



World Nomads

Go moose-spotting in Montana, hang out with orcas in Alaska, stargaze in the Badlands, and follow the barbecue trail through the Deep South.

USA

Where Nomads Go

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World Nomads' purpose is to challenge travelers to harness their curiosity, be brave enough to find their own journey, and to gain a richer understanding of themselves, others, and the world.

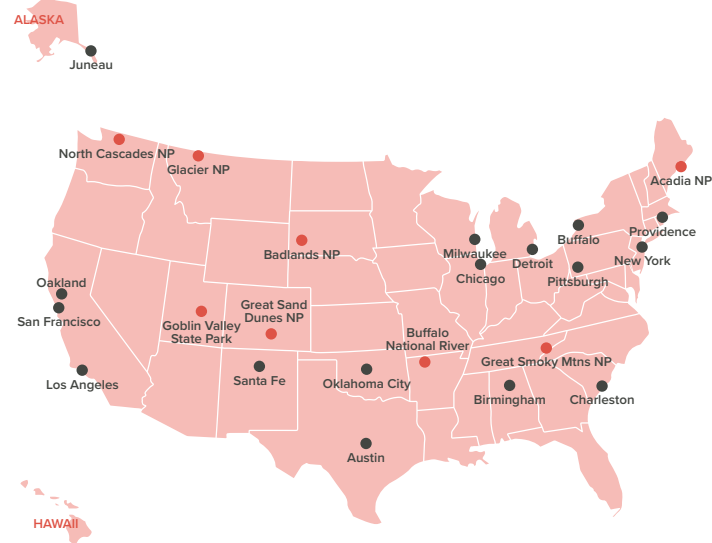
WELCOME

To paraphrase that most American of poets, Walt Whitman, the United States contains multitudes – yawning red canyons and thick pine forests, steamy swamps and rock-ribbed coasts, languid small towns and cities that stay up all night. We can't possibly cover it all in a handful of pages, and we aren't going to try.

Think of this guide as a series of windows into the United States – a selection of first-hand accounts from Nomads who've hiked the trails, sampled the local specialties, and roamed the highways. With a focus on the undiscovered and less-visited areas of the country, it's meant to inspire Americans to explore parts of their own backyard they never knew existed, and encourage visitors to get to know the US beyond the famous icons.

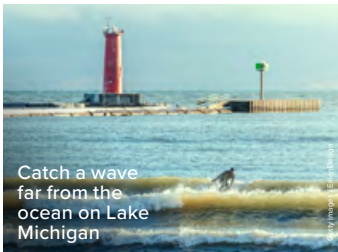
Join our travelers as they surf the shores of Lake Michigan, tag along with Creole cowboys, and follow their taste buds along the barbecue trail. You'll find plenty of inspiration and enough practical information to start planning your own journey.

Discover the United States, World Nomads' style!



ESSENTIAL USA

Don't miss out on these uniquely American places, experiences, and adventures.



Catch a wave far from the ocean on Lake Michigan



Sample southern barbecue in all its delicious forms



Summit a massive sand dune in Colorado



Witness one of the world's great migrations



Drink in the views at Glacier National Park



Hobnob with goblins in Goblin Valley, Utah



Join a Creole cowboy trail ride in Louisiana



Dance with Old Man Gloom in New Mexico



Tackle an epic mountain bike trail in the Great Smokies



Meet the Gullah-Geechee of the Lowcountry



Amadeo Vandenbergh

ART & CULTURE

Olivia Steele's *Save Me*, Bombay Beach

The US is a true mosaic of influences – it's home to immigrants and pockets of culture from around the world, not to mention a rich indigenous heritage. From this mix has sprung wholly original creations such as jazz and hip-hop, regionally accented foods and traditions, and the fascinating, sometimes checkered, history of a country that values both unity and independence.

MUSIC ACROSS THE USA

Jazz, blues, hip-hop, rock – the US has given birth to some of the world's most beloved and influential genres. Music journalist **Maura Johnston** offers her insight on the best ways to experience it.

It's a sweaty May Saturday at the New Orleans Fair Grounds Race Course, and I'm standing at the crossroads of American music. A brass band marches by, its exuberant jazz providing a beat for its dancers; strains of gospel music echo from a nearby tent; depending on which way I turn, I can hear classic rhythm and blues, crisp mariachi rhythms, or locally sourced jamming; and people in t-shirts supporting the Boston-bred rock legends Aerosmith and the Colombian dynamo Juanes mill around.

This is the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, a multi-stage, two-weekend celebration of all types of American music – and arguably the country's best place to experience that art form as a melting pot, a gumbo of genres that runs the gamut from Americana to zydeco.

What is American music?

There's no one ideal of "American" music, although the Jazz Fest lineup represents

one huge strand of it. Rooted in the jazz that its home city incubated in the early 20th century – defined by polyrhythms and an innate sense of musical chemistry that has its players embarking on improvisations – the festival also shines its spotlight on genres that descended from the blues, which originated from the Mississippi Delta, and gospel, which blossomed from black churchgoers' testifying at services. These forms have persisted and shape-shifted over the years, with new technology and old desires for camaraderie resulting in new styles like bounce and trap bubbling up out of dive bars and Discord chat rooms.

Look at the website [everynoise.com](https://www.everynoise.com), which charts nearly 3,000 genres, and you can see how, while almost all "American" music has its roots in the blues and soul, its final forms can vary wildly. Country music initially added the vocal harmonies and pathos of American folk; R&B's origins happened when musicians amped up the

No matter where you go in America, finding an opportunity or two to see live music is easy



Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival

blues' instrumentation and added heavy grooves; rock's rise amped up the volume – and the singer-songwriter ideal; and hip-hop's earliest DJs took records from all those genres, remaking them in a way inspired by the "toasting" (chanting over a beat or rhythm) of Jamaican song styles and inspiring a whole new way of making music.

Finding your new favorite artist

No matter where you go in America, finding an opportunity or two to see live music

is easy. Sites like [Songkick](https://www.songkick.com) (<https://www.songkick.com>) tell you what artists will be arriving in a particular geographic area, while the industry pub [Pollstar](https://www.pollstar.com) will help you figure out the biggest-ticket items in stadiums and theaters alike.

But some venues are worth seeking out. The Grand Ole Opry in Nashville is one of America's most storied stages. Preservation Hall in New Orleans celebrates the city's jazz traditions, and its house band has become one of America's most beloved jazz combos. Minneapolis' →



First Avenue is where Prince tore down the house in *Purple Rain*, and the galaxy of stars painted on its exterior wall is a who's who of rock and soul greats. Los Angeles' Hollywood Bowl is as visually breathtaking as it is great-sounding, while Red Rocks, located about 40mi (64km) outside of Denver, adds stunning mountain vistas to the mix.

Museums

In Cleveland, Ohio, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame is the big cheese of America's music museums, celebrating its storied inductees and hosting a massive collection of memorabilia, as well as a huge library of archival material. The Museum of Pop

Find inspiration for your next adventure with **Explore**



Culture, in Seattle, began its life as a music-only museum, an origin that lives on in its interactive Sound Lab exhibition as well as salutes to home-grown heroes like Pearl Jam and Jimi Hendrix. Sun Studio, in Memphis, lets visitors see the room where B.B. King, Elvis Presley, Roy Orbison, and other luminaries changed the course of American music.

The Country Music Hall of Fame celebrates Nashville's contributions to music history with exhibits on new and legendary country performers, as well as a vast archive. And the Musical Instrument Museum, in Phoenix, has more than 6,800 musical instruments from 200 countries in its collection, and regularly hosts concerts

as well as celebrations of iconic artists like Johnny and June Carter Cash.

Many non-music-centric museums also offer music as part of their regular programming. Mass MoCA in North Adams, Massachusetts, has a series of concerts that includes the Wilco-curated festival Solid Sound and the experimental-minded Loud Festival, which features artists like neo-classical legend Philip Glass and loop composer Julianna Barwick. The Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh celebrates its namesake artist's involvement in the music business – which included his shepherding of art-rock legends The Velvet Underground – with Sound Series, a concert series featuring modern-day indie-rock luminaries.

Festivals

Multi-day, massive-bill music festivals have been popular in Europe for decades, but they didn't gain traction in the U.S. until 1999, when Paul Tollett and Rick Van Santen decided to bring a bunch of bands to the Indio Polo Club near Palm Springs, California. In the two decades since Coachella's founding, it's become one of America's premier festivals, broadening its genre remit to include pop, hip-hop, and R&B stars including Ariana Grande, Childish Gambino, and Beyoncé.

But other up-and-coming festivals in far-flung locales promise great artists as well as opportunities to explore new parts of America. Seven Peaks Festival, founded by Nashville star Dierks Bentley, is held in the Rocky Mountain enclave of Buena Vista, Colorado, and features beautiful views alongside the country-heavy lineup. Big Ears Festival embraces the new, with artists including bliss-seekers Spiritualized and bluegrass revivalist Rhiannon Giddens, rubbing elbows at multiple venues across Knoxville, Tennessee. And Essence Fest – held, like Jazz Fest, in New Orleans – spotlights the legends and next big things of soul, R&B, and hip-hop.



Jonathon "Boogie" Long, New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival

UNEXPECTED

National Cowboy Poetry Gathering

I first realized the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering was special when I ran into one of the musicians buying fencing at the local ranch store. Given the talent and artistry on display throughout the week, it's easy to forget these cowboys and cowgirls authentically live the life portrayed in their poems and songs. Their deep love and appreciation for Western heritage brings this community together in the high desert of Nevada in the dead of winter each year.

My father and I attended our first gathering in 2014, wanting to explore this intersection of poetry, cowboys, and the American West. I've attended every Gathering since, still proudly wearing the hat I made that first year. The opportunity to steep in a world so different from my everyday life keeps me coming back.

Started in 1985 by the Western Folklife Center, the Gathering is a week-long celebration of the arts and crafts of cowboy culture. Though the American West portrayed in TVs and movies was overwhelmingly white, the reality is quite the contrary, and the Gathering tries to incorporate a different ethnic group each year – recent years have featured Mongolian, Hawaiian, Mexican, and Basque performers.

The early part of the week is filled with workshops ranging from poetry writing to hat-making to cooking Western fare. Performances kick into high gear Thursday through Saturday, with simultaneous events at venues around town – typically three or more performers alternately reciting poems, singing songs, or telling stories centered on a theme like *After a Night on a Cowboy Town*. Beyond the shows, there are dances, Western goods for sale at the local casinos, and the Deep West video series offering first-hand stories of the rural West.

Bill Sullivan

The Gathering takes place in Elko, Nevada in late January.



A Vegetarian on the Barbecue Trail

In the American South, barbecue isn't just a cooking style – it's a lifestyle. **Elle Hardy** gets in touch with her inner carnivore as she eats her way from the Carolinas to Texas.

All my life I've been a vegetarian – I like to think that I was born this way. But moving to the Deep South, where good company is inseparable from food, had me interrogating my relationship with meat.

Being frequently confined to the kids' menu when eating out, I started to reconsider my own childhood preferences. They were more instinctive – you might even say picky – and less mindful than I liked to tell myself. Charmed by an episode of *Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown* on barbecue culture, I decided that the scene's holistic nature and unpretentious settings were my route to exploring whether I could learn to appreciate meat – and embrace a way of life that turned out to be far bigger than just eating.

It was a clash of worlds that brought us, what we know today as, barbecue. Starting with the indigenous Arawak people of the Caribbean, the colonizing Spaniards translated their practice of slow-cooking meat over coals into *barbacoa*, before African slaves mastered these techniques and added their own dressings of citrus and hot peppers.

In the United States today, there are five main barbecue centers: Texas, Memphis, Kansas City, Alabama, and the Carolinas. I

In the coastal regions of North and South Carolina, pitmasters go whole hog – literally – slow-cooking an entire pig



Rendezvous Pork Barbecue, Memphis

was determined to experience as much of this "barbecue trail" as I could.

The Carolinas

In the coastal regions of North and South Carolina, pitmasters go whole hog – literally – slow-cooking an entire pig. Whereas Lexington, in western North Carolina, is famed for shoulders, ribs, and a tomato-based sauce.

