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Postcards From a 'Staycation'

Article

By [ANNE KADET](#)

Alan and Lisa Jasie are enjoying extremely leisurely weekends this summer, spent in the most peaceful, luxurious environs they can imagine. Their strategy? Stay home. As in, don't even leave the neighborhood. Last weekend, Ms. Jasie took advantage of her half-day Friday to enjoy an afternoon drink and an order of ribs at the local café. Then she retired to her Wall Street condo, where she watched five episodes of "The Tudors." Her husband, a fashion merchandiser, spent the evening playing his guitar. Saturday was equally languid. Ms. Jasie read magazines and a Kathryn Stockett novel, and Mr. Jasie kept strumming. The big excursion was a trip to the dog run with Hugo, their 90-pound Belgian Shepherd. "We've gotten so lazy, we don't even go up to the rooftop deck," Ms. Jasie says.

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Bryan Derballe for The Wall Street Journal

Comedian Dan Nainan eats toast and peanut butter with banana while reading the newspaper, a daily habit for him when he is in town. Nainan travels so frequently for work that when he is home in New York City, he stays within a couple blocks of his apartment in Chelsea.



Most New Yorkers plan their summer weekends with manic ambition. If they're too poor (or reverse snobbish) for the Hamptons, they're racing off to a \$2,000 cabin stay in the Berkshires. Two summers ago, when everyone was broke and the price of gas went bonkers, Gothamites suddenly seized on the "staycation" concept, which made a virtue of spending summer in the city. The city even launched a high-profile "Go Local" ad campaign, encouraging residents to spend their summer enjoying Staten Island bus tours. But the relief proved illusory. The staycation, it turns out, meant running around the five boroughs like a dutiful tourist, frantically exploring museums and blowing \$400 on a backyard hotel stay.

The Jasies aren't having it. They prefer Lower Manhattan's empty streets to the crowded shore. And while they love exploring the city's parks and museums, that's reserved for the spring and fall, when the weather's not so hellish. From Memorial Day to Labor Day, they decline invitations, take off their watches and hunker down with the AC. "We don't have to be anywhere," Ms. Jasie says.



Bryan Derballa for The Wall Street Journal

Mr. Nainan visits the new Trader Joes down the avenue from his apartment.



Yes, a contrary minority have discovered a relaxing alternative to the high-powered holiday: life as summer shut-in. Dan Nainan proudly cops to the lifestyle. The comedian performs in exotic locales like Dubai and Los Angeles; after shows, he has to chat with strangers and sign autographs. Enough! Last weekend, he ate at the neighborhood diner and took a leisurely bike ride before he dozed off while watching World Cup soccer in his living room (total expenditures: \$29, including the \$4 tip on a \$16 salmon-dinner delivery). And that was a walk on the wild side. His vacation excursions are typically confined to the four-block swath surrounding his Chelsea co-op. The routine: writing music or learning a new language at home, followed by trips to the library, Best Buy and Staples. "All the stuff that makes a nerd happy," he says.

The city's newer co-ops, with their pools, yoga studios and screening rooms, have done a lot to encourage the hard-core shut-in. Out in the 'burbs, meanwhile, some homeowners are sacrificing their summer vacations in favor of elaborate backyards. Rich

Cording of CLC Landscape Design in northern New Jersey designed a \$300,000 paradise for a lawyer who wanted a backyard trampoline, shuffleboard court and playground on top of the usual pool and hot tub. Another favorite: the elaborately landscaped firepit that lets the whole family enjoy that camping-in-the-wild feeling without setting a foot outside Montclair. The backyard resort may cost more than a decade of summer vacations, Mr. Cording says, "But in New Jersey, you can rationalize anything."

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Bryan Derballa for The Wall Street Journal

A library card hangs on a ring in Mr. Nainan's apartment. He travels so frequently for work that when he is home in New York City, he stays within a couple blocks of his apartment in Chelsea.



Staying home has its downsides, of course. Your friends are away, and the average July high in the city is a full 2 degrees hotter than it is out on Montauk. Then there's the fact that it's easy to spend lots of cash, even in a ghost town. TriBeCa beverage entrepreneur Erica Duignan Minnihan and her husband, Sean Minnihan, an investment banker and Downtown Little League coach, gave up their Amagansett summers after the kids got bigger. But when Ms. Duignan Minnihan gets a craving for the shore

life, she picks up the phone and orders a \$16 lobster roll. This past weekend, they spent \$710 on entertainment, including a \$380 birthday dinner at Babbo, \$90 for a family afternoon at the movies and \$120 to treat the all-star ball team to a pizza feast after the big win. Still, that's a fraction of the \$30k a month they used to spend in the Hamptons.

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And for those who miss the beach action, there's always the impromptu house party. For furniture designer Courtney Cachet and Aaron Tufankjian, an insurance VP, it's all about picnics in their acre-plus Watchung, N.J., backyard. The kids get sandwiches and Cheez-its, the adults get pasta and a pitchers of cocktails. This summer's favorite, Ms. Cachet says, is vodka and Crystal Light: "No hangover, a lot less calories, and no drinking and driving."

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