

In The LOOP

Your magazine of personal finance

March–April 2020



Checklist: Spring clean your *finances*

Dog-friendly destinations

**Spring training:
Onboard your
new hires with
ease**

**6 steps to boat
ownership**

**Holland's spring
must-sees**

Spring break trivia

Break away from the everyday...

Just when you thought it might never end... the dull, drab days of winter are fading into the warmer, brighter days of spring.

Something about the change of season creates a shift in energy and a renewed sense of productivity. Make the most of it! To help you optimize the longer days, we've packed this issue with a lot of tips and tactics—from spring cleaning your finances to buying a boat.

If you are looking to really break away from your regular routine, check out our travel feature on

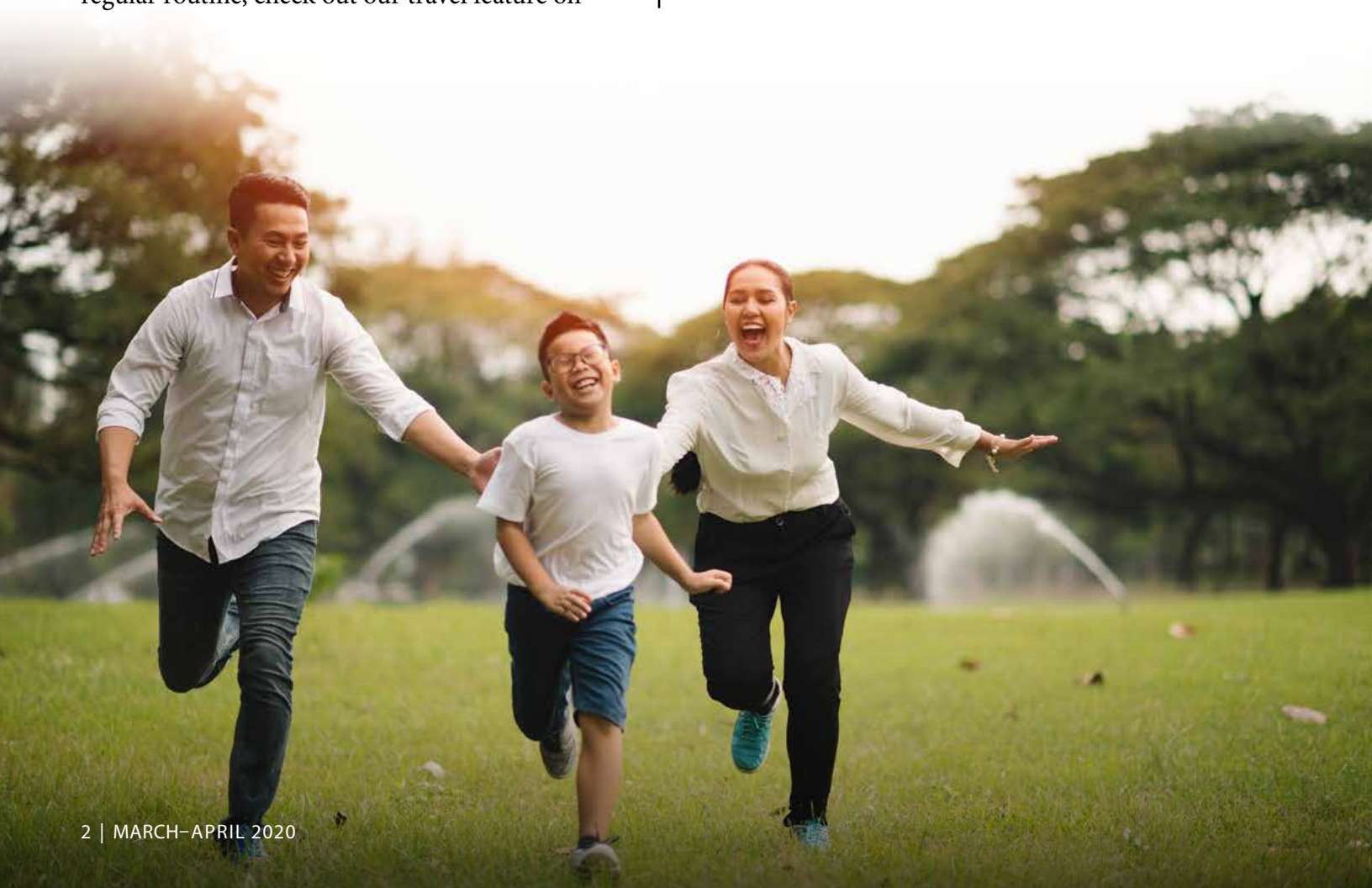
Holland. It's the destination to explore and truly appreciate spring's natural beauty (and tulips are just the beginning).