Using the whole animal seemed to me like the most ethical and sustainable way of consuming meat, and after a small pep talk from the kitchen staff, I was ready to dive

in. "It'll leave y'all moaning, like any good thing that takes all night!" the server said cheerily, presenting me with a plate of their finest cuts of "whole hog barbecue" – I wasn't feeling game enough to ask exactly what that meant – and some side dishes to take the edge off my first bite of meat since I was a small child.

The smoke drifted through my palate, and the tender meat had a surprising tang, rounded out by a hint of sweetness. A dash of "South Carolina gold" sauce – a mix of vinegar and mustard unique to the state's barbecue – only enhanced the

profile. Learning to chew slowly, I began to appreciate the interplay between layers of flavor, like a good red wine.

Memphis

Though viticulture is renowned for it, snobbery can enter any scene, even the famously laidback world of barbecue. My next stop was Memphis, where I was ringed by locals at a bar just off Beale Street, hotly debating the merits of their favorite barbecue joint amongst themselves.

John Vargos, second-generation owner of Rendezvous, which has been 'cuing →



Old wood arrow BBQ Sign

Carolina pulled pork barbecue sandwich

since 1948, explained that devotees tend to have a narrow scope, because barbecue is specific to restaurants even more so than regions.

Memphis is best known for its dry rubs – local lore says that the smoke is the sauce – and, like the Carolinas, hogs are the animals of choice. Vargos leaves the membrane on his ribs because it holds the juices, which isn't to everyone's taste, so I applied my taste buds to the darker meat of the pork shoulder, rubbed in vinegar and a mix of Greek and Cajun spices, and smoked for 12 hours.

While comforted by the familiar tangs of oregano and chilli, I spent most of my meal thinking of how to describe the taste of meat. Like the infamous 1964 Supreme Court case on pornography, when Justice Potter Stewart said it was difficult to define, but "I know it when I see it," the taste of meat – with layers of savory, sweet, and a dominant smokiness throughout – was something my virgin palate instinctively knew when I tasted it. But what

Even the flakiest roadside joint seems to have its own top-secret sauce

struck me most was the distinct texture, the complex interplay of fat and flesh pros call "mouth feel".

Alabama

By the time I reached Alabama, my early success stalled. As my mission felt like it had turned to creatively shifting meat around my plate rather than actually eating it, I began discovering the other great thing about barbecue: the sauce.

Even the flakiest roadside joint seems to have its own top-secret sauce, although there's a saying that if you need to add sauce to your barbecue, then they're doing it wrong; sauce should enhance the flavor, not mask the improper way of cooking it.

Alabama takes its inspiration from all over, but specializes in chicken and white sauce, a blend of mayonnaise and vinegar that is used liberally in the cooking process. The creaminess blended perfectly with the sharp saltiness of chicken, but as I overwhelmed my plate with the house

blend, it was apparent that I was doing barbecue wrong.

While I was unexpectedly enjoying the taste of meat, the texture of it was still strange; at times, my throat would involuntarily close over. I fretted about factory farming and the environment, and the traveler's virtues of staying true to yourself and being open to experimentation dueled nightly in my mind.

Texas

By the time my travels took me to Texas, my gastronomical ego had been cut to the bone. But the idea of a plate of Lone Star steer was made less daunting by the city of Austin itself.

More Coachella than cowboy, its grills are nestled between art galleries and caravans of vintage clothes. Forget pistols at dawn, it's barbeques shortly after, as diehards from around the world line up for hours at some 20 joints competing for our appetites.

I ordered a morning beer – it is the

South, after all – and chewed the fat with my fellow aficionados. In a line that was winding around the street, my fear of gagging on a big hunk of cow in front of all these people began to drift away with the smoke around us. The deliberately informal service, long tables, and celebratory atmosphere made it feel like a backyard family get-together.

Inside, La Barbecue owner LeAnn Mueller helped me overcome some of my ethical concerns. She, too, was once a vegan and vegetarian, and is big on integrity in the supply chain. An early adherent to the growing "happy cows" movement, she says that her suppliers can tell her what next season's brisket cuts will look like.

Cooking it is something of an artform, and a good pitmaster has an almost harmonious understanding with the animal. "Good brisket should be tender and moist," she explained. "You want a nice bark around the outside. The fat should be rendered clear and not tough. The point of slow-cooking brisket is that it gets the fat tender so that it renders through the meat and makes it nice and juicy, otherwise it stalls and goes kind of snotty if not cooked correctly."

As she explained her family's barbecue roots – grilling the leftover cuts from their grocery store for itinerant workers – I dove into a plate of plain meat, unadulterated by sauces or sides, for the first time in my life. And, for the first time on my odyssey, I made more than a dent in my plate.

While I doubt I'll ever be a full-fledged carnivore, conquering my fear of meat has made me appreciate that there's a lot of love – not to mention skill – in barbecue. That I need help in getting through my plate only means I'll never be short of dinner companions in the South. In my quest to learn how to eat meat, I realized that food is about so much more than what goes in your stomach – it's really about bringing people together.

Feel more when you travel, with **Stories**



While I doubt I'll ever be a full-fledged carnivore, conquering my fear of meat has made me appreciate that there's a lot of love – not to mention skill – in barbecue

As American as Apple Cider

British Nomad **Neil McRobert** seeks a United States he fears is long vanished.

I went to Maine in pursuit of the “real” America. I was chasing small towns, clapboard homes, wooden lighthouses, diners, milkshakes, jukeboxes, baseball, and farmers in John Deere caps. I wanted to live a Bruce Springsteen song, to summon a summer from the pages of Mark Twain, Ray Bradbury, and Stephen King. The romantic in me longed for this; the realist assumed such an America had vanished beneath waves of corporate culture, political cynicism, and the decline of traditional economies. I didn’t expect to find the romance I was seeking, hidden in a red-painted barn.

Wiscasset is a gem of a village. It sprawls along the Sheepscot River in Lincoln County, a part of the US landmass that is as much water as earth, with countless streams and tributaries carving the land into islands. A sign welcomes you to “the prettiest village in Maine.” Having seen much of the state, I find it hard to argue. Main Street curves down to the river, where the state-famous Red’s Eats serves lobster rolls to drooling customers tired from ransacking the bookshops and antique dealerships that keep the small tourist economy pulsing.

I arrived by Greyhound from Vermont. It was the third month of my travels around North America, subsisting on bed and board for a day’s work. My home was to be an inn and restaurant on the banks of the Sheepscot. I would spend the fall and early winter working in the restaurant, tending the gardens and, on one perilously windy day, scrambling 30ft (9m) up a ladder to paint the eaves.

The inn was managed by Lara, and her

father Mario, a classically trained chef, served garden-grown food to the affluent community. Built in 1763, the inn had been lovingly restored, with painted shutters on every window, antique furniture, and even a private graveyard that housed the descendants of the original owners. There was the aura of an institution about the place. It was a landmark, an integral seam of glue binding the community. On Wednesday nights, the restaurant suspended its fine-dining prestige and we fired up the pizza oven. In the lazy twilight, everyone would eat and meet in the gardens, a slice in one hand, a bottle of beer in the other.

One mid-October afternoon, I was tasked with cleaning out a storage space in the barn. As I sifted through broken garden equipment and old tractor parts, I unearthed an odd-looking object. An angular puzzle of iron wheels and wooden frame, topped with a wooden bucket, it looked like something used to torment witches in this part of the



world a few centuries earlier.

I dragged it out into the sunlight and went to fetch Lara’s husband. Jay was a real outdoorsman, long of hair, calm of temperament, and full of knowledge. He took one look.

“It’s a cider press. It must be old.”

Very old, as it turned out. This kind of press was common in the 19th century, before the advent of hydraulics. We were looking at history.

“Well, what do we do with it?” I asked, expecting we’d be selling it to one of the town’s antique specialists.

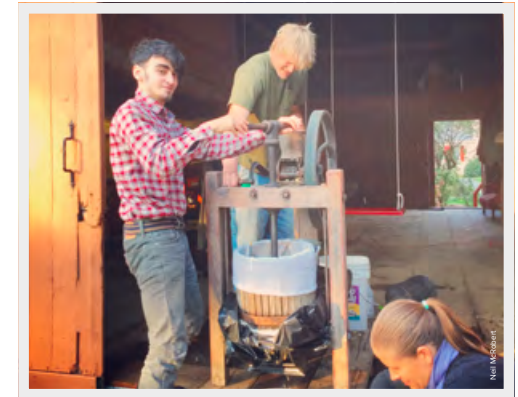
“Only one thing we can do with it,” Jay said. “Make cider.”

First, some restoration was needed. One by one, we sanded and varnished the wooden bucket panels to a deep, cherrywood gleam. Jay went in search of screws and bolts to fit a machine from another century. Somehow, he found them, proof that Mainers really don’t throw anything useful away.

Finally, it stood there: oiled, stripped of rust, and with all its mechanical wounds healed.

We raided the band of apple trees that bordered the river. That small hoard filled a few large buckets; not enough to make more than a few pints. Clearly, we had to think about expansion.

In those few weeks, as fall submitted to winter, I think I met everyone in Wiscasset. Jay, Mario, and I went house to house along the rural lanes, knocking at doors and asking the surprised inhabitants a) if they had apple trees and b) would they like to join our informal collective.



The apples rolled in. We filled buckets and sacks and carted them home in the back of a rusted Ford pickup. Finally, we had enough to press and we set to work on an afternoon that glowed the very gold of apple flesh (though maybe that’s my memory doing its work).

It was hard work, turning the press by hand to crush the fruit. Each bucketful seemed to yield only a cursory amount of juice. Hour by hour though, the volume increased, until we had liters of the stuff. It gave off a medicinal odor that was far from appetizing. That’s where Mario’s culinary experience came into play. Liberal amounts of sugar, cinnamon, and cloves soon created an apple-pie aroma that made your mouth flood.

In that part of the world, cider isn’t usually alcoholic. It is, however, a delightful mixer for your own brandy, whisky, or schnapps. That’s why, the following Wednesday, the town gathered outside the inn, with a slice in one hand and a cup of cider in the other.

As I served the pizza, more than one person handed me a cup and a nod, and often a smile. There were faces I recognized and those I didn’t, but I felt wholly part of something. I felt like I had found my America.

The following Wednesday, the town gathered outside the inn, with a slice in one hand and a cup of cider in the other

We raided the band of apple trees that bordered the river. That small hoard filled a few large buckets; not enough to make more than a few pints

4 MUSEUMS WORTH A SPECIAL TRIP

In the US, you can find museums dedicated to everything from puppetry to pizza. We chose four that taught our Nomads something profound about American history and culture.

National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, DC

Opened in 2016, the National Museum of African American History and Culture is nestled in Washington, DC's National Mall area, around the corner from the White House. Its bronze-colored, three-tiered ziggurat design is a striking addition to the nation's capital and, according to the

architect David Adjaye, is meant to appear to hover above ground as a display of resilience, hope, and faith. It's also said to mimic the tiered crown worn by African royalty of the Yoruba tribe.

As an African-American woman born in a Southern state, I was eager to see it.

