

## TRAVEL

## DISPATCHES



An artist's rendering shows the upcoming Millennium Falcon ride.

## 'Star Wars' plans revealed

The D23 expo is a biennial event presented by the Disney-run D23 fan club. Like San Diego Comic-Con, it celebrates popular culture, but focuses exclusively on the company's films, television shows, parks and other properties. Before an audience of Disney diehards who had gathered at the Anaheim Convention Center last weekend, Parks and Resorts Chairman Bob Chapek ran down what's on the way.

The announcements add new details to Disney's plans to capitalize on the *Star Wars* franchise. Among the new developments:

► **New lands have a name.** The expo revealed models and details of the 14-acre *Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge* lands that are coming to Disneyland Park and Hollywood Studios in Florida. Both will open in 2019. Visitors will be able to interact with characters such as Kylo Ren and BB-8 and dine at the Cantina.

► **Millennium Falcon ride.** One of the two featured rides at *Galaxy's Edge* will hand visitors the controls of the Millennium Falcon, the "fastest hunk of junk in the galaxy" according to Lando Calrissian.

► **Star Wars battle attraction.** The other major experience at *Galaxy's Edge* will drop visitors into a battle between the Resistance and the First Order. Chapek said that guests will feel as if they are inside a Star Destroyer.

► **Star Wars-themed hotel.** Disney World visitors will soon be able to sleep among wookies and Jedi knights. Chapek announced that a new *Star Wars*-themed resort will invite guests on a voyage aboard a starship. Every window, the parks chairman promised, will have a simulated view of space.

Arthur Levine



Gotham Market opened in Fort Greene earlier this year.

## New Yorkers eat up markets

New York may be proof that the food hall trend is far from over. Restaurateurs and developers have debuted four alternative food halls in a mere six months.

Earlier this month, Brooklyn's City Acres Market opened an outpost in Manhattan's Financial District. The space combines trendy 'grocerant' and food hall concepts with five independent food vendors, plus a butcher, cheesemonger, fishmonger and comprehensive groceries.

In June, Downtown Brooklyn got a food hall of its own, when DeKalb Market Hall debuted 40 food vendors, including Katz's Delicatessen's first outpost. Other local outposts include Ample Hills Creamery, Fletcher's Brooklyn Barbecue and Lioni Heroes.

Neighboring Fort Greene gained access to Hell's Kitchen's popular Gotham West Market concept when an outpost opened at The Ashland in January. Eight food and beverage vendors anchor a residential building.

Back in Manhattan, Canal Street Market added a food hall with 12 vendors, including Davey's Ice Cream and fresh&co, in May. The space now offers cuisines from Japanese ramen and Korean barbecue to locally sourced smoothies and a pop-up pie shop.

Ashley Day



WeeCasa Tiny House Resort in Lyons, Colo., features 22 tiny houses, including the popular Hobbit House.

# TINY HOUSE TEST DRIVE

## Try one on vacation before scaling down for good

Sarah Sekula  
Special for USA TODAY

**LYONS, COLO.** There are many reasons people flock to the tiny town of Lyons, home to about 2,000 people. For starters, its location on the St. Vrain River makes it a mecca for whitewater kayaking. Not to mention, it is home to music festivals, epic mountain biking and has easy access to Rocky Mountain National Park.

Another draw is one you might not expect, but it certainly is attracting attention. It's called WeeCasa Tiny House Resort, a cluster of 22 tiny homes for rent (starting at \$159 per night). Some are sleek and European, others are more whimsical. Each one is uniquely decorated, ranging in size from 140 to 200 square feet, and all are ready to roll. They are licensed as recreational vehicles, which means they are on wheels and can be on the move in 30 minutes or less.

As soon as I walk over to my wee abode, known as the Pequod, I realize why so many Americans have become obsessed with this phenomenon.

Outside: The curvy roofline and cedar shingles give it a cottage-like feel. Inside: There's an arched ceiling and stained-glass windows, two lofts connected by a plexiglass catwalk, a private bathroom and a kitchen where one of the drawer pulls is actually a fork. Despite its small stature, it sleeps four adults.

