



This undated photo provided by Alyssa Kauanoie of Suade LLC, shows one of their "JetsetterMaps Scratch Your Travels USA Map," partially scratched off. Kauanoie, who sells the maps on Etsy, Amazon and other sites, said the product is designed to be "fun and customizable" so that travelers can scratch off states they've visited.

The quest to visit all 50 states

By **BETH J. HARPAZ**
AP Travel Editor

NEW YORK — I recently reached a goal that I've been working on for most of my life: I visited all 50 states.

And I've been surprised by how many others I know who have been on the very same quest. "We're seeing more and more people with this goal," said Alicia Rovey, founder of the All Fifty States Club, in an interview for AP Travel's "Get Outta Here!" podcast. "It seems like any room you go in, there's at least one person that is trying to get to all 50."

What's behind the trend? Gas is cheap. The 50-state bucket list appeals to all age groups, from millennials who love to travel, to folks who travel a lot for work, to empty nesters and retirees with time for road trips.

For Americans, traveling around the U.S. is also cheaper and less daunting logistically than traveling internationally. And because the U.S. is so big and diverse, every region has something different to offer, from cities to farms, from mountains to beaches, from Southern food to Tex-Mex.

Some travelers use apps or online maps to track their travels. Others use real maps. Alyssa Kauanoie sells a product online called JetsetterMaps (\$28) that lets travelers "scratch off" the states you've been to and get your own personalized travel map.

Because there's no real way to check on those applying for membership in the All Fifty club, "we



This Sept. 6 photo shows Associated Press Travel Editor Beth Harpaz standing beneath a "Welcome to Idaho" sign near Gibbonsville, Idaho, and the Montana border. Idaho was Harpaz's final destination on a quest to visit all 50 states.

don't ask for proof," said Rovey. "It's kind of an honor system."

What counts?

For a visit to count, Rovey says, "You have to touch the ground and breathe the air." That "rules out airplane layovers." But she says most 50-staters set their own stipulations: having a meal, spending the night, or spending time with a local.

Jefferson George visited 50 states in 50 days. He drove to the lower 48, starting in Maine and ending in Seattle, then flew to Alaska and before noon on day 50, made it to Hawaii. But he didn't just set foot in a place to check it off:

"I wanted to see something of note in each state, whether it was an established attraction like the North Rim of the Grand Canyon or something maybe a little more obscure like the first paved road in America in a little town, Bellefontaine, Ohio."

Kelly Will did the 50 states in a year, using social media to find families to stay with everywhere she went and immersing herself in each community for a few days. She's written a book about the experience that she hopes to publish titled "Little Miss Willful: An exploration of feminism, fear and faith across 50 states," and said the education she got spending

time with folks around the country was equivalent to "about six different master's degrees in college."

For some, the trips offer solace. Jen Miller, author of "Running: A Love Story," set out to see the 18 states she hadn't visited after her dog died and she was forced to sell her house "because of a terrible neighbor." She got through the 18 in just one summer, and along the way, adopted a new dog in Boise, Idaho.

Kris Nazar, who came to the U.S. as a refugee from Poland in 1986, worked as a truck driver and drove a semi through the lower 48. He crossed off Alaska when he



This Jan. 26, 2014 photo shows Kelly Will in Stoneham, Maine, with Rod Rovzar, who took her ice fishing. Will visited Stoneham as part of a year-long trip to see the 50 states by visiting with locals and immersing herself in communities.

got a job helping to clean up the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989 and plans to see Hawaii with his wife in 2019 as a 25th wedding anniversary trip.

Which states are last?

Rovey says more than half of the club's 4,000 members name Hawaii and Alaska as their final stops. That makes sense: Those destinations require more planning, time and money than just driving across state lines. But the other place at the end of the 50-state road for many travelers is North Dakota.

"That seems to be a state that is not on the way to places for people," said Rovey. "Many of our members have had to make a special trip to get there." One recommendation for travelers hoping to reach all 50: If you're close to another state, make that extra trip.

Former AP newsman Dick Lipsey is running a marathon

or longer race in each state: "I have four states left and plan to finish up in North Dakota."

Melinda Frederick and her husband have been knocking off the 50 states along with another couple. "We are simultaneously keeping track of each other," she said. "We have an agreement we will all cross into North Dakota together."

I thought North Dakota would be my last, too. But my travels through the 50 states have been somewhat random compared with those who themed their trips or set deadlines. As it turned out, I got to North Dakota's beautiful Theodore Roosevelt National Park a few days before I made it to Idaho. But I did mark the moment when I ended my quest. I made my husband pull the car over and posed for a photo beneath the sign that read "Welcome to Idaho."

This Ten-Minute Tortilla Soup is filling comfort food

By **MELISSA D'ARABIAN**
Associated Press

I owe the idea to well-meaning fans, who over the years would approach me to thank me for the genius of making 10-minute-meals. I never had the heart to correct them: I hosted Ten Dollar Dinners. Ten-minute meals, I always mused, would be about a thousand versions of PB&J, which sounded like hard television to pitch my producer. But the idea marinated. And then it became a challenge: what could I make in 10 minutes that wouldn't be a PB&J (no disrespect to the sandwich-anthem of my childhood)?

While most of my recipes are weeknight-friendly — that's simply how I cook with four kiddos to feed before the activity flurry — I decided to create recipes that were extra quick for those nights when even a half hour seems impossible to find.

Today's recipe is one of the dinners that came from this project. Ten-Minute Tortilla Soup is filling comfort food that I feel good about serving my family. It's simple but tasty, and my kids love it.

I'll caveat the 10 minutes by saying that the dinner does take



Ten-minute tortilla soup.

advantage of some prepared items, such as purchased salsa, canned black beans and leftover chicken. But these items are healthy pantry staples that you probably have on hand, and have a long shelf-life, including the chicken: freezing up chicken leftovers or rotisserie chicken for weeknight dinners is an excellent

habit for weeknight cooks anyway. And, the recipe is pretty flexible. Skip the cheese and add avocado cubes, if you prefer, or if that's what you have on hand. Use ground beef instead of chicken. Or even Thanksgiving turkey leftovers. Make it spicy or mild. However you choose, I promise you this: it will be quick.

TEN-MINUTE TORTILLA SOUP

Servings: 4

Start to finish: 10 minutes.

- 3 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 4 corn tortillas (about 5-inch diameter), cut into quarters
- ½ cup prepared mild (or medium) red salsa
- ¼ cup prepared mild (or medium) green salsa
- 1 tablespoon lime or lemon juice
- 1 cup cooked black beans, rinsed and drained if canned
- 1 cup shredded or cubed cooked chicken
- ¼ cup plain lowfat Greek yogurt
- ¼ cup shredded jack cheese
- 1 tablespoon pepitas (pumpkin seeds), or other seed or crushed tortilla chip
- fresh cilantro for garnish, if desired

Heat the broth and tortillas in a saucepan over medium high heat to simmer. Simmer for 1-2 minutes to soften tortilla. Pour the mixture into a blender, and add the salsas and lime juice. Very carefully blend the mixture until smooth, about one minute. (Do not fill the blender more than halfway with hot liquids and do not cover the blender completely; use a kitchen towel to help.) Pour the mixture back into the pan, add the chicken and beans and reheat for another two minutes on medium high heat. Pour the soup into individual bowls, and top with the yogurt, cheese, pepitas and cilantro, and serve.

Nutrition information per serving: 241 calories; 48 calories from fat; 5 g fat (2 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 37 mg cholesterol; 415 mg sodium; 26 g carbohydrate; 6 g fiber; 3 g sugar; 22 g protein.