

Taking a Stay-at-Home Vacation

Because of family budget concerns, I have sometimes found myself with vacation days at work but no money in the budget to go anywhere. I was feeling burned out and needing a vacation, but the thought of going into more debt to visit an exotic, relaxing destination left me feeling more exhausted than ever. So I decided to take a stay-at-home vacation.

Advantages

1. I sleep best in my own bed anyway.
2. My wallet won't hate me in the morning.
3. No packing luggage, no airport security, no timetables.

Stay-at-Home vacations can be good for the whole family, or you might be like me and just take one all by yourself. I decided to take a mini-vacation in the sense that I took a week off work, but still took care of some of the family chores that just couldn't easily be delegated, like getting the kids off to school in the morning. Below are some tips to planning and taking a stay-at-home vacation.

Plan

Plan your vacation as you would any other.

1. Start with a budget. Even though this will probably be the cheapest vacation you ever had, some money will be required to pay for services and things you normally buy on vacation. If the money is budgeted for vacation, you won't feel guilty about spending it.
2. Pretend a good friend is coming into town and think of places you might take them to show them the sites. Plan a day trip to these locations.
3. Find out what events are planned for that week at museums, playhouses, event centers, etc., and buy tickets if needed.

Prepare

The first key to taking a stay-at-home vacation is to prepare to go on vacation as if you really are leaving and will have limited contact back home.

1. Tell friends, family, and co-workers, you will be on vacation, just leave out the details.
2. Catch up on work before leaving so that it won't be on your mind.
3. Change your voicemail and e-mail messages to indicate that you are not available and who they can contact in your absence.
4. Get the laundry done and any glaring household chores taken care of so they won't bug you while you try to relax. I actually used part of my budget to hire a

- housecleaning service the day before. Hey, I would've been paying for hotel maid service anyway. This way it was my house that got cleaned.
5. Plan to eat out for all meals or have already prepared "freezer" meals ready to go for each day. Dump and go crockpot recipes could work too. You may want to buy paper plates and utensils as well.
 6. If your kids aren't part of this vacation, make some childcare arrangements for at least a few of the days or even over night.

The other key to taking a stay-at-home vacation is to trick your mind into believing that this place that's so familiar and usually filled with busy, hectic, work, is a new, fun-filled, relaxing vacation spot – in other words, look at it like an outsider.

1. Go to the local bed and bath store and purchase a few new "spa" items to pamper yourself or look into local day spas in your area.
2. Put on fresh linens and buy some beautiful flowers. Try to make your home look like a quaint little bed and breakfast. If your budget allows, you could even use some of that money you're saving on hotel fees to purchase new linens, bath towels, or other home items that will make you feel wonderful in your new space now and will still be there when you "get back."
3. Plan an "agenda" of fun things to do each day to help you resist the temptation to take care of those nagging household chores instead.
4. Buy a good book just like you would if you were going to a beach resort, rent a few good movies for the evenings, or supplies for a favorite hobby.

The most important thing is to just give yourself permission to let everything else go for a time. It will all still be there when you're done vacationing, but you will feel refreshed and able to tackle life again. Bon Voyage.