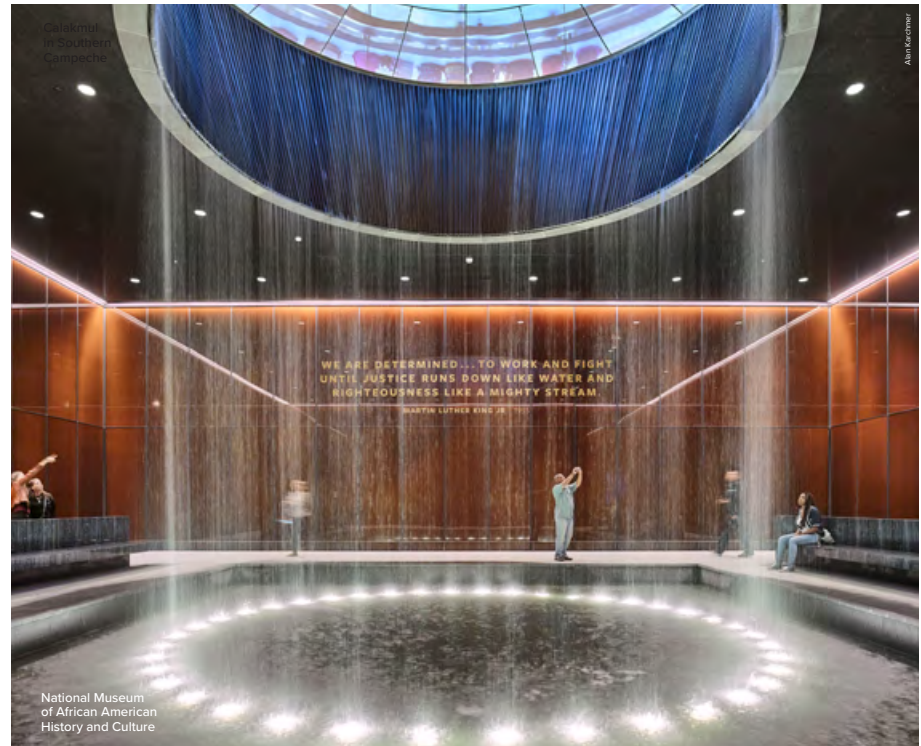
The museum holds five floors of more than 36,000 artifacts and 12 exhibitions. It details the Middle Passage slave trade route, the inception of America, and the Civil Rights Movement, all the way to present-day.

Awareness of the complicated history of African Americans in the United States just isn't enough to describe the rollercoaster of emotions that I felt in this museum. Seeing outfits and costumes of some of my own, my parents' and their parents' favorite celebrities reminded me of Saturday mornings singing in the kitchen while my Dad made breakfast and played his favorite "doo wop" records. I

Its bronze-colored, three-tiered ziggurat design is a striking addition to the nation's capital



National Museum of African American History and Culture



National Museum of African American History and Culture

was inspired watching the many videos of triumph for African Americans in sports, medicine, music, and other areas. The years of American history that constantly depicted black people as "lesser" is disproved through the exhibits of greats like Chuck Berry ("The Father of Rock & Roll"), Muhammad Ali (heavyweight boxing champion/activist), and Madame CJ Walker (first black woman millionaire).

It was also a source of tears and anger as I stared at the masks worn by Ku Klux Klan members, and the casket of Emmitt Till, the teenage boy who was murdered and mutilated after being accused of whistling at a white woman. I held my own son very close, not being able to fathom

how a mother could grieve such an event. Seeing a slave cabin and the silk shawl of anti-slavery heroine Harriet Tubman left me awestruck, with mixed feelings of gratitude and rage. But it left me feeling hopeful, too. I believe, deep down, we're more alike than different, and the better we understand each other's past, the better equipped we'll be to create a brighter future.

Imani Bashir

Currier Museum of Art, Manchester, New Hampshire

New Hampshire's Currier Museum of Art is guarded by a giant. This is *Origins*: a tangle of steel crowned with hard



Currier Museum of Art





WWII Veteran and Navajo Code Talker Dan Akee

curves. It glows dull orange or gleams fire-engine red in the Manchester sunlight, and it announces that the Currier is not your typical small-town museum.

Inside, the museum's architectural anonymity belies the depth of what it contains. Ever-changing collections offer a comprehensive view of American and world artwork in all possible mediums. Though it has an international perspective, the museum also holds community at its heart, with privileged space given to local artists and interactive exhibits.

The latter made me cry in the autumn of 2015. While trawling the halls, I stumbled across a bare room. A few people wandered around, each seemingly alone with their thoughts. In turn, they each wrote on small pieces of paper and affixed them to the walls. A few added photographs.

I sat for a while. Next to me, a middle-aged woman sat clutching a note in her hand. She was waiting. As the last person filtered out of the room, she stood and

A few people wandered around, each seemingly alone with their thoughts. In turn, they each wrote on small pieces of paper and affixed them to the walls

thumbed a piece of paper into an empty space. Then she left without once looking back.

I waited before approaching. This is what I read.

The most beautiful fall day.

9:00am, my daughter asked if dad had called – he had not.

There was no time to say goodbye. God bless them everyone.

At the top of the page was written the question: "Where were you on September 11th, 2001?"

I cried because the Currier had captured the most iconic of American tragedies in the most American of ways: with quiet dignity and individualism within the crowd.

Neil McRobert

Navajo Code Talkers Museum, Tuba City, Arizona

If I hadn't known the Navajo Code Talkers Museum was here, tucked inside a historic, stone trading post in northern Arizona, I'd have missed it. Established in 1906, the Tuba City Trading Post, in the Navajo Nation territory, is flush with indigenous silverwork and weaving, but there's a second legacy here, too, in a nondescript annex at the rear. In the early days of its involvement in World War II, tired of having its codes broken by the Japanese, the American military looked to the Navajo people for a complex and isolated language in which to communicate about tactics and troops. The Native American soldiers known as the "Code Talkers" were later credited with being essential to America's victory.

As a memorial, this museum is humble and quiet, with black-and-white photographs of the recruits lining the museum's hall. I marveled at the battle gear and weapons issued to each Navajo marine – helmets and machetes that seem primitive by today's military standards. The original communications equipment used during several of the campaigns are



Museum of Street Art

also on display, along with a reminder that these brave Code Talkers achieved what they set out to do: the Japanese never managed to break the Navajo code and, with their help, the Allies won the war in the Pacific.

Shoshi Parks

Museum of Street Art, New York City

Standing at the top-floor landing of the stairwell, it's hard to tell what I'll discover below. But, plunging down 20 stories, what I get is a modern history of New York City, told with spray paint. It's street art that's not on the streets, housed in a museum of the most unusual sort.

The Museum of Street Art (MOSA) is a "vertical love letter" to New York, sprayed onto the stairwell of the CitizenM hotel in The Bowery. MOSA's location in The

Bowery is apropos because the modern-day street art movement was spawned in New York in the early 1980s. The Lower East Side was pretty edgy then, and it has remained a hotbed for world-class street art.

The museum was conceived by the hotel's designers and executed by 20 well-respected street artists who had been part of the 5 Pointz graffiti community. 5 Pointz was a famed mural space on a derelict building complex in Brooklyn, which was razed in 2014 for a redevelopment project. When that happened, New York's street art community experienced a collective mourning process. MOSA revives the spirit of 5 Pointz with a series of murals that celebrate New York's culture, diversity, and history.

Carol Guttery

Travels With the Gullah-Geechee

Along the South Atlantic coast, descendants of African slaves maintain a distinct language and culture, and these influences can be felt from Charleston's famous food scene to the music of Mardi Gras. **Joe Furey** takes us on a journey into the past and present of Gullah life.

Despite its dull label, the South Atlantic coastal plain is a place of decided wonder. As much air and water as solid ground, it's more a state of mind than strictly mappable territory – a theater of weather, of scudding clouds, tenebrous skies, and sudden sunshine; its deck of dunes, salt marshes, estuaries, and islands constantly shuffled by wind and sea.

As it journeys 400mi (645km) south, from Pender County, North Carolina, to St John's County, Florida, the plain attracts more poetic names: Tidewater, the Lowcountry, the Golden Isles. But whatever sentimental nomenclature clings to the region, it has an official designation, too, as a federal National Heritage Area, arguably the most

Take a Heritage Trail Tour of Gullah neighborhoods such as Stoney and Squire Pope, and the sweetgrass basket-making studio of Michael Smalls



important of its titles: the Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor.

The Gullah – who in Georgia are better known as the Geechee – are descendants of the Central and West African slaves who were put to work in the cotton fields, rice paddies, and indigo plantations that made fortunes for the English colonists who settled the Corridor 300 years ago. On her father's side, former First Lady Michelle Obama is descended from the Gullah. Her great-great grandfather, Jim Robinson, was a slave on Friendfield Plantation near Georgetown, South Carolina.

Laboring on large plantations in isolated, often inhospitable rural areas, with little oversight from their captors, the Gullah were able to develop a distinctive ethnic identity founded on a common language, faith, and shared cultural traditions.

Which stood them in good stead when, in 1861, just 11 months after South Carolina sparked the Civil War by seceding from the US, Hilton Head Island, a barrier island close to the Georgia border, fell to Federal troops after they mounted what would be the largest amphibious landing by US forces until D-Day.

Finding the slaves who had been abandoned there living in scandalous conditions, yet impressed by their comradeship, General Ormsby Mitchell confiscated Confederate land and gave it to the Gullah, along with the means to lay streets and build homes. The town, Mitchelville, named in honor of its benefactor, became the first self-governing settlement of freed African-Americans in the US.

Today, Hilton Head Island, which was

developed in the '50s as America's first eco-resort, doesn't give much of its history away, unless you know where to look. The patchwork of bridal-white sands, manicured fairways, and protected wetlands is equal parts postcard, playground, and preserve, but the Gullah's influence can still be felt in the food, arts, and crafts.

Take a Heritage Trail Tour of Gullah neighborhoods such as Stoney and Squire Pope, and the sweetgrass basket-making studio of Michael Smalls; then visit the Gullah Museum of Hilton Head Island, the physical manifestation of a not-for-profit organization that preserves culturally significant buildings, maintains a record of Gullah history, and puts on events, from food festivals and oyster roasts to benefits and Christmas concerts.

They say that the past is another country, →



but you can get there via Daufuskie Island, a largely unspoiled neighbor of Hilton Head that's just 55mi (89km) by ferry and car from Savannah, Georgia. Walking dirt roads fringed by live oaks guarding antebellum mansions, I was given an introduction to *The Way Things Used To Be* by Sallie Anne Robinson, whose family have called themselves Islanders for six generations. Ebulient company, an authority on Gullah culture, a chef, author, and the model for a character in Pat Conroy's bestselling novel *The Water Is Wide*, Sallie is the only native professional guide on Daufuskie.

To remember our history is to pay a tribute to those who came before us, but cultures don't live in museums. Gullah culture is at its most vital when you don't know it's at work. In everyday dress and speech, for instance, or in song and worship. Even in exterior design. Visitors to South Carolina often note that householders paint their porch ceilings and window frames a soft pale – or "haint" – blue, a color the Gullah once thought served as a charm against ghosts (I say "once", but many still believe in witchcraft – wudu or juju – and practice folk medicine).

English-based but with many loanwords from African languages as varied as Wolof

The Gullah's biggest impact on mainstream culture is food – and nowhere is that more obvious than Charleston

(from Senegal and Gambia), Kikongo (Congo) and Fon (Benin), Gullah is spoken by some 250,000 people today, up and down the Corridor. Two years ago, Harvard University offered Gullah-Geechee as a language class in its African language program, taught by Sunn m'Cheaux, a native-speaker from Charleston, South Carolina.

Gullah is an intensely musical language that lends itself to performance, on the stage and in church. In both settings, I have seen the McIntosh County Shouters, "master artists of the authentic ring shout," reduce Savannah audiences to tears and palpitations. Part dance, part call-and-response song, the "shout" is an ecstatic, transcendental religious experience, which, in admittedly somewhat bastardized form, has been adopted by the Mardi Gras Indians of New Orleans.

The Gullah are also great storytellers, having passed down a talent for showmanship and a rich stock of ballads, fables, and trickster tales, often with an animal motif. The Georgia writer Joel Chandler Harris leant heavily on these stories in his *Uncle Remus/Brer Rabbit* books.

But the Gullah's biggest impact on mainstream culture is food – and nowhere is that more obvious than Charleston, the 11th oldest city in the US, which has been kind of a big deal on the gastronomic front for at least a decade, but has recently been showered with plaudits as tastes have turned to what it does best: highly sophisticated soul food. Also known as "Lowcountry cuisine", this is inarguably a Gullah creation.

I went to "Chucktown" to taste for myself, and to speak to BJ Dennis, a personal chef and caterer of Gullah descent, about his people's legacy.

"We live close to the earth here," he said. "We interact with our environment, and feel a spiritual connection with it. It is beautiful, fertile country, teeming with wildlife. We



Charleston City Market



Shrimp and grits

grow our own vegetables and are keen fishermen. Lowcountry cooking differs from other southern cooking because seasonality and seafood are central to it, but make no mistake, however fancy people make it, we, the African diaspora, gave it to Charleston. You must remember that as well as preparing meals for each other, the Gullah did all the cooking in the planters' grand homes, adapting our incredible larder to European culinary techniques."