Of course, if you need strategic financial guidance, we are here to help. So, get in contact with our team today.

Here's to spring!

Sincerely,

Your Trusted Advisors



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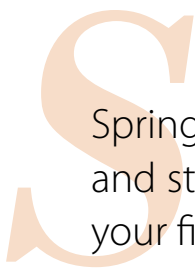
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Checklist: Spring clean your *finances*





Spring is the perfect time to review your spending habits and create a plan to get and stay on a healthy financial path this year. Use this handy checklist to clean up your financial situation and improve your financial future...

✔ Change up your routine

Make changes to your normal spending routine. For example, if you always go shopping on Saturday or you eat out with friends on Friday night, work to change this behavior in order to save money. When you alter your behavior, you can improve your financial situation over the long-term.

✔ Bust your budget breakers

If you don't have a budget, it is time to make one. If you have one but you don't follow it, now is the time to get serious. For example, if you have expenses that routinely pop up and bust your budget, work them into your plan and then work to get spending in line.

✔ Eliminate late payments

Late payment penalties translate to money wasted. They can also negatively affect your credit score. Before you spend on anything else, make certain that you have paid all of your bills on time—especially any taxes that you owe. For existing late fees, pay those off first before allocating money elsewhere. Be sure to make this goal part of your plan and stick with it.

✔ Demolish debt

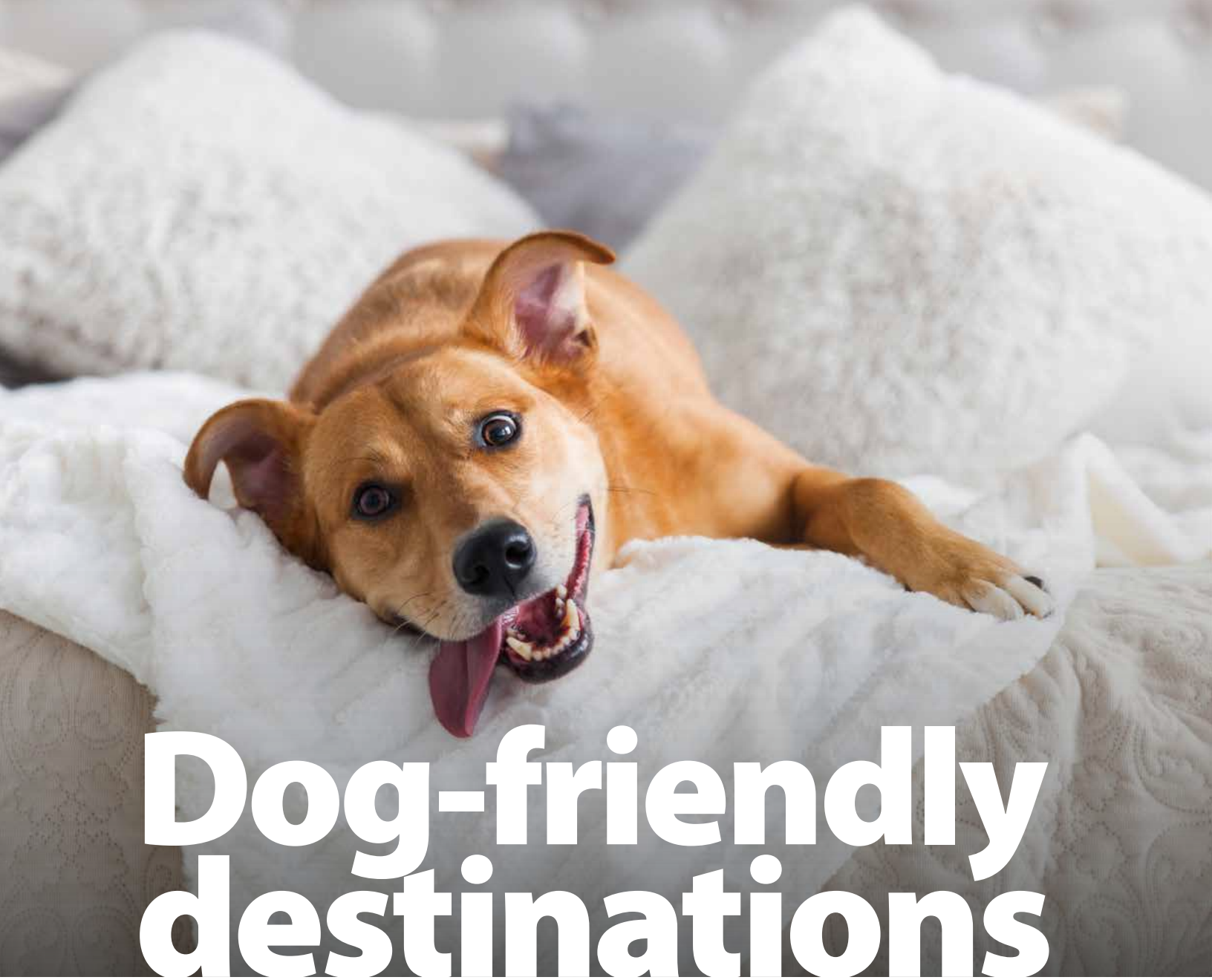
Nothing clutters your finances faster than lingering debt. Just like eliminating late payments, demolishing your debt burden requires a plan and a commitment to see it through. Create a plan that organizes payments by importance—this can mean paying off credit cards with the highest interest rates first.

