



Staycation GUIDE

Reasons to Stay

Planning a vacation can be a stressful and expensive process. Trying to plan around everyone's schedules and budgets can make it impossible to get the most out of a trip. A weekend staycation can be much easier to plan with a group of friends or family.

To thoroughly enjoy a staycation, you should take care of all your normal chores beforehand. Try to give your home the luxurious feel of a hotel. For extra comfort, consider hiring a local cleaning service to give your home a deep cleaning.

There are several reasons planning a staycation makes sense. It may even give you an opportunity to find new and exciting places in your area that you might not have known about.

SAVINGS

Budgeting for a vacation away from home can be intimidating. The costs of transportation and hotel reservations alone can require months of savings. Instead, use the money you'll save to buy something for your home or pay off a debt. Purchase a new television or appliance, or the furniture you have had your eye on.

Paying off a debt that has been a burden to you will make it easier to save for an extravagant vacation next year. Or, you might enjoy your staycation so much that you choose to enjoy the savings again and again.

TRYING NEW THINGS

Is your area loaded with fun things to do that have gone unnoticed because you have always planned for fun out of town? Talk to your friends and



© FOTOLIA

colleagues about some hot spots around town. You might find a new place that your whole family will enjoy.

A staycation is a great time to

try things that you don't usually consider. Take the family bowling or to a laser tag arena. You might find yourself with a new family tradition.

RELAX

Treating a staycation like a vacation might be more difficult, as it is easier to be reminded of your daily respon-

sibilities. If possible, avoid all business calls and emails. Make this time about you by taking a break from the ordinary duties of your busy life.

Time with Family

A staycation gives you the opportunity to enjoy your home with your loved ones. Make the time about connecting with each other without worrying about your normal responsibilities.

For a staycation with family, try to plan it when your children are on a break from school. They will enjoy spending the days together while not being restricted by their ordinary bedtime. This is a good way to build bonds and create traditions the whole family will love.

BOARD GAME NIGHT

Children are exposed to television, tablets and even cell phones so much that they might find it difficult to avoid them. Time spent playing a wholesome board game will create a relaxing atmosphere for you and your children.

Plan to play a game within your child's age range and one that you feel will keep their attention. Experts at the Public Broadcasting Service are finding that board games have many benefits for a growing child.

Games that involve dice or card shuffling enhance motor skills in children. Practicing this hand-eye coordination at a young age might make it easier to learn skills such as writing or playing instruments later.

Strategy games give you the chance to demonstrate problem-solving techniques. When discussing your strategy, be sure to inform your child why you made your decision. It



won't be long before they are incorporating those skills into real-life situations.

VISIT A PARK

You shouldn't have a problem locating a community park near your home. These are great places for children to exert energy and learn about respecting nature.

Plan fun park activities, such as a scavenger hunt. Encourage your children to invite other visitors to play along. Making new friends is great for children's confidence. You should take this time to get to know other parents, too.

Before leaving, encourage your children to clean up any garbage left behind by disre-

spectful park goers. Learning to take care of the Earth is a lesson children will hold on to.

VIEW THE STARS

If weather and conditions allow, lay a blanket outside once the stars begin appearing. Allow your child to skip bedtime and witness the

beauty of our solar system. Point out different constellations and notable stars. A telescope is a great tool for older children to use. Your child might experience the magic of witnessing a shooting star.

If conditions don't allow a good view of the nighttime sky, you can visit a local planetarium or observatory.

Learn a New Sport

Spending time at home gives you a great chance to try new things. Sports are great for making new friends and keeping yourself in shape. Your local community likely has many sporting activities to enjoy.

Before engaging in any physical activity, make sure to properly prepare your body. A warm-up should consist of light cardio exercise and proper stretching. It is important to get your body ready before increasing your heart rate and circulation.

COMMUNITY BASKETBALL

It may surprise you how easy it is to join a pickup game of basketball. You will likely find a game at your local gym or an outdoor court. Look for a group of people who are preparing to play and ask if they need an extra player. Basketball provides you with great cardiovascular exercise and coordination.

Many local gyms and recreation centers even hold summertime basketball leagues. This can be a multi-day activity around which you can build your staycation.

