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Fryburg MAYFEST 2026: Grand slam celebration

Memorial Day Weekend Fryburg, PA

As Memorial Day week-end approaches, the quiet charm of Fryburg once again prepares to transform into a hub of energy, connection, and celebration. The Fryburg Mayfest 2026 returns with its familiar blend of tradition and fresh excitement, bringing together families, friends, and visitors for a weekend of family-friendly entertainment and fun.

From the first whistle of the 5K to the final burst of fireworks, MAYFEST continues to reflect what makes small-town communities thrive: people showing up for one another.

Friday evening: A race that gives back & a movie night to remember

The weekend begins on Friday evening with a beloved tradition, the annual Mayfest 5K Fun Run/Walk once again invites participants of all ages to hit the scenic Fryburg route. This year, every dollar

supports the Clarion-Forest Little League program. Registration begins at 6:00 p.m., with the race stepping off at 7:00 p.m. sharp.

If the fun run isn't of interest, how about a family maker and movie night? This year's feature will be the new 2026 release of Goat. Catch the 6PM showing or join us under the stars for the 9PM showing. Attendees can also Step up to the plate to create and design their own baseball cap creation. This event is sponsored by Re-make Learning Days and is free for all.

Saturday: A full day where tradition meets fresh energy

By Saturday morning, Fryburg is fully alive.

From early hours, visitors begin making their way through town, some heading to yard sales, others drawn by the buzz of activity at the Fun Zone—the old ballfield behind Faller's, this area includes inflatables, bungee jumping, radar speed pitch, Dino

Roar Shows @ 11:30AM & 1:30PM, Jumping Jungle's Mobile Mini Golf, Chelly Belly the Clown, Charlie the Jester, Brynn Space face painting, and more!

A free shuttle service once again makes it easy to explore, connecting key stops and allowing guests to take in everything Mayfest has to offer without missing a moment.

A marketplace of makers: The outdoor craft and vendor show

Ready for some shopping? Head down to the parking lot across from St. Michaels church for the ever-growing Outdoor Craft and Vendor Show. Browse handcrafted wreaths, rustic wood décor, and seasonal accents, beautifully carved cutting boards, engraved keepsakes, and handmade furniture pieces, jewelry, crochet items, homemade soaps, candles, and body care products, custom-designed apparel, drinkware, and gifts, unique creations from 3D printing to stained

glass and so much more!

Adding to the line-up, the AmeriHealth Van will be on-site, offering a place to cool down and access free health resources.

Family fun, classic Cars, and community traditions

Across the road, engines rumble to life at the Grand Slam Cruise-In, where classic cars, tractors, motorcycles, and big rigs will be on display. It's a showcase of craftsmanship and pride, where owners will gladly share their cars (and stories) with all who will listen.

A new kind of royalty: Maybugs with a mission

One of the most meaningful evolutions of Mayfest in 2026 comes through the revamped Maybugs program.

Traditionally a cherished part of the festival, this year's Maybugs step into a new role, not just as representatives of Mayfest, but as community ambassadors. Throughout the season, they are actively

raising funds and awareness for the Clarion County Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program, helping provide free books to young children across the county.

The parade: Where the community comes together

By late afternoon, anticipation builds for one of Mayfest's most beloved traditions. The parade!

At 4:00 p.m., the streets of Fryburg will come alive with floats, music, waving hands, and smiling faces. It's a moment where generations line the sidewalks, children gather candy, and neighbors reconnect. Want a chance to win one of the featured parade trophies? Gather your group, decorate your float, and be part of the fun! There's still time to join the Mayfest Parade. Pre-registrations are being accepted and same-day registrations are welcome!

An evening to remember

As the day winds down,

the energy shifts once again.

Live music will fill the evening air by the Allegheny Smoke Band, as families settle in with lawn chairs to kick back and listen to some good tunes. Then the fireworks finale will light up Fryburg in a brilliant display, each burst a celebration of community, tradition, and the memories made over the weekend.

More than a festival

At its core, Fryburg Mayfest is more than a schedule of events. It's a reflection of a community that continues to evolve while holding tight to what matters most.

In 2026, that spirit is clearer than ever:

Supporting youth through the Clarion-Forest Little League program

Promoting literacy through the Clarion County's Dolly Parton Imagination Library

Celebrating local talent, tradition, and togetherness

Make plans now to be part of Fryburg Mayfest 2026.

Come for the weekend. Stay for the connection.

Eco-friendly summer fun the whole family will love

Every family has their favorite warm weather traditions. But challenging everyone to tackle new close-to-home activities can help make this the best summer ever.

Whether you're looking for outdoor activities, eco-friendly ideas, travel inspiration, or cultural fun, this guide will help you put together your family's ultimate summer bucket list.

Getting outside

Celebrate the summer solstice—21st century style. Kick off the longest day of the year with a sunrise hike complete with wildflower-picking to make a flower crown. Come evening, play a game of whiffle ball in honor of Alaska's Midnight Sun Game and roast marshmallows over a backyard campfire (instead of the traditional bonfire) when the sun finally sets.

Find a sit spot. One of the best ways to connect with nature is simply to sit outside in peaceful reflection. Have everyone in the family choose a relaxing place to visit throughout the summer: a quiet backyard nook, a space in a local preserve, or even a shady park bench. The key? Find an easy-to-access place where you can really tune into your surroundings.

Start a family nature club. Make getting outside a regular event—and help others do the same—by starting a family nature club. Have kids name your club, then decide when and how often your club will meet. Research meeting locations, like a local nature center or a park with varying trail lengths, good parking, and public restrooms. Do a couple of trial visits as a family, then invite other families to join.

Attend a star party. Although an inexpensive telescope or pair of binoculars will improve your chances of spotting more remote galactic features, the moon, the International Space Station, and several planets and constellations can all be seen with the naked eye. Gather in your backyard or local park to scan the skies, or check out a star party hosted by a local astronomy club.

Eco-stewardship

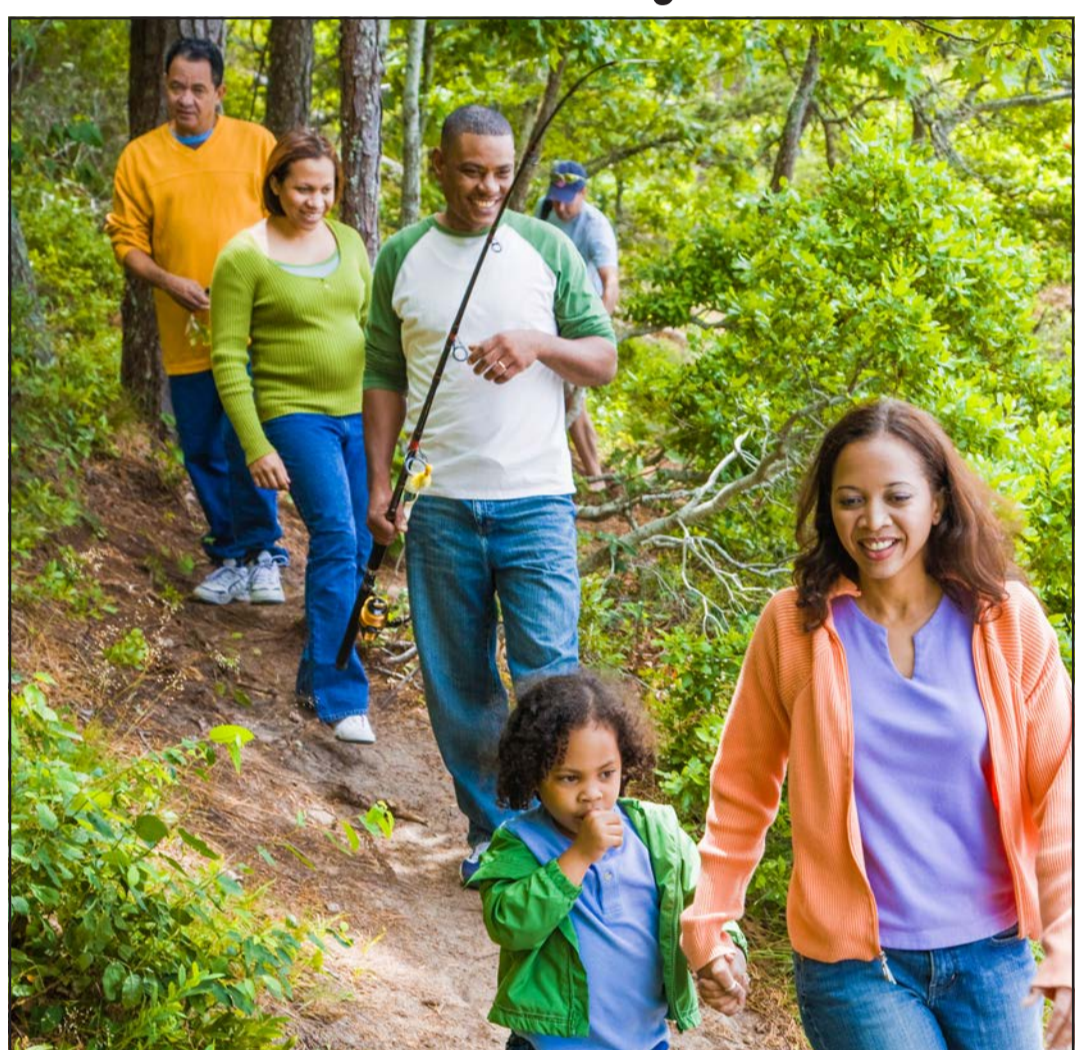
Earth-friendly activities stay with kids long after summer has passed.

