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Column: Working IX to V, best rides for road-tripping and hearing losses

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WORKING IX TO V: When they weren't busy founding modern civilization, the ancient Greeks and Romans spent their free time much like we do shoe shopping, rocking out at concerts and gossiping at parties.

Behind the scenes were workers and slaves whose jobs prove remarkably similar to many modern-day occupations, according to Vicki Leon, author of "Working IX to V: Orgy Planners, Funeral Clowns and Other Prized Professions of the Ancient World."

Among them was the sandaligerula, who made sure her mistress was wearing the proper shoes at all times, not unlike the personal stylists of today.

A locarius was the ancient equivalent of the ticket scalper, buying up tokens to theater and athletic performances to hawk at a profit.

"While all the gladiators were making a killing inside the arena, the scalpers were making a killing outside the arena," Leon said.

Similar to Miranda Priestly's assistant in "The Devil Wears Prada," a nomenclature stood behind her boss at parties and whispered guests' names as they approached.

Then there's those orgy planners no doubt a popular topic of conversation around the aqueduct.

ROAD-TRIPPING: Millions of people are expected to flee the office this weekend and hit the road for the Memorial Day holiday. While many of us will load up the trusty old minivan, some new wheels on the market are catching road-trippers' eyes.

The editors at Kelley Blue Book's automotive information Web site, kbb.com, chose 10 new vehicles well-suited for road trips and then ran them by shoppers to get their opinions.

Topping the resulting list was the Jaguar XKR convertible for its sexy, sporty appeal that's sure to impress the tanned elites at posh resorts this summer.

Coming in second was another luxury convertible, the BMW 3-Series. With a hardtop that retracts in 22 seconds, it's well-suited to long trips, the editors said.

For those planning to pack up the kids and lots of gear, the Chevrolet Suburban is the hauler of choice, with room for nine people and more than 45 cubic feet for bags, bikes and beach towels.

Rounding out the top five were the Dodge Charger SRT8 and the Mercedes-Benz E320 Bluetec, featuring clean diesel technology.

But hey, the minivan will still get you away from home and out on the open road.

HEARING LOSSES: Workers with hearing problems are losing more than snippets of conversation, they're losing money.

Two-thirds of people who suffer from hearing loss are below retirement age and still working. If you're one of them, trying to hide or ignore the problem could cost you, a new study found.

Untreated hearing loss, depending on severity, cut household income by an average of nearly \$23,000 per year, according to the study by the not-for-profit **Better Hearing Institute**.

Hearing loss prevents employees from fully engaging in meetings and conversation, which fuels anger, instability and anxiety, while giving co-workers the impression that they're less competent, said Sergei Kochkin, the institute's executive director.

People with untreated hearing problems are more likely to work into their 70s and 80s because lower salaries along the way add up to thinner retirement and investment savings in the end, Kochkin said.

"You're going to be greeting people at Wal-Mart and Costco to supplement your income," he said.

While many workers fear that getting a hearing aid will make them appear old or disabled, the opposite is true, Kochkin said. The use of hearing aids mitigated the effects of hearing loss on income by about 50 percent, the survey found.

"Hearing loss is much more noticeable than hearing aids," he said.