If you are unfamiliar with



© FOTOLIA

basketball, you should know some of the general rules before attempting to join a game.

- **Personal fouls:**

Committing this type of foul while an opponent is shooting results in free throws. A personal foul is any type of illegal physical contact including hitting, pushing or holding.

- **Traveling:** You are not allowed to take more than a step and a half without dribbling the ball. If this occurs, it

results in a turnover for the other team.

- **Backcourt violation:** If you're playing a game of full-court ball, you are not allowed to backtrack over the mid-court line once it has been initially crossed.

- **Double dribble:** You will be penalized for picking up the ball and beginning to dribble again.

Don't worry if you can't keep up with the other players. Most look at a pickup

game as a fun activity that shouldn't be taken too seriously. You'll gradually get better at shooting and understanding the rules with experience.

FORE!

Golfing is a great solo game that doesn't require extreme physical exertion. This staycation, head to your local golf course and release some steam by crushing the ball. While you can attempt golf without any experience, you

might be less likely to get frustrated if you take lessons first.

Golfing requires perfect body posture and skill to hit the ball where you intend. Professional lessons give you the opportunity to understand proper positioning during different circumstances.

Be sure to bring along plenty of water and sunscreen if you plan to spend a day on the course.

Visit a Community Pool

Spending a day at a community pool gives you the opportunity to exercise and socialize. It's a great way for your children to make new friends and exert their extensive energy.

Of course, safety should be enforced whenever water is present. Most community pools have professional lifeguards on duty to help with that.

If you're lucky enough to live near a community pool, the benefits it creates to your overall economy are huge. It increases overall property and recreational values and provides a social outlet for residents. It also provides a great day of fun while on staycation.

BRINGING THE KIDS?

Kids usually don't need instructions to have fun in a pool, but if you're aiming to maintain order with them present, recommend playing a family game.

When the pool is busy, play a game that doesn't interfere with other swimmers. For instance, a pool full of others isn't the best place to play Marco Polo. Wandering around the pool with eyes closed can create several safe-



© FOTOLIA

ty issues.

Instead, bring along a beach ball and encourage children to keep it in the air as long as possible. You might be surprised at how many other swimmers will want to participate. Another good way to get children active is to hold a cannonball competition. Judge them on their form and style points. Just make sure other swimmers

are out of the way.

HEALTH BENEFITS

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, swimming for just two and a half hours per week can decrease the risk of chronic illnesses. Two big diseases that swimming helps regulate are heart disease and diabetes.

Regular swimmers have about half the risk of death

when compared with inactive people. In the water, people can exercise longer than they do on land because it takes less effort and eases muscle pains.

PUBLIC POOL SAFETY

Safety is the number one priority, especially when swimming with a large group of people. Always follow the posted rules and guidelines

set by the lifeguards. Rules might change based on conditions.

Never enter the pool if you have the flu or open wounds. Keeping the pool uncontaminated is everyone's responsibility.

It's also important to shower before entering a pool to avoid spreading bacteria. For toddlers, waterproof diapers are a must.

Camping

Bring all the things you love about camping right to your backyard. Pitching a tent in your own yard can create the atmosphere of an ordinary camping trip, as can scuttling down to your local campground if you're looking for some adventure.

Camping blends the outdoors with indoor amenities. If you choose to camp at home, just think of the comfort of using indoor plumbing and having a safe place for shelter if weather conditions turn poor. Of course, the point of this experience is to enjoy the outdoors, but it's nice to know your home is there just in case.

BUILDING A CAMPFIRE

Before burning, make sure your area is not under a burn ban due to dangerous conditions. You can easily find out by calling your local fire department.

If conditions allow, follow these tips from the United States Department of Agriculture to build a safe campfire:

- **Prepare your site:** Look for a level spot away from overhanging branches and dry grass. Clear a circle at least 10 feet wide. In the center dig a pit 6 inches deep and 2 feet wide. Use the excavated dirt to build a barrier around your new pit.

- **Get it started:** Build a pyramid with small sticks on top of dry leaves or small twigs to get your fire started. Once the flames start, you can add larger logs.

- **Don't leave the site:** Make sure to not leave your fire unat-



tended. Keep it small for backyard camping, it will be easier to roast weenies and marshmallows.

