

Time to start doing more things alone

By Roberto A. Ferdman, Washington Post

On any given Friday night, bars, restaurants and movie theaters tend to fill up with people spending time with friends, lovers, and family. But when the weekend comes, those who find themselves on their own are likelier to be found on the couch, at home, doing something in private.

There's nothing particularly strange here. But maybe we're missing out when we automatically choose to stay in when we don't have social plans.

"People decide to not do things all the time just because they're alone," said Rebecca Ratner, a professor of marketing at the Robert H. Smith School of Business, who has spent almost half a decade studying why people are so reluctant to have fun on their own and how it may lead to, well, less fun overall. "But the thing is, they would probably be happier going out and doing something."

Ratner has a new study titled *Inhibited from Bowling Alone*, a nod to Robert Putnam's book about Americans' waning participation in group activities, that's set to publish in the *Journal of Consumer Research* in August.

Read the whole story

Pigs to take center stage at EDC Fair

Food categories have been added to this year's El Dorado County Fair contests to embrace the Hog Days of Summer theme.

The fair is June 18-21 in Placerville.

In addition to the food entries in the fair entry guide people may create Beach Ball Pigs.

The Great American Pig Races are another tie in – symbolizing life in the country and those hog summer days. These pigs will be racing several times a day, every day of fair.

In keeping with the theme, the fair chef, Gary Gilligan, will be offering cooking classes like Pork – the Other White Meat and Stuffed Pork Loin.

In the barns there may be baby pigs. Buying a swine at the auction supports the hard work of youngsters who've raised the animals. The livestock auction begins at 10am June 20.

Many of the food vendors will have some special foods – such as pulled pork nachos and porktastic tacos. Bacon cinnamon rolls will be that Sunday's featured item for the Daily Special Contest.

More info about the fair is available online.

Tourist stops change

dramatically as climate shifts

By Matt Villano , USA Today

From Alaska to Miami, the phenomenon of climate change – the catch-all phrase that describes subtle but significant changes to Earth's atmosphere – is wreaking havoc on some of the most beautiful destinations in the country. Perhaps the most concerning news: There has been no recent evidence that the trend will slow or stop any time soon.

Shrinking Lakes

All Andrew Glasgow wanted to do was share the wonder of Mount Shasta and Shasta Lake with his wife and two young sons.

He had visited the mountain before, many times. He remembered the awe-inspiring grandeur of the snow-covered triangle reflected in the turquoise waters of the lake below. His family simply had to see it. So, for Thanksgiving last year, he booked a trip. But when they arrived, the scene was totally wrong. There was virtually no snow on the mountain itself. And the lake – if you wanted to call it that – was nothing more than a glorified puddle.

Warming temperatures and drought conditions in California likely were two of the factors contributing to what the Glasgows spotted that day. Other lakes have been affected by climate change as well. Rising temperatures in Lake Tahoe are suspected to have caused a drop in the number of bottom-feeding creatures in the lake – the very same creatures that eat algae and therefore give the lake its world-renowned clarity.

Read the whole story

Health plans failing to cover women's health

By Julie Rovner, NPR

Many women were thrilled when the Affordable Care Act became law in 2010, because it required insurance companies to cover a broad array of women's health services without any out-of-pocket costs.

Five years later, however, the requirement isn't being enforced, according to two studies. Health insurance plans around the country are failing to provide many of those legally-mandated services including birth control and cancer screenings.

The studies by the National Women's Law Center looked at health plan coverage documents and consumer complaints in 15 states. One of the studies focused on contraception, while the other looked at a range of women's health issues, including maternity care, breast-feeding support and other services.

[Read the whole story](#)

UNR exhibit focuses on Tahoe recreation

Students at the UNR have created an exhibit called the Tahoe Recreation Experience: Fun at the Lake. It highlights the

history of recreational activities at Lake Tahoe such as boat racing, skiing, hiking and camping as well as the historic environmental impacts on the lake.

The project is part of the university's Shared History Program and will be on display in the Shared History Lab of the University's Mack Social Science in Room 109 for one year starting May 4.

The class partnered with the Tahoe Maritime Museum to learn about the rich history of boat racing. The students were originally planning on focusing on the exhibit solely on the history of boat racing at Lake Tahoe but expanded the project to include more activities.

There will be a reception to celebrate the opening of the exhibit and to honor the graduating seniors in the class between 1:45 to 2:15pm on May 4.

Big fish expert to give talk at UNR

Zeb Hogan, an aquatic biologist at UNR and host of the Nat Geo WILD "Monster Fish" show, has been traveling the globe for 10 years to find the biggest freshwater fish on the planet.

