

Weekend in America

In the United States Monday is the beginning of the workweek; it is the day most Americans like least. It is not surprising then that the day they like most is Saturday. Saturday is the end of the workweek; it is the beginning of the weekend.

Life is different on the weekend; most Americans take care of their house, car or garden. They sleep later in the morning. They enjoy the feeling that the time seems to move more slowly. The week is for things you have to do; the weekend is for things you want to do. Some people may get in a car and go for a drive in the country. They like to take part in a sports activity outdoors. And on Saturday night they might go to a public eating place or a movie.

The idea of the weekend is a recent invention. In 1870s wealthy people began to speak of spending weekends in the country visiting friends. For most people back then, however, the work-day was six days long. It ended at about noon or later on Saturday.

Automobile maker Henry Ford was the first major employer in the United States to establish a workweek of 5 days. He did that in 1926. Henry Ford thought that if the working people had more free time they would spend more money, something good for the economy. By 1940 it had become common for most Americans to work 8 hours a day, 5 days a week. Today the lives of most Americans are organized that way: 5 days of work or school followed by 2 days of rest. For many people Saturday night is the highpoint of the weekend and the week. It is the night for going out and having fun.

Anything and everything can happen on Saturday night. People go dancing; they visit friends and have parties. They drink too much alcohol. They get killed or kill other people. They sleep, watch television, and sometimes fall in love. People do these same things on other nights of the week too, but they do them more often and with more emotion and purpose on Saturday night.

On Saturday night movie theaters sell more admission tickets. It also is the biggest night for places that sell alcoholic drinks. That is one reason why Saturday night witnesses most murders, fights and deadly car accidents.

In a town in Indiana there is a Saturday night custom called "cruising". Cruising means to spend the evening driving your car slowly up and down the town's main street. People who are cruising talk from car to car. They exchange greetings, jokes and friendly insults. Cruising is most popular in small towns where there is not much else to do.

Many people spend the Saturday night at home with friends. They have dinner together. Perhaps they watch a movie on a video cassette recorder. Other people go on a date. A date usually involves two people. People on a date might go to a public concert, yet they talk only to each other.

Is there anything people do not like about the weekend? A study of 1000 Americans found that half would gladly trade a paid workday for an extra day of free time. The only thing wrong with the weekend, they think, is that it does not last longer.

美国的周末

在美国，星期一是工作周的开始；大多数美国人最不喜欢这一天。难怪他们最喜欢的一天是星期六，星期六是工作周的结束，周末的开始。

周末的生活不尽相同；大多数美国人料理他们的家、汽车和花园。早上他们起得比平时晚。他们喜欢那种时间好像比平时走得慢的感觉。一周里的事情是你必须做的；周末的事情是你想做的。有的人可能乘车去郊外兜风。他们喜欢参加室外体育活动。星期六晚上他们也许去一家餐馆或电影院。

周末的概念是近期才出现的。19世纪70年代，有钱人开始谈论去郊外度周末，看望朋友。然而对于当时的大多数人来说，工作日是6天。星期六中午或下午工作才结束。

汽车制造商亨利·福特是第一个创立5天工作周的美国大雇主。他是在1926年实施此法的。福特认为如果工人有更多的空闲时间，他们就会花更多的钱，这对经济有好处。到1940年，大多数美国人一天工作8小时，一周工作5天已经变得司空见惯。如今多数美国人的生活都是依此来安排的：5天工作或上学，然后是2天休息。对许多人来说，星期六晚上是一周和周末的高潮。此晚是外出和玩乐的时间。

星期六晚上任何事都可能发生。人们跳舞、访友、举办聚会。他们喝过多的酒。他们被杀或杀人。他们睡觉，看电视，有时还相爱。这些事人们在一周的其他晚上也做，但在星期六晚上他们做得更勤，情感更投入，目的性也更强。

星期六晚上电影院卖出的票比往日多。对于卖酒的地方，这也是赢利最高的夜晚。这也正是星期六晚上谋杀、打架和恶性车祸发生率最高的原因之一。

在印第安纳州的一座小城镇，有一个叫做“滑车”的星期六夜晚习俗。滑车的意思是整个晚上在城镇的主要街道上来来回回地慢速驾车行驶。滑车人与另一辆车里的人聊天、相互寒暄、开玩笑、说俏皮话。滑车在没有什么事情可做的小城镇里十分盛行。

许多人星期六晚上和朋友一起呆在家里。他们共进晚餐，也许看录相电影。有的人则赴约会。约会通常有两个人。约会的人可以去听音乐会，但他们只是在两人之间交谈。

人们对周末有没有不喜欢的地方呢？对1000名美国人的调查发现，一半的人乐于用可以赚钱的一天去换一天自由的时间。他们认为周末的惟一缺陷就是它太短暂。

本文无注释