I ate stupendously well in Charleston. In great restaurants housed in a jaw-dropping collection of colonial, Georgian, Regency, Italianate, Gothic revival, and Queen Anne buildings, I thoughtfully chomped my way through posh shrimp and grits, with scallops and lobster butter sauce; cornmeal-fried catfish with Carolina gold rice purloo; oysters, littleneck clams, and king mackerel. It was high dining, for sure,

but Gullah through and through, like the big tables provided for communal eating – because, as one waiter told me, his hand almost on my shoulder: "There's more to a night out than your own company."

The wisdom of that comment was picked out in neon for me at the James Beard award-winning Bertha's Kitchen the following night. BJ had recommended the family-owned establishment, and they found me a spot at very short notice, "So long as you don't mind sitting with a birthday party." The menu was plain-speaking – pork chops, lima beans, okra stew, collard greens – but the eating was anything but: complex, deeply flavored, driven by dark roux and no small amount of, well, love. By the end of the evening I was wearing a paper hat, blowing candles out on a second cake, and arranging to meet my new family for lunchtime drinks, because that's the way they do things 'round there: the Gullah way.

TRIP NOTES

Charleston and Hilton Head, in South Carolina, and Savannah, in Georgia, are the best places to sample all aspects of Gullah culture. The Corridor tends toward the sultry in summer, but spring and fall are long, and the sea is swimmably warm as late as September.



Skillet of cornbread

NATIVE AMERICAN JOURNEYS

Indigenous culture is still very much alive in the US, with traditions as varied as the landscape. **Eric Lucas** shares his insights, and explains how to experience Native culture for yourself.

“Want to give it a try?” Haida carver Harley Holter hands me a small tool and indicates the section of a massive yellow cedar log I can attempt to shape. I’m in the tiny village of Kasaan, on Southeast Alaska’s beautiful Prince of Wales Island, admiring a totem pole local artisans are creating for the village hall. Chalk marks delineate the figures that will adorn the pole – Raven, the Trickster; Thunderbird, king of the skies; Bear, monarch of the woods.

In between the figures, open planes of the log are being detailed with thousands of scallop marks that create a lovely stipple pattern. That’s my task, and I press the adze blade to the wood to encounter one of life’s most persistent lessons: it’s not as easy as it looks. My scallops are rough, misshapen, uneven. Holter raises his eyebrows and hands me some sandpaper. “Maybe you could just smooth this part down here,” he suggests, grinning.

A few months later, and 2,000mi (3,220km) away in northern New Mexico, chef Karin Snowflower Martinez has her cooking grill set up in a small courtyard at UNESCO-listed Taos Pueblo, offering a “pre-colonial” meal of blue cornmeal pies with venison, corn, and red chile filling. It represents the foods New Mexico’s Pueblo peoples enjoyed before the Spanish arrived four centuries ago – and while the concept is intriguing, the pies are just plain delicious. I tell Karin so, and she flashes a wide smile beneath ebony hair and wide cheekbones that reflect her quintessentially Taoseño makeup, Native American and Hispanic.

“Totally pre-colonial?” I ask. She laughs. “Well, OK, there might be a bit of grass-fed beef. And I’m not frying them in bear fat!”

While the broad outlines of these two episodes seem simple – ethnic food and regional art – the details illustrate

Tlingit Keex
Kwaan tribe,
Juneau, Alaska

Getty Images / The Washington Post

Indigenous people welcome visitors, but often have sacred ceremonies and traditions that are reserved for tribal members

the deep complexities and delights of exploring America’s indigenous cultures. There are more than 600 distinct aboriginal groups in North America; the United States government recognizes 573 different tribes, with at least 3 million members (though Native leaders say their numbers are woefully undercounted). Their members, histories, traditions and cultural practices are as diverse as on any continent, and visiting their homelands reveals many fascinating realities:

- Native peoples are still here and, in many cases, thriving in the 21st century.
- They treasure their traditions, but are fully engaged in modern life.
- Native enclaves are autonomous nations

within the United States. They govern themselves, set their own rules, choose their own leaders, and practice politics as complicated as any anywhere.

Native American history and culture

Indigenous people welcome visitors, but often have sacred ceremonies and traditions that are reserved for tribal members. Some events are invitation-only.

Their traditions often differ from modern standards, and they ask that visitors observe the differences – no photography or videography, for instance, in many locations such as some New Mexico pueblos. Yes, that means no Instagram: if you must digitally document every moment of your travel, I suggest Times Square. No →

liquor is allowed on the Yakama Nation in Washington State; if you must have a drink with dinner, there are many places to do so outside Yakama boundaries.

In addition, almost every Native backstory includes colonial oppression or genocide, whether deliberate or less overt, such as the smallpox that nearly wiped out the Haida. Most Native locales include monuments to this dark past, and while tribal members do not dwell on them, it's ungracious for visitors to blithely ignore them.

Just outside the entrance to Taos Pueblo, for example, is a cemetery on the site of a church that American cavalry troops destroyed in 1847, with about 150 Taoseños inside.

Their histories also include victories little known to modern Americans – the Lakota (Sioux) 1876 rout of Custer at the Battle of the Little Bighorn was only the most conspicuous such event.

The Tlingit people of Sitka, Alaska, demolished Russian forces in 1802 and drove the Europeans from Southeast Alaska for two years. And, in New Mexico, the Pueblo peoples revolted against Spanish rule in 1680, driving the conquistadors from the Rio Grande for more than a decade. To this day, Puebloan peoples call this “the first American revolution.”

International influences

“Tradition” is a complex concept that, in many cases, includes ideas and activities indigenous peoples have adopted from Europeans. For example, Aleut dancers performing traditional drum chants sometimes break into Cossack dances, reflecting the Russian heritage in Alaska that dates back three centuries.

After they were driven from North Carolina to Oklahoma, along the bitterly cruel Trail of Tears in 1838, the Cherokee established a new homeland and became active livestock growers – helping



Spider Rock, Canyon de Chelly Monument

establish the modern American cattle industry. Not coincidentally, Indian rodeo is a tougher, rawer version of the Anglo ranch sport; the White Swan Yakama Nation rodeo each June is a quintessential example. I marveled at the “Squaw Race” in which female riders roared around the track at full gallop – bareback.

Athabaskan villagers in Interior Alaska spend the long winters fiddling – literally, putting their own stamp on the music brought by Scottish traders and trappers in the 19th century. And the various iterations of bannock, aka Indian fry bread, use a grain imported from Europe five centuries ago – wheat.

When you pull off the highway in the shadow of Shiprock, New Mexico, one of the Navajo's sacred landmarks, to buy a Navajo taco made with fry bread, barbecued lamb, and hot sauce, it's almost totally post-colonial – only the chiles are pre-contact – but it is wildly savory, unique, and photo-worthy.

Almost every Native backstory includes colonial oppression or genocide, whether deliberate or less overt



Annual powwow, Sioux Lakota tribe, Pine Ridge reservation, South Dakota

Where to experience indigenous culture

There are hundreds, if not thousands, of venues to experience Native culture in the United States – almost all of them west of the Mississippi. Here are just a few:

Tahlequah, Oklahoma: The capital of the 350,000-strong Cherokee Nation is in Eastern Oklahoma; its nearby Cherokee Heritage Center offers insight into traditional lifestyles, and the chance to learn how to make corn husk dolls, or hunt for arrowheads.

Pine Ridge, South Dakota: One of the largest Native enclaves in the United States embraces a vast section of the High Plains that famed Oglala leader Crazy Horse loved and tried to defend. The area's Chamber of Commerce near Kyle serves as a visitor center; the Wounded Knee Monument and its heartbreaking cemetery mark the last major Indian massacre in 1890. The Red Cloud Indian School, north of Pine Ridge, has an excellent art gallery where you can

admire – and buy – Lakota art.

Canyon de Chelly: This national monument in northeast Arizona protects the hidden enclave where a Navajo band attempted to escape their people's own Trail of Tears, the 1864 Long Walk. Today, Navajo Nation property, it's home to about 40 Navajo families and can be visited only through tours operated by Navajo guides.

Southeast Alaska: The Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples who have lived here for thousands of years today populate dozens of remote villages reachable only by boat or floatplane.

Juneau's Sealaska Heritage Institute is a dynamic nonprofit organization representing the region's three indigenous peoples, helping their cultures thrive and grow, and offering visitors the chance to learn about them. The Soboleff Center in downtown Juneau features hand-carved posts, beams, and longhouse panels that have more than a half-million adze marks, all of them better than I managed to achieve in Kasaan.



CITIES & TOWNS

Strip District, Pittsburgh

American communities are microcosms of US culture – they tell the history of the country through their architecture, food, and customs, and are constantly reinventing themselves. Our Nomads share the multi-faceted, personality-rich cities that are undergoing a renaissance, and invite you to explore the hidden treasures just outside major metropolises.

UNDERRATED USA

Often overlooked in favor of San Francisco, New York, Chicago, or Miami, these eight cities are coming into their own, with newly vibrant centers, revitalized architecture, and plenty of local flavor.

Oakland, California

Oakland finally got its share of the spotlight in 2018. This city of around 420,000, perpetually in the shadows of its more famous neighbor across the Bay (San Francisco), was featured in three films that year: *Black Panther*, the third highest-grossing movie in US history and directed by Oakland native Ryan Coogler, and two indie films that made some critics' best-of-the-year lists, *Sorry To Bother You* and *Blindspotting*.

All three films are a testament to the special place Oakland occupies in the realm of black history and culture. Nonetheless, it's also one of the most diverse cities in the country, home to large Latino and Asian populations and some of the best Mexican, Salvadoran, and Vietnamese food around. In fact, Oakland now rivals San Francisco as a foodie destination. Oakland's mild weather allows for both year-round events like First Fridays – a family-friendly event that includes local artists, musicians, and food trucks – and annual events like the Art + Soul Festival, which draws big-name R&B and jazz artists.

Perhaps Oakland's most underrated

Oakland's mild weather allows for year-round events like First Fridays – a family-friendly event that includes local artists, musicians, and food trucks

feature is its geographic diversity and natural beauty, from the centrally located Lake Merritt – popular with runners, walkers, and families – to the sweeping bay views of the Oakland Hills. Visitors might be surprised to learn about the opportunities for hiking and picnicking at Joaquin Miller Park, Redwood Regional Park, or Lake Temescal. In short, far from the “urban war zone” stereotype that has long plagued the city, Oakland is a vibrant, economically and ethnically diverse city that has a ton to offer.

I currently call Oakland home, and though I'm a San Francisco native, I doubt I'd move back across the Bay, even if I could afford it. I prefer Oakland's laid-back vibe, lack of pretentiousness, and welcoming attitude toward families.

Rebecca Bodenheimer

Detroit, Michigan

Underneath me, pavement crumbles into potholes. Rising up from that, though, a mural proclaims Nothing Stops Detroit. This is the city that filed for bankruptcy six years ago – the largest municipal bankruptcy in US history. Once known as Motown, Motor City, and Paris of the



Detroit, Michigan

Midwest, Detroit is making a new name for itself: Comeback City.

Detroit shares its residents' spirit – proud, unapologetic, resilient, innovative, diverse. But even though it's resurging, Detroit's various neighborhoods aren't recovering at equal rates, which contributes to increasing inequality. Where there is a Detroiter, though, there is a solution.

Take the Heidelberg Project, Tyree Guyton's street-long outdoor art installation just north of the Black Bottom neighborhood. On a rainy-day visit, Guyton's sister tells me “he saw what was happening to other neighborhoods... he just wanted

to make our community a beautiful place.” Others share the same vision. In Highland Park, social enterprise Antique Touring offers tours in vintage Ford Model As. And in Corktown looms the abandoned Michigan Central Station, which the Ford Motor Company recently invested US \$740 million in to restore. The 105-year-old train station will soon house local shops and a research center on self-driving vehicles.

