

ADVENTURE

AWAITS

When we think of adventure, we probably imagine daring feats, faraway places, and fearless people who aren't saddled with desk jobs. Maybe someone like Isabella Bird, the Victorian-era explorer who climbed the Mauna Loa volcano in Hawaii and slept in a tent in Tibet on a carpet made of yak hair. But in fact, every one of us is wired to seek new experiences—even those of us with lower back pain ill suited for tent living.

It started with our ancestors, who used novelty for survival; scanning the horizon enabled them to spot snarling beasts and other threats. To this day, discovery rewards us with a burst of the feel-good chemical dopamine. And research finds that novelty can enhance our memory, increase our motivation, and boost our mood.

Because all these benefits are too good to miss, we've assembled this handy collection of ideas for more adventurous living. You can make the stakes as high or as low as you want: Try a new sandwich, drive to the edge of the Grand Canyon, or suspend yourself on the business end of a bungee cord. Your appetite for risk is less important than your capacity to be curious. So get out there and adventure.

You just need to find it.

BY AMY MACLIN | ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARIE DOAZAN



FLY SOLO

Spend some time with yourself.



ur relationship with ourselves is like any other relationship: To nurture it, we need quality time together, says Netta

Weinstein, PhD, professor of clinical and social psychology at the University of Reading in England and coauthor of the recent book *Solitude: The Science and Power of Being Alone*. “When we spend time alone, we’re not shifting away from others,” Weinstein says. “We’re shifting toward ourselves.” According to her research, people who prioritize self-reflection find more meaning in life. Suggestions for your next one-on-one with You:

GO TO A RESTAURANT

Chances are, you won’t be the only lone diner. According to the reservation platform OpenTable, solo bookings have increased more than any other party size in the past two years. At a table (or bar stool) for one, we can fully immerse ourselves in the sensory experience. “When we’re talking to other people, we

might realize the food tastes amazing, but we’re also a little distracted,” Weinstein says. Enjoy the flavors, sights, smells—and the fact that no one is going to ask for a bite.

HIT UP A MUSEUM

Exploring without a companion gives you an opportunity to discover what really ignites your interest, Weinstein says. You can spend an hour zoning out in front of the Jackson Pollocks with no one to hurry you along. Another plus: “You can focus on your thoughts and let them build on each other,” Weinstein says. “Solitary time is when I have my deepest ideas.”

TAKE A NATURE WALK

Nature is a common trigger for what researchers call peak experiences—moments when we’re caught up in wonder and awe—and we can find them whether we’re climbing a distant mountain or admiring a stunning old tree in our neighborhood. We can’t force peak experiences, but the tranquility of solitude may leave us more open to them, Weinstein says. “The joy we feel isn’t the active, energetic kind—it’s a sense of peace. We can have tremendous moments when we feel in touch with ourselves but also part of something bigger.”



Have a Heart-to-Heart

Find out how your familiar partner can still surprise you.

When your long-term relationship starts to feel old hat, you could sign up for, say, couples skydiving. According to happiness researcher Sonja Lyubomirsky, PhD, author of *The How of Happiness*, physical challenges can elicit a chemical rush that feels like falling in love. Or you could try emotional risk-taking, with psychotherapist Esther Perel’s card game, *Where Should We Begin?* (\$40; game.estherperel.com). The idea is to reignite the spark by fostering curiosity through conversational prompts, like “Something I believe but haven’t said aloud...” and “A story I tell about myself that isn’t entirely true...” It feels a bit dangerous, but you can do it while sitting on the couch eating hot wings. (You can also play with family, friends, even close colleagues.)



Have a Microadventure
If you’re short on time, money, or bravado, start small.

Take a different route home from work, and switch up whatever you normally listen to. If it’s music, try a podcast or audiobook, or vice versa. Or enjoy the silence.

Stop at a new place for your morning coffee. Bonus points if you get wild and order something you’ve never tried.



Move in a new way. Work out in your backyard instead of the basement. Skip spin class and try African dance (search YouTube). Or swap Pilates for a long, contemplative walk by yourself (see above). Try anything that speaks to you!



Rearrange your furniture. Will a newly feng shui-ed living room change your life? You won’t know until you’ve moved that couch.

Go to a new-to-you restaurant, or get adventurous when cooking dinner. Head to the library for a low-risk way to try different cookbooks—even offbeat ones, like *The Star Trek Cookbook* or the 1983 classic *Quiche Quiche Quiche*.

Have a weeknight dinner party. It’s fine if you just order a few pizzas—the point is making merry on a school night.



Find a new poem. At poetryfoundation.org, you can browse by topic, time period, where the poet lived, verse form (sestina, sonnet, etc.), and more. For maximum enjoyment, read it aloud.