Make your yard wildlife friendly. Transform your backyard into an inviting habitat for birds, butterflies, and other fauna. To attract pollinators like honeybees and hummingbirds, replace a corner of

lawn with native plants that provide lots of flowers, nectar, and pollen. Add a bird feeder and a simple birdbath for feathered friends and a flower pot or two (tip them on their sides and bury them halfway) for toad abodes.

Meet a farmer. Browsing a nearby farmers market can help teach kids about the impact of locally sourced food on the environment. Try sending them on a scavenger hunt for familiar items as well as weirder fare like garlic scapes, green zebra tomatoes, and lemon cucumbers. Or set forth challenges: the biggest and smallest fruit, something that grows underground, or four things that could go on a pizza. To seal in the eco-lesson, bring a map to locate each farm, then figure how many miles your food traveled.

Go on a backyard bioblitz. A family bioblitz—recording as many plant and animal species as you can in a specific amount of time—is a great way to show kids the importance of biodiversity. Grab a field guide or nature app to help identify flora and fauna, then set a goal. Can you identify 25 different species? 50? 100? Have kids jot down their findings in a notebook, index cards, or even a hand-drawn map of the backyard. Split the



family into teams and make it a friendly competition!

Organize a neighborhood clean-up. Is there a waterfront area where trash tends to accumulate or a playground that needs a new flower bed? Tackle those issues with a green service day. Kids can design and print flyers to advertise the event, create an on-line sign-up, and reach out to

friends and neighbors to enlist their help. Parents can post information about the clean-up on community social media pages and solicit local businesses or the public works department to donate or lend supplies.

Travel

Summer travel doesn't have to mean jetting off to the

other side of the world. **Take a trip around the world ... at the zoo.** Your local zoo can be a great place to explore the world. Bring a world map, then have kids record where different animals live as they find them. They can also jot down other geographic characteristics they notice, like climate, water features, and natural vegetation. Along the way, talk about some of the challenges humans and animals living together face.

Plan a daytrip using public transportation. Hop on a ferry. Ride the bus. Journey by train. Challenge your kids to plan a quick getaway that involves traveling via public transportation. Start by brainstorming local places your family would like to visit, like a beach or museum. Then help kids read maps and schedules for various modes of mass transit to figure out how to reach your chosen destination. And remember—getting there is half the fun!

Be a tourist in your own town. Spend a day exploring your family's hometown through the eyes of a traveler. Before the "trip," encourage kids to pick up some brochures at a welcome center or grab a guidebook at the library. Then help them design an itinerary with lots of new-to-your-family activities. One fun idea is to check in to a nearby hotel the night before your adventure.

Preserve your memories. Document your family's summer escapades by making a scrapbook. Encourage kids to collect plenty of souvenirs, from favorite family photographs to postcards to ticket stubs. You can also include restaurant menus, pressed flowers from a hike, party invitations, sketches, and favorite quotes. Work on your scrapbook throughout the summer.

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Relaxing day trips to explore this summer

Northwestern Pennsylvania offers no shortage of scenic destinations perfect for a relaxing summer day trip. From peaceful lakeshores and forest trails to wildlife refuges and historic railroads, the region is filled with places that invite visitors to slow down and enjoy the outdoors. Whether planning a family outing, a quiet afternoon surrounded by nature, or a leisurely road trip with friends, northwestern Pennsylvania provides a wide variety of destinations that combine natural beauty, small-town charm, and easy-going adventure.

A unique spectacle at Pymatuning State Park

Located along the Pennsylvania-Ohio border, Pymatuning State Park is one of the largest and most visited state parks in the Commonwealth. The park is best known for the famous Pymatuning Reservoir Spillway, where thousands of large carp gather near the surface, creating a memorable and unusual sight for visitors. The spectacle has become a longtime regional attraction and remains one of the park's most photographed spots.

Beyond the spillway, Pymatuning offers countless opportunities for a peaceful day outdoors. The large reservoir provides scenic water views, boating access, fishing areas, and picnic spaces perfect for spending an afternoon by the lake. Visitors can also enjoy walking trails, wildlife observation areas, and shaded spots for relaxing along the shoreline. During the summer months, the park becomes a favorite destination for families looking for an affordable getaway while also appealing to retirees and nature lovers seeking a slower pace and beautiful scenery.

Peace and wildlife at Erie National Wildlife Refuge

For visitors who enjoy quiet natural surroundings and wildlife viewing, the Erie National Wildlife Refuge offers a refreshing escape from busy daily routines. Spanning thousands of protected acres, the refuge features wetlands, forests, grasslands, and waterways that support a wide range of native wildlife.

Several easy walking trails throughout the refuge allow visitors to experience the landscape at a comfortable pace. Birdwatchers are especially drawn to the area, as the refuge serves as an important stop for migratory birds throughout the year. Bald eagles, waterfowl, songbirds,



deer, turtles, and other wildlife can often be spotted along the trails or near the water.

The refuge's peaceful atmosphere makes it an excellent destination for photography, leisurely walks, or simply enjoying time outdoors. With quiet surroundings and scenic views in every season, it offers a relaxing alternative to more crowded tourist attractions and encourages visitors to reconnect with nature in a calm and meaningful way.

Lighthouses and shorelines at Presque Isle State Park

Along the shores of Lake Erie, Presque Isle State Park continues to be one of northwestern Pennsylvania's most beloved summer destinations. The sandy peninsula stretches into Lake Erie and offers

miles of shoreline, scenic overlooks, recreational trails, and beaches that attract visitors from across the region.

One of the park's biggest draws is its versatility. Visitors can spend the day swimming, picnicking, biking, birdwatching, kayaking, or simply enjoying the lake views from one of the many peaceful observation areas. Paved trails throughout the park make it especially accessible for visitors of all ages, including retirees and families with young children.

Historic lighthouses and scenic waterfront areas add to the park's charm, while beautiful sunsets over Lake Erie provide the perfect ending to a summer evening. During warmer months, Presque Isle becomes a gathering place for families, outdoor enthusiasts, and travelers looking to enjoy

a relaxing day surrounded by water and natural beauty.