Deeper in Detroit is Hamtramck, an enclosed two-square-mile city, where women in *hijab* browse through Polish grocery stores. Originally an enclave for Polish immigrants, Hamtramck is now →

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the first US city with a majority Muslim population and city council. Some call Hamtramck a refuge, and if that's so, then it's Detroit that's offering refuge.

Has Detroit made its comeback? Not quite yet. But that's precisely why it's important to visit. Travelers can not only witness Detroit's renaissance, but play an active role in it.

Sarah Bence

Los Angeles, California

When I moved to Southern California 25 years ago, Downtown Los Angeles was run down – a dismal landscape of abandoned factories and deserted streets. But, in recent years, the neighborhood has undergone a seismic shift, with world-class art museums and trendy galleries and hotels transforming dilapidated industrial buildings into cutting-edge, creative spaces.

The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA exemplifies this transition. Once a police warehouse, it's now home to 40,000ft² (3,715m²) of exhibition space housed in a Frank Gehry-designed building.

Behind an intriguing honeycomb façade, The Broad houses a 2,000-piece contemporary art collection with works by Andy Warhol and Jeff Koons. And, in an effort to make art accessible to all, admission is free.

When I want to explore the underground scene, the Arts District's galleries are an incubator of experimentation. A former flour mill, Hauser & Wirth is now a contemporary art gallery that has preserved elements of its past, including the original motif of wheat sheaves. The gallery supports a range of emerging and established artists across various mediums, with a steady stream of rotating exhibits.

Like many transplants, I originally moved to Los Angeles to work in the film business. Cinephiles like myself flock to Downtown's Ace Hotel, in the renovated United Artists building that once housed the production companies of movie greats such as Charlie



Lake Merritt, Oakland

Like many transplants, I originally moved to Los Angeles to work in the film business. Cinephiles like myself flock to Downtown's Ace Hotel



Birmingham, Alabama

Chaplin, for screenings at the now-restored Golden Age theatre.

Retail and restaurants are part of the urban renewal, too. Originally the LA Terminal Market, Row DTLA is now a shopping and culinary hub. I bring my appetite on Sundays, when Smorgasburg LA sets up shop at the Alameda Produce Market here. Dozens of vendors dish up everything from vegan donuts to juicy *porchetta*. If craft beer is your beverage of choice, Arts District Brewing Company's 15-barrel brewhouse is the place to be.

And, thanks to vast improvements in Downtown's public transportation links, it's possible to avoid the city's infamous traffic and explore car-free via pedestrian-friendly streets, the Metro, and bike and electric scooter shares.

Allison Tibaldi

Buffalo, New York

In the 19th century, Buffalo was one of the wealthiest cities in the United States. It was

a powerhouse of early industry because of its location on the Erie Canal, between the Great Lakes, and near Niagara Falls. Its fortunes changed in the mid-20th century, when much industry moved elsewhere and the city lost more than half its population. But, it never lost its mansions, Art Deco City Hall, Frank Lloyd Wright-designed homes, or proximity to Niagara Falls.

All of these are great reasons to go and check out Buffalo. Plus, in recent years the waterfront areas and ex-industrial apparatus, like enormous grain silos, have been developed and turned into recreational areas for residents and visitors. Investment is trickling back in and once-neglected places – often hiding architectural gems – are being revived.

I lived in Buffalo for a year and a half, and explored the city with the insider-outsider perspective of a resident and a tourist. Although the winter is a time for hibernation – the snow can be so deep it's



Elmwood Ave. Festival of Arts, Buffalo

actually funny – I got outside to ice skate at Canalside and try cross-country skiing. But Buffalo really comes alive in the summer, as if nature is rewarding Buffalonians for enduring the winter. There are street festivals in Elmwood and Allentown, weekly craft markets, food truck Tuesdays at Larkin Square, free concerts at Canalside (with some really big-name acts), and opportunities to kayak and sail on the river, canal, and Lake Erie.

Ellen Turner

Birmingham, Alabama

It's generally understood that phoenixes rise from ashes and that any city enjoying a renaissance must once have had it tough. But what if the city brought the conflagration that reduced it to nothing on itself? That's a question often asked of Birmingham, which during the civil rights period acquired the nickname "Bombingham" due to the campaign of terrorism waged by proponents of racial →

segregation. Between 1947 and 1965, more than 50 crimes involving explosives were recorded. Black community leaders were targeted, children killed, and churches and houses destroyed – and the majority of those crimes went unsolved.

Birmingham's approach to its history is to confront it head-on. It has wholeheartedly embraced its importance as a destination on the US Civil Rights Trail, which was launched last year and connects 110 sites of historical significance, chiefly across the South.

But Birmingham is more than a rueful memorial to its grisly past. Founded in 1871 as an iron, steel, and rail town, it grew quickly, earning the nickname "the Magic City". Its recently rejuvenated downtown area, with its striking Art Deco and neo-gothic buildings, is a testimony to the good taste of that boom time.

Birmingham's population had been steadily dropping until a decade ago, when it started to attract the advance guard of gentrification: musicians, artists, gourmands, and their pals in tech. To be fair to them, the transformation has been impressive. Pepper Place, the home of Alabama's largest farmers' market and the 19-acre Railroad Park, used to be a few blocks of gutted warehouses and tracks going nowhere. Avondale, a formerly unprepossessing district of car repair businesses, gas stations, and rust, is now a walkable neighborhood lined with brunch places, bars, and breweries, and once-subdued Forest Park is livelier for its independent stores, consignment shoppers, and generally bohemian air. Most of these neighborhoods are linked by greenways, which, come the weekend, are abuzz with cyclists making use of America's first electric bike-share program.

Almost equidistant between Memphis, the blues capital of the US, and Atlanta, hip-hop's center of gravity, Birmingham is becoming a hothouse for musical talent, with punk, Americana, and metal bands pulling in big audiences, and the number of



Providence Athenaeum

Bricktown, Oklahoma City

Birmingham started to attract the advance guard of gentrification: musicians, artists, and their pals in tech

performance venues quadrupling in under 10 years.

The 'Ham has a growing food scene, too. It's not for nothing that Zagat readers voted it the "number one up-and-coming food city" in a recent national survey.

Joe Furey

Providence, Rhode Island

Providence is a small city by any measure, at just 20.5mi² (53km²) and home to 180,000 people. But, without a doubt, it's also one of the most underappreciated cities in America.

I might be a little biased. I grew up in Pawtucket, literal steps from the Providence city line. And, of course, it's often easier to love a place once you've left it. It's been 10 years since I've lived there. But every time I visit, it just gets better.

Thanks in part to an esteemed culinary arts school, Johnson & Wales, and edgy art students at the Rhode Island School of Design, you'll find top restaurants gaining

international recognition, hipster doughnut shops with cult followings, and multi-story murals cascading down the city's most historic buildings. Providence has been slower to grow than other cities of its size, and its affordability has fueled small businesses – you won't see many chains downtown.

I love walking up College Hill, one of the state's best-preserved colonial-era neighborhoods, to sit in Prospect Terrace Park, overlooking the city for sunrise and sunset. I love tip-toeing to the second floor of the Providence Athenaeum, perhaps the most photogenic library in the US, to write at an ancient desk sandwiched between stacks of old books. I love grabbing a frozen Del's lemonade – watermelon, of course – and clambering for a front-row view of WaterFire, an art installation of bonfires on the Providence River that has enchanted the city on special nights since 1994. And I love that it's possible to stay at a sub-US \$100 boutique hotel room in a renovated

former brothel, within walking distance of Broadway shows on tour at the Providence Performing Arts Center.

Sure, Providence is home, and so it will always have my heart. But if you're not careful, it'll easily snag yours, too.

Kassandra Cloos

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

"Where do you want to eat?" my friend asked me, both of us ravenous and still full of adrenaline from an afternoon of whitewater rafting in downtown Oklahoma City. We had conquered the Class II to IV raging water at RIVERSPORT Rapids, one of the only man-made urban rafting centers in the nation, and we were ready for a cold drink and a hearty meal.

Whenever someone asks me where to eat in Oklahoma City, I groan a little inside. Not because I can't think of a decent place to eat, but because there are so many choices, from traditional Vietnamese in the Asian District to award-winning restaurants in Midtown.

Not so long ago, OKC was considered a fly-over location, with a ghost-town downtown and sad nightlife. In the 1980s and early 1990s, college co-eds like me didn't go downtown at night. Besides the fact the city "rolled up the sidewalks" at 5pm, the area was shady and ominous in its emptiness – a far cry from the hopping, brightly-lit vibe that it has today.

But combine a rabid love of public art, a ripping music and performance scene, a new public streetcar system, an NBA team, and districts that get hipper every day, and OKC is being called the new "Austin of the Plains."

A massive, highly-anticipated urban park now under construction will bridge OKC's quickly regenerating downtown to the Oklahoma River. Nearby, the old warehouse district of Bricktown, sometimes described as a miniature version of San Antonio's famous Riverwalk, continues to add more nightlife and entertainment options. →

A massive, highly-anticipated urban park now under construction will bridge OKC's quickly regenerating downtown to the Oklahoma River



OKC's renaissance wasn't by accident, though. After the April 19, 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building that claimed 168 lives, the city and its citizens refused to be defined by tragedy. With an upswelling of pride and a crusade to heal itself, the citizens and leaders came together to create a downtown that mirrored the indefatigable spirit of Oklahomans.

Heide Brandes

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Pittsburgh exists in the popular imagination as one of the "Rust Belt" cities that, along with Cleveland, Detroit, and Buffalo, were left for scrap after the industries that made their names closed for business. But while it's true "the Steel City" did lose its way for a spell, it swiftly rebuilt its fortune on robotics, biomedical engineering, and self-driving tech, drawing on graduates from Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon, and Duquesne universities.

Built at the confluence of the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio rivers, the City of Bridges (Pittsburgh has multiple names, and 446 bridges at last count), is defined by water. In this respect, it reminds me of a shrunken, hillier, vista-peppered Chicago, with which it shares deep blue-collar roots.

Pittsburgh reminds me of a shrunken, hillier, vista-peppered Chicago, with which it shares deep blue-collar roots

On the south bank of the Allegheny, where mills once choked the city with smoke, the Strip District looks like a textbook illustration of a miraculous recovery. Just northeast of Downtown's museums, galleries, and theaters, its warehouses and factory buildings now house dive bars, art studios, craft workshops, Polish delis, the Heinz History Center, a whiskey distillery and "Robotics Row", an area where a string of tech companies have set up shop.

Pittsburghers – or Yinz – are fiercely loyal to their city. And the city celebrates them back. Its heroes come in various forms, many of them athletic. Game days are hectic – the streets are flooded with black and gold, the colors of its three professional sporting franchises – but brain is as revered as brawn in the 'Burgh, so long as it's from there, and its cultural life is rich and diverse.

See for yourself at these Northside neighbors: Randyland, Randy Gibson's bemuralled house containing his own outsider creations; The Mattress Factory, a showcase of installation art; and City of Asylum, a non-profit organization that provides sanctuary for refugee writers who are under threat of persecution. The Andy Warhol Museum, the largest museum dedicated to a single artist in the country, is marvelous, a fitting shrine to the modern era's greatest iconographer, iconolater, and iconoclast. Special mention must also go to the August Wilson Cultural Center, a multi-purpose venue that's a leading promoter of African-American arts.

As befits a place of punishing inclines, Pittsburgh has two funicular railways, though having eaten my way around the city I can tell you walking it off is the only proper response to dining there. Don't get me wrong, its restaurant scene is thoroughly modern, with southeast Asian and Chinese influences, but its light bites tend toward the hulking – the Big Mac was invented here, after all, in a local McDonald's.

Joe Furey



UNEXPECTED

Creole Trail Ride

Long before Hollywood Westerns, where men on horseback chased "Indians" and gunslingers fired pistols in between saloon doors, black cowboys herded cattle in Louisiana. In the late 18th century, Creoles of mixed African and French descent were some of the first cowboys in the US, but for some reason, the image of a black man riding a horse has been largely left out of history books. Fortunately, Creole cowboy culture thrives today in the form of trail rides.

