

How to get out of paying hotel resort fees

By Juliana Shallcross, Frommers

Resort fees can be the ultimate buzzkill during your hard-earned vacation.

Spending an additional \$20 to \$30 per night, plus tax, can cancel out whatever good vibes you picked up while relaxing at the pool, especially if the charge covers amenities and services that were once included in the room rate, such as newspapers, in-room coffee, and use of the fitness center.

But it's even more irksome to pay for amenities you'll likely never need, like fax copies or a notary service.

While many hotels claim their resort fees are mandatory, that's not true. Guests can take a stand against paying resort surcharges.

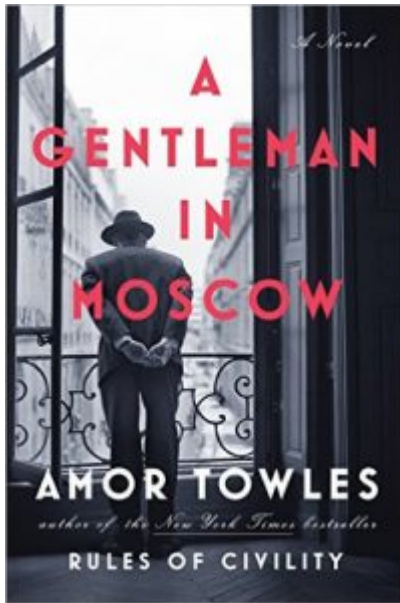
Read the whole story

One-line book reviews: Immigrants find their way in 3 novels

By Kim Wyatt

What makes one leave his or her home? What makes one stay? Three novels convey powerfully the effects in our lives of

borders created by political forces and those we create in our own minds.



"A Gentleman in Moscow"

By Amor Towles

480 pages, Viking

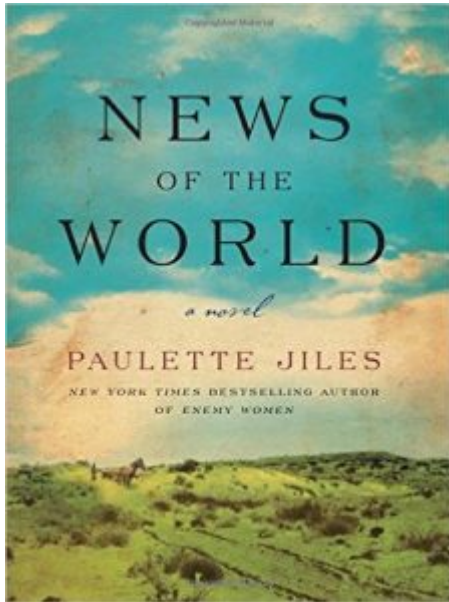
An enchanting spell about Mother Russia cast in tumultuous times.

In 1922, Count Alexander Ilyich Rostov received a life sentence for writing a poem. An aristocrat, Rostov was sentenced by a Bolshevik tribunal to house arrest at the elegant Metropol Hotel near Red Square. A man of charm, wealth and wit, he accepts his fate and makes the best of it, while the Soviet machine presses on outside the gilded doors.

"A Gentleman in Moscow" is a sophisticated romp for those who like their entertainment full-bodied. History, love affairs and letters are steeped in humor, and word play, imagery, allusion, metaphor and simile are tropes on full display. I imagine a mustache-twirling narrator who, although melodramatic, is never condescending to a captivating cast of characters: a smart seamstress, temperamental chef, seductive actress and earnest writers, naturally, add dimension and verve to this charming novel. Punctuation, at this time in Russia, matters: Union meetings turn into melees over word choice, exclamation points issue from cannons, and treatise hang on a comma—this is a world I understand and adore, and made me laugh out loud.

The count's friendship with a little girl, Nina, an occasional prisoner in the hotel due to her father's travel, is the spark that fires up the story and leads to its somewhat satisfying resolution. Occasionally, I wondered why the count never left the hotel; but the world within was so elegantly rendered, I might just stay myself to enjoy a 1912 San Lorenzo Barolo rather than battle Siberian snow.

The winter equivalent of a beach book, "A Gentleman in Moscow" is best read by the fire, wrapped in a blanket, where you can effortlessly slip into the count's world, a magnificent hotel protected as if inside a perfectly lovely snow globe while Russia revolts just outside the glass.



