

## THE GETAWAY

## Deals to Jump-Start Three-Day Weekends

Summer packages encourage stressed-out Americans to take mini-vacations.

By SHIVANI VORA

You don't have to wait until Saturday to start your weekend, the fun can begin on Friday afternoons. That's the message hotels around the United States, throughout the Caribbean and Europe are trying to get across to an overworked, stressed-out American crowd by creating attractive packages valid for weekends in July and August.

Summer Fridays — the idea of either ending a Friday workday early or taking it off altogether — are enjoyed infrequently, if online polls are any indication. A survey last year by Google and Priceline.com of 15,723 Americans showed that only 8 percent said they played hooky on Fridays come June.

This summer, hotels are hoping that targeted deals will encourage a trend in the opposite direction.

Many of these packages are designed with millennials in mind, said Misty Belles, the global head of public relations for the luxury travel network Virtuoso. "Millennial travelers haven't banked as much vacation time as their older counterparts, and our research shows that they are in the mind-set of thinking of several three-day breaks as their vacations," she said.

And, according to Ms. Belles, these short getaways aren't limited to destinations within driving distance of home. "Younger travelers are very willing to jump on a plane to get away, and the travel industry, especially hotels, is realizing and catering to this new traveler preference," she said.

Delta Air Lines is also trying to push the Friday-is-a-holiday idea with the Go Fridays social media marketing campaign it kicked off on June 27 in New York City. The airline is partnering with the productivity platform Slack to find office workers throughout the city and entice them to start their weekends early by offering rewards such as Delta flight vouchers, reservations at popular restaurants and a private tour of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

The aim of the campaign, according to Bill Betz, the airline's general manager for marketing in the Northeast, is to "bring some classic summer fun to some of our hardworking New York customers."

For those looking for a destination getaway, the Bermuda Tourism Authority has a new Summer Fridays campaign that encourages East Coast residents in cities like New York, Boston and Washington, D.C., to consider the island for a weekend trip. "Time is precious for people today, and Bermuda offers the mystique of island life



GRAHAM ROUMIEU

for savvy travelers that's easy to access. Being a two-hour flight from most cities in the Northeast, summer weekends can start sooner in Bermuda," said Victoria Isley, the chief sales and marketing officer for the tourism authority, in an email.

Seven hotels on the island, including the Rosedon Hotel and the Grotto Bay Beach Resort, are participating in the campaign by offering a 4th Night Free deal for travelers who book their trips for stays through Aug. 31.

Below are nine other packages that celebrate an early start to summer weekends.

**Camden Harbor Inn**, a Relais & Châteaux property in the picturesque coastal town of Camden, Me., has a Maine Summer Fridays deal. The weekend starts with a lobster roll lunch at the property's restaurant, Natalie's, and also includes two nights' accommodations, daily Champagne breakfast, a sailing trip around Penobscot Bay with sparkling wine and canapés, a five-

course dinner at Natalie's with wine and unlimited bottled water, tea, coffee and snacks. Prices from \$1,520 for two people. Information: camdenharbourinn.com.

**The One & Only Ocean Club** on Paradise Island in the Bahamas is offering Summer Fridays with accommodations, a poolside late lunch for two upon arrival, daily sunrise yoga classes and a choice of an express spray tan, a blowout for women, a shave for men or a manicure and pedicure. Prices from \$735 a night; valid through Sept. 30. Minimum two-night stay. Information: one-and-onlyresorts.com/one-and-only-ocean-club-bahamas.

**Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village**, a resort near Malibu and Los Angeles, is offering Friday Night Fever, a deal that includes accommodations, welcome drinks for two guests, parking, discounts on select spa treatments and 20 percent off poolside dining on Fridays. Prices from \$381 a night. Information: fourseasons.com

**With the right incentive, the overworked may find a reason to play hooky or cut out early on Fridays. Let the out-of-office notifications begin.**

/westlakevillage.

**Jumby Bay, A Rosewood Resort**, situated on a private island off the coast of Antigua, is offering the Friday Jump to Jumby package. Included are accommodations in a beachside courtyard suite, meals including afternoon tea, all drinks and most water-sports such as water skiing and kayaking. Prices from \$1,450 a night for two guests. Information: rosewoodhotels.com/en/jumby-bay-antigua.

The **Marriott Marquis, Washington D.C.**, recently introduced the Digital Bingeworthy Package; the deal includes a 20 percent discount on weekend room rates, access to Netflix, Hulu and Pandora on in-room televisions, a bottle of wine and snacks such as nuts, caramels and popcorn. Prices from \$119 a night. Information: dcmarquis.com (use Promo Code PD50).

Besides the fourth-night-free offer, in which rates start at \$579 a night, the **Hamilton Princess & Beach Club, Bermuda** has the Bermuda Summer Weekends package. Guests receive up to 50 percent off when they book three, five, or 10 two-night weekends through Aug. 31. The package costs \$3,799, \$5,999 and \$10,999 and includes laundry, luggage storage, airport transfers, daily breakfast for two, early check-in/late checkout and a \$150 hotel credit per stay. Information: thehamiltonprincess.com.