✔ Focus on the future

Spring is the season of renewal, so make a commitment to clean up your finances and set realistic goals. Whether your goals are to buy a home, save more for retirement or start a college savings fund, if you maintain a focus on the future, you are better positioned to achieve it.

This checklist is short and simple, but offers a stepwise approach to cleaning up your finances for a brighter financial future. Be sure to contact our team if you need assistance building your strategic financial plan. ■





Dog-friendly destinations

If leaving Fido behind when you travel is not an option, check out these dog-friendly destinations from across the country:

San Diego, California

Cali offers many entertaining options for visitors with dogs, including the Patio on Lamont at Pacific Beach. This venue offers homemade dog biscuits and delicious human fare. Another favorite is Stewman's Lobster Pound Downtown where you can order something yummy and then check out the special doggie menu. Margaret Todd Windjammer Cruise line also accepts dogs, enabling you to sail around Frenchman Bay with your four-legged companion.

Huntington Beach, California

This is another great place in the sunshine state for a dog-friendly vacation. Huntington Dog Beach is a stretch of true doggy heaven. After a long day at the dog beach, you can book your pet a rejuvenating treatment at the Doggie Spa in Seacliff Village.

Austin, Texas

Dog owners trek to West Austin Dog Park and the park at Auditorium Shores throughout the year. For dogs partial to swimming, the Red Bud Isle peninsula offers a lot of water for the most energetic of dog-paddling pups. In February, enjoy Mardi Gras Dog Parade, complete with treats from the Groovy Dog Bakery.

Asheville, North Carolina

People and their pooches love the 220 acres at the Biltmore Estate. There is also an onsite kennel for dogs to play while you tour the historic home. Asheville offers the French Broad River Dog Park as well—a fenced-in acre with a river where dogs can run free. While in Asheville, also visit Woof Gang Bakery for premium animal treats and toys.



Key West, Florida

This is another great place for dogs. The Key West Dog Beach is the perfect venue for your pooch to play in the waves. If your dog likes to be on the water, visit Lazy Dog Kayak and enjoy the scenery while kayaking.

Atlanta, Georgia

Atlanta offers the Piedmont Dog Park, a designated off-leash area with a separate space for smaller animals. Other great on-leash parks include Freedom Park and Chattahoochee River National Recreation Park.

Washington, D.C.

The nation's capital offers several parks for pooches including Montrose Park, Shaw Dog Park, S Street Dog Park and the designated dog run on the waterfront at The Yards Park.

Portland, Oregon

Head down to the Tin Shed Garden Café on a Tuesday night to enjoy a free item from the dog menu with each human-friendly dish you order. After eating, enjoy the off-leash sections for dogs in Chimney Park and Mt. Tabor Park.

Nantucket Island, Massachusetts

This historic destination is bordered with sandy stretches of beach where dogs are welcome to roam on-leash. Two favorites among dog lovers are Francis Street Beach and Surfside Beach. You can also take your dog out for a private charter excursion with Endeavor Sailing or sit back and relax with a drink at the dog-friendly Cisco Brewers.

