

Safe and Sane Vacations

Vacations seem too few, too far between and too brief. No wonder we try to squeeze them for every bit of enjoyment we can muster. Too often, in order to extract the most from our recreational time, we tend to overdo it. Too much food, too much play and too much sun can spoil our best-laid plans -- all because we took too little time to prepare.



Here are some helpful summer vacation tips as we begin the 101-day, Memorial to Labor Day vacation season.

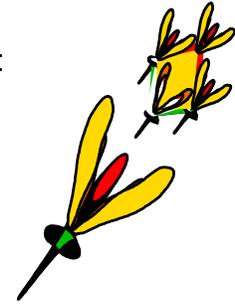
Prepare for the Worst -- carry a first aid kit. Whether you are traveling to a nearby park or the distant mountains, it is wise to include a well-stocked first aid kit. Your kit should contain bandages, sterile gauze, adhesive tape, scissors, an elastic bandage, acetaminophen, a thermometer, medicated ointments, tweezers, calamine lotion, antiseptic soap, hand towels, a small flashlight and important numbers. Also, learn first aid measures and carry a first aid book.

Beat the Heat. Except for the cold, heat kills more Americans than any other natural hazard, including hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and earthquakes. To have fun in the hot summer sun:

- Restrict strenuous activities during the hottest part of the day. Avoid direct exposure to the sun between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., when the sun's rays are the strongest and temperatures the highest.
- Wear loose fitting, lightweight and light colored clothing that reflects the heat and sunlight. To stay cooler on long walks, consider investing in garments made from the new high-tech fabrics.
- Drink lots of water and other non-alcoholic fluids before, during, and after strenuous activity. Drink the water even if you do not feel thirsty.
- Do not take salt tablets unless your doctor has prescribed them, especially if you have high blood pressure or a heart condition.
- Adjust to hot environments gradually. It usually takes a couple of days to fully acclimate to hot weather.
- Avoid direct sunlight as much as possible. Use a sunscreen with a "sun protection factor" that matches your skin type.
- Wear a hat but one that is not tight fitting, since much of your body's heat needs to escape from your head.
- To protect your eyes from the sun's ultraviolet rays, wear sunglasses that shield against type UVA and UVB rays. A broad brim on your hat will also help.
- If you are on a prescription for any medication, consult your doctor on possible side effects in hot weather or direct sunlight.
- Eat light, nutritious meals and avoid fatty foods.

Bugs that "Bite." To live in harmony when around stinging insects:

- Wear insect repellent.
- Do not wear bright-colored clothing.
- Do not use cologne or scented cosmetics, especially floral.
- Do not walk barefoot, and watch where you are walking.
- If you happen upon a nest, move away slowly. Avoid rapid movements that look like attacks.
- Do not eat or drink sweet things outdoors. These attract insects like iron to a magnet.
- If you are stung by an insect and begin to experience difficulty breathing, hives, stomach pains, diarrhea, dizziness, chills, or facial swelling (regardless of where you may have been stung), you are having an allergic reaction. Seek immediate emergency medical help.



Take a Safe Hike. A favorite summer activity is a hike in the woods, but it should be carefully planned. Take a buddy with you, but, if you hike alone, at least tell someone where you will be hiking and when you expect to return. Check the forecast to avoid bad weather.



Establish a leader and a plan for changes of direction in the trail. Carry a map and compass and stay on a blazed path when you can. Carry a whistle. Three short blasts is the international signal for help in an emergency.

Wear proper clothing, preferably natural fibers. Long sleeves and full length pants will protect you from insects, the sun and brush. Wear hiking boots or good, sturdy walking shoes that are comfortable and well fitting.

Hike in small groups of less than ten people. Again carry a first aid kit.

Return Home Carefully. So far, so good. Now let's get you home safely. Do not try to complete a long drive on the last day. Sure, you want to get home, but more importantly, you want to arrive safely. Drive part of the way the day before, and enjoy the night. On the last day, sleep late and arrive home relaxed and ready to tackle the stress of getting back to work in the best possible frame of mind.