The **Doyle Collection** in London — the Bloomsbury, the Kensington and the Marylebone — has the Luxurious London Weekends offer, which includes accommodations for two nights, breakfast, afternoon tea, late checkout and a bottle of Champagne. Prices from £525 (about \$678) for two nights. Information: doylecollection.com.

The **Chatwal Hotel**, in Manhattan's theater district, is offering a Summer Weekends package that includes two nights' accommodation with a third night free, breakfast, two tickets to a Shakespeare in the Park performance, two tickets to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and two tickets to the Central Park Zoo. Prices from \$1,504 for three nights. Valid through Aug. 14. Information: thechatwalny.com.

Finally, for day trippers interested in traveling from New York City to Sunset Beach on Shelter Island, N.Y., the air charter service **StndAIR** has Sunset Hooky, running on Thursdays and Fridays through Sept. 2. The company's eight-passenger seaplane departs for Sunset Beach on Shelter Island at 11 a.m. from New York Skyports Marina, on the F.D.R. Drive in Manhattan, and returns at 4:30 p.m. At the beach, passengers can enjoy a three-course Mediterranean-inspired lunch and get access to a beach chaise and a bike. \$735 a person. Information: stndair.com.

## HEADS UP | GERMANY

## Celebrating at a Dinner Cooked by Refugees

In Berlin, guests mingle with the cooks, and hear about their arduous journeys from Syria.

By DAVID FARLEY

The moment she mentioned Lesbos, the room grew quiet. The group of a dozen people had splintered off about halfway through dinner to converse about life in Berlin and about the food we were grazing on. But now HEND, 37, wearing glasses and a gray hijab, had the stage. She was about to reveal what everyone at this dinner party was most curious about: What was it like for her to journey from Syria to Germany?

This was no ordinary dinner party. Twice a month Anna Gyulai Gaal, a Hungarian-born journalist, turns her apartment in the Neukölln district of Berlin into a supper club through the dining service WithLocals.com, and calls the get-togethers Refugee Dinners. Her friends and strangers alike sign up and pay 35 euros or about \$40 to partake in a multicourse feast that goes beyond the plate and the palate.

The cooks are Syrian refugees, women who have just arrived in Berlin after making the arduous trek across the Mediterranean and through Europe. Because of their refugee status, the cooks are not allowed to work and earn money, so Ms. Gyulai Gaal gives them the money she earns from the dinners.

Guests mingle with the cooks, hearing about the uprooted lives of people most have only read and heard about in the news: life in the refugee camps, what they left behind in Syria and, what the voyage was like to get to Germany.

"We were walking on a road in Lesbos, a long line of refugees in front of us and behind us," said HEND, who requested on behalf of the group that only their first names be used for fear of possible repercussions to family members still in Syria. "We couldn't take it anymore so my mother and I sat on the side of the road as cars sped past us. Suddenly a car stopped and they offered us food."

Her mother, Ferial, sitting next to her, continued: "I said to the people in the car: 'We don't need food. We need a ride to the nearest police station so we can register as refugees.' They reminded us it was illegal to pick up refugees but they took us anyway."

"And they were German," HEND said. "My mother later said, 'See, that's a good sign.'"

Ms. Gyulai Gaal started the dinners with Boryana Ivanova, a Bulgarian-born refugee activist. "I realized one day that the newcomers — I don't like the word 'refugees' — need to interact with locals. Integration can only begin by an initial meeting," said Ms.



Left, guests at a dinner cooked by Syrian refugee women at the home of Anna Gyulai Gaal in Berlin. Far left, from top, preparing the feast: slicing cucumbers; cooked lamb-and-rice-stuffed grape leaves; checking on a chicken dish; and tabbouleh salad.

Gyulai Gaal, fanning her arm across the room where the dinner party was in full swing.

For the diners, the appeal is to connect with people, going beyond the headlines. "I was looking forward to the dinner and had various questions," Samantha Tite Webber, an American student living in Berlin, said after the dinner. But, she realized, her hosts "are probably glad to have the chance to relax and share a bit of their homeland with us in the form of wonderfully prepared food."

The five Syrian women (as well as a 12-year-old girl) showed up to start cooking three hours before the guests arrived. By the time everyone was there — a Hungarian, two Greeks, three Americans and a German — they had laid out a feast of Syrian and Middle Eastern dishes, including tabbouleh salad, lamb-and-rice-stuffed grape leaves and bazalya, a mixture of minced lamb, beef, peas, carrots and cashews. The star of the show, though, was rraga, sometimes called borgaga, a chicken and caramelized onion pie from southern Syria.

Ms. Gyulai Gaal's dinners aren't the only events in Berlin that celebrate collaboration with refugees. The nonprofit group Give Something Back to Berlin puts on the Refugee Cooking Group, weekly dinners where Berliners and the newly arrived cook together, chat and share stories. Uber den Tellerrand organizes cooking classes led by Syrian and Afghan refugees in the Schöneberg district. There are also guided walking tours of the Arabic and Turkish-dominated Neukölln put on by the organization Querstadt, led by refugees.

"For us," HEND said, "we get the benefit of leaving the refugee camp."

Wahida, 55, turned to HEND (who was translating) and said, "We can leave when we want but coming to Anna's feels like a second home to us."

Hugs and email addresses were exchanged. In two weeks they would be back here in their "second home," pleasing the palates of a new set of hungry people.