A journey through history at Oil Creek State Park

Oil Creek State Park combines scenic landscapes with one of the most significant stories in American industrial history. Located in the region considered the birthplace of the oil industry, the park offers visitors an opportunity to experience both outdoor recreation and historical exploration in a picturesque setting.

The park's rolling hills, wooded trails, and creekside scenery create an ideal backdrop for hiking, picnicking, and sightseeing. Visitors looking for a more leisurely experience can board the Oil Creek & Titusville Railroad, which travels through the valley while

sharing stories about the early oil boom that transformed the region and helped shape modern industry.

Nearby museums and historic attractions provide additional insight into the area's rich past, making the park an educational destination as well as a scenic one. The combination of history, train rides, and natural beauty makes Oil Creek State Park especially appealing for multigenerational trips where visitors can enjoy both entertainment and learning together.

Discovering the charm of Northwestern Pennsylvania

One of the greatest appeals of northwestern Pennsylvania is the variety of experiences available within a relatively short drive. Small towns,

scenic byways, quiet forests, and lakeside destinations create countless opportunities for memorable summer outings without the stress of long-distance travel.

Whether exploring peaceful wildlife refuges, relaxing beside Lake Erie, taking a scenic train ride through historic valleys, or spending the afternoon at a state park, visitors can discover destinations that feel both refreshing and accessible. These day trips offer an opportunity to slow down, enjoy the beauty of the region, and create lasting summer memories with family and friends.

As summer continues, northwestern Pennsylvania remains a perfect destination for those looking to combine relaxation, outdoor beauty, and meaningful experiences close to home.

Celebrating the start of summer solstice

The summer solstice offers the most hours of daylight all year. According to Space.com, the summer solstice occurs when one of the Earth's poles has its maximum tilt toward the sun. The summer solstice falls on June 20, 21 or 22 in the Northern Hemisphere.

The longest day of the year and the beginning of astrological summer is a source of celebration for many people. Come the summer solstice, the warm weather stabilizes and there are more days of sunshine and mild temperatures. Summer also is a season for school breaks and family vacations, representing

additional reasons to look forward to the summer solstice. People can commemorate the start of summer in many different ways, including these fun ideas.

Plan a hike. With a greater number of daylight hours, the solstice is the perfect time to head outdoors and enjoy the sights. There's no need to rush, as the sun sets late in the evening, giving those who have to work or attend school earlier in the day an opportunity to enjoy a hike after signing off.

Take a photo. Make it a tradition to take a "first day of summer" photo each year

to catalog the years going by. Everyone can pose in their favorite summer garb or get coordinating t-shirts.

Change the decor. The first day of summer is a perfect time to change a home's decor to reflect bright, summery details. Pull out bright throw pillows, switch to citrus or coconut-scented candles to establish a beachy mood and fill a bowl with limes, lemons and oranges for an easy summer centerpiece.

Make a summer treat. Spend the day trying a new summer recipe, such as homemade ice cream,

s'mores, fresh lemonade, or a frozen cocktail (mocktail) like pi-a coladas. Enjoy in honor of the start of summer.

Take a plunge: Make an inaugural summer trip to the seaside, a pool or a lake and do your best cannonball into the water. Summer is a peak time for swimming, water sports and boating, so it pays to dive right into these activities.

These are some of the entertaining ways that people can celebrate the arrival of the first day of summer. Festivities can continue over the ensuing months.

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Summer entertaining on a budget

Summer is a season for entertaining. But as the cost of consumer goods and even necessities like food has risen in recent years, some people may be hosting a lot less often than they used to.

It's important to keep in mind that memorable entertaining options are not only defined by cost. Sure that professional decorator or expensive catering service may be lavish, but it's possible to host a gathering without putting a strain on your finances. Here are some strategies for budget-friendly summer entertaining.

Buffets and bars: A complex, multi-course meal will be expensive, and some guests may even find it pretentious. Instead, reduce time spent in the kitchen and simplify meal service with buffet stations and food bars. Allow guests to customize their food

with different toppings and ingredients, which can elevate even simple fare like tacos or burgers.

Signature drinks: A full open bar is expensive. Keeping a few staples on hand, such as beer and red and white wine, should be sufficient. But hosts also can create a signature cocktail, make it in bulk and serve it in a pitcher. Spritzers also can stretch wine or liquor further because they are mixed with sparkling water. Remember to also make non-alcoholic offerings available. A pitcher of mineral water with fruit or cucumber slices is affordable and refreshing.

Affordable atmosphere: There's no need to hire a party planner to transform an entertaining space. Inexpensive tricks can go a long way. Lighting is important,



and repurposed holiday lights or bistro lights will make the space intimate as the sun goes down. Even tea candles in scattered mason jars will create a relaxing ambiance. Utilize found items for decor, like seasonal fruits in a bowl for a vibrant centerpiece or clippings from the garden instead of costly bouquets picked up from the store.

Music: Music is an useful means to set the mood and help guests feel comfortable, while silent space can be austere and awkward. Hosts can curate a party playlist via a free or paid music app rather than spending money on live entertainment.

Encourage contributions: As a party host or hostess, it's tempting to want to do it all and take on all of the burden. But it's alright and cost-effective to accept

help when guests want to contribute. If friends express a desire to help, ask them to bring a side dish, a favorite beverage or a dessert to defray costs.

Low-cost activities: Keeping guests occupied doesn't have to be expensive. Pass around lyrics to songs so everyone can join in on a group karaoke session featuring familiar favorites like "Sweet Caroline" or Shaboozey's "A Bar Song (Tipsy)," among others. Board games, lawn games like cornhole, or even card games are some additional low-cost options. Pool owners have an ultimate source of entertainment without any new expenses.

Entertaining during the summer doesn't have to be expensive. By focusing on company, fun and casual food, hosts and their guests are likely to have a good time.

5 must-haves for a successful cookout

(BPT) — There's nothing better this time of year: good food, friends and family hanging out together and enjoying the outdoors for a fun, relaxing time in the yard. To ensure that you have a great cookout every time, here are some backyard barbecue essentials.

Keep it simple

Even if you're a dedicated foodie who loves trying out all the latest recipes, you'll want to be sure to include crowd-pleasers that everyone expects at a cookout: Burgers, hotdogs and brats come to mind. Be sure to clean the grill thoroughly and start heating it up well before your guests arrive. If you love to cook, you can show off your culinary skills with creative sides and desserts — just consider prepping those the day before so you'll be ready to go.

Consider creating a condiment and toppings station away from the heat of the grill where guests can choose their favorite ketchup, mustard, relish, onions and any other tasty garnishes you'd like to supply.

Provide something for everyone

For guests who have specific dietary needs or preferences, it's easy to cook up a little fish or even tofu alternatives on the grill or using foil packets. Make sure to grill up some easy veggie options everyone will enjoy, like portobello mushrooms, potatoes or corn-on-the-cob.

You could provide skewers and a variety of choices for a make-your-own shish kebab station, with shrimp, peppers,



pineapple chunks, cherry tomatoes, and more! Let your imagination go wild.

Hydrate in the shade

While unfortunately you can't control the weather, you can help your guests stay more comfortable and cool with a little planning ahead. If your deck or patio doesn't already have an awning or sun sail to help block out the heat of the sun, consider installing one — or rent one from an events or rental center — for the occasion. Another great option is to buy or rent an outdoor misting or cooling fan.

Make sure that you provide plenty of cold, non-alcoholic beverages and ice to help everyone stay cool and hydrated during your get-together. Ice cream, ice pops and water-rich fruits like cantaloupe are also welcome treats when the temps are high.

