



GUIDE TO DRIVE-IN MOVIES



Over the last few months, it has been no secret that almost everything we took for granted in our day-to-day lives changed dramatically. Even nights at the movies have changed. Social distancing across the country made conventional movie theaters temporarily obsolete.

Enter the drive-in theater. What was once a relic of the past has now become an innovation in entertainment by allowing moviegoers to enjoy films together while maintaining the requisite isolation. This guide is meant to shed light on this rediscovered institution of cinema and give tips to drivers looking to enjoy what drive-ins have to offer.

MINI has always been about bringing people together for the drive. And for now, we encourage everyone to come together for the drive-in.



HISTORY

The drive-in movie theater is an American institution that started as early as the 1910s. Richard Hollingshead patented the drive-in a couple decades later and on June 6, 1933, drivers from around Camden, NJ parked their cars at Park-In Theaters, the first patented drive-in movie theater. Hollingshead charged a quarter per car and per person, but no group paid more than \$1. The weather was warm and there was no rain on the horizon, a perfect night for a drive-in movie. The perfect family night out, but the show was perhaps not-so-family-friendly—*Wives Beware*, a story of a married man who fakes amnesia to pursue other women. Nevertheless, the show was a success, with drivers coming from 43 states that summer.

After that, the drive-in movie was a part of the American tradition, one that included a love of automobiles and perhaps borne of a desire to spend even more time in them.

Drive-in theaters have since become much less popular, as indoor venues started to offer gourmet dining, plush seats and surround sound systems that cars simply could not compete with. But now, people have many of those comforts at home, but yearn for a simpler time. With the recent pandemic closing down conventional movie theaters to maintain social distancing, the drive-in has emerged once again as a premier venue for entertainment.

DRIVE-INS TODAY

Today, there are about 300 drive-in theaters across the United States. Plus, many more are popping up in communities across the country as alternatives to conventional theaters. Most drive-ins today are owned by individuals or families, but there are some drive-in chains. The largest based in the West is called Westwind which operates in California, Nevada and Arizona.



FIND NEAREST DRIVE-INS

Use the interactive map from [DrivelnMovie.com](https://www.drivelnmovie.com) to find a drive-in theater near you.

If you do choose to go out to a drive-in movie theater, you will likely be treated to some great snacks courtesy of a snack bar or food trucks. For the time-being, drive-in movie theaters have adopted new layouts to accommodate social distancing. These include spaced-out parking spots, some closed snack bars and reduced capacity.

Despite these temporary restrictions, drive-in movie attendance is up right now, and that is in a period with no new releases. People want to get out of the house and do something. Do something safe, fun and unique.

[FIND LOCATION](#)

DRIVE-IN TIPS

ARRIVE EARLY TO GET A GOOD SPOT

Many theaters allow guests to arrive up to an hour before the show begins. Take advantage of this time to pick the best parking spot and stretch your legs. If the snack bar is open, grab a treat!

IF YOUR DRIVE-IN ALLOWS IT, BRING YOUR OWN SNACKS

Some drive-in venues are keeping their snack bars closed in light of current health restrictions. More on what snacks to make in the next section.

ENJOY THE DRIVE-IN WITH FRIENDS

You can still safely go to the movies with your friends while staying socially distanced. Meet at a nearby location or rendezvous and rally to the drive-in together in separate cars. If you're a MINI owner, check with your local MINI owner's club about a drive-in movie rally. You can even bring two-way radios or set up a group chat on your phone to talk to each other for a live commentary of the movie.

PACK STRATEGICALLY

In addition to snacks, be sure to pack a blanket in case there is an evening chill in the air. A small pillow can also help support your back through the movie. Bring a small trash bag, too for all of your wrappers, empty cups and popcorn buckets. And lastly, if your car doesn't already have one, bring a phone charger.

TOP 5 DRIVE-IN MOVIE SNACKS



POPCORN

Pick up your favorite variety at the grocery store and feel free to season as you like.



HOMEMADE CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

If you can time it right—and you live close enough to the theater—you can enjoy some warm, fresh cookies right as the film starts.



SOFT PRETZELS

These can be made at home, too.



