



Summer
Recreation
GUIDE

Playing It Safe

Warming temps mean more time spent outside, exciting vacations and evenings spent gathered around the grill. Here's how to play it safe.

WATER

Trips to the pool or beach are a signature part of summer, but there are inherent risks associated with any time spent in the water — in particular for younger, less experienced swimmers. Use a life jacket for safety, in particular in waterways with currents or deeper depths. Air-filled swimming aids are typically not sufficient if a swimmer begins to struggle. Keep a watchful eye on children when they're in the water, and try to stay within reach in case they need your assistance. Take a shower before swimming to make sure you're not bringing dirt and grime into the pool. Bacteria spreads quickly in water, so we should all do our part to keep it as sanitary as we can. Bathe quickly afterward too, so you don't transfer germs or harsh chemicals into your home.

HOME

Always wear a helmet when bicycling, skateboarding or roller blading. The use of fertilizers, pool chemicals and

weed killers rises every summer, along with the risk of poisoning. Store them away properly.

Grilling becomes a common outdoor activity, with the added benefit of not overheating your home while using the oven. But there are important safety issues relating to the grill, beginning

with the fire and burn hazards. Keep small children away from the flames, and stick to all recommended safety measures. Heating the grill to the required temperature is also crucial, in order to avoid serious food-borne illnesses. Consider purchasing an internal temperature gauge for added confidence.

SUN

Sunburns increase our risk of skin cancer, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. If you're planning a trip to the beach or pool, or will be doing summertime yard work where shade isn't possible, wear a wide-brimmed hat to protect your head, face and neck.

Apply sunscreen with a SPF of at least 15; look for products that provide protection from both UVA and UVB rays. Drink plenty of water when you're outdoors, since dehydration is always a risk. Try not to work in the sun during the hottest parts of the day. High-energy activity on summer afternoons can lead to heat stroke.



Up, Up In the Air

A summertime balloon ride can give you a whole new perspective on the season.

WHAT TO KNOW

A balloon ride may take you over your own hometown or across an exotic faraway locale, but either way you'll have to be prepared for more than breathtaking views. Before you decide to rise hundreds of feet in the air, be aware of the possibility that surrounding weather conditions and what you wear might play a role how your day unfolds. Summer conditions and the balloon's propane burners will keep you warm at ground level, but layering is advised since temps drop as the balloon rises. Cancellations are always a possibility as well, since adverse conditions can have a huge impact on flying. Winds make the balloon difficult to control, while rain makes the balloon heavier, so pilots remain grounded when thunderstorms threaten.

FUN, AND SAFE

The Federal Aviation Administration's Aviation Accident Database finds that hot-air ballooning is the safest form of air travel. In fact, the report shows that driving a car is actually far more dangerous. Still, you'll want to search out professional operations that employ FAA-certified equipment and pilots. Then



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you'll be assured that your flight and crew meet the same rigorous inspection requirements as any other aircraft. You may also want to research the manufacturing record of the company that made your potential basket and balloon. Ask about years of experience, and how many passengers

have previously flown with the company. Check out online reviews, as well.

PACKAGE DEALS

Lifting off the ground doesn't have to be the sum total of your day. Many tourist destinations offer package deals that only add to this amazing experience.

You may be treated to special breakfast on morning flights, or a champagne toast in the evening. Some launch facilities have their own food and shopping options. You sometimes have the option of booking multiple balloons for larger groups of friends and family, creating a shared experience

that will be treasured for a lifetime. Some balloons are outfitted with glass bottoms for even more spectacular views. Then there's an incredible "edge-of-space" balloon flight, which takes riders to some 100,000 feet in a pressurized capsule. It's a bit pricey, though — at \$50,000 per person.

Pick Your Own Fun

Summer brings with it a bounty of fresh foods. Why not get yours right from the source?

A YUMMY HISTORY

Pick-your-own farms have also been called cut-your-own, u-pick and choose-your-own options over the years. Customers can select an item right off the tree or in the field, a particularly popular activity on orange, apple, berry, flower, pumpkin and Christmas tree farms. The trend emerged in the 1930s and '40s, when prices for some crops were so low that farmers were struggling to pay for harvest expenses. As agri-tourism began to flourish in the 1960s, pick-your-own farms emerged as a major contributor. Purchasing produce in this way can save money, while helping to ensure a farmer's livelihood.