You can't go wrong with a sweet cantaloupe. Whether a refreshing snack, a tasty side dish or juicy dessert, cantaloupe is an ideal option for your backyard barbecue.

Amp up the fun

Provide a fun atmosphere with an upbeat summer playlist, colorful decorations and activities that bring out the kid in everyone. When was the last time you participated in a water balloon toss, a three-legged race, a rousing game of tug-of-war or ran through a sprinkler? Set up areas for outdoor games in your yard so guests of all ages can choose the activities they enjoy the most.

Create a cooling-off area

Especially when the weather is hot, or in case someone just needs a few moments of calm and quiet, make sure there's a designated outdoor or indoor spot away from the sun, fun and games to rest for a while. This will be especially welcome for older adults or anyone with very young children who may need a brief respite.

Following these tips, your next cookout is bound to be the first of many fun and successful get-togethers, all season long.



Long weekend ahead? How to plan a fun last-minute road trip

(BPT) — If you're looking forward to having an extra day or two off work, why not make the most of it? Even without the opportunity to do a lot of planning ahead of time, you can have a blast by going on an exciting excursion that's not too far from home.

Here are some tips to help you enjoy a fun road trip during your next long weekend.

Keep it short and sweet

Instead of making your road trip fill your entire weekend, you could consider taking just a day trip or an overnight stay at a location not too far afield, so you'll also have time to work on your yard or just relax at home for a day or so after your adventure.

A brief but enjoyable change of scenery may be just what you need to put things in perspective — and create fun new memories with your family, friends or that special someone.

Play tourist in your own state

First, identify a couple of

attractions you'd like to visit that are within an hour or two (or three!) of your home base.

Try an online search like: "Tourist attractions within two hours of my hometown," "State or national parks in my state," and/or "Festivals and events near me during the weekend of ..." to find a few options that you've never experienced before. You can even narrow your search to suit your specific preferences by adding phrases like "outdoor recreation," "cultural events" or "food festivals."

Then do a little research about the hours your chosen attractions or events will be open, any fees you'll need to cover, plus nearby amenities you can combine with your trip, such as restaurants, recreation areas or scenic spots.

Pro tip: To avoid big crowds or lines, opt for less popular or touristy events and venues, or plan your visit outside peak times.

Be flexible about where to stay

While you may be able to find last-minute openings at hotels or motels by searching

your preferred travel sites online, if they're already booked or don't provide what you need, you may need to widen your search to check out vacation rentals like Airbnb. You'll find accommodations of different types and sizes so your entire group is comfortable. Being willing to travel off the beaten path may also open up more opportunities for places to stay.

Pack wisely

Include a few layers of clothes so you'll be ready for any kind of weather (no matter what the forecast says), such as extra jackets or rain ponchos, as well as necessary toiletries including sunscreen and bug spray, and of course your favorite road trip playlist!

Make sure to prep plenty of car-friendly snacks and drinks, including reusable water bottles, trail mix, fruit and sandwiches so you don't have to spend too much money en route — or time searching for restaurants while you're on the road. A small portable cooler can help you keep drinks and food items cold during your journey.

Make sure your car is up to the trip

If you haven't had any car maintenance done recently, be sure to check that your tires, brakes, oil and battery are all in good shape before you head out. Also ensuring that your trunk is packed with safety items like jumper cables, a jack and spare tire, plus a first aid kit, will go a long way toward having peace of mind on the road, even if nothing goes wrong. Keeping your phone charged and having a current membership to a roadside assistance service are also good safety measures.

Wherever you're headed during your long weekend, remember to relax, have fun and take lots of pictures! Your next great vacation could be right around the corner.

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Why now is a smart time to replace an old HVAC system

(Feature Impact) With summer heat just around the corner, homeowners may not be aware that spring can be a perfect time to prepare for rising temperatures. An outdated heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system, for example, may not be up for the task of keeping a home cool.

In fact, it can end up costing homeowners more in the long term due to a gradual decline in efficiency and more frequent repairs. In addition to savings over time, there are multiple reasons to replace an aging system this spring.

In a recent survey, Carrier found more than one-quarter (26%) of homeowners don't know the age of their HVAC system, and a slight

majority (54%) don't know the average lifespan of one. Those knowledge gaps can result in missed opportunities for long-term savings.

Aging systems can't take the heat

Many homeowners postpone purchasing a new HVAC system until their existing system fails or they find their aging system is struggling to maintain a consistent temperature. Often, upfront costs deter homeowners from purchasing a new system; however, 8 in 10 homeowners would consider a new heating and cooling system if it paid for itself in energy savings within 5-10 years. With a new energy-efficient system, those savings are possible.

A new HVAC system is a critical home investment

Modern heating and cooling systems have uses beyond heating and cooling. They can improve air quality in the home by balancing humidity levels, reducing drafts and keeping a consistent climate throughout multiple rooms and stories. They also use less energy and run more quietly than older systems, making a home quieter and more cost-effective.

HVAC basics many homeowners miss

HVAC units often go unseen, yet a home's comfort depends on them running consistently. It's critical that homeowners schedule annual

maintenance appointments to ensure their system is running as it should and they're aware of when it may be time to replace.

While it may seem more cost-effective to stick with an outdated system for one more season, an old system could end up prolonging issues and ultimately cost homeowners more in repairs.

Spring is an ideal time to invest in a new HVAC system, as contractors are generally more available to install a new system and homeowners can get ahead of the summer heat, ensuring they'll be cool all season long.

Signs it's time to replace

Red flags that indicate it's time for a new HVAC system include: a

system that's more than 10-15 years old, a system that needs noticeably more repairs, energy bills going up despite usage remaining the same, inconsistent temperatures, a system struggling to maintain the desired temperature or a system that's constantly running or seems less efficient than it used to.

Many companies offer specials during the spring and fall months, known as shoulder season. For example, until May 31, Carrier is offering 0% APR for 60 months and up to \$2,100 in rebates so customers can get a jumpstart on a cool, comfortable home. A new HVAC system means more than just cool temps this summer; it means added home value, cleaner air and peace of mind.

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Wed. May 20 — Community Philosophy Circle — 6 p.m.; Oil City YMCA; in-person philosophy discussion group hosted by Community Philosophy Circle; free to attend

Wed. May 20 — Cookie Ruck: Kraft Hill — 6 p.m.; St. Stephen's Lutheran Academy, 3823 Academy St., Utica; GORUCK Crawford County event on a 4- to 6-mile moderate route; free

Wed. May 20 — Walk with a UPMC Northwest Doc — 5 p.m.; UPMC Northwest Walking Trail Pavilion, Seneca; for more information, contact Theresa Edder at 814-676-7145 or edderta2@upmc.edu

Fri. May 22, Sat. May 23 & Sun. May 24 — 2026 Bluegrass Festival — 7 to 11 p.m.; Venango County Fairgrounds, 867 Mercer Road, Franklin; for more info, contact Jim Dick Jr. at 814-720-8509; for camping questions, Christopher Nicklin at 814-671-2387

Fri. May 22, Sat. May 23 & Sun. May 24 — Living History Weekend — Cook Forest State Park; living history weekend celebrating America's 250th birthday

Fri. May 22 — Paint & Sip — 1 p.m.; Oil City Library, Oil City; monthly paint-and-sip class; Chloe Boden instructor; cost \$10 at the door; art supplies and mocktails/snacks provided; RSVP required by May 15 at 814-227-3156

Fri. May 22 — Red Eye Theatre Project auditions — 7:30 p.m.; Barrow-Civic Theatre, 1223 Liberty St., Franklin; auditions for 24-hour theatrical sprint — a performance cast, written, directed, rehearsed and performed in a single day; no experience needed; everyone who auditions is cast; participants asked to read something of their choosing