“News of the World”

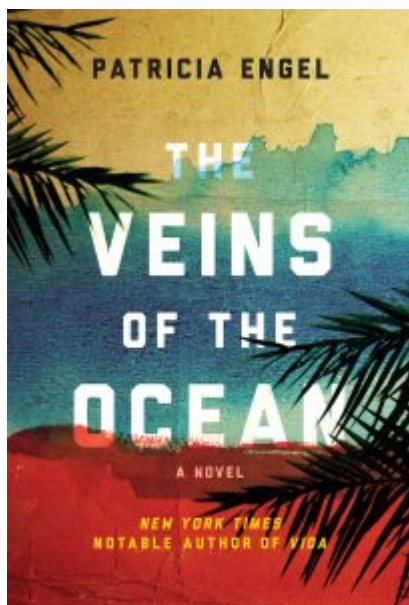
Paulette Jiles

224 pages; William Morrow

A fast-moving feminist Western that literally turns on a dime.

About one third of the way through “News of the World” by Paulette Jiles I said to my husband, “I’m reading a western!” This National Book Award finalist is the story of Capt. Jefferson Kyle Kidd, a Civil War veteran who travels through northern Texas in 1870, giving live readings from newspapers to audiences hungry for news of the world. Many people are illiterate, or don’t have access to newspapers and are eager to hear what is transpiring in New York, Europe or on the roads leading into town, where ambushes are common. On one stop, Kidd is offered a \$50 gold piece to return a young girl whose parents had been killed by Kiowa Indians to her family

home in south Texas. Johanna, now 10 years old, had been raised by the Kiowa until her rescue by the Army. With reluctance on both parts, their treacherous journey begins. The return of the girl to her family is heart-wrenching, illuminating the life of female children on the plains and also the difficulty of assimilation after living with Native Americans. If you think you wouldn't like a story about a gun-toting curmudgeon and the return of an orphan to her blood family—not necessarily her best family—this book will put that to the test, showcasing the aftereffects of war, and what happens when we care for one another. I couldn't put it down.



"The Veins of the Ocean"

Patricia Engle

320 pages, Grove Press

A modern-day immigration story set in Florida and the Bermuda

Triangle of family, hope and home.

What if you had the chance to start over? To break free from the shackles of family and place? Would you begin again, or remain in the past? After the death of her brother, Carlito, in Miami's South Glade Penitentiary, Columbian immigrant Reina Castillo finds herself in the Florida Keys. Reina has no hope for a better life; without her weekly visits to her brother and the grisly crimes that tether them, she is adrift. So it's fitting that she meets Nesto, a Cuban exile who is comfortable with the ocean—it is his lifeline to the wife and children who wait on the other side of the sea. Together, these two navigate the rocky shore toward redemption.

If you like complicated novels about the bonds of family, are beguiled by the strange beauty of Florida or intrigued by modern immigrant stories, consider "The Veins of the Ocean" by Patricia Engle. I was drawn in by the cadence of Reina's voice, her lens on the world, and her lack of pretense. There is a subplot involving the release of dolphins from a rickety theme park, a nod to Florida's complicated relationship with the environment, but the story is really about deliverance. When Reina meets Nesto, you have more hope for her than she has for herself. I wanted Reina to find happiness, but she has a lot to resolve, and her personal exploration, it turns out, is as deep as the sea.

*Kim Wyatt is the owner of **Bona Fide Books** in Meyers.*

Paul Simon to play at Harveys

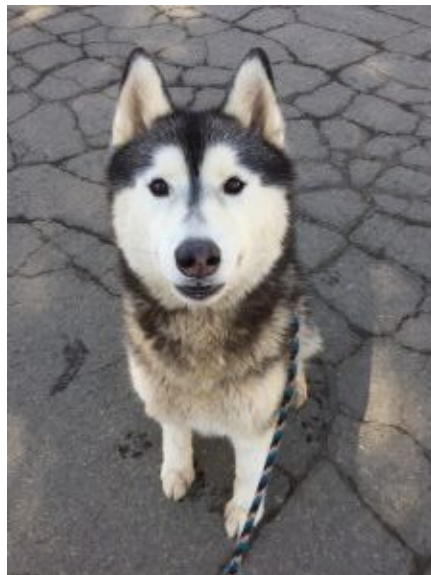
in June

Paul Simon is coming to Lake Tahoe this summer.

He will be performing as part of the Harveys Outdoor Concert Series on June 25.

Also coming to the South Shore this summer are: Rebelution (June 30), Sammy Hagar (July 2), Train (July 9), Third Eye Blind (July 16), Jack Johnson (July 28) and Slightly Stoopid (Aug. 4) .

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Balto

Balto is a beautiful 4 year old Alaskan Malamute; a little smaller than the typical Malamute.

He takes treats very nicely, and walks well on a short leash.

He is bossy with other dogs, but may do well with a mellow female. He is way too interested in cats, small animals and birds.