Nearly every weekend in small towns throughout Louisiana and East Texas – and to a lesser extent Mississippi, Georgia, and North Carolina – African-American men and women trot along streets and dusty paths on horseback. Beside them, jam-packed trolleys dish out cold beers and grilled meats while huge speakers blast traditional zydeco and country music. Nearby, rows of young and old swing their arms and hips in sync, practicing →

traditional line dances passed down over the years. Recently, hip-hop music and DJs have injected more bounce into trail rides, to the delight of urbanites and the chagrin of traditionalist trail riders.

When the sun creeps below the horizon after several hours of riding, the horses get some much-needed rest, but the fun is far from finished. DJs and MCs keep the party going all night long with the help of bands, guitarists, and rappers while smoking food stands and coal-fired barbecues deliver juicy meats including rabbit, venison, squirrel, pork, chicken, or turkey legs smothered in gravy. You're also sure to find steaming bowls of gumbo (meat stew) with ingredients like shrimp, okra, sausage, veggies, spices, and probably the kitchen sink. If it's the right time of year, usually between January and July in Louisiana, you might also see tables of boiled red crawfish from nearby swamps. Care for a cold one? Trail rides tend to be BYOB (which means you'll also need to bring a drink-responsibly attitude).

Horse or not, all are welcome at trail rides, and tickets tend to be extremely affordable, but despite their popularity, they can be tricky to find. Ask around in places like Lafayette or Breaux Bridge or visit the Zydeco events website. Don't forget to wear your cowboy hat and your best dancing boots. *Joel Balsam*



5 ADVENTURES: OUTSIDE THE MAJOR CITIES

Many visitors to New York, Los Angeles, Miami, San Francisco, or Houston never go beyond the city limits. But you don't need to travel far to find yourself in a totally different world.

Outside Houston: Czech communities

I love visiting the area I affectionately call Czexas, about a 90-minute drive west of Houston via Interstate 10. Settled by Bohemian and Moravian immigrants in the mid-1800s, these pastoral communities maintain their proud Czech heritage in everything from music to food, language, architecture, and culture. October is festival season, and the towns come alive with old-fashioned church picnics and lively street fairs.

Although the Texas Czech Heritage and Cultural Center in LaGrange is worth a visit, I prefer to base myself in quaint Schulenburg. The area is filled with historic sites, museums, and antique stores to peruse, and the churches in the communities of Dubina, High Hill, Praha, and Ammannsville are awe-inspiring with their hand-painted interiors based on traditional Czech designs.

Local, family-owned meat markets and bakeries showcase all manner of Czech foods. For breakfast, I get *kolaches* (pastries filled with fruit or cheese) and *klobásník* (savory ones filled with sausage) from the Kountry Bakery. Lunch consists of smoked meats and homemade sausages at City Market in Schulenburg, or Kolacny's Barbecue and Novosad's Meat Market in Hallettsville. And, for a cold one with a side of Texas polka, Schulenburg's historic Sengelmann Hall and the Moravia Store are an absolute must, whether to dance or just soak it all up.

Claudia Alarcón

Outside Miami: Shark Valley

I promised my Italian boyfriend that he'd

see alligators, and the Shark Valley did not disappoint. A 10ft (3m) long behemoth sunned itself on the side of the road, just a few steps away from us, jaws open to absorb heat on a chilly day. Soon, we'd see 'gators at every turn, as well as turtles, fish, birds – so many birds – and even a family of deer. Mother Nature was clearly in charge here, indifferent to the gawking humans with their cameras and binoculars.

Just an hour before, we'd been having breakfast on bustling, busy Miami Beach.

Shark Valley Visitor Center is on the northern boundary of Everglades National Park, easily reachable from Miami via US 41. Here, visitors don't see a primordial, mosquito-filled swamp, but the true "River of Grass" about which local conservationist Marjory Stoneman Douglas so tenderly wrote in the 1940s. Clear, clean water flows swiftly

through sawgrass plains, and it's teeming with life. (The waters feed into the nearby Shark River, which gives the park its name and is home to numerous species of sharks.) For those wishing to see an incredible concentration of Everglades wildlife, Shark Valley offers a remarkable glimpse of natural Florida as it once was. See it via tram ride, or better yet, hire a bike and take the 15mi (24km) loop through the preserve. Just remember to brake for alligators.

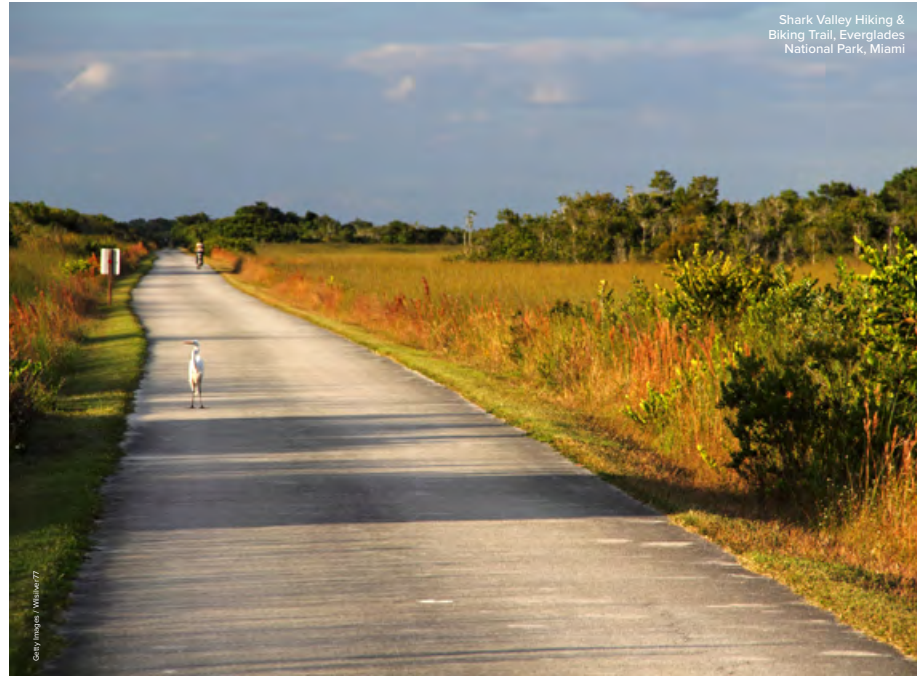
Elizabeth Heath

For those wishing to see an incredible concentration of Everglades wildlife, Shark Valley offers a remarkable glimpse of natural Florida as it once was

Outside Los Angeles: Bombay Beach

Driving east from LA past the glittering resorts of Palm Springs, a sense of doom sets in as the dying Salton Sea appears on the horizon. Once a playground, where stars like Sinatra and the Beach Boys →

Shark Valley Hiking & Biking Trail, Everglades National Park, Miami



Getty Images/Wikistart77



St Mary's Catholic Church, High Hill, Texas

Photo by Michael O'Connell



Bombay Beach drive-in



Riding horses through the Point Reyes forest

performed in its mid-century heyday, the motels and yacht clubs of California's so-called "inland Riviera" were abandoned by the '80s, as rising salinity killed off the fish and the dream.

It's a desolate landscape for sure – until we turn off Hwy 111 at Bombay Beach and our hearts lift with signs of life. This town built for 1,000, and where only 100 diehards remain, boasts a drive-in, an ersatz art museum, even an "opera house," thanks to a crew of creative optimists who, every spring, make it magical for the Bombay Beach Biennale.

We're here for a taster of the festival, marveling at the art installations which are now permanent and, unlike the other attractions, can be experienced any time. Those not taking in a movie, as we do, come to see live ballet and opera, slurp oysters in a St Tropez-style beach club, or dance the night away in view of a neon Save Me sign hanging wistfully over the water. "It's more a movement than a festival," says co-founder Stefan Ashkenazy, who like many artists has bought into the town and built its first hotel,

If I have a couple of days, I like to hike in and pitch a tent at the small Coast Campground, with its easy access to the beach

The Last Resort, out of shipping containers.

The inland sea may never be repopulated, but we feel exhilarated to walk the deserted streets, join a surreal dinner party in a derelict house hung with chandeliers, and be part of something exciting happening, against all odds, in a place time forgot.

Anthea Gerrie

Outside San Francisco: Point Reyes National Seashore

I always discover something new and unexpected at this 71,000-acre (271km²) coastal wildlife sanctuary, about an hour north of San Francisco. If I have a couple of days, I like to hike in and pitch a tent at the small Coast Campground, with its easy access to the beach. One of the park's four backcountry campsites, it requires a backcountry camping permit.

The weather can be changeable, with thick, coastal fog most mornings and evenings, so I've learned to dress in layers with a waterproof jacket in my backpack whatever the season.

Hiking trails cover 150mi (240km) through scenic fir and pine forest hilltops

and beach trails. The Bear Valley Visitors Center provides maps and info for activities including hiking the Limantour Spit Beach Trail, visiting the historic Point Reyes Lighthouse, or gray whale watching and elephant seal viewing from the overlook at Chimney Rock.

If I close my eyes, I can picture the Coastal Miwok, the peninsula's first human inhabitants, living peacefully off the land and its waters for more than 5,000 years. The only federally protected seashore in the western US, Point Reyes was rescued from potential development and incorporated into the National Park System in 1962.

Horse riding with a guide from Five Brooks Ranch is one of my annual spring or summer highlights. And on dark, moonless nights, pre-scheduled bioluminescence night kayaking tours in the glowing tidal waters of nearby Tomales Bay are an unforgettable experience.

Frances Rivetti

Outside New York City: SUP on the Hudson

The summer sun warms my bare shoulders as I plunge my carbon paddle into the dark, sparkling water. Gliding by the massive Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum on my stand-up paddleboard, I head south on New York City's mighty Hudson River, overtaking the tall skyscrapers and weathered piers flanking the shore.

The blue sky is clear and the waterway busy with ferries, speed boats, and jet skiers. I wave to tourists gawking at the NYC skyline from the deck of the Circle Line harbor cruise as it sails past me.

It's easy to forget that Manhattan is an island. Over the past two decades, the Hudson River has become my year-round paddling playground, providing a mini-escape from fast-paced city life.

As I continue south, scores of sailboats dance in the distance, criss-crossing New York Harbor. The Statue of Liberty, my



SUP on the New York Harbor near Liberty Island

destination, comes into view as I reach Battery Park, where the water grows bouncy from the wakes of the imposing, orange Staten Island Ferry and Liberty Island ferries. Delicately balancing on the choppy water near Lady Liberty, I gaze up with an awe that never fades, no matter how many times I see her. After a final peek, I turn my board north and paddle back to my boathouse.

Stefani Jackenthal

SUP lessons and daily tours are available from MKC Kayak at Pier 84.

LGBTQ TRAVELERS:

LESSER-KNOWN DESTINATIONS

Ed Salvato reveals the best LGBTQ-friendly destinations beyond popular urban centers in the USA.

There are many queer-friendly places in the United States and very few that LGBTQ travelers should avoid. For the most part, big cities are more accepting and welcoming of diversity than rural places, though it's more complex than that. There are parts of big cities where local, out gay people may not wish to demonstrate even mild expressions of affection like hand-holding – for example, parts of the South Bronx in New York, or South Central Los Angeles – though it's unlikely any visitors would find themselves in these places.

Obvious hubs for LGBTQ visitors include New York, San Francisco, Chicago, and Fort Lauderdale. But here are a handful of the many other urbane hot spots where queer travelers will feel super welcome:

- West Hollywood and San Diego, California
- Miami, Florida
- New Orleans, Louisiana, home to the fourth-highest concentration of LGBTQ people in the country and the South's

Queer visitors are encouraged to keep an open mind and do their research; a warm welcome may await in surprising locales throughout the US

biggest gay celebration

- Boston and Northampton (especially for lesbians), Massachusetts

In a sign of changing times, Tulsa, Oklahoma; Cleveland, Ohio; Houston, Texas; southern Illinois; and other "Red State" cities are also eagerly promoting themselves as LGBTQ-friendly.

And there are breathtakingly beautiful national parks in the American wilderness that actively cater to LGBTQ travelers. So queer visitors are encouraged to keep an open mind and do their research; a warm welcome may await in surprising locales throughout the US.