FINDING A FARM

Local ag centers can usually provide information on area pick-your-own farms, and occasionally even provide helpful maps. They'll also help you chart which produce items are available during the time of year you'll be visiting. You can plan out multiple visits on a single day to create the perfect fresh-made meal, or schedule stops throughout the season to catch the latest crop at its peak. Friends and family members may have recommendations, too. Some national data



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indicates that the typical customer won't travel more than about 40 miles to a pick-your-own operation — but that doesn't mean you should limit yourself. These farms are also a great place to make a pit stop on a summer road trip. Seek them out through a web

search, and then spend a few moments stretching your legs in search of a delicious snack.

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

You'll obviously be getting the freshest, hardiest fruits and vegetables. But time spent on a farm also strengthens our

connection to the food we eat, and to our country's deep agrarian roots. School tours are increasingly popular — in particular among fruit, pumpkin and Christmas tree farms. Children learn more about nature, and how their meals begin. You'll also come to

respect how fragile the whole process can be, as you gently twist an apple — rather than sternly pulling — in order to preserve the limb's integrity. Simple lessons like that are harder and harder to come by as society becomes ever more removed from nature.

Summer Stargazing

The warm months give us a great opportunity to stare out into a sky full of wonder.

TIPS FOR GAZING

In some places, temperatures fall quickly after sunset. So, summer stargazing should be accompanied by a blanket, jacket and extra set of clothes. This is particularly crucial in areas with mountains or deserts. If temperatures remain moderate, use the blanket to lie back on for the very best views. Your supply kit should also include bug spray, since any extended time spent outdoors increases the risk of running into pests that might carry illnesses. Summer weather can be very unpredictable, so bring along rain jackets and water-resistant protection for cameras or stargazing tools.

WHAT YOU'LL SEE

Constellations turn over our heads all evening, accompanied by the waxing and waning moon and the occasional shooting star. Find a dark place away from city lights, then look for the Big Dipper, one of the most recognizable star groups for those in the Northern Hemisphere. Those seven bright lights are at the center of Ursa Major, or “greater bear” in Latin. Elsewhere, you might find Cassiopeia, Scorpius, Cygnus, Sagittarius among the other constellations and asterisms. You can easily pick out



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some satellites as they fly by. The International Space Station is particularly noticeable as it orbits our earth. Many have spotted the Iridium satellite as it flares as well. Neighboring planets will also become more visible as summer continues. Those with a telescope or binoculars may find deeper-sky

objects like Brocchii's Cluster or the Ring Nebula. The famous Perseid meteor showers peak every August, as debris from the comet streaks across our atmosphere.

STUDY UP FIRST

Wondering where to find all of those cool things? Seek out a

night sky map for your particular region. Maps from a mid-northern latitude include sights that can be viewed from southern Canada, the lower 48 United States, central and southern Europe, Japan and central Asia. Objects on the map will be lower in the sky for those north of those areas, and

the horizon might completely obscure distinctive things like the Summer Triangle — a three-cornered star pattern that's formed by Altair, Deneb and Vega. There are a total of 88 constellations surrounding the planet, and some are visible year round. Others, however, are seasonal.

Pedal Your Way to Health

Cycling is a great way to see the world, while getting the exercise we need to remain healthy and strong.

HOW YOU'LL BENEFIT

Riding a bike increases your endurance while also improving cardiovascular health. You can easily add resistance to your workout by choosing steeper hills to climb, or shifting to a more challenging area terrain. Summer's longer days also give us an opportunity to take longer rides after work hours. You become leaner and more toned, while taking in the sights and sounds of the greater world around you. Whether you're traveling down a bike lane on a city street or tracing down the side of an incredible hillside, you'll be getting closer to nature with a heady mixture of fresh air and sun.

TOP TRIPS

Ready to pack your bike and go? The Adventure Cycling Association has compiled a list of the Top 5 places to ride, and each of them presents its own challenges — and beauty. The Katy Trail is America's longest ride, at an astonishing 225 miles along the Missouri River outside of St. Louis. The Chesapeake & Ohio Towpath offers incredible views of the Potomac River Valley on an 184-mile ride from Washington, D.C.



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The Colorado Hut Systems allow you to pick and choose your adventure near Aspen and Vail, depending on your skill level. British Columbia's Kettle Valley Railway has been tagged as the most epic rail trail anywhere by the ACA. The White Rim Trail in Utah's backcountry offers a

system of camping areas to take a breather after all of those challenging climbs.

