

May 2025

Prairie Rose Center

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Celebrating May

Clean Air Month

**Military Appreciation
Month**

May Day/Lei Day
May 1

Kentucky Derby
May 3

**International Firefighters
Day**
May 4

Wildflower Week
May 4–10

Windmill Day
May 10

Mother's Day
May 11

Biographer's Day
May 16

**International Coaching
Week**
May 12–18

World No-Tobacco Day
May 31

Wonders of the Great Lakes

The Great Lakes—Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, Lake Huron, Lake Erie, and Lake Ontario—are not only beautiful but also vital to the environment, economy, and wildlife. These five lakes, which make up the largest freshwater system in the world by total area, are home to more than 30 million people and provide a habitat for countless species. Additionally, they contain about 84 percent of North America's fresh surface water!

Every year, people across the U.S. and Canada celebrate the Great Lakes during events like Great Lakes Awareness Day, observed this year on May 5. This day highlights the importance of protecting the lakes and raising awareness about environmental issues that threaten their health, such as pollution and invasive species.

But the celebrations don't stop there. May 10 marks World Migratory Bird Day. The Great Lakes provide crucial resting areas for birds traveling along their migration paths, making them key to preserving biodiversity. Some of the most notable migratory birds passing through the region include the peregrine falcon, the fastest animal on Earth, and the common loon, which uses the lakes for nesting and fishing. The Great Lakes serve as an essential hub, especially for species traveling from the Gulf of Mexico to breeding grounds in Canada.

The Great Lakes are not only a stunning natural resource but also a treasure trove of history and recreation. Their waters have witnessed countless historic events, such as the sinking of the *Edmund Fitzgerald* in Lake Superior in 1975. The lakes still conceal many sunken vessels, offering a fascinating glimpse into the past. Beyond their historical significance, the Great Lakes are a destination for outdoor recreation. Boating, fishing, kayaking, and hiking are just a few of the activities that draw millions of visitors each year. The picturesque shorelines, sandy beaches, and scenic trails make them a favorite for summer vacations. Whether you're exploring the history beneath the surface or enjoying the natural beauty above, the Great Lakes remain an essential part of the American and Canadian landscape.

Breathe into Balance



Sometimes, contrary to our best interests, the mind has a mind of its own. It is constantly wandering off, distracted, fixated on things that do not calm or soothe us. Like so many things that improve with practice—

playing an instrument, passing a football, doing your taxes—maintaining a calm and clear mind takes practice, too. Just how does one train the mind to remain calm and focused? One way is meditation. As luck would have it, May is also Meditation Month.

What is the goal of meditation? For some, meditation is an important part of spirituality. A calm and open mind creates a space for divine influence, prayer, and worship. For others, meditation reduces stress, builds confidence, and even supports success of personal goals at work or in the home. Still others use meditation for pain relief.

There are a variety of meditation techniques. One method is to repeat a mantra or sound. Some chant the Sanskrit syllable *om*, while others choose to repeat another meaningful phrase. The goal is to be comfortable, focus on the sound, and shut off the intellectual side of our brains. Other varieties, such as Zen Buddhist meditation, focus on the breath. Practitioners may practice in a seated position or lie flat on their backs, breathing deeply and focusing on individual body parts. Yoga, as opposed to exercise, blends breathing with stretching, gentle movement, and sometimes visualization. With “guided visualization,” participants concentrate on a peaceful environment, such as a grassy field or a waterfall.

These are just a few of the many forms of meditation. For anyone interested, it’s important to both check with your physician and, once approved for this activity, try a variety of types to find the one that works best for you. Luckily, there are 31 days in May to explore the options.

Aloha in Bloom

In Hawaii, May Day is Lei Day. Since 1927, Hawaiians have celebrated this holiday and publicly honored the lei, that quintessential Hawaiian necklace fashioned of flowers and vines. Lei garlands are given as an expression of welcome and friendship when a loved one arrives, departs, or celebrates something special. The act of fashioning a lei is a sacred one. According to legend, as the creator weaves a lei, a piece of their spirit enters into the garland and passes along to the recipient.

There are two distinctive types of leis and eight common methods for weaving them. Tropical Hawaiian flowers, such as plumerias, pikake, and orchids, are often used. They’re intertwined with leaves of maile, ti, and ferns. Shells, too, can be incorporated into the garlands. The leis of the island of Ni’ihau, for example, are specifically fashioned with small seashells known as *pupu*.

Many fantastic leis are on display during Lei Day at Kapi’olani Park near Waikiki Beach in Honolulu. A Lei Queen is crowned each year, with princesses representing each Hawaiian island, each wearing a special lei showcasing the island’s signature flower and color.

The Sock That Got Away



Do you have a spot for old unmatched socks? Do you hold out hope of someday reuniting those single socks with their lost matches? Chances are you may never see those lost socks again,

since many fall over the top of washing machine tubs and are sucked into the drain. On May 9—Lost Sock Memorial Day—take the time to say goodbye to those missing socks, wherever they may be. Perhaps the best way to celebrate this strange holiday is to take those unmatched socks out of the back of the drawer and wear them! Restore them to their former glory, and go unmatched for a day.

A Mom-entous Occasion

Celebrated with great enthusiasm in the United States, Mother's Day falls on Sunday, May 11. And why shouldn't it be celebrated so enthusiastically? Where would we be without our mothers? The fact is we would not *be* at all.



Anna Jarvis is known as the mother of Mother's Day, for she so adored her mom that she campaigned for a holiday to celebrate all mothers. Jarvis herself never

married nor had children, but this didn't stop her from lobbying those in power to set aside a day to honor mothers. By 1911, almost every state in America was celebrating Mother's Day, and on May 9, 1914, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson declared the second Sunday in May to be Mother's Day.