Spend an entire day outside—eat, read, daydream, nap, hike, host a cornhole tournament.

Discover new music. At the free internet radio and social networking platform 8tracks (8tracks.com), you can discover other members’ playlists and upload yours.

Drive to an intriguing place you’ve never been. See if you can navigate there (and back home!) without your phone.





HIT THE ROAD

When everyone piles into an RV, the journey and destination are one and the same.

BY RORY EVANS

Imagine combining the freedom of a road trip with the comforts of home—you're sitting at a sunny kitchen table in your pj's, sipping coffee, while someone a few feet away is in the driver's seat. Sound good? Well, buckle up, because this magical hybrid vacation can be yours, and it's spelled R-V.

RVing is on a roll. The industry's economic impact (including dealers, rental companies, campgrounds, and other related businesses) increased by almost 25% between 2019 and 2022. And it's not just for retirees: The median age of first-time buyers is 32. RV-curious? Here's what experts recommend.

EXPLORE THE RENTAL MARKET

If you're a novice, ease into RV living with a rental, available through dealerships, companies like Cruise America and Indie Campers, and peer-to-peer platforms like Outdoorsy and RVerzy (think Airbnb but for RVs). You have a range of options: a collapsible pop-up camper you can tow behind your car and then expand into a little home, complete with a toilet and running water; a Class C (the iconic bed-over-driver-seat camper); a Class B (compact but with a kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom); or the big daddy Class A (land yacht worthy of the Eras Tour). Prices vary depending on the model, the duration of your trip, and the time of year (summer is peak season, when prices tend to be higher), so it's worth it to comparison shop.

PRACTICE & PLAN THE ROUTE

In general, you don't need a special license to drive most RVs (check with your local department of motor vehicles for requirements), but you do need some practice. "You have to get used to driving a heavier vehicle that takes longer to speed up and slow down," says Tracey Forde, founder of the organization Black Women Who RV. When you're renting, ask if you can take your vehicle for an accompanied test

drive, which "will make a world of difference for your confidence," says Jen Young, cofounder of Outdoorsy.

When planning your route, make sure bridges or overpasses offer enough clearance for your chariot. Forde swears by an RV GPS from Garmin, which plots routes specifically for a vehicle's size and weight.

BOOK YOUR SITE

For peace of mind, reserve your campsite well in advance (if you're going to a popular spot, you may need to book at least six months ahead). Search for campgrounds and RV parks by state at the helpful site Go RVing.

LEARN THE HOOKUPS

You may need to hook your vehicle's utilities (electricity, water, sewage, TV) to your campsite's connections. Monika Geraci, a spokesperson for the RV Industry Association, recommends watching how-to videos (also at Go RVing) to learn the ropes...and cables, and tanks for gray water (wastewater from sinks and showers) and black water (effluvium from toilets). This might not be your favorite job, but it beats 2 a.m. pee breaks in the woods.

PACE YOURSELF

Before you head out for a cross-country jaunt, try a test run to a destination an hour or so from home. Forde suggests leaving late in the morning so you can avoid rush hour, and arriving at your campsite at least a few hours before dark so you can take care of hookups while there's still daylight. When you're ready for a longer trip, limit your driving to a few hundred miles a day, for the sake of your lower back, your alertness level, and your well-being. And build in rest days to give the driver(s) a break.

CONSIDER CURB SERVICE

Too nervous to take the wheel? You may be able to have your rental delivered and set up at the campsite, Young says. Or head to a vintage trailer or Airstream resort, like AutoCamp, to enjoy camper vibes without having to haul an RV down the highway.

DREAM ROAD TRIPS



South Carolina Lowcountry
FOR HISTORIANS, FOODIES, RYAN GOSLING FANS

Explore 350-plus-year-old Charleston by carriage; feast on shrimp and grits at local faves 82 Queen and Hank's Seafood; swoon over locations from *The Notebook*; head to one of the many beaches for oceanfront camping.



The California Coast
FOR BEACH LOVERS, TACO CONNOISSEURS, CAT PEOPLE

Drive the Pacific Coast Highway from Los Angeles to Big Sur; sample fare from the nation's premier taco state; detour to Pasadena via Route 66 to attend CatCon, billed as the world's largest cat-centric event (August 3–4). Meow!



Michigan's Upper Peninsula
FOR JET-SKISERS, TIME TRAVELERS, BEER DRINKERS

Plunge into one of the Great Lakes (Lake Superior contains 10% of the planet's fresh water); take a ferry to car-free Mackinac Island, once beloved by vacationing Victorians; raise a glass (or two) in one of the state's numerous craft breweries.