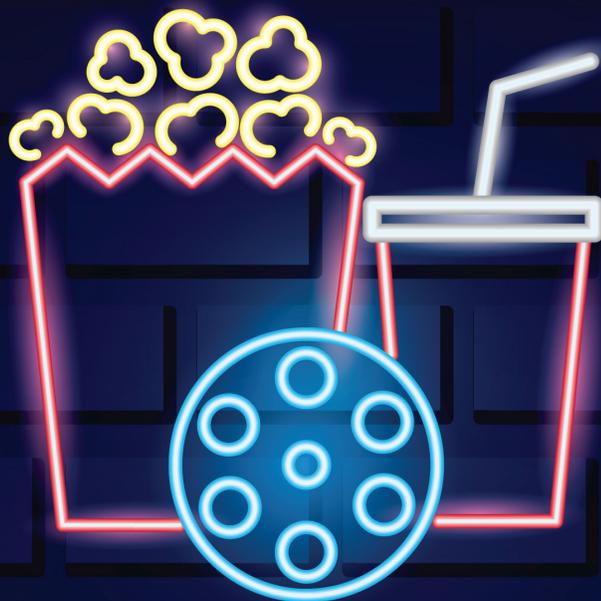
FAVORITE CANDY FROM THE SUPERMARKET

Sure, movie theaters tend to have a huge selection of candy, but do they have all of the candy? Your local supermarket will have a huge variety to choose from, go wild!



COOLER WITH YOUR FAVORITE SODA

Same principle applies here. Go out and pick up your favorite soda. Does your movie theater not stock your cola of choice? You can bring it yourself, no sneaking required! Are you a stickler for soda in a glass bottle? Go ahead, pack three!





Q&A WITH J.C. BARONE, PH.D

J.C. Barone is professor at the Department of Communications & Media Arts at Western Connecticut State University and an active producer/director/educator for over 20 years. He is an expert on movies and film.

WHAT EXCITES YOU THE MOST ABOUT THE RESURGENCE OF THE DRIVE-IN MOVIE?

The drive-in is the perfect entertainment for this pandemic. It is an outdoor communal experience, and you can talk. You can also bring your dog! The ability to bring your own snacks is a huge benefit, too. And when there is a snack stand, you can walk to it without missing what's happening on-screen. Finally, the drive-in experience typically includes a curated double-feature, something not typically seen at a conventional movie theater.

DO YOU THINK THAT DRIVE-IN MOVIES WILL ONCE AGAIN BECOME A PART OF MAINSTREAM AMERICAN CULTURE?

Well, COVID-19 has definitely brought about a new interest in drive-ins. Hopefully this means that there will be a sustained resurgence in attendance.

WHAT WOULD YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE MOST ICONIC "DRIVE-IN" MOVIE OF ALL TIME AND WHY?

Grease pretty much nails it. It is one of those classic movies that was big during the drive-in's heyday. Even bad movies are great at the drive-in, though, because you are free to talk with your friends and make fun of it without the worry of bothering your fellow moviegoers.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST DRIVE-IN EXPERIENCE LIKE?

I was very young. I remember wearing my pajamas and being there with my parents and our dog. It was great because before the movie, I remember playing on the playground with all of the other kids in their pajamas.

WHERE DO YOU PARK WHEN YOU GO TO SEE A DRIVE-IN MOVIE?

As close to the projector as I can get. It's in the center and always has the best view.

WHAT DRAWS PEOPLE TO THE DRIVE-IN?

The same thing as a concert, experiencing something together. We are social animals, and the drive-in provides the opportunity for people to all come together while still affording privacy.



TIPS FOR MINI CLUBS AND OWNERS THAT WANT TO HOST THEIR OWN DRIVE-IN EXPERIENCE

1. Locate places with large parking lots and large blank walls to project on in your community; think of properties that may be closed for the summer like schools.
2. Connect with your local town council or local officials about permits and restrictions that may apply to hosting this type of gathering.
3. Approach your local movie theater in town to see if they are interested in supporting your event given the current restriction and limited business at their theater.
4. Borrow a projector from work and if you can, get a UPS, uninterrupt power supply to act as a battery. You may need to run power from the building you're projecting on to.
5. If the gathering is a private one, pick out your favorite movie that everyone will like. Private viewings are not subject to the same copyright restrictions.
6. Plug in speakers and be mindful of the volume when it comes to neighbors, while a MINI drive-in movie night sounds like a great time, others in the neighborhood may not find the loud action scenes as amusing, especially late at night.
7. Consider offering grab and go snack and beverages for your guest, along with hand sanitizer and wipes.