He will be giving a free lecture May 7 at 7pm about his adventures, travels and work to find, study and protect behemoth fish – fish that are more than 6-feet long or weigh more than 200 pounds.

The first 100 children will receive a copy of one of Hogan's monster fish books, geared for young adult readers. There will

also be a book signing following the lecture.

His research is documented in his “Monster Fish” show and in the new featured exhibition *Monster Fish: In Search of the Last River Giants* on display at the National Geographic Museum in Washington, D.C. through Oct. 12.

The talk is in the Redfield Auditorium in the Davidson Mathematics and Science Center on the UNR campus.

Classical music concert returning to Tahoe

Lake Tahoe SummerFest’s fourth season, “Passport to a World of Music,” will bring Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn to audiences July 31-Aug. 16.

The three weekend series of nine concerts will include renowned artists and a nationally acclaimed orchestra of 40 players.

It marks a return for pianist Joseph Kalichstein, the guest artist who opened SummerFest’s inaugural 2012 season.

Special guest artists during the following weekends feature guitarist Ana Vidovic on Aug. 7-9, and cellist Paul Watkins of the Emerson Quartet and music director of the English Chamber Orchestra for the festival’s finale on Aug. 14-16.

Joel Revzen, artistic director and conductor, leads the orchestra. The orchestra is comprised of musicians from symphonies including the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the philharmonics of New York and Los Angeles, and the symphonies of San Francisco, Seattle, Dallas, and Vancouver.

The event is in a 500-seat concert tent pavilion at Sierra Nevada College in Incline Village.

For more info, go online.

Track spending habits with money-management apps

By Reid Abedeen

Money management is probably at the forefront of your mind.

While everyone should have a long-term plan for their investments, yours will do you no good if you aren't also watching your money on a day-to-day basis. You should have a monthly budget, spending categories with soft and hard caps, and a system to keep track of it all and rein in your spending. If you don't have responsible spending habits, you don't have responsible saving habits; it's that simple.

There are a multitude of technologies that can help you pay attention to your spending budgets. These include money-management apps on your mobile phone or banking websites that let you categorize your expenditures for easier totaling, among other things.

For most of us, keeping a close eye on our spending is all it takes to make more responsible money decisions. When you have to notice every dollar as it comes in and goes out, the awareness of your accounts creates its own incentive to spend carefully. It's the same principle behind calorie counting: Even if you don't adopt any special diet, having all the information in front of you – and the awareness of how many

minutes of exercise it takes to balance out that one candy bar – will tug you gently in the direction of prudent decision-making.

Here are a few of our few favorite daily money-management hacks.

EveryDollar

Financial guru Dave Ramsey has plugged this iPhone app (there is not yet an Android version). It's simple, yet elegant and effective. After installing it, you create a monthly budget on the app's corresponding website. You link it to your various credit, debit, savings and investment accounts, and the app tracks your expenditures proportionate to your budgets. When you spend money in a category, the app shows you how much you have left to spend for the month.

For one-time or annual expenditures, EveryDollar has you create a Fund that's paid into every month and then zeroes out when the expenditure is made. The basic version of EveryDollar is free. If you get the premium version of the app, you can drag and drop transactions from your bank to one of your budgets, making it easier to ensure that every expenditure is properly accounted for.

Mint

Another budgeting and money-management app, Mint (available on iOS and Android) has the same basic functionality. You create monthly budgets in several different areas, taking up a portion of your monthly projected income. You can then set goals with the remaining funds. An example goal might be "Pay off credit card" or "Save for vacation." Most of the differences between this app and EveryDollar are cosmetic.

Assigning categories to credit or debit card transactions in Mint is a little more tedious. Instead of dragging and dropping from transaction to budget, you have to scroll down a

submenu, for example. Then again, this is a premium feature on EveryDollar, so it comes at a price of \$99 yearly. Mint is free for all users, although the app does offer “advice” in the form of advertisements for credit cards and other financial solutions. These are customized to your spending and saving habits, which could make some users leery of just how much financial data they are sharing with the manufacturer.

You have to set up each of your monthly budgets yourself, but there is a drop down menu’s worth of spending options to choose from, so this isn’t too onerous. Mint has additional features such as spending reports, divided by category (into a pie chart) or by month (in a bar graph). If one of the spending categories looks suspicious, you can easily navigate to the list of transactions to make sure they all belong there, and have a clear sense of where your money is going. Even if you don’t change a penny of your spending habits, being able to view and justify every dollar will have you feeling good about your decisions instead of wondering why your wallet is always empty.

