

## ***Girlfriend Getaways***

We know that in order to make our life work, we have to make time for work AND play. We also know that a life that works includes many wonderful friendships. Why not combine the two? I call this combination **Girlfriend Getaways!**

Girlfriend Getaways are a wonderful opportunity to have the luxury of time with the very special women in your life. I try to plan one at least every year. At first it was hard to justify going away with my friends rather than my family. I started by tacking a few days on to a business trip so I wouldn't feel guilty. Pretty soon though, not only did I recognize the benefits of these getaways, but my family did too – I was very happy when I returned. And that made it easier to plan the next one.

### **Planning**

Plan the getaway just like you would a vacation. You can be frugal, extravagant, or anywhere in between. I have found that if you have family responsibilities, limiting your getaway to a long weekend works well. If you have few responsibilities at the moment, take as much time as you like!

You can plan your trip with as many friends as you would like. For me, one or two friends works well but I know of larger groups with as many as ten women who plan annual trips together. If you have never done this, start small and work your way up to a group size that is right for you.

Most likely you will have to plan well in advance. Once you get a date that works for everyone, write it in ink on your calendar and treat it as a done deal!

### **Expectations**

It's important that your sister travelers have the same expectations as you for the time you spend away. Many of my getaways have been with friends who live in different states. We discussed our plans by e-mail or phone. During these discussions we usually found that each of us had a different idea of what our getaway would be like. Since we were still in the planning stages there was time to come to consensus about just what we would do.

### **Where to Go**

Getaways do not have to be in exotic or luxurious surroundings. One of my favorites happened several years ago. Mary, Jeanie, and I live four hours from each other. On Friday afternoon Mary headed south and I headed north on Interstate 35 meeting at Jeanie's house in Des Moines. From there we set off on a road trip across Iowa. Sounds ho-hum, huh? But it wasn't.

We agreed that we would only travel on back roads, no highways for us. We planned our first night's stop just an hour or so away. Our destination by Sunday was to visit the Field of Dreams (from the movie of the same name) before we returned home. The rest was unplanned! We were merry wanderers. We took along a video camera and recorded our adventure. We became

sillier and sillier as the hours passed. By the time we got to the Field of Dreams we had decided that we would film a remake of the original movie. What fun that was!

We enjoyed the sheer luxury of quiet time together and still had time for intimate, late night talks, and laughing – lots of laughing. The best part was that it cost us next to nothing, just our time.

My most recent getaway was with my friends Billie and Leslie. I was speaking at a conference in Scottsdale, Arizona. Billie and Leslie met me there. We took two days after the conference and drove up to Sedona. Billie, Leslie, and I used to live in the same town and even work together. A few years ago Leslie and I moved away. Our busy lives make it difficult to be together often. Those two days exploring, napping, eating delicious food, and watching gorgeous sunsets were worth every minute we spent saving and planning to get there. I can't believe how much talking we did. We reviewed the past, problem-solved the present, and best of all wove dreams about the future. As I sit here at my keyboard, I can glance at a photograph we took of the three of us on top of a red rock ridge in Sedona. The smile on my face in the photo mirrors the one on my face now as I reminisce about that magical time.

### **You Have the Choice**

We each have the choice to make our life work. If a Girlfriend Getaway appeals to you, make the choice to do it. Don't put it off because you don't have money (remember, they can be very inexpensive) or you have too many responsibilities. I took that road trip through Iowa only two weeks before my husband Max died. He had been ill for many years. I was exhausted, depressed, and really needed time away. It was a sheer act of will to force myself to leave him and the kids to take just three short days for myself. We didn't realize how ill he was or I would never have gone. But, it was a blessing that I did. I came back refreshed, renewed, and ready to face anything.

I'm thinking I better get started planning my next Girlfriend Getaway. How about you?