LGBTQ events

If you can plan around one of the major queer events, it's even more fun. Gay Pride in some of the big cities can be an extremely good time – the two best for visitors are in San Francisco and New York.

Other major events to watch out for include: Winter Party in Miami, Florida; White Party for men and the Dinah for



Provincetown, Massachusetts

women in Palm Springs, California; Southern Decadence in New Orleans, Louisiana; Fantasy Fest in Key West, Florida; and Carnival in Provincetown, Massachusetts.

Top LGBTQ-friendly beach destinations

Provincetown, Massachusetts

Provincetown is probably the gayest resort in the United States, in some ways on par with Mykonos and Ibiza for gay popularity, though not so much in terms of vibe. P-town (as locals call it) is located at the curlicue tip of Massachusetts' arm-shaped Cape Cod. Artists and queer people started coming here in the late 1800s to live relatively free lives and have been returning every summer since then.

Key West, Florida

Key West was a quintessential gay colony in a remote area in the Caribbean (only 90mi/145km north of Havana, Cuba) and

home to super quirky, hippy gays and lesbians for decades, until a bridge and large mainstream cruises connected it to the outside world. It's more straight than gay nowadays, but it still retains its quirky, independent all-are-welcome vibe and boasts one of the world's greatest and longest-running all-men's gay guesthouses (Island House Key West).

Palm Springs, California

Palm Springs is a fabulous mid-century-modern resort in the desert two hours east of Los Angeles. This is mostly popular with gay men who flock here all winter long and gather around their all-men (sometimes clothing-optional) guest house pools to flirt over cocktails.

Other beach-oriented gay getaway spots include:

Saugatuck, Michigan
Rehoboth Beach, Delaware
Waikiki on the Hawaiian island of Oahu.

TRIP NOTES

WHEN TO GO: You can visit the cities all year round, of course, and in fact many are more fun and much less expensive off-season. New York, for example, offers all sorts of specials on restaurants, Broadway entertainment, and attractions in January and February.



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ROAD TRIPS

George Parks Highway, Alaska

For many travelers, the USA is synonymous with the open road – and why not? Getting there is half the fun. Join our Nomads as they explore three very different regions of the country: the sand dunes and industrial cities of the Great Lakes, the surreal landscapes and towering monuments of South Dakota, and the rich convergence of cultures in New Mexico.

Celebrating the Strange in South Dakota

There's a lot more to South Dakota than four presidents carved into a mountainside. **Katie Jackson** shares three memorable journeys through the Badlands, the Black Hills, and Custer State Park.

Wedged between my brothers on the back seat – that's how I road-tripped through South Dakota the first time. South Dakota meant Mount Rushmore to us kids. But before reaching the famous rock faces, we encountered another unforgettable stone body part.

Where history and superlatives are made: Devil's Tower, Sturgis, and the Black Hills

My Dad called it Devil's Thumb, but officially, the skyscraping butte we saw on our 1997 road trip from Montana to South Dakota is Devil's Tower National Monument. In 1906, it was designated the first United States National Monument, and in 1977, made famous by the film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Today, this extraordinary Wyoming landmark is revered by rock climbers and Native Americans (who believe it's sacred and want to rename it Bear Lodge). We didn't have time to climb it on that trip. Just 60mi (97km) beyond, the Black Hills beckoned.

Behind the wheel, my best friend from college riding shotgun, is how I road-tripped through South Dakota the second time. The highlight of that 2015 adventure is a toss-up between climbing Black Elk Peak – the tallest point east of the

Rockies – and experiencing downtown Sturgis, *during* Sturgis, the world's largest motorcycle rally. Every August, the population explodes from 6,000 to 500,000 as the rally takes over this small town which borders Black Hills National Forest.

From a distance, the Black Hills look black. Up close, they look like any other rolling hills blanketed in green pine trees – except they're the site of Deadwood, once home to the legendary Who's Who of the Wild West. It's where my brothers and I flinched during the Main Street Shootout reenactments. I'll never forget watching Wild Bill Hickock get assassinated, fake bullets and blood flying, while the crowd cheered. It's where we visited the grave of his lover/companion, Calamity Jane, and learned how gold rushes boom and bust. We also stayed in a Holiday Inn that was once a mining plant processing millions of dollars in gold – aka a "slime plant" after the nickname for the gold before it's purified.

Hands down, though, the Black Hills' most famous residents aren't in Deadwood. They're carved into the hillsides outside of Keystone.

Humbled by Mount Rushmore, Crazy Horse Monument, and Custer State Park

Pedaling a hybrid bike, as part of a six-day rail-to-trail cycling trip with Austin Adventures, is how I saw South Dakota for the third time. Our tour guide, along the 109mi (175km) Mickelson Trail, made sure we reached Mt. Rushmore by sunset, when they do the flag-lowering ceremony and honor veterans in the crowd. One of the cyclists in our group had served in Vietnam. On stage, in front of hundreds of visitors, he held one of the corners of the flag. I think he cried while helping fold the hallowed piece of fabric.

While Mount Rushmore is memorable for its symbolism, the far-from-finished Crazy Horse monument commemorating the great Oglala Lakota leader is

Today, this Wyoming landmark is revered by rock climbers and Native Americans



Devil's Tower, Wyoming

memorable for its sheer size. Once completed (if ever), it will be 10 times the size of Mount Rushmore, and will become the world's largest rock carving.

We ended our visit at nearby Custer State Park. Imagine driving a wildlife loop where you encounter antelope, bison, elk, and even wild burros before sitting down to dinner at the State Game Lodge (President Calvin Coolidge's "Summer White House") where most of what you saw earlier is on the menu. It was here, at the age of 26, I lost my rattlesnake and rabbit virginity.

The Unforgettable Corn Palace, Wall Drug, and Badlands National Park

My other most epic epicurean South Dakota memory is picking popcorn ball remnants out of my teeth at the "World's Only Corn Palace." Imagine a secular mosque comprised entirely of corn kernel mosaics, planted in the middle of Mitchell, South Dakota, just another dot on the map along the interstate. It's about as bizarre as it gets – unless you're in South Dakota, where it's impossible to drive 50mi (80km) without being tempted by a roadside attraction so wacky you have to →



Deadwood,
South Dakota



Corn Palace,
Mitchell, South
Dakota

take photos or the people back home won't believe you.

For example, there's Wall Drug, home to the world's most famous ice water. There are so many Wall Drug billboards and "free ice water" signs along I-90 that the idea of driving by the town of Wall (pop. 800) doesn't seem physiologically possible. In fact, each year more than two million travelers visit. It's just a small, frontier town-themed shopping center, but I remember my first visit to Wall Drug, as an eight-year-old, with the same fondness as I remember Disney World. Wall Drug is where a life-sized T-Rex model scared my brothers and me more than the entire *Jurassic Park* series. It's where we spent our allowance on rubber-band guns, and our Dad, after one too many cups of Wall Drug's famous five-cent coffee, convinced us jackalopes were real. Now, 21 years later, I choose to still believe. Who wouldn't want to live in a world alongside giant rabbits with antelope antlers?

My attitude toward South Dakota's Badlands is similar. If the Badlands are bad, then I don't want to be good. Seven miles south of the six-foot-tall jackalope, and Wall Drug's other man-made photo ops, is a national park with ethereal geological features you only expect to see in a *Star Wars* movie. Distinct layers of red, pink, and gray earth form dramatic, mini-mountain chains and abstract rock formations only scientists know by name. It's where dinosaur bones are found during the day, and at night, you can see every single star. It's also where my parents threatened to leave us if my brothers and I wouldn't settle on a ceasefire. A backseat rubber-band gun battle was not what they'd signed up for when we'd set off on our family road trip.

But the rubber bands kept flying. If my parents were going to abandon us anywhere, it may as well be South Dakota. At least we wouldn't be bored. And we'd never run out of free ice water.

Distinct layers
of red, pink,
and gray
earth form
dramatic,
mini-
mountain
chains and
abstract rock
formations



Photo: Robert S. Hines

UNEXPECTED

Fiestas de Santa Fe

"Burn him! Burn him!" At first, this sounded like a macabre chant straight out of my nightmares. But I soon found it's par for the course at the Burning of Zozobra – the fiery kick-off to the Fiestas de Santa Fe, in New Mexico. Founded in 1712, to celebrate the return of Spanish rule following the 1680 Pueblo Revolt, the fiesta is billed as the longest-running community festival in the US.

Zozobra, aka Old Man Gloom, is more recent. Local artist Will Shuster first created a six-foot puppet in 1924 for a celebration inspired by a Catholic ritual where an effigy of Judas is burned. Word of this backyard celebration spread, and it went public two years later. As the festival has grown, so has the puppet. Zozobra, who takes his name from the Spanish word for anxiety, is now a 50ft tall (15m tall), green-haired, tuxedoed marionette that's burned to cast off worries.

At the festival, I cautiously approached the part-ghost, part-monster with a slip of paper inscribed with my personal woes. I dropped the slip into the "gloom box," where it joined countless others to make up his stuffing. As the pageant began and flames started licking his feet, the marionette writhed above the audience, taunting us and moaning eerily. Yet, by the time flames engulfed his body and cries of "Burn him!" rose from the crowd, I had joined in the revelry – hopeful that my gloom would be carried away in the flames along with Zozobra. *Ashley Biggers*

Las Fiestas de Santa Fe is held the first or second week of September.

Beauty & Industry on the Great Lakes Loop

From the gleaming skyscrapers of Chicago to the towering dunes of Lake Michigan, the Great Lakes region is full of contrasts, with cities as cool and scenery as refreshing as its waters. **Elle Hardy** dives right in.

Formed more than a million years ago, by melting glaciers along today's US-Canada border, the Great Lakes – Michigan, Erie, Huron, Superior, and Ontario – contain around 18% of the world's fresh water.

Embarking on one of the great American road trips, I set out from Chicago to loop around these vast beauties, and explore the contrasts of the Rust Belt – the great industrial cities of the 20th century that later fell into decline – with the lakes that serve them.

Chicago (the “Windy City”)

Thanks to the Great Lakes Compact, an agreement between the eight Great Lakes states and two Canadian provinces, that governs the use of the water basin, they are in pristine condition in spite of the cities that line their shores.

In Chicago's busy ecosystem of skyscrapers, I immediately saw that this was a city that cut nothing down to size. The best way to see it is on an Architecture Foundation river cruise, which takes visitors through the city's history that is inseparable from its built environment.

Alongside deep-dish pizza and baseball, Chicago is perhaps best known for housing two of the defining paintings of American modernism, *Nighthawks* and *American Gothic*, at The Chicago Art Institute. Outside, the parks and streets surrounding

it served as the playgrounds for literary greats like Saul Bellow, who is celebrated among his colleagues in the American Writers Museum.

Lake Erie and Niagara Falls

Some 250mi (400km) east of the Windy City, Toledo, Ohio is known as the Glass City after its dominant industry – although it could just as easily be for the way its skyline is reflected onto Lake Erie. I took it in with a local specialty – a loaded hot dog – in hand, before getting back on the road for the 300mi (480km) drive to Niagara Falls.

Some 30 million visitors come each year to see, feel, and hear 530,000 gallons (two million liters) of water per second cascading over three falls. I'm not one for crowds, so I got my fix and headed to the Niagara Glen Nature Reserve, on the Canadian side of the border, for a few miles of hiking trails, blissfully removed from my fellow travelers.

Crossing back into the US, I decided to balance out the kitsch of peak tourism (which, somewhat surprisingly, is more concentrated on the Canadian side of the Falls) with something deliberately absurd: Prophet Isaiah's Second Coming House. The Prophet began turning his house into a piece of outsider art in 2007, with a centerpiece crucifix that he hopes will be the final cross all sentient beings will see before Judgement Day.



Ann Arbor

This walkable city would rival any other for bookstores per square mile, not to mention a hectic calendar of theatre, film, and art exhibitions

Ann Arbor

Traveling back west, I pulled up for a night in Ann Arbor, a charming university town that feels like something of an island between the lakes. A perfect stopover heading up into sparsely populated parts of Michigan, it features a vibrant, multicultural food scene and a European affection for sidewalk dining.