Fri. May 22 — Spaghetti dinner benefit — 5 to 8 p.m.; First Presbyterian Church, Oil City; benefit event for Halayne and Bryn; spaghetti dinner includes garlic bread, drinks and desserts; basket donations and sharing memories of Logan; adults \$10, kids \$5, under 2 free

Fri. May 22, Sat. May 23 & Sun. May 24 — Spring Franklin Regatta — 471 Beach Road, Franklin

Fri. May 22, Sat. May 23 & Sun. May 24 — Traditional Archery Shoot — Rainbow Bowmen Archery Club, 1205 Baker Road, Franklin; Memorial Day weekend shoot; camping on site; \$15 for one day or \$40 for three-day weekend; ages 11 and under free; for more info, contact Luke Mays at 814-221-8573 or Bob and Linda Steiner at 814-374-4759

Sat. May 23 — Dragonfly Fantasia art class — 10 a.m. to noon; The Parkside Parlor, 201 W. Spring St., Titusville; Titusville Council on the Arts; alcohol ink on watercolor paper with glass color options; all minors must be accompanied by an adult; cost \$15

Sat. May 23 — Franklin VFW Spring Vendor and Craft Show — 4 to 8 p.m.; Franklin VFW, 1405 Buffalo St., Franklin

Sat. May 23 — MAC Expo — 1 to 5 p.m.; MAC Center, 228 Seneca St., Oil City; Oil City Arts Council event featuring local talent, demonstrations and showcases; information at www.oilcityartscouncil.org

Sat. May 23 — May Birding Series: Old-Growth Forests out-

door program — 9 to 10:30 a.m.; McKeever-Goddard Trailhead, 1 mile west of Sandy Lake on Route 358; free and open to the public; attendees can register for binoculars by calling 814-226-1901

Sat. May 23 — Red Eye Theatre Project performance — 7:30 p.m.; Barrow-Civic Theatre, 1223 Liberty St., Franklin; performance of 24-hour theatrical sprint cast, written, directed and rehearsed in a single day; tickets \$12

Sat. May 23 — Roughneck Gravel Roubaix — 7 a.m.; Titusville Iron Works, 315 S. Franklin St., Titusville; fifth anniversary gravel cycling event

Sat. May 23 — Stand-up comedy with Skyler Bolks — 7 p.m.; Bizzy's, Oil City; live stand-up comedy featuring Skyler Bolks, as seen in "America's Best Bar Comics"; advance tickets \$7.50 or \$10 at the door

Thurs. May 28 — AlleyCats concert — 6 to 8 p.m.; 423 13th St., Franklin; free open-air concert featuring the AlleyCats; schedule changes due to inclement weather will be announced on Jim Ellis Photography Facebook page

Thurs. May 28 — America 250: Many Voices, One Song — 7 p.m.; Bandstand Park, Liberty Street, Franklin; Venango Chorus and Clarion Community Choir performing selections with the Silver Cornet Band

Fri. May 29 — Fire Tower/Seneca Point historical tour — 1 p.m.; Cook Forest State Park, Fire Tower parking lot; participants encouraged to bring binoculars

Fri. May 29 — PA's Natural Symbols presentation — 6 to 7 p.m.; Clear Creek Forest District Office, 158 South Second Avenue, Clarion; free and open to the public; attendees can register by calling 814-226-1901

Fri. May 29 — The Merge middle school dance party — 6 to 9 p.m.; Oil City YWCA, 109 Central Ave., Oil City; under-18 dance party for middle school students; tickets \$5

Sat. May 30 — Birds, Brews, and Ballads — 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.; Cook Forest State Park

Sat. May 30 — Dancing for Eternity's 4th Annual Spring Performance — doors open at 4 p.m., performance at 4:30 p.m.; Oil City High School; advance tickets \$10, tickets at the door \$12

Sat. May 30 — Herb Bigley Memorial Fundraiser — 3 p.m.; Coon and Fox Club, 126 Martin Hill Road, Reno; sponsored by the Friends of Herb Committee; tickets \$15, limited to 200; tickets available by calling Jerry Cochran at 814-221-6619, Quail Klingensmith at 814-671-4409 or Bogan Goughler at 814-657-7691; checks may be made payable to Jerry Cochran or Franklin Men's Softball League with Herb Bigley Memorial Fund in the memo; checks may be sent to Jerry Cochran, 977 Tarklin Road, Cranberry, PA 16319, or Quail Klingensmith, 158 East State Road, Seneca, PA 16346

Sat. May 30 — May Birding Series: Open Meadows outdoor program — 9 to 10:30 a.m.; Wolf Creek Tract, located off Centertown Road near Grove City; attendees encouraged to bring binoculars, with loaners available; free and open to the public

Events Hub

A complete list can be found at TheDerrick.com

Sat. May 30 — Reverse Ekphrasis poetry reading opening — 2 to 4 p.m.; Red Brick Gallery & Gift Shop, 17 Main St., Foxburg; exhibit runs through July 5 in gallery

Sat. May 30 — Summer-time Classic Car Show — noon to 4 p.m.; Titusville Iron Works Tap House, 315 S. Franklin Ave., Titusville; free admission

Sat. May 30 — The Kindness Rock Project — 2 to 5 p.m.; 15 Harriott Ave., Oil City

Sat. May 30 — The Merge high school dance party — 7 to 10 p.m.; Oil City YWCA, 109 Central Ave., Oil City; under-18 dance party for high school students

Sun. May 31 — Clark Wilson theatre organ performance — 2 p.m.; Lincoln Hall, 42 S. Palmer St., Foxburg; adults \$25, ARCA members \$20, students \$5; tickets available at alleghenyriverstone.org or by calling 724-659-3153

Sun. May 31 — Fly-In and Car Cruise — 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.; The Runway Ristorante and Lounge, Venango Regional Airport, 1564 Airport Road, Franklin; family event featuring planes, classic cars, food and music

Thurs. June 4, 11, 18, 25 Curb Market — 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Central Avenue Plaza, Oil City

Thurs. June 4 — Demonstration and concert on historic Shaker chimes — 7 p.m.; DeBence Antique Music World, third floor, 1261 Liberty St., Franklin; free event

Fri. June 5 — First Friday and Music on the Square — 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.; downtown Oil City; art galleries open 7 to 9 p.m. on second floor of National Transit Building

Fri. June 5 — McKeever-Goddard Trail History Walk outdoor program — 6 to 7 p.m.; McKeever-Goddard Trailhead, 1 mile west of Sandy Lake on Route 358; free and open to the public; attendees can register by calling 814-226-1901

Fri. June 5, Sat. June 6, Fri. June 12 & Sat. June 13 — Shakespeare in the Park — 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.; Franklin Bandstand Park; Barrow-Civic Theatre presents "The Comedy of Errors"; admission free, donations accepted; attendees encouraged to bring chairs or blankets

Fri. June 5 — Summer Open Studios — 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.; National Transit Building Art Studios second floor, 206 Seneca Street, Oil City; free and open to the public

Sat. June 6 — Children's fishing derby — Cook Forest 113 River Road, Cooksburg; for more info call 814-744-8407

Sat. June 6 — National Trails Day — 9 a.m. to noon; Queen City Trail, Jersey Bridge Trailhead, Titusville; free to attend

Sat. June 6, 13, 20 & 27 — Used book sale — 9 a.m. to noon; Oil City Library

Sun. June 7 — Children's fishing derby — 1 p.m.; Cook Forest State Park, Tom's Run from the Swinging Bridge to the Children's Fishing Pond; for children ages 12 and under; registration and prize giveaway at the Children's Fishing Pond behind the Park Office

Sun. June 7 — Rachel Wheeler pop-up exhibit — noon to 4 p.m.; Transit Art Gallery & Gifts, 206 Seneca

