisan Christmas Market, one of Bavaria's most beautiful and romantic, Vienna with its impressive Christmas Market and Budapest where most products are handmade. Revel in a feast for the senses: sparkling lights, festive sounds of children dressed as angels singing carols and the enticing smells of hot-mulled wine, roasted chestnuts, sausages, and sweet treats of every kind. Rates start at \$3,699.00 per person double occupancy. Air fare and pre and post op MARCH 13-26,2026—TWELVE NIGHT VIETNAM & THAILAND CRUISE ABOARD THE CELEBRITY SOLSTICE This bucket list trip starts in Hong Kong and visits Hanoi (Halong Bay), Hue/Danang, Ho Chi Minh (Phu My), Bangkok/Laemchabang and Ko Samui Thailand, and disembarking in Singapore. Pre and post land packages will be available. Cruise includes balcony accommodations (V1), all current port and government taxes, beverage package, gratuities, and Wi-Fi. SAVE OVER \$1,500 PER CABIN. Rate per person based on double \$3,350.00. A deposit of \$900/cabin is required to reserve your cabin. Final payment is not due until December 1, 2025. **ONE CABIN LEFT.**

MARCH 8, 2026 to APRIL 8, 2026—31 DAY PANAMA CANAL, INCA & SOUTH AMERICAN DISCOVERY ABOARD HOLLAND AMERICA'S OOSTERDAM.

Holland America's first Vista-class ship, the Oosterdam recently emerged from dry dock with exciting updates including completely refurbished suites and new lounge, dining and entertainment venues, such as Music Walk with Lincoln Center Stage, B.B. King's Blues Club and Billboard on board. Guests can choose from delectable specialty restaurants, hone culinary Skills with America's Test Kitchen and thrill to BBC Earth experiences. Embark in cosmopolitan Buenos Aires where pre-cruise packages will be available soon. Visit the penguins in Patagonia as you get ready to sail past Cape Horn and the Straits of Magellan. We then sail from Ushuaia and cruise the dramatic coast of Chile with stops in Puerto Montt and Punta Arenas. Sail through Glacier Alley enroute to a full transit of the Panama Canal. Inside cabins start at \$4,999.00 per person double. Available additions include Holland America's "Have It All" package which includes beverage package, three specialty dining venues, \$300 per person shore excursion credit, wi-fi and \$250 per person on board credit. This package is available for \$55 per person/per day. Prepaid gratuities are available at \$17/day. Other categories are available. Call for other rates and more information.

MARCH 13-26 ,2026—TWELVE NIGHT VIETNAM & THAILAND CRUISE ABOARD THE CELEBRITY SOLSTICE

This bucket list trip starts in Hong Kong and visits Hanoi (Halong Bay), Hue/Danang, Ho Chi Minh (Phu My), Bangkok/Laemchabang and Ko Samui Thailand, and disembarking in Singapore. Pre and post land packages will be

available. Cruise includes balcony accommodations (V1), all current port and government taxes, beverage package, gratuities, and Wi-Fi. SAVE OVER \$1,500 PER CABIN. Rate per person based on double \$3,350.00. A deposit of \$900/cabin is required to reserve your cabin. Final payment is not due until December 1, 2025.

Cultural Treasures of Japan with Collette Vacations April 2026

Welcome to Japan, the “Land of the Rising Sun.” Explore ancient and modern Japanese culture firsthand. Discover peaceful temples and technological marvels set against unimaginable natural beauty. This amazing 14-day tour will include airfare from Newark, transfer to and from Newark airport from Home Town Travel, 18 meals, all accommodations, sightseeing with entrance fees, transportation within Japan and a professional tour escort thorough the trip. Some of the highlights of this tour will include: Tokyo, Asakusa, Sensoji Shrine, Tea Ceremony, Ginza, Lake Ashi Cruise, Matsumoto Castle, Takayama, Sake Tasting and Hida beef dinner, Kyoto, bullet train and Hiroshima. Exact dates and rates will be out shortly. For more information, please call the office.

Netherlands, Belgium & France with Collette Vacations September 2026

From iconic Dutch windmills and cozy Belgian streets to the world-renowned Champagne region and the “City of Light,” experience the essence of three European countries. This 12-day tour will include airfare from Newark, transfers to and from Newark airport from Home Town Travel, 16 meals, all accommodations, transportation through out your journey, sightseeing with entrance fees and a professional escort. Some of the highlights of this tour will include: Amsterdam, Canal Cruise, Kinderdijk, Bruges, Reims, Route du Champagne, Paris Parisian Bakery Workshop, Parfum Workshop, Le Marais, Ile de la Cite, Seine River Cruise and Eiffel Tower dinner. Exact dates and rates will be out shortly.

We will be having an informative Wine and Cheese with Collette tours in April with all the information on promoted tours. Please make sure to RSVP early, date will be confirmed and will be in our news blast.

Princess Cruises Goes Country with New Music Partnership

Princess Cruises, in partnership with the Academy of Country Music (ACM), is bringing country music to the high seas with the ACM Live from the Red Barrel Lounge concert series. On Caribbean voyages departing Galveston, Texas, between Feb. 9 and March 17, guests aboard Regal Princess will enjoy live performances from some of country music's most exciting emerging artists, including chart-topping singer and ACM Award nominee Kameron Marlowe, reigning ACM New Vocal Duo or Group of the Year Tigirlily Gold, and America's Got Talent breakout stars Chapel Hart, along with other rising acts across several cruises sailing out of Galveston in early 2025 voyages. (Pictured above: Maddie & Tae being interviewed live from the Princess Stage at the 59th ACM Awards Show.)

As part of the series, six ascending country music acts will perform two, 45-minute concerts in the Princess Theater and interact with guests during Meet & Greet sessions.

POISELLA FAMILY CRUISE



Crispy Air Fryer Chicken Thighs

Juicy, tender dark-meat chicken with the crispiest skin in less than twenty minutes—who could ask for anything more? Serve these lightly seasoned chicken thighs as is, or toss them while still hot with your favorite barbecue or buffalo sauce to give this quick and easy anytime meal an extra kick.

Level: Easy
Total: 35 min
Active: 10 min
Yield: 4 servings

Ingredients:

- 1 teaspoon granulated garlic (or garlic powder)
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 4 bone-in, skin on chicken thighs (about 2 pounds)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

Directions:

Special equipment: a 3.5-quart air fryer

- 1 Mix together the granulated garlic, onion powder, thyme, paprika, 2 teaspoons salt and 1/2 teaspoon pepper in a small bowl. Pat the chicken dry and add to a medium bowl. Add the olive oil and half of the spice mix, then toss to combine.
- 2 Add the flour to the remaining spice mix and stir to combine. Transfer the flour mixture to a large resealable bag. Add the seasoned thighs to the bag, seal well and toss until the chicken is fully coated in the flour.
- 3 Preheat a 3.5-quart air fryer to 400 degrees F. Add the chicken thighs to the air fryer basket, skin-side down and without touching. Cook, flipping skin-side up halfway through, until an instant-read thermometer inserted into thickest part (avoiding the bone) reads 165 degrees F, about 18 minutes. Let rest for 5 minutes before serving.

