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## On the Road: With the girls

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To any male readers who thought this story might be about dating or something, ahem, else -- sorry. While we really enjoy traveling with you -- there's no one else we'd rather go with on a romantic trip to Hawaii or a family vacation to Disneyland -- sometimes we just need to get away with the girls. Come on, you understand -- you've been going hunting/fishing/golfing/gambling with your buddies for years. (And if you haven't, see the opposite page for some ideas on guy-only getaways.)

The term "girlfriend getaways" has been gaining in popularity in recent years as increasing numbers of women have had disposable income and the desire to spend it -- on themselves. Google the term and you'll be overwhelmed by the possibilities. Whether you're into scrapbooking or scuba diving, a girlfriend getaway is out there just waiting for you to sign up. The time when traveling with the ladies was stigma is over.

"Twenty-eight years ago when women came on our trips, people would say to them, 'What's wrong with your marriage?'" says Susan Eckert, president of AdventureWomen, an adventure travel company for women. "Now people say, 'What's wrong with your marriage?' if you don't take a vacation by yourself or with your friends or your mother/daughter/sister. It's just more acceptable for women to go away on their own with other women."

So without further ado, here are some ideas for your next (or maybe your first) trip with the girls.

relax and be pampered

If your idea of a week away with the girls involves massages, pedicure and deep relaxation, plenty of resorts and spas here in the Northeast are happy to oblige. The Spa at The Equinox in Manchester, Vt. (1-800-362-4747; [www.equinoxresort.com](http://www.equinoxresort.com)), only about an hour and a half away from the Capital Region, has a plethora of spa services that will make you feel thousands of miles away.

Cranwell Resort, Spa and Golf Club in Lenox, Mass. (1-800-272-6935; [www.cranwell.com](http://www.cranwell.com)), offers several ideal girlfriend getaway packages. They include "Culture in the Country," which allows participants to experience some of the best museums and historical societies in the area along with full use of the Spa at Cranwell, and the one, two and three night "Spa Stay" packages, which include spa services, accommodations and dining at any Cranwell restaurant.

If you're looking for a more private getaway, check out the "Girlfriends Package" at the White Elephant Hotel in Nantucket, Mass. (1-800-445-6574; [www.whiteelephanthotel.com](http://www.whiteelephanthotel.com)). You and five friends could have your own luxurious three-bedroom cottage, full breakfast every morning, a spa cocktail reception and -- even better -- a selection of romantic comedy movies and popcorn. What more could you want? shop 'til you drop

If you'd rather spend money than get a manicure, consider a shopping getaway. Plan a trip around shopping at the many nearby outlets, including The Factory Outlets of Lake George ([www.factoryoutletsoflakegeorge.com](http://www.factoryoutletsoflakegeorge.com)), Woodbury Commons Premium Outlets ([www.premiumoutlets.com/outlets/outlet.asp?id=7](http://www.premiumoutlets.com/outlets/outlet.asp?id=7)), Prime Outlets in Lee, Mass. ([www.primeoutlets.com/locations/lee.aspx](http://www.primeoutlets.com/locations/lee.aspx)), and Manchester Designer Outlets in Vermont ([www.manchesterdesigneroutlets.com](http://www.manchesterdesigneroutlets.com)).

You can channel your inner Carrie Bradshaw with the "Head Over Heels" shopping package at the Muse Hotel in New York City (212-485-2400; [www.themusehotel.com](http://www.themusehotel.com)). You and your friends will get one night deluxe accommodations, champagne, a private car tour of Fifth Avenue shoe shopping destinations, a map of shoe shopping hotspots and a \$25 credit towards in-room spa treatments.

If you're looking to get more bang for your buck in the Big Apple, take an "Elegant Tightwad Shopping Excursion" (800-808-4614; [theeleganttightwad.com](http://theeleganttightwad.com)). Pamela Parisi, a.k.a. The Elegant Tightwad, will use her two decades of experience in the garment industry to help your group find the ultimate bargains all over the city. You'll go home with expensive designer duds -- and have a clear conscience when telling your husband you didn't pay designer prices.

get active

Many women prefer outdoor activities to shopping malls and spas, and the travel industry has taken note. Several companies, including AdventureWomen (800-804-8686, [www.adventurewomen.com](http://www.adventurewomen.com)) and Adventures in Good Company (1-877-439-4042; [www.adventuresingoodcompany.com](http://www.adventuresingoodcompany.com)), specialize in adventure vacations for women. Whether it's riding camels in Mongolia, sea kayaking in Maine or fly fishing and riding horses in Wyoming, there is a trip for every interest. Gather a group of girls or go solo; either way, you're sure to have a memorable -- and different -- experience.