St., Oil City; light refreshments provided; open to all

Sun. June 7 & 14 — Shakespear in the Park — 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.; Franklin Bandstand Park; Barrow-Civic Theatre presents "The Comedy of Errors"; admission free, donations accepted; attendees encouraged to bring chairs or blankets

Mon. June 8, 15, 22, 29 — Mondays at the Museum — 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Venango Museum, Oil City

Wed. June 10 — Free nature program — 6 p.m.; Clarion Free Library, Lower-Level Conference Room; "Butterflies of Pennsylvania" with Dr. Brian Wargo; hosted by Seneca Rocks Audubon; information at www.senecarocksaudubon.org

Fri. June 12 — Bats & Moths! — 8:30 p.m.; Cook Forest State Park, Shelter #2; free program about bats and moths along Tom's Run; no registration required

Sat. June 13 & Sun. June 14 — French & Indian War Encampment — Cook Forest State Park, Black Bear Trail by the Sawmill Center for the Arts

Sat. June 13 — Gabe Taylor singer-songwriter concert — 7 p.m.; DeBence Antique Music World, third floor, 1261 Liberty St., Franklin; featuring local singer-songwriter Gabe Taylor; original songs and covers; first concert in the area; free concert

Sat. June 13 — Oil Creek & Titusville Railroad opening day — 11 a.m.; Oil Creek & Titusville Railroad; first regular ride of the railroad's 40th year; travel through Oil Creek State Park aboard a vintage passenger car; advance reservations not required but appreciated; those interested can call 814-676-1733 for schedule and departure times

Sat. June 13 — Venango PRIDE in the Park — 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Justus Park, Oil City; free family-friendly event; fun day of community celebrating LGBTQ+ neighbors, friends and family; all are welcome to attend

Sun. June 14 & 28 — Fly-In and Car Cruise — 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.; The Runway Ristorante and Lounge, Venango Regional Airport, 1564 Airport Road, Franklin; family event featuring planes, classic cars, food and music

Sun. June 14 — Women's Hiking Series — 5 p.m.; Cook Forest State Park, starting at Nuthole Pavilion; moderate Sunday evening hike for women ages 14 and older; approximately two hours; dogs permitted on leash; rain or shine; for more info contact Meredith Reinhart at 814-319-4621

Wed. June 17 — 47th Annual Titusville Tee Off — registration at 9 a.m., shotgun start at 10 a.m.; Cross Creek Resort, Titusville; Titusville Chamber of Commerce golf event

Thurs. June 18 — Third Thursday Night Market Under the Lights of Linden — 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.; live music and night market featuring artisans and makers

Fri. June 19 — Paint & Sip — 1 p.m.; Oil City Library; monthly paint-and-sip class painting a cat in the grass; instructor Chloe Boden; art supplies and mocktails/snacks provided; cost \$10 at the door; participants must sign up by

calling 814-227-3156

Fri. June 19 — Silent Film Series: "Captain January" — 7 p.m.; Venango Museum, 270 Seneca St., Oil City; 1924 silent film screening accompanied live by Tedde Gibson on the museum's 1928 Wurlitzer theater organ; general admission \$15, museum members \$12; tickets available at venangomuseum.org

Sat. June 20 & Sun. June 21 — Blues & Barbecue Festival — noon; Bandstand Park, Franklin; free music festival; attendees encouraged to bring a chair

Sat. June 20 — Cooperstown VFD Ox & Corn Roast — 1 to 4:30 p.m.; Cooperstown Fair Grounds; 33rd annual ox and corn roast; food and drink provided; 50 prizes; \$25 donation; tickets available at Wyattville Country Store, Nancy gas station or from any Cooperstown VFD member; attendees encouraged to bring a chair or canopy

Wed. June 24 — Rocky Grove Firemans Parade — lineup at 5 p.m., parade at 6 p.m.; Rocky Grove; held rain or shine; parade entries asked to register by June 17; questions can be emailed to rgvfd21@gmail.com

Sat. June 27 — 7th Annual Truck and Tractor Pull — garden tractor pull at 9 a.m., gates open at 2:30 p.m., main event at 5 p.m.; Venango County 4-H Fairgrounds, Franklin; Western PA Pullin 4 A Purpose seventh annual truck and tractor pull; proceeds help support this year's children and families; food, raffle auction, lottery boards and 50/50; admission \$12, pits \$20, ages 5 and under free; rain date June 28

Sat. June 27 — St. Joseph's Annual Liberty 5k run/walk — 8 a.m.; Lucinda Train Station 1040 Lander Dr. Lucinda; more info call 814-226-7288 or watch4deercatholic.church or Facebook @stjoesliberty5k

Sun. June 28, Mon. June 29, Tues. June 30, Wed. July 1, Thurs. July 2, Fri. July 3 & Sat. July 4 — Wolf Corners Fair — Wolf Corners Fairgrounds; demolition derbies, tractor pulls, ATV obstacle races, horse pulls, rough truck competitions, side by side races, double figure eight races, fireworks and much more; for additional details and a complete event schedule visit wolfscornersfair.com

Thurs. July 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 — Curb Market — 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Central Avenue Plaza, Oil City

Fri. July 3 — Jolly July 3rd — 11 a.m.; downtown Oil City; holiday celebration featuring family activities, art walk, demonstrations, vendors, games, food and beverages, live music at Justus Park and fireworks

Sat. July 4 — St. Joseph's 87th Annual 4th of July Celebration — 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.; St. Joseph Church parish grounds, Route 66, Lucinda; includes dinner, drawings, games of skill and chance, music; (814) 226-7288; www.watch4deercatholic.church; Facebook @stjoseph4thofjuly

Sun. July 5 — Summer Open Studios — 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.; National Transit Building Art Studios second floor, 206 Seneca Street, Oil City; free and open to the public

Mon. July 6, 13, 20, 27 — Mondays at the Museum — 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Venango Museum, Oil City

Sat. July 11 — Venango Brigade America250 concert — 7 p.m.; DeBence Antique Music World, third floor, 1261

Liberty St., Franklin; free event

Sat. July 11 — Venango Forward Community Cook-out & Family Fun Day — starts at noon; Hasson Park, Oil City; nonprofit launch event featuring games, food, prizes, music, cornhole tournament, water balloon dodgeball, hula hoop contest, Chinese auction and kids activities; vendor spaces \$20; T-shirts \$25 each or two for \$40; donations, volunteers and sponsors welcome; event updates and more info available on Venango Forward Facebook page

Sun. July 12 & July 26 — Fly-In and Car Cruise — 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.; The Runway Ristorante and Lounge, Venango Regional Airport, 1564 Airport Road, Franklin; family event featuring planes, classic cars, food and music

Thurs. July 16 — Third Thursday Night Market Under the Lights of Linden — 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.; live music and night market featuring artisans and makers

Sat. July 18 — Ikes' 100th Anniversary EnviroBash/Outdoor Show — 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Waltonian Park, 396 Monarch Park Road, Franklin; location is off Deep Hollow Road, 2 miles from Oil City

Sat. July 18 — Mostly Brass America250 concert — 7 p.m.; DeBence Antique Music World, third floor, 1261 Liberty St., Franklin; featuring Mostly Brass Community Band; America250 music; free concert

Wed. July 22, Thurs. July 23, Fri. July 24, Sat. July 25 & Sun. July 26 — Oil Heritage Festival — Oil City; 48th annual Oil Heritage Festival

Thurs. July 23 — Third Thursday Night Market Under the Lights of Linden — 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.; live music and night market featuring artisans and makers

Fri. July 24 & Sat. July 25 — Flea Market — 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Rainbow Sportsman's Club, 481 Rainbow Rd., Polk

Sat. July 25 — Carl Schubert America250 concert — 7 p.m.; DeBence Antique Music World, third floor, 1261 Liberty St., Franklin; free event

Thurs. Aug. 6, 13, 20, 27 — Curb Market — 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Central Avenue Plaza, Oil City

