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Traveling near and not so far

Souring economy makes home a sweet place to vacation

July 27, 2008

By **KATHY MILLEN** kmillen@scn1.com

So, the Caribbean cruise ship left the dock without you.

And that trip to Arizona so the kids could spit in the Grand Canyon?

That didn't happen either.

» Click to enlarge image



Bicycling through Springbrook Prairie in Naperville, left, checking out exhibits at the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago, bottom left, or having a picnic are some of things you can do without having to travel far this summer.

Sun file

» Click to enlarge image

And what about lying on a distant beach sipping pina colodas while watching the sun set?

Somebody else lived that fantasy because it certainly wasn't you.

You stayed home.

You weren't alone. The Air Transport Association said about 1.3 percent fewer Americans are expected to fly anywhere this summer compared to the same time last year.

And the American Automobile Association estimated the average cost of lodging and meals on a North American vacation for two at \$244 per day. Considering that, coupled with the cost of transportation, is it any wonder home has been the destination of



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Planning the perfect staycation

1. As with any vacation, specific times and dates should be set aside for staycations.
2. Have a theme. If you really want to go to France, have a French staycation. Speak French, eat French foods, rent French foreign films.
3. Avoid everyday life chores and activities. Do things usually done on vacations.
4. Dine out whenever possible, eating at restaurants you've never visited.
5. Take lots of pictures. Source: www.squidoo.com

more than one night. Some of them came back more than once. We had one couple that stayed that lived three blocks away. We sat at breakfast and they said "It's so nice to get away." Jeannie Triezenberg and her husband, Bob, of Naperville, who have stayed at the Harrison House, saw the merits of a staycation even before the economy began to falter.

"We thought it would be fun to take a local vacation and enjoy Naperville like a tourist," said Triezenberg, a professional organizer, "The bed and breakfast is so conveniently located. We could walk around downtown and go out for a nice dinner at Sullivan's. We could go over to Frankie's and could just walk around town without having to worry about driving anywhere. When you are local, you are the last person to see the local attractions."

For some, a home-based vacation can be even more restorative than a trip to somewhere else. There's no dealing with the logistics of traveling, no lugging heavy suitcases, no killing time in airports, no stressing out in traffic jams.

At home, you're always guaranteed a room. If you have access to a swimming pool in the backyard or subdivision, you can have a good time in the sun and the water. A backyard grill can cook up a special meal at a fraction of what dining out would cost.

Some staycationers are even turning their backyards into outdoor home theaters. One of the newest trends in home entertainment, according to Home Theater Specialists of America, is the weatherproof large-screen HDTV and digital surround sound system that can be integrated into a backyard landscape.

Triezenberg has used her organizational skills to help clients make their home a more enjoyable place to be which ultimately will save them money. In her own quest to cut expenses, she and her husband decided to skip the Las Vegas vacation they had planned and instead spend a few days exploring Chicago.

"How many are from this area who've never been on top of the Sears Tower?" she asked. "There's nothing like seeing where you live."

choice for so many people this year?

It's still not too late to show yourself a good time during these waning days of summer. Finding things to do can be as close as the nearest phone book. According to The Yellow Pages Association, the best headings to turn to for local fun include amusement parks, bowling, campgrounds and rv, golf courses, marinas, museums, recreational parks, skating rinks, spas and theaters. (For more information visit www.ypassociation.org).

Still, it's nice to get away, even if it's just a little way away. TravelMole, the online community for the travel and tourism industry, said hotel room rates have been slashed in order to woo vacationers, including some in Chicago. Through Sept. 1, Hotel Allegro, Hotel Burnham and Hotel Monaco Chicago are offering specially priced packages to encourage local residents to vacation in the city. To qualify, guests must ride Metra into the city and present their ticket at the time of check in. (Call 800-546-7866 for reservations.)

Lynn Harrison, owner of The Harrison House Bed and Breakfast on Eagle Street in Naperville, has seen business pick up in this economic downturn. June was the busiest month in the B & B's 21 years of operation, she said, with the majority of visitors living within a three-hour radius.

"We had over 50 guests or couples (in June)," said Harrison, who operates the inn year round. "It doesn't seem like much, but a lot of them stayed

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