

What would you do with an extra day?

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By Stephanie Schorow, Globe Correspondent | February 28, 2008

Is there anyone among us who has not wailed, "Oh, if only I had more time!" Haven't we all wished for another day in the week, another hour in a busy day? Haven't we all heard our children (or ourselves) plea: "Just one more minute? PULLEASE."

Every four years (more or less) we get an extra 24 hours, and that day is tomorrow, leap day, the paradox-producing Feb. 29 that helps balance out the extra minutes that accrue every year as the earth rotates around the sun in just over 365 days.

The extra day is an illusion, of course, a quirk of the calendar. But it got us thinking: What if we could really get another day? Would we squander it in our pajamas munching chips in front of the television? Would we use it at the office catching up on mundane work projects? Or would we do something we always wanted to do but never had time for.

To answer this question, we asked people around the Hub what they would do. Some had specifics, and others spoke longingly about the pleasure of filling the day with whatever comes along.

Explore a cemetery

Imagine "that carefree feeling like you have when you're on vacation," said Daena Giardella, a Cambridge-area actor, improvisation teacher, and presentation coach. The co-author of the book, "Changing Patterns: Discovering the Fabric of Your Creativity," says an extra day is a chance to explore your own neighborhood, a local woods, a special beach, or to just wander as the spirit moves you. "When I think of an extra day, I think of getting lost in timelessness," she said. She would walk through the Mount Auburn Cemetery, letting the trees, birds, and yes, even the graves, refresh her spirits.

Think of how we wander with interest and joy when we travel to a foreign city, she said. "I would approach the day without a plan, set off, and let the day take me where it will."

Mount Auburn Cemetery, 580 Mt. Auburn St., Cambridge. 617-547-7105. mountauburn.org Open 8 a.m.-5 p.m. October through April.

Play the blues

An extra day lets us dream. David Lavalley, executive director of the Center for the Arts in Natick, has barely enough time to see all the music and theater he needs to see as part of his job. If he had more time, he would love to take in a play at the American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge. But, he admitted, his perfect extra day would be spent taking a blues harp lesson from blues master James Montgomery. And it just so happens Montgomery is playing tomorrow night in Falmouth.

James Montgomery Blues Band plays Grumpy's Pub (29 Locust St., Falmouth. 508-540-3930. grumpyspub.net) tomorrow at 9:30 p.m.

Wander the streets

Normally Mary Fichtner, executive director of Boston by Foot, has to keep track of the many different tours being conducted by volunteers around Boston. If an extra 24 hours were handed to her, though, she would use it to wander through the streets of Boston on her own private tour.

"As an art historian and architecture enthusiast, I would start my spare day walking along the new Rose Kennedy Greenway, poking around in the North End and the Wharf District and stopping to enjoy Chinatown Park along the way," she said. "I would probably then head over to the Institute of Contemporary Art to end my day with art and a view of the waterfront." Or - if she were really motivated - she might walk the Emerald Necklace from Boston Common to Franklin Park.

Boston by Foot offers a two-hour tour, "The Greenway and Beyond," May 25 from 2 to 4 p.m. \$15. 617-367-2345. bostonbyfoot.org

Transform nature

Marc Gurton, owner/operator of the 13Forest Gallery in Arlington, knows how precious time can be. The gallery recently moved from Medford to Arlington and will mark the move with the opening of "LEAP." Gurton has been working nonstop on the show, which pays "homage to this human desire to transform nature with our own curious frameworks" - much like how we finagle the calendar with leap day. But he recently got his own extra day when, between projects, "we drove down to the Cape to check out the 50-foot shipwreck that landed on Newcomb Hollow Beach in Wellfleet," he said. Gurton proceeded through Truro and then to Provincetown for a bite and more galleries. "So it really was like a mini-vacation all in one day."

The opening reception for "LEAP," new work by Taleen Batalian, April Clay, Nathan Miner, and Jim Ospenson, is tomorrow from 7 to 10 p.m. at 13FOREST Gallery, 167A Massachusetts Ave., Arlington. 781-641-3333.

Have a movie marathon

Even a professional time management consultant loves the blank slate, the BlackBerry without a single "Must Do" item. Ann Marie Williams, who runs Atmosphere Consulting from her Braintree home, talks with relish about having a "no-schedule schedule," something she and a friend call their "aimless days."

She remembers several such days in which they would head into the city with nothing on their agenda and see where the day took them. One such day started out with shopping, continued with a long lunch, and then a movie. "We ended up seeing three movies in a row," she said.

Have your own movie marathon. Tomorrow, Coolidge Corner Theatre is playing "There Will Be Blood" at 1 p.m., "Juno" at 4 p.m. and "Persepolis" at 7:15 p.m. Tickets: \$9.75. 290 Harvard St., Brookline. 617-734-2500. coolidge.org

Eat right

If Hiro Shirai, a chef at the Brookline Japanese restaurant Fugakyu, had a magical extra day, he has no doubts how he would spend it. "I would go home to Hawaii," he said, and indulge in poi, the classic Hawaiian dish made from taro.

But because it would take "Star Trek" technology to visit Hawaii for just a day, he has, instead, created a special Leap Day dish, a Japanese "mini kaiseki." Shirai has crafted a smaller version of what is usually a drawn-out, multi-course dining experience of small dishes; his kaiseki features pan-seared tuna, scallop and avocado maki, braised chicken with white asparagus, and more. The price is, appropriately, \$29; it will be served through Saturday.

Fugakyu, 1280 Beacon St., Brookline. 617-734-1268. fugakyu.net. Open Mon-Sat 11:30 a.m.-1:30 a.m., Sun noon-1:30 a.m.

Create your own extra day

Of course, a few folks admitted, the gift of an added day would probably be spent "catching up" on work and domestic duties.

Attorney Walter Wright of Trinity Law Group of Greater Boston jokes that many of his colleagues would be delighted to have 24 more hours: "It's one more day to bill." But, he insists, let's face it: It's an illusion.

"In the end we come to the recognition we are the master of time, and in that notion we have extra days," he said.

Wouldn't it be nice to have an extra day devoted to pondering just that? ■