These are just a few dog-friendly vacation spots around the United States. Consider one (or more) of these destinations when planning a getaway with Fido in tow. ■



Spring training: Onboard your new hires with ease

Leaving new employees to learn as they go is not the best way to ensure they deliver on your company's promise—having a structured new-hire training program in place is. Introducing new staff to the company's mission, processes and expectations via a structured program is key to higher retention rates, a more cohesive culture and happier employees overall. While some onboarding tasks will be unique to your company, the following represent general best practices to get you started:

1 Establish new-hire procedures

Make sure your procedures are concrete. This ensures that every new hire is educated in the same way and receives the same information. New-hire procedures help outline the what, why, when and how of what each new employee needs to know to function effectively in your organization. Follow these steps to get started:

- Identify each task the employee needs to know and break it down into concrete steps.
- Select the best person to conduct training for each particular task.
- Allocate the appropriate resources, supplies and time for training.
- Create a system for training by deciding what types of activities are best for new hires to learn each particular skill. This could be online training, peer-to-peer training or hands-on practice.
- Test for understanding after you train. Integrate opportunities for new hires to show that they have a solid grasp of the information provided in training.

2 Create a new-hire training checklist

It's likely that your new-hire training will span several days—or maybe weeks. To keep track of where each employee is within the training process, create a checklist. Here are some practical items to include:

- Send a welcome email with parking instructions, who to report to, where they will be and the dress code. This allows you to start the onboarding process even before the new hire starts by providing useful information. This can reduce stress that employees often feel before starting a new position.
- Make sure new-hire office space is clear, stocked and ready for a new occupant.
- Establish a mentor for the new employee.
- Introduce employee to individualized training plan.
- Plan check-in meetings and training tests.

3 Incorporate onboarding best practices into your training

Here are some ideas from the top companies who consistently rank high in employee retention and satisfaction:

- Create a memorable first day tailored to what the new employee needs to be successful.
- Use varied learning methods suited to the topic at hand. In other words, don't use a one-size-fits-all approach to training.
- Allow ample time for questions and dialogue instead of just running through information. Make new hires feel comfortable asking questions by building time into the process.

4 Make sure you train on culture, not just work tasks

A new employee can be a great ambassador for your company if they are trained on culture from day one. Be sure to highlight the things that make your company unique and how it impacts the way employees perform their jobs. An extremely effective way to communicate your company culture is to have your CEO address it directly when they meet new employees or via a video message.

5 Incorporate reviews and improvements into training

Many employees won't settle into a new job for at least six months. So, make sure management is available to new hires to answer questions, check in on how tasks are being performed, and ensure employees have the resources they need to be successful.

When you consider that 20 percent of U.S. workers leave their jobs after less than 45 days of being hired, you can see why having a solid onboarding process is important. Use these tips to create one for your business and then start your spring training! ■

6

steps to boat ownership

If buying a boat is on your to-do list this spring—congratulations! For many people, boat ownership is the passage to freedom and lots of great memories found on the open water. Purchasing a boat, however, can be daunting. Use these six steps from boats.com to help simplify the process...



STEP 1

Choose your boat type. Consider where and how you will use the boat and then take time to conduct research to find the model that will support your planned activities, tastes and budget. Some questions to consider:

- Do you want a boat that you can trailer to and from the water?
- Do you want to entertain guests or do a lot of overnighting?
- Do you have kids, and will you waterski and wakeboard?

STEP 2

Start shopping. The place to begin is online. Compare models, prices and take virtual tours from the comfort of your home. With so many boats to choose from, it's important to weed out those that may be a letdown. Boats.com offers this advice:

- Compare photos between similar boats to see what isn't mentioned on a particular listing.
- Compare highlights between listings to see what's part of a stock dealer equipment list and what's different about each particular boat.
- If the boat is listed with a dealer, glance through the rest of the offerings to get a feel for the overall business.
- Beware of boats that include a lot of features you won't use or will have to replace, such as outdated electronics.

STEP 3

Determine if you want to buy new or used. You'll find a variety of price points, but understand that you can often get used boats in great condition for much less. However, while buying used saves money upfront it also means no manufacturer's warranty...which can amount to repair costs out of pocket.

STEP 4

Check out your boats of interest. Once you have a list of your top picks, go check them out in person. This could mean going to your neighborhood marina or dropping by a boat show booth. While onsite, conduct a thorough inspection. It can be helpful to bring an unbiased boat-owning friend who can offer an objective view. Make sure you also insist on a sea trial if you are serious about purchasing.

STEP 5

Line up your financing and insurance. Once you are ready to buy a boat that fits your criteria and your budget, you'll need to get your financing in line. Be sure to shop for the best possible rates and avoid using credit cards and home equity to purchase. If you think you will need to access this type of credit, put your purchase on hold until you can use lower-interest financing and have a decent down payment.

You will also need to purchase insurance, and may need to pay for a professional marine surveyor to provide a survey to your insurance company.