"My favorite example is all the women whose first experience with hiking was with boyfriends who took off as fast as they could and left them gasping for breath," says Marian Marbury of Adventures in Good Company. "They reached the conclusion they didn't really enjoy hiking. We encourage women to go at the pace that's comfortable for them. It's a lot more supportive and fun for women."

For those who've always dreamed of mastering the waves, another option for a getaway is learning to surf. Take a couple of private lessons or enroll in a week-long intensive surf camp; the choice is yours. Try New Jersey Surf Camps (609-729-7400; [www.newjerseysurfcamps.com/pages/aboutus.html](http://www.newjerseysurfcamps.com/pages/aboutus.html)) or Nantucket Island Surf School (508-560-1020; [www.nantucketsurfing.com/rates.html](http://www.nantucketsurfing.com/rates.html)) if you want to stay in the Northeast. A little further afield is the Women's Surf Camp and Yoga Retreat in Wrightsville Beach, N.C. ([www.wbsurfcamp.com/camps/camp\\_women\\_only.asp](http://www.wbsurfcamp.com/camps/camp_women_only.asp)), for a six-day/seven-night getaway that's both challenging and relaxing.

#### get crafty

Some women want nothing more than to hole up in a room with their friends and quilt, scrapbook, knit, or just do anything crafty. If that sounds like your idea of girl getaway heaven, you have plenty of options.

A number of companies cater to scrapbookers looking to get away. Crop-A-Lot (518-893-7967; [www.cropalot.com](http://www.cropalot.com)) hosts weekend scrapbook retreats in East Coast locations including Saratoga Springs, Queensbury and Lake George. Scrapper's Dream Vacation (301-432-7533; [www.dreameventsinc.com](http://www.dreameventsinc.com)) offers a number of getaways every year, including events in New Jersey, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. You might also want to consider planning a vacation around a scrapbooking convention here in the Northeast or out of the area. (Check out [www.creatingkeepsakes.com](http://www.creatingkeepsakes.com), [www.memoriesexpo.com](http://www.memoriesexpo.com) and [greatamericanscrapbook.com](http://greatamericanscrapbook.com)). Most conventions include shopping, classes and group scrapbooking events.

Women who enjoy quilting with their friends will also find options for quilting retreats such as "An Adventure in Crazy Quilting" in Connecticut ([www.wix.com/greeson1/cqadventure](http://www.wix.com/greeson1/cqadventure)), Quilting Retreats at The Upstairs Inn at O'Susannah's Quilts & Gifts in Watkins Glen, N.Y. (607-535-6550; [www.osusannahsquiltshop.com/quilting-retreats.htm](http://www.osusannahsquiltshop.com/quilting-retreats.htm)), A Quilter's Touch in Skaneateles (585-563-7807; [www.aquilterstouch.com](http://www.aquilterstouch.com)) and Hudson River Valley Art Workshops (518-966-5219; [www.fiberartworkshops.com](http://www.fiberartworkshops.com)).

#### stay home

I know this may sound crazy, but you can also get away with the girls right here at home. Take a couple days off from your normal life and enjoy all that the Capital Region has to offer. Go see a show at Proctors, have dinner at some of the great restaurants in downtown Albany, and go antiquing in Waterford or Ballston Spa. Even if you live in Clifton Park, a weekend at a bed and breakfast in Saratoga Springs can provide all the girl time you need -- and just think of all the money you'll save on gas.

if you're really looking to get out of dodge, here are several more exotic girl-getaways

to consider:

Travel to Europe on a culinary vacation. Take hands-on cooking lessons in dream vacation spots including France, Greece and Italy. For more information, go to [www.activegourmetholidays.com](http://www.activegourmetholidays.com).

Take a ghost tour in South Carolina. Experience the supernatural by walking through haunted cobblestone streets and church graveyards by candlelight, and spend a night at a haunted historic inn. For more information, check out [scgirls.discoverouthcarolina.com/ghost-tours](http://scgirls.discoverouthcarolina.com/ghost-tours).

Visit Bali on a Surf Goddess Retreat. This getaway includes surf instruction, daily yoga, Balinese food and special activities like a bike tour through Balinese villages and an Indonesian cooking class. For more information, head to [www.surfgoddessretreats.com](http://www.surfgoddessretreats.com).

Enroll in Cowgirl Boot Camp. This all-inclusive adventurous women's retreat takes place at Alisal Guest Ranch and Resort outside Santa Barbara, Calif. Cowgirls will be trained in "Saddle Up" instruction before exploring over 50 miles of trails, where they will learn archery, fishing and hat shaping. For more information check out [www.alisal.com](http://www.alisal.com).

Other Helpful Websites: [www.girlgetaways.com](http://www.girlgetaways.com) • [www.girlaway.com](http://www.girlaway.com) • [www.girlfriendgetaways.org](http://www.girlfriendgetaways.org)