Las Vegas & Nearby National Parks
FOR CARD SHARPS, NATURE ENTHUSIASTS, GEOLOGY NERDS

Start in Sin City (have a decadent spa day at Resorts World), then go to one of several national parks within driving distance, including the grand Grand Canyon.



TAKE A DARE

Cultivate some bravery by crushing a physical challenge.

BY ELENI GAGE

Anyone who's ever gone to summer camp and finally worked up the courage to jump off the high dive or climb the tallest boulder knows what physical adventure can do for your self-confidence—a feeling that can last long after summer ends, says Rachel O'Neil, associate director of Adventure Treks, outdoor adventure camps for teens. "These experiences build mental and emotional strength that can translate to life back home."

Even if you're a bit beyond the teenage years, you can foster the same type of personal growth by pushing your limits. "We encounter a variety of challenges throughout life, physically and emotionally," says Paige Davis, president of AdventureWomen, a travel company that plans active trips for women worldwide. "Adventure travel lets you confront fears and insecurities and emerge feeling a sense of triumph." You can do it! These tips can help.

REFRAME FEAR AS EXCITEMENT

If your youthful derring-do has turned into derring-don't, that's normal, Davis says. "As we age, many of us experience increased fear and hesitancy. But you can shift that fear to excitement by redirecting your focus from the risks to the rewards," she explains. The reward could be geographical (say, an adventure in a

fascinating locale), spiritual (the view from the top of the mountain you're about to hike), or a pure thrill (the wind rushing past your face as you ride along a zip line).

BE BRAVE WITH A BUDDY

A plus-one can provide practical and emotional support, for both a low-key afternoon and a high-adventure trip. If you don't have a like-minded friend, check out local Facebook groups or clubs devoted to hiking, biking, and other active pursuits. The outdoor retailer REI offers classes and events that feature kayaking, camping, and more, at a range of activity levels and time commitments. Or if you hunger for something even more adventurous, consider a trip to a farther-flung spot—bird-watching in Costa Rica or traveling the Camino de Santiago in Spain—with a company that specializes in group trips, such as AdventureWomen, Damesly, Intrepid Travel, or Wild Terrains.

LEARN TO ENJOY THE RIDE

"It's not necessarily about reaching an end goal. It's about the journey, doing the things we thought we couldn't do or have been told we couldn't do," O'Neil says. "We're all so much stronger mentally and physically than we give ourselves credit for. We just have to allow ourselves the opportunity to flourish, to start a hard thing and realize it's OK to hit bumps along the way." Onward, adventurers!



Chuck It All to Live Your European Fantasy

And heed these words of wisdom from an American who did just that.

Who among us has not imagined living in Provence/London/Tuscany, running a boutique/bookstore/donkey sanctuary? Chicago native Jane Bertch, restless in the finance job that had brought her to Paris, dreamed of a cooking school where foreigners could learn the secrets of croissant baking in English. In 2009—despite *beaucoup* de red tape and French friends who gave her plans the "smell face" you'd give a stinky cheese—she opened La Cuisine Paris, a journey chronicled in her new memoir, *The French Ingredient*. We asked for her advice on living the expat dream.

REAL SIMPLE: You met many challenges, like Paris real estate, tourism downturns, chefs who refused to teach French onion soup in July because it was "not the season." How'd you keep your cool?

JANE BERTCH: I tried to approach problems with a child's curiosity—that nugget

of inquisitiveness we all still have or had. I told myself, *I don't have to have all the answers right away. It's OK to pick something up, play with it, and learn.*

RS: What's your best advice for navigating other cultures?

JB: Sit back, observe, and resist the temptation to rush things. In my experience, the French are often called unfriendly—but in fact, they take time to grow relationships. They're like feathers. If you try too hard to grasp them, they float away. But once they trust you, they're like extended family.

RS: Is it lonely to be an outsider?

JB: Sometimes, but you can get away with things most people wouldn't. Recently at a wine fair, I asked every basic question about the grapes, regions, food pairings, etc. Most French people wouldn't dare ask because they wouldn't dare to appear any-

thing less than an expert, especially on a subject like wine. But a small crowd gathered, and I realized that although most natives wouldn't have asked the questions, they were curious about the answers.

RS: What other advice do you have for someone considering the expat life?

JB: Plan an extended visit during the off season so you can appreciate living in the prospective city rather than just visiting. Be respectfully curious. And again, hone your critical observation skills!

RS: What do you miss about the U.S.?

JB: So much! Target. Going to a diner at 2 a.m. I'm an only child, and it's hard to be far from my mother as we're both getting older. I don't feel like a Chicagoan anymore, and I don't feel like a Parisian. But I try to take the best of both those wonderful worlds and make them part of who I am.