

# Skipping, spitting highlight state fun

For those with a bent toward the bizarre, many and unusual, Michigan serves up a fair plate this summer.

Here, chronologically, are 11 offbeat events to add zest to vacation enjoyment for participants and spectators, suggests AAA Michigan.

Judges will seek the funniest, speediest, smartest, longest and most unique rafts during Saginaw's 19th annual Saginaw River Raft Race June 15. Viewers and entrants are welcome. Raft judging begins 8:30 a.m. The race starts two hours later.

The Kentucky Derby it's not, but the June 23 Fastest Mule in Michigan Races at Crossroads Village in Flint lets participants saddle up. No one can predict whether the rider/mule teams will trot, reverse course or stand still.

If hiking is your thing, the 2 1/2-mile International Bridge Walk in Sault Ste. Marie may be just the ticket. So what if it's not the Mackinac Bridge Walk, this event lets walkers stroll across an international border into Canada June 29.

Spectators might expect some chaos when they crane to see 300 hot air balloons over Battle Creek June 29-July 6, that's when the Battle Creek International Championship and Air Show takes to the skies.

Don't bring pancakes to the fifth annual Log Cabin Day June 30. This has nothing to do with maple syrup. But 40 different log cabins will be open for viewing from Berrien Springs near the Indiana border to Marquette in the Upper Peninsula. Contact the Log Cabin Society of Michigan in Sodus for information.

Brush up on sand castle architecture and visit Alpena July 4. All public beaches in the city will be turned into construction sites 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. for the sand castle contests. Sign up in individual, family or group categories.

Pink. Fluffy put. Plunk. Those are the sounds of the Mackinac Island Stone Skipping Tournaments scheduled 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. July 4. Visitors can compete in the open division by bringing six flat or round stones and paying the \$1 entry fee. Winners take home, what else, fluff. The tournament starts at noon.

Pucker up for the International Cherry Pit-Spitting Championship July 6 at the Tree-Mendus Fruit Farm in Eau Claire. But don't expect to walk away with a prize unless your pit travels around 20 yards.

Remember being scared as a kid when someone told horrifying tales around the campfire? Recreate that fear during the Michigan Story-Tellers Festival July 12-13 at Crossroads Village in Flint. While professional tale tellers will spin yarns about ghosts, this year's festival emphasizes cultural diversity.

The World's Largest Coffee Break

## OFFBEAT EVENTS SCHEDULE

June 8 World's Largest Breakfast Table, Battle Creek, (616) 968-6101	July 4 Stone Skipping Tournaments, Mackinac Island, (906) 847-3783
June 9 Rubber Duck Race, Ironwood, (906) 932-1122	July 6 International Cherry Pit-Spitting Championship, Eau Claire, (616) 782-7101
June 15 Saginaw River Raft Race, Saginaw, (517) 752-8161	July 12-13 Michigan Story- Tellers Festival, Crossroads Village, Flint, (313) 736-7100
June 23 Fastest Mule in Michigan Races, Crossroads Village, Flint, (313) 736-7100	July 17 World's Largest Coffee Break, Gaylord, (517) 732-4000
June 29 International Bridge Walk, Sault Ste. Marie, (906) 632-3301	Aug. 25 Strait's Underwater Preserve Treasure Hunt, St. Ignace, (800) 338-6860
June 29- July 6 Battle Creek International Balloon Championship and Air Show, Battle Creek, (616) 962-0592	July 30 Log Cabin Day, Statewide, (616) 944-5719
June 30 Sand Castle Contests, Alpena, (800) 562-1906	

# Flight attendant offers tips on family travel

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Are nearby restaurants "children friendly?" Will you need passports? Will you travel with an infant? (If so, you should tell the airline reservation agent). After you assess anticipated vacation needs, you are ready for stage two:

### PREPARATION

**WRITE IT DOWN!** Make a checklist and cross off each item when it is packed (I live by this rule). Essential items, excluding clothing, include the following:

- Items for infant: Baby food/juice/formula, bottles, cereal, diapers, disposable travel pads to put baby on when changing diapers and Handwipes.
- Items for children: Snacks (not all flights serve a meal), gum and/or candy (for ear problems), straws. Consider games, cards, books or maps. The list should also include motion-sickness pills (recommended by your physician) and/or prescription medicines a family member may need, plus aspirin, antacid tablets, sunburn ointment, etc.

Many of these items may seem obvious to you, but as a flight attendant I've found that's not always true. I've been asked — more than a few times — "Don't you have anything for my child to eat, (play with, etc.)?"

All of this sounds like a lot to remember, but it will save unnecessary expense and headaches if you take a few minutes to prepare. Now you're ready to go!

### TRAVELING

Families with small children are offered the option of boarding the aircraft before others. En route to your seats, you'll usually pass the cockpit. If the children want to say "hi" to the pilots, by all means let them — just ask the flight attendant's permission. The lights and gadgets can be intimidating, so don't encourage your children if they seem apprehensive. If the pilots have time they will spend a couple minutes answering a child's (or your) questions. ... Don't forget, most of them are parents, too.

Flying is a wonderful, uninterrupted opportunity to learn. You can't go anywhere during the flight, so what better time to get to know more about your children?

Read to them, play question-and-answer games, review geography with them by looking at maps.

Talk to your children. Let the clouds stimulate their imagination. You will be surprised at some of the creative thoughts they get. You might want to do this exercise yourself. Looking at the world from a different perspective gives you insight into a problem. You'll be looking down at Earth instead of up at the sky.

I mentioned that you should bring along snacks for the flight. I can't stress this enough. Because of the unpredictable nature of air travel (weather or mechanical delays), food may not be available when your kids are hungry.

