



“Staycation”... all you ever wanted

By Peter Hans

Resort Maps

Okay, the term “staycation” might not be as catchy as the Go Gos 1980s hit “Vacation”, but the concept has become quite popular during this recession for people who are looking for money-saving alternatives.

Loosely defined, a staycation refers to a vacation spent at home where, instead of going away, you do short day trips—typically within three hours from your residence. The concept itself has enlightened many to the tourist “treasures” quite literally in their backyards. But before getting into your options for a staycation, it’s important to lay some ground rules.

For starters, treat your staycation like a vacation—by trying to look at your home base through the eyes of a vacationer and all the opportunities your home base lends itself to recreation. A staycation provides an opportunity to see new things, while saving money *and* getting a good night’s sleep in your own bed.

By following certain ground rules on your staycation, it is more likely to be fun and stress-free. For starters:

- ***No contact with your office*** – Just because you’re not going away for an extended trip is no reason to be calling in to the office. Time off is to rest up and recharge your batteries. You can’t do that if you’re never mentally away.
- ***Limit your computer time*** – Again, you’re on vacation. Restrict your computer time to researching potential day trips. NO E-MAIL, unless you’re being sent a confirmation or reservation number.
- ***Do not set your alarm*** – Do not set your alarm if you don’t have to. The beauty of the staycation is that you’re NOT on a schedule.
- ***Minimize your home chores*** – Unless you’re specifically taking the week off to complete a project, e.g. painting your house, keep your home chores to a minimum. That doesn’t mean let the dishes in the sink stack up. Just don’t sweat it if the lawn goes a few days without being cut.

With that out of the way, what can you do on your staycation? That’s the beauty of it, you can do anything. Some easy, low cost ideas include:

- **Visit a local water park** – In most parts of the country, you can find a water park within a three-hour drive of your home. Pack a picnic basket or, better yet, take some coals and barbecue. Many of these parks have barbies you can use.
- **Hike and picnic at a state or national park** – Be a little daring and venture off to one you haven't visited before.
- **Outdoor music or film festivals** – Free outdoor concerts are in abundance during the summer. For many, you can just spread out a blanket or prop up a lawn chair. Also, more and more areas hold film festivals.
- **Foreign Cuisine Night** – Maybe a trip to another county is not in the budget. A night out to sample some foreign cuisine can be the next best thing. For example, have a “Mexican night” at a nearby Mexican restaurant, “Indian night” at your local Indian establishment, etc. If you've never tried that kind of food, even better.
- **Museum Day** – You've probably got several within a 45-minute drive from your home, yet how many times have you been to one of them? Take one day and hit as many museums as you can.
- **Family Game Night** – Lest you think it's mandatory to go somewhere for your staycation. Hosting a family game night can be fun and relaxing—whether it's a Wii golf tournament or board game marathon.
- **Camp out in your backyard** – Young kids especially will love the adventure of pitching a tent in the backyard. Plus, you've got the conveniences of your home without the expense of a campsite.

For more ideas on possible local excursions for your staycation, you'll also want to pick up the free literature at your area's visitor's bureau or a local rest area. Maps of the area, in particular, can be a great resource for things to do.

Staycations provide a viable alternative to a vacation, allowing similar adventures you might experience on a vacation without the big expense. Who knows, you may even like them more. Especially when you can put your head down on your own pillow at the end of the day.

Peter Hans is the president of Resort Maps Franchise, based in Waitsfield, Vermont. Resort Maps creates customized travel maps over 90 cities and towns across the U.S. and U.K. For more information, please visit www.resortmaps.com.