Balto is neutered, microchipped, tested for heart worm, and vaccinated. He is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes. Go to the Tahoe animal shelter's Facebook page to see photos and descriptions of all pets at the shelter.

Call 530.573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go **online**.

– Karen Kuentz

Nevada arts groups ‘fight’ for federal funding

By Jenny Kane, Reno Gazette-Journal

As the National Endowment of the Arts faces rumors of being on the chopping block under the new White House administration, the organization's director is conducting business as usual and made a trip to a surprising location last week: Reno.

Jane Chu, an Oklahoma native, former piano prodigy and daughter of Chinese immigrants, was appointed in 2014 to take charge of the federal organization tasked with appropriating \$148 million in grants each year to arts organizations around the country. She is the first director to visit Northern

Nevada in two decades; it's the 47th state that she has visited so far under her leadership.

The biggest grants in recent years were a \$60,000 grant to the Reno Chamber Orchestra for a composer residency and a \$50,000 grant to the Nevada Museum of Art for the "Tahoe: A Visual History" exhibition.

Read the whole story

Actors sought for LTCC production of 'Godspell'

Auditions for the smash-hit musical "Godspell" will be at Lake Tahoe Community College's Duke Theatre on March 27 at 7pm.

Performances of the musical take place June 16-25. Actors of all ages and ethnic backgrounds are sought for this award-winning musical with music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz and book by John Michael Tebelak.

"Godspell" was the first major musical theater offering from three-time Grammy and Academy Award winner Schwartz, and it took the world by storm when it first opened off-Broadway in 1971. Led by the international hit, "Day by Day," "Godspell" features a parade of beloved songs, including, "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord," "Learn Your Lessons Well," "All for the Best," "All Good Gifts," "Turn Back, O Man" and "By My Side."

The musical tells the story of a small group of people who help Jesus Christ tell different parables by using a wide variety of games, storytelling techniques and a hefty dose of comic timing.

Scripts will be available on reserve at the front desk of LTCC's Roberta Mason Library. Audition sides will also be available in the Duke Theatre lobby inside the Fine Arts building, and listed on the Theatre Arts Department's Facebook page one week prior to auditions.

In addition to acting roles, LTCC is also seeking light and sound board operators, a stage manager, backstage crew, and construction workers. For more information about these positions and this production, call 530.541.4660, ext. 240.

Grow a bigger garden in a smaller space

By Melinda Myers

Whether in the ground or on a balcony or deck, there's always room to grow your own garden-fresh produce and beautiful flowers. Space-saving gardening techniques and products can help you increase productivity in any available space.

Consider elevated gardens and planter carts that not only save space, but make gardens more accessible. Movable carts like the Demeter Mobile Planter Cart allow you to grow flowers and produce in narrow spaces, store garden accessories and move the garden into the sunlight or out of the way of guests as needed.

Save more space by going vertical. Look for containers and raised garden beds with built-in trellises and plant supports. Just plant your pole beans, peas, cucumbers or tomatoes and attach them to the supports as they grow. Support the large fruit of squash and melons with cloth or macramé slings. Just

cradle the fruit in the sling and secure it to the trellis. You'll not only save space, but reduce disease problems and make harvesting a breeze.



Planter boxes with built-in trellises like this Apex trellis planter enable gardeners to maximize their garden space. Photo/Gardener's Supply Company

Double your planting space by growing shade tolerant greens under cucumbers, growing on a cucumber or A-frame trellis. Set the trellis in place and plant the greens in early spring as soon as the soil is workable. Plant your cucumbers next to the trellis as soon as the soil warms. As your cucumbers grow they shade the greens below keeping them a bit cooler and extending the harvest season. Just make sure you can reach the greens beneath the supports for planting, weeding and harvesting.

Extend the growing season with a year round kitchen garden.

Grow greens and herbs under lights attached to a raised bed on wheels. When the outdoor planting season arrives, remove the lights and roll your garden onto the patio or deck. Continue planting and harvesting outdoors until it is time to roll it back inside to start your indoor garden.

Or top your raised bed and containers with frost protective coverings. Many have built-in frames to support greenhouse covers, allowing you to plant earlier and harvest later in the season. And once the weather warms switch out the cover for an insect-protective fabric or mesh. These fabric coverings prevent insects like cabbage worms from damaging cabbage, broccoli and Brussels sprouts and keep root maggots off radishes.

Select planters that complement your landscape design and gardening style. Wood, metal and colorful raised beds and containers add beauty, durability and growing space. Galvanized planters, cedar raised beds, and those in eye-catching colors found at Gardener's Supply make your raised bed a beautiful focal point in the garden. Or fill your planters with tall grasses, cannas, elephant ears and other plants to create an attractive screen.