In fact, several flights serve nothing more than the peanuts regardless of the time. ("We've been traveling since breakfast and your airline hasn't fed us yet. . . it's 2 o'clock!") Savvy travelers with or without children know this and pack accordingly: Fruit, peanut-butter crackers, popcorn, yogurt and granola bars are just a small sampling of easily-packed food you can bring.

Airliner quarters are very cramped. Young children can get cranky. They want and need to move around, and because parents are also cramped, they're usually only too happy to allow the kids their freedom. But if the seat belt sign is on, it's on for a reason (the captain anticipates or has reports of turbulence). Children should be held or seated when the seat belt sign is on.

If the plane encounters severe turbulence unexpectedly and your child is standing on the seat or playing/sleeping on the floor, he may wind up out of your protective grasp before you can do anything about it. I've seen it happen.

### COMING HOME

We all suffer from an occasional case of post-vacation blues. Children may not recognize their symptoms as such. The "no-hummers" that can settle in when you pull into your driveway can be alleviated by getting back on a routine schedule quickly.

Have the children unpack bags and help wash vacation laundry. Ease the transition back into their everyday lives by reviewing the vacation. Discuss highlights, laugh about the low points and start planning your next trip!

# Kids get 'slimed' in Florida

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ees bike around the park, handing out tickets.

Tickets are free but the first people who ask for them get them, so come early. If you get tickets to be in the audience at Game Lab, held every half hour after July 1, you have a good chance to be slimed. If chosen, you are taken to a dressing room with your name on the door, where they give you a pair of baggy pants and an orange Nickelodeon shirt to wear.

Even if you aren't picked, you can see the Gak Kitchen and taste a little slime and Gak on a throwaway stick.

If one of your adults is still reading and doesn't know what Gak and slime are, ask your kids. Slime looks like liquid green Jello and tastes OK, but not terrific. Gak looks like orange pudding and tastes great. They use so much of this stuff that they have a Gak drainage system.

Game Lab is a fun half-hour for people touring the studio; it is not taped for television. There are four tiers of wooden bleachers on four sides of a square. The kids sit on two of the tiers and adults occupy the other two. It's a standoff and the kids always win.

A 12-year-old from New York was the slime victim

when I watched Game Lab. She sat in a small plastic swimming pool awaiting the inevitable. The first time the pressor brought the slime out it was yelled too hard and wouldn't leave the bucket. Boo. Hiss.

The second time the pressor brought the slime it was too dry and came out like torn paper. Boo. Hiss. He finally got it right and down it came, green, gooey, pouring across the child's head, down her long dark hair, over the orange Nickelodeon T-shirt and onto the baggy pants.

That's more like it! The kids screamed and clapped and stomped their feet.

Warning: Your parents will probably think this is really gross, and it is. But you get to wash the slime out of your hair and put your own clean clothes back on, so what do they know?

If you want to visit Nickelodeon Studios and get slimed, you'd better have the facts, and here they are. You pay regular admission to Universal Studios: \$30.74 a day for 12 and older, \$24.38 for kids 3-11.

Once you are on the grounds, all attractions are free, including the Nickelodeon tour. Call ahead if you want to know what is being filmed the day of your visit. For more information, call Universal Studios at (407) 363-8000. Ask to hear the Nickelodeon recording of the day's events.

# Group arranges trips with grandkids

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collection in South Bend, Ind. The Slidebaker Larkette Regal Deluxe designed by Sam Schepk of Niles, Mich. is a child's version of the Lark convertible.

• AAA has a travel activity book to help ward off the plaintive cry, "Are we there yet?" It has 144 pages of puzzles and games for kids age 4-12, with a little touch of geography, history and nature for each state. It costs \$4.95, \$3.45 for AAA members, at any AAA office.

• The Curiosity Place: An Exhibit for Young Children is a highlight of the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry. Or you can take the kids overnight to the Field Museum.

### HOTELS

Most hotels are offering special

services or rates to attract families. Guest Quarters Suite Hotels has summer rates that start at \$59 a room per night in Detroit (take the kids and not bother driving) to \$129 at Walt Disney World in Florida, with lots of variations in between.

A suite hotel typically gives you a bedroom with two double beds and a sitting room with a pull-out bed, light kitchen facilities and lounge area, a good idea for kids. You also get a full breakfast free and can enjoy free cocktail hour when the kids are in the pool.

### CRUISES

If you still think Caribbean cruises are for winter-bound adults, follow the families sailing three- and four-day cruises out of Florida, or combine a Disney visit with a short cruise. Several cruise lines do this

combination, but the most popular is Premiere Cruise Lines.

Call World Wide Cruises, Inc. toll-free (800) 882-9900 for the hotline information about family cruises.

### DIVE CLUB MEET

Scuba diving is one of the most popular activities at Club Med Family Villages, where kids 4-12 don mini-sized equipment under expert guidance.

### READ ALL ABOUT IT

Let the kids help you plan the trip and they will be less likely to complain during your vacation.

Send \$1 for postage and handling to get Family Travel Guides catalog from Carousel Press, P.O. Box 5061, Albany, CA 94708. They specialize in family travel and their small catalog lists a lot of reading material you can buy to enrich family travel.

# Cruise combines reunion, anniversary

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The food was outstanding. The 5-year-old had enough French fries to last a lifetime. The assistant food manager went out of his way to make dining an experience, especially for the vegetarians.

## clarification

A May 20 story about Maumee Bay State Park Lodge, the newest of Ohio's 10 park lodges, should have said the park would begin taking cottage reservations for June 1991 on June 1 this year. On July 1 and Aug. 1 they will take cottage reservations for July and August 1992, respectively. For information, call toll-free (800) AT-A-PARK.

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