STEP 6

Close the deal. Buying a boat can be very emotional, so it's important to do your homework when negotiating price, completing the paperwork, and lining up financing and insurance. Once you have verified everything to your satisfaction, it's time to close the deal!

Buying a boat is a serious undertaking and can be a major expense. Following these steps will help you be more prepared for the process. ■



Holland's spring must-sees

Holland is known as a destination for tulips and spring flowers, but there are many more must-see attractions you'll want to take in if you visit this beautiful destination in the Netherlands. Here are a few...

Easter on the beach

Easter is a big spring event in the Netherlands with many tourist activities, including the popular Easter brunch on the beach. In fact, the true tourist season starts on Easter weekend, so clean up, inspection and leveling of Holland's beaches starts weeks before.

Beautiful (and delicious!) blossoms

Holland's fruit and vegetable harvest also begins in spring. You can pick or purchase harvested apples, cherries, pears and other produce. Walking trails take you through picturesque fields full of fresh scented flowers as well.

Bountiful biking

Spring marks the beginning of cycling season—with many Netherland regions offering excursions or guided routes for cyclists. Cycling routes often run through areas full of blossoming trees and fields of fruit where you can buy “all-you-can-pick” from local farmers and enjoy eating your bounty picnic-style. For cycling fanatics, the spring also marks the launch of bike races. For example, in Limburg, the Amstel Gold Race is held. Spectators line the sidelines to cheer on cyclists.

Cheese markets

If you are a foodie, then make sure to hit the cheese markets in April. There are markets in Gouda, Alkmaar, Edam, Hoorn and Woerden where cheese farmers and traders meet on the market square to negotiate prices and offer tastings. To see where and how Dutch Gouda cheese is made, add a visit to a cheese farm and a historical cheese warehouse to your itinerary.

Fruit and veggie stands

If you like browsing through farmer's markets, you'll love Holland in the spring. You'll find many local markets with an abundance of asparagus, strawberries and other home-grown goodness.

Keukenhof and the flower parade

When you think of Holland in the spring, your mind likely goes to the enchanting tulip, daffodil and hyacinth fields. To experience them, you'll want to visit Keukenhof park in March, April or May. The park offers an idyllic setting for photo shoots. Also, stick around for the spring festival flower parade known as Bloemencorso, located in the area of Leiden, Lisse en Haarlem.

Flea markets on King's Day

King's Day falls on April 27 each year, celebrated with street parties (especially in Amsterdam). Be warned, the city gets very crowded, so make your plans early and arrive a few days before the festival. If you'd rather avoid the big crowds, you can also visit the surrounding cities of Utrecht or The Hague where every neighborhood has its own flea market, and you can play traditional Dutch games.

There's plenty to do in Holland for sure. From biking to blooms, you'll not only enjoy the best of the spring season, but you'll also bring back many beautiful memories. ■



Test your spring break knowledge



Whether it's been a while since your last spring break getaway or you are planning a trip this spring, our trivia questions are sure to challenge your knowledge of this time-honored tradition.

1 How many students in the United States go on spring break each year?

A. Between 1.5 and 2 million.

2 How much money do U.S. spring breakers typically spend each year on their getaways?

A. They collectively spend over \$1 billion.

3 During spring break, how many arrests occur on South Padre Island?

A. On average, there are 25 arrests a day generating approximately \$80,000 in fines.

4 What nickname have spring break visitors given Fort Lauderdale?

A. "Fort Liquordale"

5 In 2013, how many high school and college students spent their spring break building houses for Habitat for Humanity?

A. More than 10,000.

6 What are the five top destinations for U.S. spring breakers?

A. 1) Panama City Beach, Florida;
2) Cancun, Mexico;
3) Daytona Beach, Florida;
4) South Padre Island, Texas; and
5) Colorado's ski resorts.

7 What event started modern spring break?

A. Spring break began in 1936 when a swimming coach at Colgate University took his team to Fort Lauderdale to train. An annual swimming competition soon followed as well as the swimmers' aquatic friends.

8 What percentage of students get injured over spring break?

A. 60%

9 What theme park is the most popular for spring breakers?

A. Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida.

A woman with curly hair, wearing a dark blue suit, is running down a set of stone steps. She is looking down at her wrist, checking her watch. She is carrying a silver laptop under her left arm. The background shows a city street with cars, a green construction barrier, and a large classical building with columns.

Time is running out...

The **TAX DEADLINE** is approaching fast—have you filed yet? Take advantage of our convenient, paperless process. But hurry—time is short!