Mint’s main screen is a snapshot that shows every connected account balance and a summary of those accounts. (You can get this in EveryDollar as well, but it requires paying for the Plus version.)

One-time or annual expenditures are also a little trickier to manage on Mint, but there are workarounds that can make them feasible. At free, it’s a bargain at twice the price.

Know Thyself and Save

Whatever money-management app you decide to use, the automatic transaction tracking will make it easy to keep track of your budget and find corners to cut. When you do, make sure to turn those extra discretionary funds into progressive investments, to make your retirement richer – and possibly sooner.

Reid Abedeen is a partner at Safeguard Investment Advisory

Road beat: Mazda 6 tops the mid-size market



The Mazda 6 is setting the standard for what a mid-size car should be. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

Mazda isn't the biggest car company in the world, now selling about 30,000 units a month in the U.S., up about 25 percent from the same period last year and for good reason. They design and build some of the best cars in the world. A recent Road Beat test of the Mazda 3 hatchback ranked it as the best

compact car currently on the market, a positioned they could hold solely on its looks, closely based on its recent Takeri show car. But its top of class handling, ride, fuel economy and performance only sealed the deal.

Mazda 6 is an obvious Mazda 3 sibling. Looks wise it's hard to tell them apart giving the Mazda 6 the title of the best looking mid-size car on the market. Its long, flat, yet shapely hood and aggressive front end sets the tone that this car means business. Even better is its profile, slick, lean and muscular with a window line that accentuates its length and sleekness. Its coefficient of drag is a remarkably low 0.26 which pays big dividends as you will see later. If there were a perfect design, this is it.



Specifications

Price \$21,985 to about \$33,000

Engine

DOHC, 16 valve inline 2.5L
four 184 hp @ 5,700 rpm
185 ft-lb of torque at 3,250 rpm

Transmission

Six Speed torque converter automatic, with paddle shifters

Configuration

Transverse mounted front

engine/front wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 111.4 inches

Length 191.5 inches

Width 72.4 inches

Height 57.1 inches

Track (f/r) 62.8/62.4 inches

Ground clearance 6.7 inches

Weight 3,232 pounds

Weight distribution (f/r)
58/42%

Fuel capacity 16.4 gallons

Cargo capacity 16.4 cubic
feet

Steering lock to lock 2.81
turns

Turning circle (curb to
curb) 36.7 feet

Wheels 19X7.5 inch alloys

Tires 225/45X19 all season
radials

Co-efficient of drag 0.26

Performance

0-60 mph 7.32 seconds

50-70 mph 3.92 seconds

50-70 mph uphill 5.81
seconds

Top speed 140 mph
electronically limited

Fuel economy 28/40/32 mpg
city/highway/combined.

Expect 31-32 mpg in rural
country driving and over 40
mpg on a level highway at
legal speeds.

Mazda 6 looks longer, lower and wider than it actually is,

although its wheelbase, length and width reveal it is a couple of inches bigger than other mid-size vehicles with a wheelbase of 111.4 inches, a length of 191.5 inches and a width of 72.4 inches. While it stands 57 inches tall, which is about average for this class, it looks much lower because of its design.

Under the hood is a choice of one engine, a 2.5L super trick, SKYACTIV, 16 valve, inline DOHC four that produces a peak of 184 hp at 5,700 rpm and peak torque of 185 pounds at an exceedingly low 3,250 rpm. This engine also sports an astronomically high compression ratio of 13:1. One of the technologies of SKYACTIV is direct injection which allows such power producing compression while still running fine on 87 octane regular gas.

With peak power and torque being made at such low rpm, it means the Mazda 6 makes more power at the rpms you actually use in your driving, 2,000-4,000 rpm. Consequently, the Mazda performs far beyond its numbers would indicate with 0-60 mph arriving in just 7.32 seconds. Simulated passing tests also show off its muscle with 50-70 mph on level ground stopping the clocks in 3.92 seconds and the same test up a 6 percent grade only slowing that time to 5.91 seconds. Those numbers certainly put the new Mazda 6 at or near the top of the class for four cylinder mid-size sedans and are almost identical to the numbers produced by the Mazda 3 Road Beat test which uses the exact same powertrain but weighed in at about 230 pounds less. Only the 0-60 mph time was different by about a quarter second.

The six speed auto cog-swapper is a willing participant in achieving the 6's outstanding responsiveness as the paddle shifters really do act like an automated manual with quick, smooth shifts, up or down. Nice, or you can leave it in drive and forget about it. This is a high performance automobile that doesn't stop with just straight-line performance.

