

HEY! BO DIDDLEY P. 80 • MAFIA PRINCESS P. 96

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CHINA'S GREAT WALL

STORIES
FROM A
CRUMBLING
WORLD
TREASURE

ALSO:

FOUR POLITICAL
CONVENTIONS
THAT CHANGED
AMERICA

STALKING
TOMATOES

LEOPOLD
AND LOEB:
CRIME OF
THE CENTURY

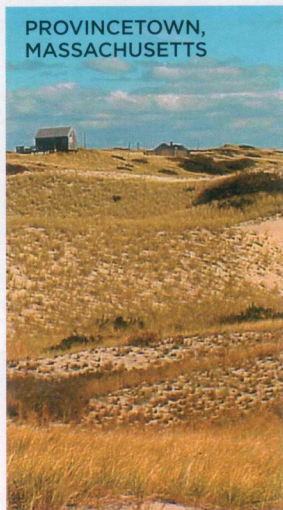
Kerouac Slept Here

NESTLED AMONG the dunes of the Cape Cod National Seashore are 19 rustic huts that have neither running water nor electricity but are as sought after as any luxury beach property. Over the decades the mostly one-room shingled buildings, built in the early 1900s for the Life-Saving Service, have welcomed the likes of Norman Mailer, Jack Kerouac, Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko. The dune shacks became a popular retreat after Eugene O'Neill stayed in one in 1919. "A grand place to be alone and undisturbed," the playwright wrote to a friend. Interest has steadily increased to more than 500 applications a year for the six shacks that are not leased long-term. The rentals come equipped with a bed, table, propane fridge, camp stove, a tool kit and composting toilet. Guests must haul their own water from a nearby well. Mice visit regularly.

The objective, of course, is to wrestle with one's muse, face off with solitude and the inner self—and perhaps turn out a prize-winning work. Deadlines for lotteries for one- to three-week stays, which are managed by two nonprofit organizations, are January 1 and February 15, 2009. For details call 508-413-9239 or visit www.thecomcompact.org.

BY GREGORY B. GALLAGHER

PROVINCETOWN, MASSACHUSETTS



HAWAII

DRESSED IN A FLORAL SHIRT and black cowboy hat, Led Kaapana dazzles the audience at a slack-key guitar festival with fancy fretwork and improvised riffs. He delivers the sweet bell-like tones of a music genre that has gone from backyard luaus to winning four Grammys as it spread to the mainland and abroad. It is believed that slack key began in

Playing Fast and Loose

the 1830s after Spanish and Mexican cowboys came to island ranches to help manage cattle. Native musicians adapted the newcomers' guitars to

traditional Hawaiian chants and falsetto singing by retuning the strings (usually loosening them) and creating fingering to heighten the contrast of high and low sounds. Slack key can flow gently like water lapping the shore, or roar like big surfing waves. The Honolulu festival, now in its 26th year, takes place August 17, followed by concerts in Kona, on the Big Island of Hawaii, on August 31 and on Kauai, November 16. BY CONSTANCE HALE

Dark Matters COUDERSPORT, PENNSYLVANIA

WITH ITS REMOTE mountaintop location, Cherry Springs State Park is a mecca for stargazers. In the north-central part of the state, it is a protected skywatching site, meaning white lights are prohibited. Its dark velvety sky is ideal for viewing the Perseids, a spectacular annual meteor shower in mid-August. BY JOE RAO •