"I think tiny living in general is really something that people are fascinated with," says Kenyon Waugh, WeeCasa's "Wee-EO." "What we see is people leaving here energized to reduce the amount of things they have and the footprint they have and to really simplify their lifestyles."

### LILLIPUTIAN LIVING

WeeCasa is part of a growing number of tiny-home getaways across the nation from Oregon to New York that make for an unusual and Instagram-worthy vacation. Beyond that, though, some of the homes are models available for purchase, so spending time there can serve as a tiny-home test drive.

So much so, one visitor even brought her cat bed along to WeeCasa to see how it would fit in, and another whipped up a quiche to make sure the kitchen space was adequate.

Gregory Johnson, who has kept a close eye on the tiny-living moment for the past 15 years, says many people find it to be a great way to find a peaceful sense of renewal, even if it's just for a weekend.

In 2001, Johnson became enchanted with the idea of tiny living



Fireside Resort in Jackson Hole, near Grand Teton National Park, offers 23 Wheelhaus tiny-house cabins for rent.



The interior of a model at Mt. Hood Tiny House Village shows the efficiency of tiny-house design.

ing and commissioned Jay Shafer, owner of Tumbleweed Tiny House Company, to build him one a few years later. He also was inspired to create the Small House Society to help foster the growth of the tiny-living movement.

Back then, Johnson says, a Google search for small houses or tiny houses produced no results. Fast-forward to today, and those shrunken homes have sparked so much interest there is now an entire category of reality TV shows and documentaries devoted to the topic. There even are tiny-home jamborees.

With the sheer charm and design aesthetic of these homes, the intrigue is certainly there, but when it comes down to living in one full time, that's another story.

For Gerrie Stone, who lives in Watertown, S.D., and recently stayed at WeeCasa, it was a good way to bring her family from Nebraska and Colorado together. Although committing to tiny living

does not appeal to her, she loved the community atmosphere. And staying in a Hobbit-themed tiny home was worth the trip alone. With its round door and windows, faux ivy and tiny chandelier, it was an instant conversation starter with fellow visitors.

### ON THE RISE

The trend is poised to grow.

Right now, travelers can take their pick from such places as Fireside Resort in Jackson Hole, Wyo., which has 23 cabins for rent (starting at \$225 per night) near Grand Teton National Park. With such names as Caboose and Light-Haus, the 400-square-foot homes all were built by Wheelhaus and serve as model homes available for purchase starting at \$58,000.

Then there's Getaway, which offers tiny-home stays (starting at \$99 per night) in New York's Catskills and in the forests of New Hampshire. The first thing

you'll notice is the cellphone dropbox encouraging you to disconnect. Homes also are stocked with fun snacks (think: popcorn and s'mores by the fire pit) and simple meals.

They keep the specific location under wraps so renters won't stress about planning ahead of time, looking up restaurants and such. (Guests enter their starting zip code online, so they will know the approximate drive time.)

"People are yearning to find a counterbalance to the digital age," says Getaway founder and CEO Jon Staff. "Cities are great, but nature can provide things the city doesn't. Technology is powerful, but we can't be connected all the time. Tiny houses capture the minimalism and simplicity that went out of style ... but seems to be coming back in reaction to a world that has become too busy, complicated and stressful."

Throughout the year, more tiny-home hotels will open. Tumbleweed, for example, opened Mt. Hood Tiny House Village outside of Portland, Ore., last year, has a tiny-house village in Washington state and also rents tiny homes at camping resorts across the country. And, no surprise, more plans are in the works.

The same goes for Getaway. Their homes typically are booked several months out and weekend dates can book as much as six months in advance. They, too, have more homes in development.

Whatever these minimal dwellings lacking in the square footage department, they make up for it with tons of personality. And for vacationers who may find the quarters confining, a return from Lilliput is just a weekend away.