



Left to right: Debby Henning, Kathy Markasian and Cathy Rocca craft altars at the Valley Ridge Art Studio.

- Photo by Suzanne Berland

Getting started

Valley Ridge Art Studio

Described as "a communal art space in southwestern Wisconsin for people to actively explore, learn and create the arts and crafts of life." In Muscoda, west of Spring Green. Classes include book arts, mixed media and writing.

250-5028

kathym@valleyridgeartstudio.com

www.valleyridgeartstudio.com

Peninsula Art School

Door County is famous for its artists - now you can be one of them! Combine a summer getaway with artistic exploration at the Peninsula Art School. Classes include jewelry design, painting and ceramics.

(920) 868-3455

peninsulaartschool.com

University of Wisconsin Continuing Studies

Stay in town and learn ballet, a foreign language or how to write a screenplay. Head out of town to experience the art and culture of New York, Edinburgh or Paris. Learn to paint or draw in Rhinelander or Green Lake. The Department of Continuing Studies has numerous options (over 1500) for hands-on education or arts and cultural exploration and appreciation.

262-1156

info@dcs.wisc.edu

http://www.dcs.wisc.edu

Clay Circus

Learn pottery from a professional in an intimate studio right here in Madison.

222-3029

info@claycircus.com

www.claycircus.com

A lesson in the arts: More fun with a friend

By Jennifer Garrett

Ah, summer. Time to kick up our heels, soak up the sun and get away from it all. Long lazy days just beg to be whiled away sipping lemonade on a porch swing. But let's face it; hours rocking to and fro can get a little boring. This year, why not use a little of that vacation time and money to learn something new or develop a hobby? Thanks to endless educational travel opportunities, you can relax while developing your inner passions an hour a week or a week at a time.

Don't worry if your husband and kids don't have the same things in mind for a vacation. You can still

go, and you don't have to go alone.

Every now and then Bernice Thering gets the itch to go to New York. She likes the opera, the plays and the museums. The only problem is her husband hates to travel. So rather than sulking at home, Thering packs her bags and heads to the Big Apple with Judie Shelp. "He's happy if I go with Judie and he doesn't have to go,"

Thering says.

Although Thering would like to travel with her husband, she acknowledges that there are some benefits of traveling with friends. "It's so much more fun going through an art museum with someone who likes going through an art museum," she says.

Shelp and Thering plan their trips through the University of Wisconsin Department of Continuing Studies. The arts excursions to New York

Girlfriend
getaways



are just like regular old vacations, plus they include supplemental lectures and reading materials. "It's not like you're just going to school and going to a performance," Shelp says. "You learn and you can get more out of a performance than if you were going in blind."

Doris Lang is an artist, and sometimes she wants to get away for inspiration. So almost every summer she heads to the Peninsula Art School in Door County. She's been going to the art school since "back when it was in a barn." She always attends with at least one friend, and they

always start the week with a fish boil followed by cherry pie a la mode. "That is our official entry into peninsula life," she says.

While Lang says having a traveling companion doesn't affect the quality of her art, it does affect the quality of her time away from the easel. "It's so much more fun to eat with somebody or to shop with somebody or to watch the sunset with somebody, and it doesn't have to be romantic."

The week of arts indulgence quickly became a priority for Lang and her friends. "It's one of the nicest things we do all year. We look forward to it and we taste it for another six months afterwards."

Think of it like your own summer camp. Your kids go away to commune with nature and to burn off energy. Why not head out yourself for a few days of edification? The nice thing about places like Door County is that there's plenty to do for those who aren't so artistically inclined. You can spend your days throwing clay on a potter's wheel while your kids and husband bike and swim. It's a great compromise if you don't really want to vacation without your family.

And if going away really isn't an option, there are plenty of ways to satisfy budding curiosities and to bond with friends without leaving town.

Let's face it, learning something new can be exciting and scary. Having a friend along can inspire confidence to really get moving in that belly dancing class or to bear your soul in an acting workshop. It also gives you something to talk and laugh about long after the course is finished.

Helen Esmond signed up for a pottery class with her daughter-in-law, Sarah Esmond, at Clay Circus in Madison. It turned out that the other two women in the small group were friends of Sarah's. Class nights quickly turned into girls' nights as the women sipped wine, sampled sushi, gabbed about their husbands and got to know each other better than they ever expected.

"The conversations a lot of time went toward girl talk," Helen says. "It just makes me realize that [Sarah] is no different than I was at that age."

Although older than the other three women, Helen held her own in the group and the class. "I can join in and be just as much part of it as anyone else," she says. "I'm an older adult and yet I do enjoy being around younger people. I enjoyed

their wit, their sense of humor."

Susan Brook, a friend of Sarah's, says having a weekly obligation like a class made the night a priority. In the end, none of the women became an expert potter, but they are all closer. And that might just be the best lesson of all.

"Doing things like this together helps strengthen a friendship's foundation. We all shared this new adventure. We had our suc-

cesses and our failures. We supported each other — like when we saved my butter dish fiasco by renaming it a 'candle tray,'" Brook says. "We all ended up with stories we can refer to and laugh about."

Jennifer Garrett is a Madison-based freelance writer.



May getaway: *Art in Chicago*

This spring the Madison Art Center makes it easy to discover the latest developments in contemporary art. The museum invites reservations for a day trip to Art Chicago on Friday, May 9.

Art Chicago is one of the world's largest and most respected international fine art fairs. Celebrating its tenth anniversary in 2003, Art Chicago brings more than 200 galleries to historic Navy Pier on Lake Michigan. Though most of the works on view will be available for purchase—at prices that are sometimes as much a conversation starter as the works themselves—visitors are left to browse without pressure to buy. As if the art weren't enough to give the eyes a workout, Art Chicago may be the city's best event of the year—indoors or out—for people-watching.

Participants will enjoy the company of other art enthusiasts while the planning, driving and parking are left to professionals. The \$65 cost per person includes travel by chartered bus, light refreshments and admission for one to Art Chicago. The tour will depart Madison at 8 a.m. and return by approximately 7 p.m. The deadline for reservations is Friday, April 25. For details or to make a reservation for the Art Center's tour, call Susan Lang, director of volunteer services, at 257-0158.

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