High performance also extends to fuel economy which the EPA

rates at 28/40/32 mpg city/highway combined. Overall I averaged 31-32 mpg in very aggressive driving (hey, this ride begs to be driven as you will see why). If I slowed it down a bit, that number would go up by a couple of mpg. When you cruise down a level highway at 70 mph you can expect 42-43 mpg. No, that is not a misprint, 40 plus mpg on the highway is a no brainer and with its 16.4-gallon fuel tank, the Mazda 6's tank will definitely out last yours. The Mazda 6 test vehicle did have the Mazda i-Eloop electric regen system which takes some alternator load off the engine thereby marginally improving fuel economy. The EPA numbers with i-Eloop are two mpg better across the board over the non i-Eloop model. Engine performance is otherwise identical.

More high performance is apparent when you change directions. Suspenders consist of the usual state of the art MacPherson struts up front and a multilink system in the rear with coils and twin tube shocks in all four corners and stabilizer bars at both ends. And does it ever work. Adding to this marvelous equation is a speed sensitive electric power rack that is only 2.8 turns lock to lock. My tester also had the optional gorgeous 19 x 7.5 inch alloys shod with wide 225/45 rubber (standard rubber is no slouch either at 225/55x17). Additionally, Mazda sports a wide 63-inch track front and rear. It changes direction better than water in a hose. It doesn't matter what you do as it goes where you point it with a natural aplomb while maintaining an incredibly flat attitude. Turning circle is almost 37 feet. It is the best handling mid-size car I have ever driven and that is among some pretty good competition.

Ride quality is firmer/supple; perfectly smooth on the highway and super quiet as the engine spins a slow 1,950 rpm at 70 mph. Is there a negative? Yes, on coarse roads you get more road and tire noise. It handles both small and large road imperfections well and there is absolutely no float or jiggle. I appreciate this quality ride, but we are not done yet.

Braking, of course, is by front ventilated four-wheel discs with ABS and all the other braking acronyms. Performance is right at the benchmark stopping in 40 feet from 40 mph. The pedal is strong, firm and linear. The rest of the safety not left up to the all important driver consists of stability control, traction control, hill launch assist, a plethora of airbags, Mazda's SKYACTIV body ring structure and even a rear cross traffic alert. Also deserving special mention are the fabulous Bi-xenon headlights with standard AFS.



Plenty of room in the back
for tall friends.

Inside is a fabulous interior that puts this Mazda Grand Touring into the near luxury class. Seating is perfect for my shape, some of the best I ever sat in. And their tasteful design only adds to the leather luxury. Of course in this full boat ride, they are heated, full power with lumbar and have a two position memory. Rear seating is voluminous with comfort and enough leg room for the front line of the Sacramento Kings.

Instrumentation is sporty with a tach and center speedo plus a digital trip meter/info gauge flanking right. Center stack and controls couldn't be better thought out and the materials on the instrument panel, door panels, center console and steering wheel is near luxury car quality or better. The trunk is large at almost 15 cubic feet.

Pricing starts at \$21,190 plus \$795 for the boat from Hofu, Japan. And that is a six-speed manual. The auto adds about \$1,050. I would enjoy driving the manual which is also available in the touring sedan at \$23,845. My fully loaded ride stickered for \$29,895 and that included NAV and Bi-xenon adaptive headlights. The only option was the \$2,080 Tech Package which added i-elloop, high beam control and radar cruise. I would take a pass. It is the best mid-size car I have ever driven.

Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.

Laura Ingalls Wilder finds stardom in old-fashioned way

By Nora Krug, Washington Post

One of the most coveted books of the season is not a thriller or a celebrity tell-all but an oversize, 472-page annotated autobiography with hundreds of detailed notes and several appendixes. It weighs roughly three pounds and is printed on specially cut paper.

Unlike typical New York Times bestsellers, it is not available as an e-book – and might not be for some time. Finding a hardcover edition has been for many an exercise in frustration. Amazon.com can barely keep the book in stock, and one secondary seller on the site is hawking a first edition for \$499 (plus shipping), or about 12 times the cover price of \$39.95.

The book is “Pioneer Girl: The Annotated Autobiography,” an expanded version of a memoir by celebrated “Little House on the Prairie” author Laura Ingalls Wilder. Wilder herself couldn’t find a publisher for the memoir 85 years ago. So, working with her daughter, she used it as the basis for the series of novels still so popular today.

Read the whole story