- **Extinguish:** For safety purposes, your fire should be completely extinguished before bedtime. Separate and soak burning logs and mix water in

the ashes until the fire is out.

For backyard camping, consider buying a free-standing fire pit to safely house your fire.

WHY BACKYARD CAMPING?

The United States National Park Service recommends

using backyard camping as a testing ground for new equipment or to introduce children to the idea.

Becoming familiar with new camping gear at home is much easier than trying it out in the wilderness. If your tent is too hard to set up or your new

sleeping bag doesn't provide the warmth you need, head inside. You can then adjust your equipment before taking it on an actual trip.

Sleeping outdoors can be scary for children. A trial run at home is a great way to make them comfortable.

Staycation for Couples

Sometimes, our hectic work schedules and other responsibilities get in the way of relationships. A staycation provides a great chance to show your significant other that you appreciate them. Planning an exciting and romantic staycation is easy.

PACK A PICNIC

Choose a spot at your local park to enjoy an intimate lunch. Bring along a comfortable blanket to keep you separate from the grass.

A romantic picnic should include a bottle of wine or sparkling cider, fruit and a cheese sampler. Leave behind the conversations of stressful situations such as work and enjoy each other's company.

HAVE A NIGHT OUT

A relationship that is stuck in the same routine can sometimes lose its excitement. Plan a night to do things you normally wouldn't do. You might find a new interest to share.

Dinner at a restaurant you haven't tried may inspire a taste for a new type of food. Not only will you enjoy your night together, but you can try to create the same dishes at home. Cooking together is a fun way to bond.

Your local theater also can make for a fun night out. Check the listings to find a movie that piques both of your interests.

SLEEP IN

If your schedule allows it, turn off the alarms and catch a much-deserved recharge. If your internal alarm clocks are



too strong to stay asleep, catch up on a television show or enjoy a movie in bed. This is an intimate experience that allows couples to reconnect.

TRY SOMETHING NEW

New experiences can lead to new hobbies for couples. Consider taking a bike ride or going for a hike in the woods. If

you're not used to regular physical activity, be sure to take breaks when it gets tough. These breaks are a good time for couples to enjoy the views

and converse.

Check with your local marinas about renting a pedal boat. You can work together and checking out the views.

Hiking

Get personal with nature on your staycation. Hiking is a great way to give your cardiovascular system a good workout and can give you a different perspective of your local area. Check with your local forestry department for the best time to plan a hike.

Hiking is an inexpensive way to enjoy the outdoors. The amount of gear required is minimal. Most public forests have free entry, although you might consider donating to keep them in good shape for you and other hikers.

PLAN YOUR ROUTE

Today's satellite technology makes it simple to plan a safe hiking route. If you're new to hiking, plan a path that doesn't feature many hills. Starting slow gives you the opportunity to familiarize yourself with the area and make plans to tackle more advanced paths on later hikes.

Be sure to let loved ones know which route you plan to take in case you get caught in bad weather or end up getting lost. A fully charged cell phone can be a lifesaver in this situation.

Take screenshots on your phone or bring along a map of the forest. This way, if you lose signal you can still navigate your way back to safety.

WHAT YOU NEED

While there is plenty of hiking gear on the market, you don't need much special equipment to be a weekend hiker. There are a few things you should bring, however, to ensure safety and comfortability. Here are a few important items to bring along per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

- **Foot protection:** Try a pair of well-fitted hiking boots and thick socks. Also, bring along moleskin ban-



dages. If you begin feeling pain in your feet, apply the bandage to the affected area.

- **Bug spray:** Forests are full of insects. Keep a can of bug repellent on hand. Make sure it contains DEET, this ingredient is the most effective.

- **Backpack:** This is essential for

packing plenty of water, a map, snacks and sunscreen.

CHECK THE WEATHER

Getting stuck outdoors during hazardous weather is a dangerous situation. Make sure the forecasts are clear of lightning or other serious condi-

tions.

Always be prepared in case a storm develops unexpectedly. Bring along a weather-proof jacket with a hood to keep yourself dry during the rain. If lightning does occur, head downhill away from the storm, squat and keep your head low.