

May is Bike Month!

Nick Dunn

It's the most wonderful time of the year: bike weather! Whether for fun, fitness, or transportation (and often all three!), May is a wonderful time to wake up your bike from its long winter's nap and hit the roads and trails as we celebrate Bike Month in Champaign-Urbana.

According to the League of American Bicyclists, "established in 1956, National Bike Month is a chance to showcase the many benefits of bicycling - and encourage more folks to give biking a try."

In that spirit, C-U Bike Month is hosting educational events and fun rides all month long. If you missed C-U Bike to Work Day on May 2nd, don't worry, you can still participate in Champaign Bike to School Day on May 10 and National Bike to Work day on May 19th.

Check out @cubikemonth on Facebook for a full local Bike Month calendar. Highlights include the National Bike Month Celebration and Full Moon Night Ice Cream Ride on May 10th, a fun and healthy(ish) way to celebrate bikes, make new friends, and enjoy American and Illinois culture!

More bike resources can be found at www.champaigncountybikes.org and www.fs.illinois.edu/services/more-services/tm/biking. And of course, keep an eye on iss.illinois.edu for Bikes 101, an international and domestic campus-member cycling education program featuring safe riding training, a review of local laws, and prizes!



Celebrating the 4th of July

Melissa Chin

In this issue:	
May is Bike Month!	1
Celebrating the 4th of July	1
Summer Camp in the USA	2
ISSS Summer Hiking and Camping Trips to Turkey Run and Kickapoo	2
It's Picnic Season!	3
Summer Festivals in the C-U Area	3
Motorsports in the American Heartland	4
Ask Igor!	5
ISSS Favorite Summer Beach Reads	6

The Fourth of July, also known as Independence Day in the US, celebrates the day on which the Declaration of Independence was adopted in 1776. The adoption of this document commemorated the official breaking of ties between the thirteen American colonies and the British Empire, officially recognizing the United States of America as an independent entity. Every year, people in the United States celebrate this holiday with family and friends by engaging in a variety of summer activities such as having picnics, going to the beach, barbecuing, and attending parades, all while wearing red, white, and blue clothing. Of course, the most popular Fourth of July tradition involves watching a local firework display once it gets dark outside. To learn more about how you can celebrate the Fourth of July in Champaign-Urbana, check out the [Champaign County Freedom Celebration webpage](#). If you would like to learn more about the history of Independence Day and its traditions, take a look at the [History Channel's overview](#) of the holiday.



Summer Camp in the USA

Lauren Karplus

Aaah, summer camp. What else in the American psyche could lead to such great films as *The Parent Trap*, *Addams Family Values*, *Wet Hot American Summer*, *Moonrise Kingdom*, and *Happy Campers*? So just what is the quintessential American “summer camp”? Summer camps first arose in the US in the 1870s as a means of escaping an increasingly modern and urban way of life. The belief was that children needed to spend time in nature bonding with their peers, exploring the great outdoors, and gaining skills needed for independence. Camps exploded in popularity in the US over the last century, and there are now even specialized camps for skills like music or sports, and there are even camps for adults! Summer camps can last from a few days to the entire summer, during which children spend most of the day away from their families doing activities with other children. The most traditional summer camps remain sleep-away camps. On a typical camp day, children will sing silly songs, do arts and crafts, go on nature hikes, swim in a lake, and do silly skits led by their counselors (typically young adults or teenagers themselves). To give your kids the Americana camp experience of a lifetime, enroll them in 4-H Memorial Camp this summer (across the street from Allerton Park in Monticello, Illinois). This camp is affiliated with the university through the Extension Office, is affordable for families, and remains the most traditional American camp experience in the area. Hurry- spots fill up fast! <https://4h.extension.illinois.edu/programs/camping>



ISSS Summer Hiking and Camping Trips to Turkey Run and Kickapoo State Parks

Lauren Karplus

Do you like to go hiking? So do we! ISSS will take a small group (first come, first served) to Turkey Run State Park in Indiana. Turkey Run is known for its unique hikes, and you won't feel like you're in the flat Midwest there. We will be heading there on Saturday, June 17th. Cost is only \$5 for transportation and the park entrance fee. You will need to bring about \$10-15 dollars for lunch. Email lkarp12@illinois.edu for more information and for the registration link. If there is enough interest, we may also go camping at Kickapoo State Park this summer. Email lkarp12@illinois.edu if interested in a camping trip.



This was our Allerton Hike crew last Fall.



We had fun hiking at Kickapoo, too!

It's Picnic Season!

Melissa Chin

May and June are wonderful months for an afternoon picnic. The Champaign-Urbana area has plenty of spots that are perfect for a short picnic getaway with friends. Stop by your favorite bakery or market, get some snacks, and head to one of the following spots for a peaceful and relaxing afternoon.

