



Photo by Matt Love

During your Spring Break of the Mind, go to the beach and build a driftwood fort.



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On your Spring Break, visit a museum, like the Flavel House Museum in Astoria.

Take a SPRING BREAK of the *mind*

Do something new, for fun or that makes you think. Explore and reclaim your spring break. (School enrollment not required.)

Story by MATT LOVE

To most adults without school-age children, the phrase “Spring Break” holds about as much relevance as the Kardashian family does to American reality.

The thinking goes: families and collegians travel to some near or distant recreational attraction, spend a lot of money, and purport to have fun. Meanwhile, you have to work. There is no Spring Break for you, right? Those days are long gone.

Wrong. Next week, the annual week-long vacation ritual commences right in our own backyard, and perhaps the time has arrived for older adults to reclaim or repurpose the idea of Spring Break. Forget dreams of Las Vegas, Disneyland or Timberline Lodge. Try something called the Spring Break of the Mind. It’s cheap, local and only takes one day instead of five. It may only take several hours.

The always great notion of taking a Spring Break of the Mind begins by doing something to induce sheer joy or contemplation by doing something you don’t normally do in the area or have never done.

Here are some suggestions:

Read a novel

Jane Austen? Ken Kesey? Perhaps even revisit one that an English teacher crammed down your throat and ruined by overanalyzing. “Catcher in the Rye” really is a great novel, and since a sequel to it

by JD Salinger is rumored to be released later this year, why not try it again? Or better yet, try reading

Timothy Lane’s recently published debut novel, “Rules for Becoming a Legend.” The story is set in a fictional Astoria, was written by a former Astoria High School graduate, and contains uniquely coastal scenes and characters.



Submitted photo
Sit back and relax on your Spring Break of the Mind by enjoying a novel. Try reading Timothy Lane’s “Rules for Becoming a Legend,” which is set in a fictional Astoria.

Go to a movie alone in the afternoon

One of the singular pleasures of living in small town with a cinema complex nearby is the thrill of seeing a movie on a weekday afternoon all by yourself. No one is texting or talking. No screaming babies. You can put your feet up. You can interact with the characters aloud or throw popcorn at the villains. You can actually enjoy a film you wanted to see and nobody else wanted to.

Drink some local beer

Sample every commercially brewed beer in the area available as a growler purchase. Take them all home and invite some friends. This is the perfect way to relax and support the local brewing economy and float your way to the Spring Break of the Mind.

Climb Saddle Mountain

The second tallest peak in the Coast Range beckons. Make the ascent. Build a cairn. Commune with nature. Scream an affirmation to the sky.



Submitted photo by Leigh Oviatt

Channel your inner child and ride the bumper cars in Seaside.

Visit a museum

Astoria and its environs boast some of the most specialized and interesting museums in the region. And it’s not often you get to visit a museum wholly dedicated to the life of one strange rich coastal family — the Flavels. Every tour of their former mansion in Astoria makes for an experience not unlike reading a thick Gothic novel or a thin Edgar Allen Poe tale.

Ride bumper cars

The bumper cars in Seaside are nothing less than a bumpy ride back in time to the happy, care-free, Spring Breaks of the past. For a mere \$2.50, climb in, strap in, and hit the gas! Find some unsuspecting novice going the wrong way or stranded in the corner and go for the kill. It feels good. It feels like victory. And there’s no way to sanely use your phone during the experience. That’s a three-minute Spring Break of the Mind right there.

Become a Mermaid

There is something mysterious, sensual and antediluvian about mermaids. Why not become one for an hour, day or week? Why not escape into myth and legend? Sea Gypsy Gifts in Astoria offers hand-crafted mermaid costumes that might just revolutionize the heart of anyone who wants to don one.

Walk a shelter dog

Nothing in life satisfies more than providing succor to an abandoned animal. Donate your Spring Break Day of the Mind to bettering the life of a canine friend in need at the Clatsop County Animal Shelter. Watch how the dog walker’s world changes, too.

Eat at a new restaurant

There it is: A new seafood restaurant in the area appeared, or you finally noticed the Italian joint on a drive to work that looks inviting but you’ve never given it a try. Now is the time. Break out of your boring culinary routine and experiment with a locally owned restaurant. Nobody wants to go with you? Go by yourself! Combine this meal with the companion-less movie outing and create the ultimate solo, three-hour Spring of the Break of the Mind.

Take a long walk in rain

It’s Spring Break on the coast; it will be raining. When it does, advance into it. No umbrellas. No phones. Walk forever. Something astonishing will happen. You may not even know what it is. Rain is like that.

Go to the beach and build a driftwood fort

When was the last time you went to the beach and had a hand in building a driftwood fort? If you can’t recall or have never experienced this sublime and magically tactile activity, you are missing out on something wonderful. This is especially true for adults cut off from nature or meaningful collaboration. Constructing a driftwood fort doesn’t cost a cent, materials are easily obtained, the workout is decent, the ocean is your subconscious architect, and you are making cosmically ephemeral art, shelter and fun at the same time. Fort Stevens State Park is one of the best places in the world to build driftwood forts. Recruit friends or family and make an afternoon out of it. Go there now! The wood is waiting for you.



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Sea Gypsy Gifts in Astoria offers handcrafted mermaid costumes that might just revolutionize the heart of anyone who wants to don one.

Matt Love lives in Astoria and is the author/editor of 12 books about Oregon, including “Of Walking In Rain,” his account of one of the rainiest winters in Oregon history. They are available at coastal bookstores and through www.nestuccaspitpress.com