

Meditation

Long distance

slow motion.

New York

Chicago.

Six days.

Twelve rules:

1) Make every effort

to stay off roads

that are represented on a map

by a double line.

2) You cannot avoid intersecting

the Interstate, but don't parallel one

unless there are at least five miles

between you and the highway.

Ten or twenty miles is better.

3) Avoid all major metropolitan areas.

There is, still, a small-town nation

even if you might be surprised

by how many times Walmart

and K-mart can be found

side by side.

4) Never exceed the speed limit.

Never.

Five miles per hour

below the speed limit is OK.

Pull over to let others pass you.

5) Chart a course that visits

as many lakes as you can even
if it means an extra 50 or 100 miles
each time. You will see something
interesting because of this additional
travel that you would not have
had you proceeded in a straight line.

Swim if the beach
and the weather are inviting.

(Hiking trails would have been
a priority were it not for the ankle
that is still recovering
from my accident some weeks ago.
You may substitute water falls,
wildlife preserves, scenic overlooks,
or any other attraction that brings you
closer to the natural world for lakes
and hiking trails in rule number five.)

6) There is no rule number six.

7) If in season

a) Stop at any U-pick raspberry farm.

b) Stop at any U-pick blueberry farm.

c) Stop at roadside produce stands for sweet corn, tomatoes, peaches, cucumbers, or other items easily consumed as you travel.

(Eat the corn raw or cook it in a motel microwave.

You may substitute yard sales

local museums, or any other

truly human institution for roadside

produce stands in rule number seven,

especially if you are traveling

in a different season.)

8) Stop each time you transition

from one numbered route onto another.

Check your map and reconfirm or reconsider

the itinerary you have planned. If

you remain on the same numbered route

for more than half an hour

stop at some point soon

to check your progress

and likewise reconsider.

9) Your destination is

your next left or right turn,

your next meal or rest stop,

the next lake, hiking trail

or roadside produce stand. The only

exception to rule number nine is
to think about where
you will spend the night
at least a few hours in advance.

10) You may start just before sunrise
on one or more days but do not travel
after night falls unless, I guess, you
are a person who is more inclined
to be awake in the dark.

11) Spend time alone with your thoughts.

They are important.

You may listen to the radio, CD or tape player
if you like, but not most of the time.

Let this be a punctuation of the silence,
food, therefore, for further meditation.

12) Take those thoughts that are distressing and watch them recede in your rear-view mirror.