On Campus

The [University of Illinois Arboretum](#) contains many attractions including several gardens, walkways, and ponds. Within its 160 acres, there are plenty of spots that would be perfect for taking a stroll or rolling out a picnic blanket so that you can read and have a snack in the shade.

Off Campus

Champaign

Champaign's [West Side Park](#), just a few blocks west of the main Downtown area, offers plenty of options for the perfect picnic spot, including lush plots of grass, wooden tables under the shade, and benches by the park's central fountain.

Urbana

Urbana's [Crystal Lake Park](#) boasts nature trails, a lake, and various recreational centers. After your picnic, consider taking a stroll through the woods, renting a paddle boat with a friend, or stopping by the nature center to learn more about local conservation efforts.

Monticello

If you're looking to get a little further off campus for your afternoon getaway, consider going to the [Allerton Park & Retreat Center](#). Owned by the university, this park is filled with beautiful sculpture gardens, houses, and trails that you can roam for free. Explore the grounds independently or join a free tour the third Saturday of every month.



Summer Festivals in the C-U Area

Melissa Chin



Allerton Park Concert Series, May 13- September 30, 2017

Allerton Park will be hosting several concerts for both kids and adults throughout the course of the summer. The concerts will feature bands that specialize in a range of genres, from Blues to classic Irish music.

Homer Soda Festival, June 3, 2017

If you're a fan of soda, this is the festival for you! At the Homer Soda Festival, you'll have the opportunity to choose from up to 250 different flavors to sample while you learn about family-run soda companies from across the country.

StreetFest, June 10 and July 15, 2017

During StreetFest, two of the busiest intersections in Downtown Champaign will be shut down so that you and other eventgoers can enjoy two separate nights of local food and bands.

Blues, Brews and BBQ, June 23 and 24, 2017

Blues, Brews and BBQ will give you the opportunity to try some of the best Barbecue that Illinois has to offer while enjoying live music from locally- and nationally-known Blues bands. Refreshments and carnival foods (corndogs, funnel cakes, fried oreos...YUM) will also be available!

Taste of Champaign, August 18 and 19, 2017

Ever had a difficult time choosing between Downtown Champaign's extensive list of delicious restaurants? At Taste of Champaign, you can sample them all! Find your new favorite restaurant while enjoying performances on the main stage.

Urbana Sweet Corn Festival, August 25 and 26, 2017

The summer festival season will wrap up with Urbana's Sweet Corn Festival right before the start of classes. Grab yourself an ear of some famous Central Illinois sweet corn while enjoying a mix of local and big-name live performances.

If you are interested in other events that will be going on Champaign-Urbana this summer, take a look at the [Visit Champaign County](#) and [Chambana Moms](#) event calendars.



Motorsports in the American Heartland

Nick Dunn



Quick, what's the largest single sporting event ever? A World Cup final? Perhaps the Super Bowl? If you guessed none of the above, you're exactly right, since no other sporting event has ever come close to the 350,000 attendance Indy 500 car race in 2004.

350,000 people, all in one place, at one time, to see one historic event. Why did the 100th iteration of the Indianapolis 500 draw so many?

It might be the speed. Back in 1996, driver Arie Luyendyk set a track record of 237.498 miles per hour that still stands today. The fastest lap speed in a race was set the same year at 236.103 mph. In other words, cars often travel around the entire 2.5 mile course in less than 40 seconds.

It might be the history. The only such place designated a National Historic Landmark, The Indianapolis Motor Speedways is often called the Brickyard, because at one point it was paved entirely with bricks. It has since been updated with modern paving, but a one-yard-wide strip of bricks is left exposed at the start finish line. The speedway also houses the Auto Racing Hall of Fame.

It might be the golf. Really. The golf. The Brickyard is also home to an 18-hole golfcourse, with 14 holes adjacent to the racetrack, and with 4 holes inside the racing oval. I'm happy to report that in researching this article, I found no instances of stray balls striking drivers, nor of racecars terrorizing the golfers.

How can you get involved with Indy? I'm glad you asked! If loud noises and exciting autoracing action aren't your thing, plan a visit to the Auto Racing Hall of Fame or play a round of golf. If you're looking for American auto racing at its finest, you can attend the Indy 500 on May 28th, or the NASCAR Brickyard 400 on July 23, 2017. Races are also televised and streamed online. Visit www.indianapolismotorspeedway.com for more info!





Ask Igor the I-20!