Fri. Aug. 7 — First Friday and Music on the Square — 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.; downtown Oil City; art galleries open 7 to 9 p.m. on second floor of National Transit Building

Fri. Aug. 7 & Sat. Aug. 8 — Oil Festival — Titusville; America 250-themed festival

Fri. Aug. 7 — Summer Open Studios — 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.; National Transit Building Art Studios second floor, 206 Seneca Street, Oil City

Sat. Aug. 8 — Oil Festival parade — 11 a.m.; Titusville; 2026 Oil Festival Parade

Sat. Aug. 8 — The Last Chance Band concert — 7 p.m.; DeBence Antique Music World, third floor, 1261 Liberty St., Franklin; free concert

Sun. Aug. 9 — Drake Day — 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Drake Well Museum and Park, 205 Museum Lane, Titusville; Drake Day

Fri. Aug. 14 & Sat. Aug. 15 — BridgeFest — 4 to 9 p.m.; Center Street Bridge, Oil City

Sat. Aug. 15 — Drake Well Marathon and Half — 7 a.m.; 10K race, 5K and half marathon races; the marathon is also a qualifier for the Boston Marathon; registration for all three races can be found at drakewell.org/events

Sun. Aug. 16 & Aug. 30 — Fly-In and Car Cruise — 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.; The Runway Ristorante and Lounge, Venango Regional Airport, 1564 Airport Road, Franklin; family event featuring planes, classic cars, food and music

Thurs. Aug. 20 — Third Thursday Night Market Under the Lights of Linden — 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.; live music and night market featuring artisans and makers

Fri. Aug. 21 — Silent Film Series: "The General" — 7 p.m.; Venango Museum, 270 Seneca St., Oil City; 1926 silent film screening

Sat. Aug. 22 — Cornhole tournament — 12 p.m. start; Rainbow Sportsman's Club, 481 Rainbow Rd., Polk

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How to entertain in your backyard

If you have a backyard, it can be the perfect place to entertain guests. While an empty grassy space does have a lot of possibility, you may have to make some upgrades before you invite people over. Maybe you'll want add patio furniture, get a grill or install a fire pit. As you plan your event, don't forget to include food and activities.

Start by thinking about how you'll use your backyard entertaining space. If you love to cook, consider adding an outdoor kitchen or grill station. If you're more interested in relaxing around a fire, then an outdoor fire pit might be the perfect addition. No matter how you use your yard, it should be a reflection of your own personal style. With a little planning and effort, you can create an inviting space that will make entertaining a breeze.

Provide enough places to sit

For a successful event, make sure you have a place for your guests to sit. Seating can include anything from patio furniture to benches around an outdoor fire pit.

There are many different types of patio furniture to choose from, including chairs, couches and benches. The furniture that's right for your space will depend on the size and layout of your patio. Look for pieces that are comfortable and inviting. Also, consider style and durability.

Provide a range of seating options to accommodate your guests. Think about chairs that work well for tall people and ones that would better suit shorter people. Friends or family with mobility issues might need special considerations when it comes to seating and accessibility.

If you have a small backyard, you may not have space for a full patio set that include a couch and chairs. In that case, consider individual chairs or loveseats that can be arranged in conversational groupings.

Expecting a crowd for your event? Ask people to bring camping chairs or set up folding chairs around your main patio set.

Add accessories to your patio

Patio accessories can make your outdoor space more comfortable and inviting. Throws and blankets offer a cozy touch. Cushions and pillows can add an extra layer of comfort. Lanterns and string lights can create an inviting ambiance. They can also be practical for providing illumination after the sun goes down. By adding a few simple patio accessories, you can transform your backyard into an outdoor oasis that your friends and family will love.

Gather around an outdoor firepit

Whether you're roasting marshmallows for s'mores or simply enjoying the warmth of a fire on a cool evening, an outdoor fire pit can be a great addition to your home. Unlike a traditional fireplace, an outdoor fire pit can be enjoyed from all sides, so it's a perfect spot for social gatherings. With a wide range of designs to choose from, it's easy to find an outdoor fire pit that fits your budget and style.

First, consider the size of your outdoor space. A fire pit can take up quite a bit of room, so you'll want to make sure you have enough space to accommodate it. Second, think about how you'll use your outdoor fire pit. If you're planning on entertaining large groups of people, you'll want to choose a larger model. However, if you're mostly using it for intimate gatherings or simply enjoying the occasional bonfire, a smaller fire pit should work. Finally, be sure to check local ordinances before purchasing an outdoor fire pit. Depending on where you live, there may be restrictions on the sizes or types of outdoor fire pits that are allowed.

Adding a fire pit to your backyard can be a DIY project. Start by choosing a location. A fire pit should be set



back from any buildings or trees. It should be at least 10 feet away from any combustible materials. Next, decide on the size and shape of your fire pit. It should be large enough to accommodate the wood you'll be burning, but not so large that it's unsafe. Finally, you'll need to choose the material you want to use for your fire pit. There are many options available, including stone, brick and metal.

Serve a memorable meal As you entertain in your backyard, there's nothing quite like cooking and eating outdoors. For starters, why not try grilling some of your favorite vegetables? You can also use your outdoor grill to cook up a variety of meats, including chicken, steak and fish. If you really want to impress your guests, you could even invest in an outdoor kitchen or pizza oven. If you have an outdoor fire pit, you can use it to roast marshmallows or make s'mores.

Here are some tips for hosting an outdoor dinner party: Whatever you decide to

serve, plan your menu carefully. Ask guests about food allergies or dietary restrictions and plan accordingly.

Prep as much as you can ahead of time and make sure you have everything you need on hand. Don't forget plates, napkins, cups and flatware. Put trash cans in places that are easy to see and access.

If you're short on time, you can have food delivered instead of making everything yourself.

If your budget is stretched, consider asking each guest to bring a dish to share.

Offer a selection of beverages. If you're serving cocktails, wine and beer, also plan several options for those who won't be consuming alcohol.

Make sure there is enough space for everyone to sit and relax. Create a comfortable seating area for your guests with a patio dining set or picnic table. If you'll be hosting a lot of guests, you may need several tables and additional chairs.

Don't forget the little details that will make your party

memorable, like music and lighting.

Depending on the season, bugs may crash your party. Figure out how you'll handle insect repellent before your guests arrive.

Arrange some activities

No matter how many people you have over, there are plenty of backyard games and activities to keep everyone entertained. As you plan activities, think about the amount of space needed for each one. Also, consider the atmosphere of your event. Some activities are better suited for high-energy crowds,

while others work well for more sedate settings.

Lawn games such as croquet or bocce are easy to set up. People of all ages and skill levels can enjoy these two games.

Cornhole is a classic game is easy to learn and can be played by kids and adults. You can buy pre-made cornhole sets or make your own cornhole game.

Other backyard favorites include horseshoes and badminton.

Frisbee and tag don't require a lot of equipment, though your guests will need space to run.

Water games can be a great way to cool off on a hot day. You can set up a sprinkler or splash pad. If you have a swimming pool, you can invite your guests to take a dip.

For evening entertainment, set up an outdoor projector and a screen. You can show a movie or the big game.

As you figure out how to entertain in your backyard, know that the options are limitless. Still, no matter what kind event you'll be hosting, you'll need to provide a place for your guests to sit. The best parties also have an inviting atmosphere, great food and fun activities.



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How to keep your kids safe this summer

Summer is a great time for kids to get outside and enjoy the weather — but it's important for parents and guardians to remember safety tips throughout the season.

"We want children to run, play and enjoy themselves, but we also have to be mindful that certain environmental elements may be potentially dangerous to them," says pediatrician Paula Sabella, MD.

Ready for fun in the sun? Be safe about it!