RIDING SAFELY

Unfortunately, cycling accidents are on the rise, according to the National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration. Driver negli-

gence is often to blame, but bikers are also being injured after improper lane usage and failing to wear reflective gear during night rides. Safety has to be a top priority when riding in such an unprotected environment. Keep your bike in good working condition, and take advantage of all

available safety and reflective options. When possible, travel in groups. That makes you more visible to motorists, and you'll also have a helping hand should some mishap occur. Pack a small first-aid kit, including bandages, alcohol pads, tweezers and anti-bacterial spray.

Rental RV Adventures

Recreational vehicles allow us to road trip in style, but they can be a huge investment. That's why rental options are flourishing.

A GROWING TREND

Some 65 million travelers are planning an RV vacation in 2022, according to one survey from the Go RVing trade group. Many of them will be renting instead of buying. The practice became trendy during the first year of the pandemic, as the Austin-based peer-to-peer rental site Outdoorsy saw a stunning 4,000 percent increase during 2020's busiest months. RV and camper-van rentals are now expected to be a \$356.2 million industry in 2022, as the segment continues its steady rise. Growth of more than three percent has been charted every year for the past five. Outdoorsy now has 48 million users; company officials says they have already passed 1 billion total transactions.

HOW TO CHOOSE

Size, space, distance and your driving comfort level are all key factors in deciding which RV to rent. You'll obviously need additional room if more friends and family are coming along, but the largest Class A models can present driving and parking challenges. These RVs range from 24 to 40 feet, and comfortably



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accommodate up to seven people. Less experienced drivers might select a Class B version, which is about as wide as the average pickup truck and less than 25 feet long. They're easier to maneuver and get better gas mileage, but you shouldn't try to fit more than four people inside. Class C RVs are usu-

ally built on a truck chassis, with sleeping bunks located above the passenger cabin. They're usually 30 feet or less, and can welcome up to six people.

READY TO RENT?

Professional dealers will be easier to research. They'll also

have technicians on duty to help should anything go wrong. Renting from large companies like Cruise America includes package deals with roadside assistance and insurance, while RVshare also offers fifth wheels and travel trailers for rent. (RVshare makes one-way rent-

ing possible, too.) Be aware that some states require RV drivers to have a commercial driver's license — in particular for Class A motorhomes — so check local laws along your travel route. Research RV camp sites before you go, since there is a very wide range of amenities and pricing.

Hook, Line and Sinker

Nothing speaks to the season like an afternoon spent on the lake. But what if it's summertime and the fishing isn't easy?

GEAR CHECK

Sometimes a great day of fishing is ruined for the simplest of reasons: Broken or missing gear. Technically, you only need a pole, hook and worm. But that's not how most people fish nowadays, so you'll need to check to make sure you've got what you need — and that it's not going to let you down out when you need it most. Are you planning to fish on a stream or pond, lake or river? That will determine which equipment you bring. Inexpensive spin-cast rods and reels are best suited for smaller bodies of water. You'll need a special rod for fly fishing or if you're going out to do some deep-ocean fishing. Different species are also attracted to different lures, and there are seasonal considerations. You have to pack the right things to catch the right fish.

SAFETY FIRST

Become familiar with local fishing regulations, and seek out those details before traveling to fish. If there are laws and limits in place where you are fishing, try to obtain a copy of the rules — or write them down to make double checking easier. Children should always wear



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a life preserver, whether they are on the dock, on shore or in a boat. Smaller ones should be careful helped with casting and handling hooks. Barbless hooks are also available.

FIVE GREAT SPOTS

If the fish aren't biting, consider switching locations.

Florida is teeming with great summer fishing trip options, with a huge variety of local fishing holes and gorgeous deep-sea options.

Colorado is renowned in fly-fishing circles, and it's easier to get started than you think. A local outfitter can help with casting lessons for

newcomers to the sport.

Ocean City, Maryland, is known as the White Marlin Capital of the World. Enough said, right? Local guides will steer you to the very best places to fish, while taking care of every detail from needed gear to licensing.

Or how about a trip to

Alaska during its more temperate summer months? You'll find a host of halibut, king salmon and rainbow trout.

Finally, consider Walt Disney World. Yes, Walt Disney World. The resort offers a surprising array of family fishing options along its well-stocked waterways.