In this advice column, our resident “agony aunt,” Igor attempts to answer some of your burning questions about life, love, and America. If you have a question for Igor, email: askigortheittwenty@gmail.com

Dear Igor,

I am an international student and feeling really stressed about the new immigration policies. I keep hearing rumors about OPT and H1B rules changing, and I am losing sleep over it. I can't concentrate on my schoolwork because it depresses me. Help!

Signed,

International Student

Dear International Student,

First of all, I'm sorry that you're feeling stressed. Please don't listen to rumors, but come and talk with one of the friendly advisors at ISSS who are up-to-date on the latest immigration truths. Know your resources, too! Here's a link to an FAQ about the new immigration rule changes: <https://illinois.edu/blog/view/7019/457640>. Also, every Thursday at 4pm in the ISSS multipurpose room, the Counseling Center and ISSS are offering a space to come and share your thoughts. Take care of yourself, and know that Igor and the rest of the ISSS team are glad you are here.

Sincerely,

Igor



Dear Igor,

I am confused by restaurants in the US. Why do we have to tip? How much should we tip? What if the service is bad or it's a fast food place? Help!

Help,

A Paying Customer

Dear Paying Customer,

Congratulations! You've stumbled onto one of the oddest American customs. While tipping is not mandatory, it is prevailing practice to tip between 10-20% of the bill at a restaurant where a waiter takes your order and serves you at your seat. Servers are exempt from the minimum wage standard in Illinois and many other states, and as such, most make the majority of their income through tips. Personally, I still give at least 10% even with sub-par or mediocre service. Consider tipping just part of the price of your meal, even if it's unwritten!

There's an unsettling racial history that helped give rise to the prevalence of tipping culture in the US that had to do with rail companies wanting to cheaply hire newly-freed slaves at unfairly low wages. On the bright side, studies have also found that societies with lots of friendly, extroverted people tend to be more tip-based. Some restaurants are starting to eliminate tips by paying their workers more in the US, but the practice would be advertised as such by the restaurant, so you should always tip unless told explicitly not to. For more information on tipping, see [here](#).

Sincerely,

Igor





ISSS Favorite Summer Beach Reads



Looking for a book recommendation for all the hours you'll spend on the beach or at the park this summer? Look no further! ISSS has got you covered with our favorite beach reads!

Amira: Anything by Judy Blume. I remember reading her books back in the day, during the summer, and not being able to put them down. They are easy to read and perfect for a peaceful beachy day!

Lauren: *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver. This bestseller is far more than your average beach schlock. It tells the story of an American missionary family in the Congo, and ends up being a chilling critique of evangelism and colonialism. Each chapter is narrated by a different woman in the family as they face hardships in an unfamiliar land, and their destinies are forever altered by their time there.

Leo: A novel: *Middlesex* by Jeffrey Eugenides. Eugenides expertly tells the story of 20th century America, immigration, and personal identity through the genes that make up the main character Cal. What's an American? What's a person? What's a boy and what's a girl? Explore the answers in *Middlesex*.

Short stories: *Nightfall and Other Stories* by Isaac Asimov. After *Middlesex* you may wonder about your place in the world. But did you every think about your place in the universe? Asimov knows.

Non-fiction:

The Swerve by Stephen Greenblatt. How did western civilization emerge from the Dark Ages?

Why the West Rules – for Now by Ian Morris. Explore the entire history of human social development from the first hominids to the present – and beyond.

Death of a King by Tavis Smiley. Martin Luther King Jr. is one of the most famous Americans ever, but this book will challenge what you think you know about him as a thought leader and as a human being.

Martin: *Leviathan Wakes* by James S.A. Corey. Part space opera, part detective story regarding a missing girl set 300 years in the future, it's a great read with many short chapters allowing you to dip in and out as you sip your drink on the beach, stare at the sky, and wonder what happened to Julie Mao.

Nick: *The Father Dowling Mysteries* series by Ralph McInerney (various, 1977-2009). Light murder mysteries set in Illinois, these novels affirm the value and dignity of human life (murders must be solved, after all) without getting too bogged down in the philosophical details. Which book to start with? I don't know actually. They're equal parts fun and forgettable, a hallmark of great beach reads.

Stephanie: This might sound a little unconventional, but I like to pick out books that are about to be made into movies (to see how they compare). A couple of examples of books that I read about to become major Hollywood motion pictures were "*Girl on a Train*" (by Paula Hawkins) and "*The Great Gatsby*" (by F. Scott Fitzgerald). I prefer the books to be "page-turners" and easy to read so that I can zone out in the sunshine and finish the book by the time I'm finished with the beach!



Have anything that you'd like to see in future Cultural Spotlight editions? Sports, holidays, local wildlife? Let us know! Email Jennie Avery at jsavery@illinois.edu with your suggestions for future content!