In the United Kingdom, a holiday honoring motherhood dates back much further than 1914. In the 1600s, the fourth Sunday of Lent was dedicated as Mothering Sunday. Church services were devoted to the Virgin Mary, and families were encouraged to attend services not at their local parish but to return to their larger "mother" church, or cathedral. Also, in a time when many servants worked in the homes of the rich away from their own families, these servants were allowed time to return home and visit their mothers. The tradition of Mothering Sunday largely died out in the 19th century, but when American servicemen flooded Europe during World War II—bringing their American Mother's Day holiday with them—Mothering Sunday became popular once again.

Whatever the month and whatever the country, many cultures have understood the importance of honoring motherhood. Whether you give the mothers in your life a carnation, a greeting card, or a special simnel cake loaded with fruit, what matters is thanking and honoring all mothers for the miraculous gift of birth.

More Than Margaritas

Cinco de Mayo—which is Spanish for "Fifth of May"—is often a cause for celebration among Mexicans and most anyone else interested in Mexican food, drink, and music. Some less-informed revelers will claim *Cinco de Mayo* as the day of Mexico's independence. Those in the know will tell you it celebrates the Mexican army's 1862 victory over the French at the Battle of Puebla, led by General Zaragoza.

In 1862, Mexico had just gained its independence from Spain. France seized this as an opportunity to expand its empire and launched an assault at Veracruz, a 600-mile march from Mexico City. An underwhelming Mexican militia of 4,500 led by Zaragoza met the 8,000 well-armed French troops at Puebla. Though the French army was considered the greatest fighting force in the world, the Mexicans defeated the French. Six years later, France withdrew its claim on the country. But it was this May 5 David-versus-Goliath moment that instilled a new sense of patriotism and national pride in the young country of Mexico.

Tapping Through Time

Put on your tap shoes and get ready to do the Shim Sham Shimmy on May 25, Tap Dancing Day. Centuries ago, cultures collided in the New World when two distinct dances became one:

Irish and Scottish immigrants brought wooden-clogged step dances, and West African enslaved people brought stomping and slapping juba. Tap dancing emerged as a hybrid, as African styles became more formal and were tapped with hard-soled shoes, and European dancing forms became more fluid, rhythmic, and dynamic. In 1925, iron was introduced to the toe and heels of tap shoes, allowing dancers (and their audience) to more easily hear their rhythm. Now dancers could tap *a cappella*, clacking out their own beats without musical accompaniment.



Cache Me If You Can



Geocaching is an activity that combines treasure hunting and technology. The very first geocache consisted of a five-gallon bucket filled with a map, two CD-ROMs, a cassette recorder, a VHS movie

tape, a book, four \$1 bills, a slingshot handle, and a can of black-eyed peas. While this does not sound like a very glamorous treasure, it has gone down in history—amongst geocaching enthusiasts—as the “Original Stash.” The bucket was partially buried in the ground by Dave Ulmer of Beavercreek, Oregon. He then posted its whereabouts on a website on May 3, 2000. He did not include a treasure map or a list of directions; instead, he listed the GPS coordinates of N 45° 17.460 W 122° 24.800. In this way, anyone with a handheld GPS device could find his stash. And geocaching was born.

This hobby is now practiced worldwide. Millions of caches are hidden all over the world, just waiting for someone to find them. All one needs is a cell phone and the cache’s coordinates. Typically, a geocache consists of a waterproof container—Tupperware, a plastic canister, a military ammunition box—concealed in some way and containing a logbook, pencil, and “treasures.” Once the cache is discovered, the finder logs their name in the logbook and is free to take whatever they wish from the cache. Often, the finder adds something new to the treasure. In this way, geocache hunters share and interact without ever meeting each other. Participants also record their experiences on the website where they found the GPS coordinates, such as www.geocaching.com.

Sometimes a special object will be moved from cache to cache. For example, the original can of beans from Ulmer’s first geocache (included in the case pictured above) is now the “most-found travel bug in the world.” But food is no longer allowed in caches, so the carefully restored can is housed in a see-through case and loaned out for geocaching events from Oregon to Austria.

May Birthdays

In astrology, those born from May 1–20 have the star sign of the Bull of Taurus. Bulls show steady, dogged persistence. Once goals are reached, they enjoy being rewarded, especially with beauty and peace at home. Those born between May 21–31 are Gemini’s Twins. Geminis love conversation, and they are good at it, too! Witty, intellectual, curious, charming, and imaginative, they’re often the life of the party.

Joseph Heller (writer) – May 1, 1923

Gary Cooper (actor) – May 7, 1901

Martha Graham (dancer) – May 11, 1894

Perry Como (singer) – May 18, 1912

Joan Collins (actress) – May 23, 1933

Bob Dylan (singer) – May 24, 1941

Sam Snead (golfer) – May 27, 1912

Henry Kissinger (politician) – May 27, 1923

Joe Namath (quarterback) – May 31, 1943

Racing Across the Centuries



Each May since 1912, runners have been sprinting from San Francisco Bay to the Pacific Ocean in San Francisco’s Bay to Breakers road race, proudly hailed as the oldest footrace in America. But the Thanksgiving

Turkey Trot in Buffalo, New York, has been held continuously since 1896—five months longer than the Boston Marathon, which first took place in April 1897. And Buffalo’s cross-border neighbors in Hamilton, Ontario, are host to the Around the Bay Road Race—first held in 1894 and canceled only during World War I and from 1925 to 1935. The world’s oldest running race may have been at Greece’s Olympic Games, kicked off in 776 BC. Other notable races include Italy’s Palio del Drappo Verde, first held in 1208 and run for 590 years until the French invaded Italy in 1798, and Scotland’s Red Hose Run, which has taken place continuously since 1508, interrupted only by plague and war.