

BELLEVUE CLUB

HOTEL BELLEVUE

# reflections

NOVEMBER 2017

sparking  
interest  
in  
innovation

A guide to local  
tech-based museums  
that will encourage  
creativity in the  
whole family

44

plus  
THE  
ELECTRIC  
MAN

DILLON MOYER  
HITS A HOME  
RUN

DECODING  
THE OXYGEN  
FACIAL





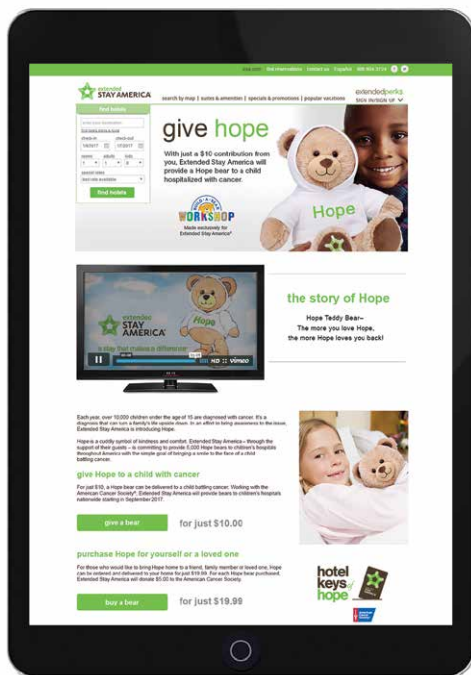
WRITTEN *by* HALEY SHAPLEY

# **MAKE A** DIFFERENCE **WHEN YOU** TRAVEL

On a recent trip to Charleston, South Carolina, I struck up a conversation with a woman while on a boat tour of the harbor. As we cruised past Fort Sumter, the USS Yorktown and gorgeous homes, I learned that Amie Sanders was visiting the city on better circumstances than previous trips. For a year she traveled several hours from her home to undergo treatment for breast cancer. The driving there and back was too much to do in one day, but finding a doctor closer to home wasn't a path she wanted to go down. "There are good doctors in the Charleston area, and the reputation here is so good," she told me. "I have little kids, so it wasn't an option not to be here."

That's when Hotel Keys of Hope stepped in. The program is a collaboration between Extended Stay America and the American Cancer Society to offer free and deeply discounted rooms to those who are undergoing cancer treatment far from home. Nearly 85,000 rooms have been donated since the program began in 2013, helping more than 12,000 patients and their families save over \$5.5 million in travel costs.





[www.extendedstayamerica.com/acs-partnership](http://www.extendedstayamerica.com/acs-partnership)





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For Amie and her family, having a place to stay, especially one with a kitchen, was a huge relief. “It offered some normalcy, being able to get away and relax,” said Amie’s husband, Gibby. “It gave us the opportunity to pretend we were going for a date night.”

Amie’s treatment was successful, and when we crossed paths, she was back in Charleston to meet other cancer survivors. Inspired by her story, I dropped my hotel room key in a box in the lobby when I checked out—for each guest who does the same, Extended Stay America donates one dollar in hotel room value to the cause. It was a small gesture on my part, but I wanted to show my support and appreciation of the program.

The experience got me thinking about what other ways I can make a difference, however small, when I travel. Here’s what I found:



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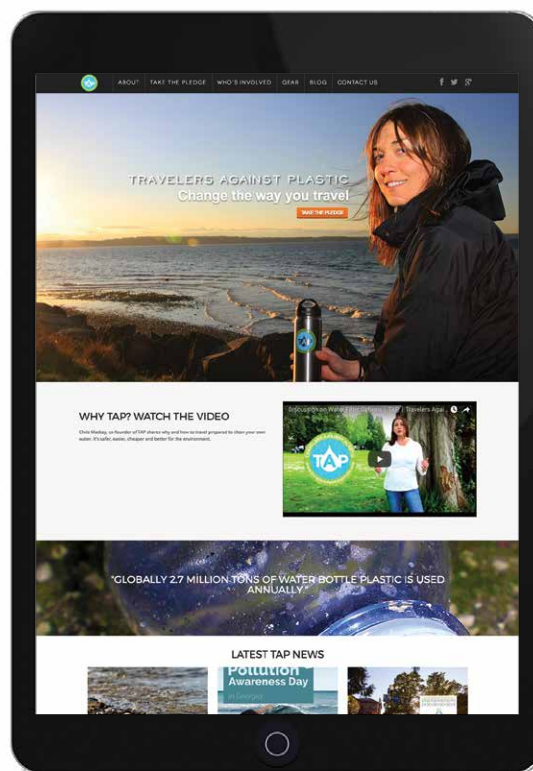
[alib@avenueproperties.com](mailto:alib@avenueproperties.com)

[amyw@avenueproperties.com](mailto:amyw@avenueproperties.com)



### BRING YOUR OWN WATER BOTTLE

In the US alone, 86 percent of the single-use plastic water bottles we drink find their way to a landfill—and in other countries, that number can be even higher. With 2.7 million tons of water bottle plastic used annually across the globe, the environmental impact is huge. You can avoid leaving a trail of plastic bottles behind you by simply packing your own water bottle. This works virtually anywhere in the US, but what if you're traveling internationally in a destination where the water isn't safe to drink? In this case, purify it on your own. The easiest way I've found is via a SteriPEN, a handheld device that uses ultraviolet light to destroy more than 99.9 percent of the bacteria, viruses and protozoa that lurk in water. There are other methods too: visit Travelers Against Plastic ([travelers-againstplastic.org](http://travelers-againstplastic.org)), an organization founded locally, to learn more.



[www.travelersagainstplastic.org](http://www.travelersagainstplastic.org)



[www.redlanternjourneys.com](http://www.redlanternjourneys.com)

### VOLUNTEER ON THE ROAD RESPONSIBLY

“Voluntourism” is controversial in the travel world, as parachuting in to a faraway destination and helping out for a few days can sometimes do more harm than good. Orphanages, in particular, don’t make ideal volunteer vacations for a variety of reasons—consider that bonding with children for a short period of time and then leaving can be detrimental to their well-being, and some orphanages sadly exist more to cater to tourists than because the children are benefiting. So how do you take your good intentions and channel those into the right volunteer opportunity? Research, research, research—the organization you’re working with should have a proven track record of contributing positively to the community. Ask questions, read reviews and look for projects that are more concerned with how volunteers can help than how the experience will help volunteers. Also be sure to assess your own abilities and ensure that what you’re planning to do matches up with your skill set.

### COMBINE A TRIP WITH A DONATION

When I decided to climb Mount Rainier, I chose to do so as part of the Climb for Himalaya Children, a fund-raiser for the Mitrata-Nepal Foundation for Children. Beforehand, I spent some time researching the nonprofit and liked what I found out about the work they’re doing for children’s education in Nepal. To participate in the climb, I donated approximately the same amount that it would have cost to sign up with a tour company, and a handful of friends and family contributed as well. Local tour operator Red Lantern Journeys organizes the annual trek on a volunteer basis so that the funds raised can go directly to the charity. There are lots of other opportunities like this all over the world, often related to adventure travel and bucket-list-type experiences. ■