Dr. Sabella shares 10 ways to keep your kids safe this summer, including how to avoid dehydration, tips to protect skin from the sun, and care for bites and bruises.

Protect kids' skin

Sunburn is the scourge of summer, and kids are especially susceptible. It's important that you lather your child with sunscreen any time they're headed outdoors. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children wear sunscreen with at least 15 to 50 SPF.

Remember to reapply sunscreen every two hours or after swimming, sweating or toweling off, and consider wearing sun protection clothing for an added barrier.

Sunscreen isn't recommended for babies under six months, who should always be kept out of direct sunlight. Keep your littlest ones protected from the sun by dressing them in lightweight clothing and sun hats, and using umbrellas for shade.

"Harmful ultraviolet rays are at their strongest from between 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Minimizing outdoor play during these hours also minimizes the risk of sunburn to children," Dr. Sabella explains, "but even when they're in the shade, continue to use sunscreen!"

Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate

When it comes to warm weather, hydration is key — and not just when kids are playing sports or sitting in the sun. "Keep kids hydrated at all times, especially the day before a big activity or even the day before a play date," Dr. Sabella advises.

Steer clear of soda, energy drinks and fruit juices, which may worsen dehydration. Water is the best source of hydration for kids who are over 1 year old, while breast milk and formula are the preferred fluids to hydrate kids under a year. To gauge whether your child is hydrated enough, take a peek at the color of their urine. It should be a light yellow color, not golden or dark.

Maintain healthy eating habits

Sodas and ice cream trucks and cookouts, oh, my! Opportunities for junk food abound during the summer, but abiding by healthy eating habits for kids while they're out of school will ensure that your little ones learn healthy, consistent habits and get the vitamins and nutrients they need to fuel their summer fun.

Beware of hot cars

You probably think you could never, ever forget your child in the car on a hot day — but researchers estimate that half of all hot-car deaths involve a loving caregiver who forgets a sleeping child in the backseat of their car.



"We want children to run, play and enjoy themselves, but we also have to be mindful that certain environmental elements may be potentially dangerous to them."

Paula Sabella, MD.
Pediatrician

"We're all human," Dr. Sabella says, "and there are some things caregivers can do to help ensure that they don't forget their child in the car."

She recommends developing daily habits that can prevent hot-car deaths

- Never intentionally leave your child in the car for any reason.
- Be extra vigilant when you have a new or a different routine.
- Leave another important item, like a purse, cell phone or work badge, in the backseat of the car. This serves as a reminder to get your child out of the car when you retrieve this item.
- Make a plan with your babysitter or daycare providers to have them call you if your child is late for any reason.

There's no safe situation, temperature or length of time for a child to be left alone in a car.

Ride safely

As kids head outdoors to play with friends and ride bicycles around the neighborhood, make sure they're practicing bike safety, including riding a properly fitted bike and wearing a properly fitted bike helmet.

"Adults can be good role models for children by always wearing their own bike helmets and abiding by the same bike safety rules we're asking kids to follow," Dr. Sabella notes.

Practice water safety

The American Academy of Pediatrics reports that drowning is the leading cause of injury-related death in U.S. children ages 1 to 4 — so take to heart pool safety tips for families, from drain covers and fenced enclosures to life vests, swimming lessons and CPR classes.

Toddlers should be no further than an arm's length away from their guardian when they're around a pool or any other body of water. Empty buckets, bathtubs, coolers and wading pools immediately after use.

"I also recommend that nonswimming children always wear life vests when in water," Dr. Sabella says. "And any time you're on a boat or watercraft, everybody should be wearing life vests — adults and kids alike, both swimmers and nonswimmers."

Ward off bugs and tend to bites

Your kids aren't the only ones playing outside! When the weather warms up, the creepy-crawlies come out en masse, and little ones are liable to fall victim to bites and bumps.

Use insect repellent. Don't forget the bug spray! The Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than 30% concentration of DEET in insect repellents for children over two months old.

Beware standing water. "Try to avoid stagnant water in or outside of your home," Dr. Sabella says. "Ponds and turned-off fountains with stagnant water can serve as a breeding ground for mosquitoes."

Check for ticks. May to October is tick season, so up your tick removal know-how and be on the lookout for these buggers burrowing in your kids' skin.

Know what to do. If your child has a run-in with a bee, spider, mosquito or other painful pest, follow doctors' guidance for treating bug bites and bee stings.

Safely enjoy fireworks

Children under 15 years old account for about a third of fireworks-related emergency department visits — most of which involve burn injuries to fingers, hands and eyes.

"Taking safety precautions will allow your family to enjoy summer fireworks worry-free," Dr. Sabella says.

Don't give sparklers or bottle rockets to children, and practice other fireworks safety recommendations for both children and adults.

Prevent playground mishaps

As they spend more time outdoors during the summer, kids may be more prone than ever to scrapes and bruises. Practice safe playground habits to prevent injuries.

Find the right playground. "Choose one that's appropriate for your kids, with equipment that suits their age, size and abilities," Dr. Sabella says.

Do a touch test. Kids can get thermal burns from playground equipment, so confirm that slides and swings aren't too hot before kids play.

Wear the right attire. Opt for sturdy-soled sneakers over slippery flip-flops, and avoid clothing with strings, such as hoodies, which can get caught in equipment.

Look for safe surfaces. Some playgrounds offer rubber or mulch on which kids can safely run, play and even fall. These surfaces are more kid-friendly — and less accident-prone — than cement and asphalt.

To be on the safe side, keep a first aid kit handy and brush up on how to treat common playground injuries, from splinters and friction burns to bumps and bruises.

Don't overdo it on the outdoors

Kids of all ages should take breaks from playing outside by retreating into the shade — or, even better, into air-conditioning — every 20 minutes to 30 minutes.

"Kids need time to relax, cool off and hydrate before they return to play," Dr. Sabella says. "And once they're done playing for the day, continue to keep up that hydration."

Hot, humid weather also puts active kids at a higher risk for developing heat rash, so take precautions to avoid it and make sure you know how to treat it in case it happens.

Enjoy your summer!

By following common-sense safety precautions, you can set your child up for a safe and enjoyable summer — without necessarily hovering over their shoulder all season long.

"Be mindful of the sun, keep an eye on hydration, and keep pool safety and water safety in mind," Dr. Sabella encourages. "And most of all, have fun, love your children and enjoy the summer safely with your children."

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How to prep your pool for summer

(Feature Impact) Summer will be here before you know it, but before you start digging out the bathing suits, beach towels and sunscreen, be sure to take time to prep your pool for the swimming, tanning and splashing to come.



Deep clean

Start by giving your pool a good scrub. Remove debris such as leaves, branches, rocks and other items that may have collected over. Then use your cleaner of choice and a hard brush to scour the walls and floor to remove algae, stains and loose dirt.

Apply an algacide

No one wants to swim in green water with slimy surfaces. To prevent algae growth, add an algacide to the water. These chemical cleaning agents are best used preventatively to keep algae spores from growing and water clear.

Shock it up

Shocking a pool is simpler

way to describe superchlorination — a process that involves adding a large amount of chlorine to destroy bacteria, algae and other contaminants that may have formed. As for how much shock to use, usually about 1 pound of shock per 10,000 gallons of water for routine pool maintenance.

Lessons in (water) chemistry

A healthy pool season is all about the right mix of chemicals and pH levels. Before you get into testing mode, you'll need to have a water testing

kit on hand. Begin the process by testing the pH levels of the water and adjust as needed to keep the pH between 7.2-7.8. Keeping the pH levels in this range helps prevent skin irritation and eye discomfort.

Filter first

As much as you may be ready to dive in after the prep work, you'll want to run the filter first — for at least one full day. It helps distribute the shock and algacide throughout the water and remove any lingering bacteria to help ensure your pool stays clear and clean.

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