Look for multi-purpose furnishings and accessories to maximize your space and enjoyment. Fire pits that become a table or bench can double as a cooler, making relaxing and entertaining in small gardens a real possibility. Or how about planters with built-in hidden storage like the green box elevated planter Box. You'll enjoy the convenience of having your garden tools handy, yet out of sight.

Use these space saving ideas to help increase the beauty, productivity and enjoyment your garden can provide. With the right combination of growing techniques and garden accessories you, your family and guests will create beautiful memories throughout the gardening season.

Melinda Myers is the author of more than 20 gardening books, including "Small Space Gardening." She hosts the nationally syndicated "Melinda's Garden Moment" TV and radio program.

Elegant Evening tickets on sale

Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra is hosting the 28th annual Elegant Evening on April 22 at Harrah's Lake Tahoe.

There will be food, wine and vodka tastings, raffles and a silent auction that allows **online** bidding prior to the event.

The Soul Experience featuring Trey Stone will provide the dance music.

The mission of Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra is to enhance and participate with actions and funds in projects locally and globally. A few examples are:

- Project Middle School: provides support throughout the academic year, giving youth the skills needed to become productive adults including; anti-bullying assemblies, Kid's Day, and the Junior S Club for girls.
- Summer Book Program: books are given at the end of each school year to K-8 students to encourage reading during the summer break.
- Scholarships: awarded to high school and college students.
- Ongoing support for the Young Parents Program, Drug Store Project, Boys and Girls Club, Live Violence Free's Girls Empowerment Project, National Alliance of Mentally Ill, BATS~Bringing Art to Schools, Kellermann

Foundation, Tahoe Turning Point, and Tahoe Youth & Family Services.

Tickets are \$65 through March 31, \$75 after that; buy them **online** . The event is from 5:30-9:30pm.

Wild & Scenic Film Fest returns to South Shore

The 12th annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival South Lake Tahoe combines award-winning environmental and adventure films with the energy of local activism.

Featured films will include outdoor adventures, environmental battles and inspirational stories of people making a difference. The film festival will take place March 24 at the MontBleu showroom in Stateline.

Advance tickets are \$12 for Sierra Nevada Alliance members, \$15 for non-members and \$10 for students. Tickets can be purchased **online** and at Patagonia South Lake Tahoe. Tickets will be available at the door for \$20. Doors open at 6pm, films start at 7pm.

Money Matters: 5 reasons to plan for the unknown

By Rick Gross

When you plan for the future, you may think about positive events such as marriage, starting a family, retirement or grandchildren. Yet there are other life changes such as job loss, illness, disability, or the need to care for a family member that can take an emotional and financial toll.



Rick Gross

While it's natural to avoid thinking about these difficult events, it's short-sighted to ignore the possibilities. Here are five compelling reasons why it's better to prepare your finances for the unexpected rather than simply cross your fingers.

Challenging life events are hard enough to manage. Financial decisions made in a moment of crisis may not be the soundest ones and could have consequences for years to come. If you have financial contingency plans in place, you may have less to worry about or distract you from the issue at hand. You can be free to focus on pressing personal situations when it matters most.

You'll have more choices. Planning when things are going well will give you more options for protecting your finances. Certain options that guard against financial loss may not be

available when tragedy strikes. For example, it's too late to buy insurance after a kitchen fire or a family member becomes ill. Planning ahead can give you peace of mind that you'll be ready for these types of events.

Careful planning takes time. When you face an unexpected situation, you may not have the time or energy to consider your options carefully. With time on your side, you can be more deliberate, thorough and informed. For example, you can make multiple appointments to meet with tax, medical, financial planning and legal professionals to get advice and recommendations. These professionals can help you with a variety of tasks to prepare for the unexpected, such as updating your will, researching and comparing prices on financial products or insurance, establishing a trust or completing a healthcare directive. All of these arrangements can be complex, requiring a certain amount of your time and attention to get them in order.

It's the considerate thing to do. Imagine the burden to family members if you're incapacitated and your finances are in disarray. Having your financial dealings in order makes it easier for a loved one to step in and help, as needed. Make sure a trusted family member knows where key financial documents are and how to contact the professionals who help with your finances.

Action beats fear. Conventional wisdom urges us to 'hope for the best and prepare for the worst.' It's good advice, and having a plan in place is empowering. You may not be able to prevent every unpleasant occurrence in life, but you can soften the blow of a personal hardship by putting safety nets in place. A financial advisor can help you identify options to prepare for life's uncertainties.

Rick Gross is a financial advisor and private wealth advisor with Ameriprise Financial Services in South Lake Tahoe.