This walkable city would rival any other for bookstores per square mile, not to mention a hectic calendar of theatre, film, and art exhibitions, but it's best known for star college football team the Michigan Wolverines, which between September and January plays in its 110,000-seat stadium – only 5,000 shy of the city's population.

Sleeping Bear Dunes

The hills that roll into Sleeping Bear Dunes form an honor guard of cherry trees, hops plantations, swaying corn, and silver firs, with a welcoming committee of bald eagles flying overhead. Named after an Ojibwe legend, I felt like one myself just for making it to the top of the eponymous dune – only to discover that it's not even the most demanding.

I regathered my breath looping around the stunning Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive. While the route has 12 stopping points, locals say to park at #9 and get out to see the view. A precipitous 450ft (137m) below, a few colored dots on the sand turned out to be souls who had braved the warning →

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Lakefront Brewery, Milwaukee



Niagara Falls

signs and climbed down the steep slope to the Lake Michigan shore – according to the signs, it takes around two hours, or a hefty rescue fee, to make it back to the top.

Marquette

Crossing Mackinac Bridge, which connects Michigan's Lower and Upper Peninsulas, the changing weather became its own journey. I fancied some sunshine, so stopped for a couple of nights in Marquette, the jewel of Lake Superior towns, distinguished by its photogenic, disused copper wharf, fishing, and gastropubs.

Wherever I pulled up a seat, locals were keen to divulge their secret swimming spot – beaches of black sand, white sand, or known pockets of warmth in water that spends much of the year frozen. Marquette is a hub for the many small towns along North America's largest lake, which is home to the brilliance of Aurora Borealis on clear nights in autumn and late spring.

Door County

Moving southeast, Door County looks like a thumb jutting into Lake Michigan. I found my inner child by joining the locals at Cave Point to jump feet-first into the aqua waters.

I found my inner child by joining the locals at Cave Point to jump feet-first into the aqua waters

The county is a favorite summer holiday spot for Wisconsinites, a place where time slows and the fresh local food never stops. Long days of swimming and kayaking required plenty of sustenance – top of the list: ubiquitous fried cheese curds and whitefish paste.

Milwaukee

Two hours northwest of Chicago, the revival of this great industrial city is well underway, named by *Vogue* as the Midwest's coolest and most underrated city.

Sprawling north to south along Lake Michigan's western shore, Milwaukee is all about refreshment. After getting attuned to the city's heavy German and Polish cultural accent when buying snacks at the Milwaukee Public Market, I moved on to Brew City favorites Lakefront and Miller for a flight of tasting ales, finishing it off with a tour of the revived Pabst Brewery before crawling into bed in the old distillery-turned-hotel across the street.

The best cure for a heavy Milwaukee night is, of course, water, so the next day I headed to popular Bradford Beach for a swim in a lake that felt close to freezing, until my head was as clear as the water.

UNEXPECTED

Surf's Up in... Sheboygan?

Sheboygan, Wisconsin may be the last place you'd expect to catch waves, but it's in this lakeshore town (known as the "Malibu of the Midwest") where I have my first surfing experience.

While some coastal surfers might scoff at the idea of freshwater surfing, Lake Michigan is not for the faint of heart. Despite visiting in late September, I still need a wetsuit, since the lake's temperatures hover between 30 and 50°F (-1 and 10°C) year-round. The absence of salt also makes the water far less buoyant, which means it's a much greater challenge to pop up (go from a paddling to a surfing stance).

My instructor, Mike Miller, owns EOS Outdoor & Surf, the only surf shop in town, and is exactly the type of person I want teaching me a potentially hazardous sport. His calm demeanor echoes the surfer dude stereotype, but he, like the others in the hearty band of local "hang tenners," has a charm that could only be cultivated in the heartland. Some popular surfing spots are famous for being unwelcoming to beginners and tourists, but the Sheboygan boys are hospitable to anyone willing to brave the chilly waters and share a beer post-surf (after all, it is Wisconsin). The group is helmed by local legend, Larry "Longboard" Williams, and his press-shy fraternal twin, Lee "Waterflea" Williams, who co-authored *Some Like It Cold: Surfing the Malibu of the Midwest*.

The group meets every morning at a local cafe to check the weather conditions. If a storm is on the way, it's all the better for choice waves – but the early autumn weather is kind to me, and I have a gentle introduction to the sport.

Try as I might, I do not master a pop-up. Instead, I basically body board (or sometimes knee board) through the mild wake. A disappointment for sure, but I'm having too much fun to care. I even wind up missing my flight back home that night, but it's worth spending extra time with the nicest brood in surfing. *Gina Zammit*



Brandenburg

Uniquely New Mexico

When he arrived in the Land of Enchantment, **Joel Balsam** wasn't sure what was in store. What he got was a crash-course in Pueblo cooking, a newfound appreciation for green chiles, and a brief trip to another dimension.

I was driving west like a bandit on the run. The July hellfire and the behemoths on wheels cutting me off on the highway were way too much – I had to get out of west Texas. Fortunately, I found refuge in a state I'd heard very little about, save for UFO conspiracies and what I'd seen on *Breaking Bad*, and I was willing to bet the show about meth dealers did not portray the best of New Mexico.

Carlsbad Caverns

Over the state border, I parked at Carlsbad Caverns National Park and zig-zagged down into the cave mouth. Every summer evening, millions of Brazilian free-tailed bats soar out for dinner in a thick, black cloud, but all I craved was cool air. As I approached, a wave of freshness washed over me and I exhaled. I felt like Indiana Jones as I delved deeper and deeper into the enormous, 73mi (117km) maze of caverns, though instead of a whip, I was carrying a far less badass GoPro. Harrison Ford, eat your heart out.

The next day, I'd planned to roll around in the surreal sand dunes at White Sands National Monument, but the heat was overpowering, and I was in no mood to become a fried egg. So, I powered directly to Santa Fe and dove face first into a prickly pear margarita at The Shed cantina, housed in a hacienda that dates back to 1692.



Meow Wolf

Out-of-this-world food and art in Santa Fe

I can't tell you if the heat was oppressive or not in Santa Fe, as I was completely distracted by the city. Smooth, beige adobe buildings lined the streets like so many anthills, housing shops selling artisanal wares, art galleries, and restaurants – plenty of restaurants.

At Tia Sophia's, I drove a fork and knife into a descendent of the first-ever breakfast burrito, a recipe that was dreamed up in 1975. Like nearly every New Mexican food worth eating, the burrito ("little donkey" in Spanish) was bathed in a bright green sauce derived from green chiles, an ingredient so beloved that New Mexicans drive around with them on their license plate.

After spending the night in my RV in the parking lot of Santa Fe's Visitors Center, I took an Uber to what might as well be a different galaxy. Part art gallery, part trippy alien amusement park, Meow Wolf is an experiment carried out by a collective of hair-brained artists that is just as much fun for adults as for children. One moment, you're trying to put together clues to figure out a family's disappearance, the next, you're walking through a refrigerator door leading to a spaceship from the future. And it only gets stranger from there.



Pueblo woman baking bread in an adobe oven

Taos Pueblo, and pueblo-style cooking

North of Santa Fe, I gazed out the window at vast mountain ranges suitable for framing until I reached Taos. This artist colony and ski town is neighbor to the UNESCO-recognized Taos Pueblo, a settlement of multi-story adobe homes that have been continuously inhabited for more than 1,000 years.

After a tranquil couple of days meandering around Taos's winding streets, I headed back south towards Española for a lesson in traditional Pueblo cooking at Norma Naranjo's Feasting Place.

I was late and the group of women from Missouri and Oklahoma let me have it with their glares – they were starving, and so was I. I was quickly hustled off to the sun room and handed hunks of *masa* (corn dough), shredded spiced pork, and corn husks. I tried to wrap my tamales, but they came out oblong, instead of the cute, rectangular packages they're supposed to be, and I

I was quickly hustled off to the sun room and handed hunks of *masa* (corn dough), shredded spiced pork, and corn husks

broke the thin piece of husk used to tie it. Meanwhile, Naranjo – a member of the Tewa-speaking Ohkay Ohwingeh Pueblo group – was wrapping delicious packets that looked like they belonged in an art gallery.

"I don't use machines," she said, looking down at her hands. "These are my machines."

As we tucked into our Pueblo feast of spicy *posole*, fresh *pico de gallo* with horno bread, and a veggie stew made from zucchini, squash, corn, and green chiles roasted in the backyard adobe oven, Naranjo explained that New Mexico is a complicated place to nail down. There are the Native American, Anglo-American, and Spanish/Mexican cultures as well as African-Americans and others who comprise the state's intricate mosaic.

"New Mexico is a very unique place," Naranjo said to the group. "I think that's why people like coming. It's the uniqueness, and that's what we hold onto."



UNEXPECTED Frozen Dead Guy Days

You'd think coffin racing would be a euphemism for chain smoking or some other deadly pursuit. But you'd be wrong. In the mountain town of Nederland, Colorado, it's the star attraction of arguably the world's most eccentric festival: Frozen Dead Guy Days.

The story starts in the mid-90s, with a young Norwegian lad, Trygve Morstol, getting kicked out of the country and leaving behind his dead grandpa, Bredo, whom he'd frozen in a cryogenic chamber he built himself in his garden shed. Talk about a cool man-cave.

What did the locals do when they discovered Gramps? Contact a legitimate cryogenic facility? Bury the poor chap? No. They threw a party. Frozen Dead Guy Days has been held every year since to help raise funds to keep the dead dude on ice.

Think of the festival as a cross between Monty Python and the zombie apocalypse: three days of frosty, death-themed merriment and silly games, including 30+ live bands, costumed polar plunges, frozen-turkey bowling, and more.

But I haven't come as a spectator – I've come to compete. The UK had never had an official entry in the coffin race before. I convinced my wife and five friends, bought some masks

and a couple of inflatable corgis, and team Royal Bloody Family was born.

It seems so simple. Teams of six pallbearers, and one rider, must carry a home-built coffin over a 650ft (200m) course filled with hay bales, mud pits, and icy hills, without it breaking or dumping the "corpse" inside on the ground. Hundreds have gathered in support of the 30 teams that compete, racing a head-to-head knockout: Lady Lumberjacks versus the Disco Queens, Rainbow Unicorns against the Toilet Plunger Knights. As we approach the start line, the crowd is hushed. This is our moment.

Or not. I'd love to tell you we won. But the truth is: coffins are heavy, we're out of shape, and team Mario Kart scuppers us with an actual banana peel thrown out the back of their box.

But then, something amazing happens. After the race, the teams take part in a Death March through town. Her Majesty is a hit. Strangers hoot and high-five us as we pass. We may have lost the race, but we win the parade. And that's the thing: To compete is honorable, but to laugh at yourself while doing so is truly enlightened. Grandpa Bredo would be proud. *Aaron Millar*

Frozen Dead Guy Days takes place every March.





NATURE & WILDLIFE

Juneau, Alaska

With landscapes that range from glacial peaks to subtropical deserts, the United States has enough diversity of terrain, flora, and fauna to satisfy the most avid wilderness lover. Our Nomads share their favorite off-the-beaten-path parks around the country, take you inside the cockpit of a whale-watching boat in Alaska, and do some moose-spotting in Montana.

UNDER THE RADAR:

4 STATE & NATIONAL PARKS

Icons like Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Zion draw visitors like magnets – and they're famous for good reason. But if you want to see astonishing natural landscapes while avoiding the crowds, these lesser-known parks are more than worthy alternatives.

Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, Colorado

The first time I climbed the Great Sand Dunes in southern Colorado, I couldn't fully comprehend it. I was in the middle of one of the driest, most land-locked states in the US, and I was gazing upon what appeared to be an inverted beach.

I went on a whim, taking the three-hour drive from Colorado Springs with a friend

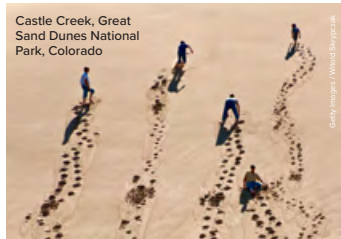
to explore the tallest sand dunes in North America, ever-shifting mountains up to 750ft (230m) high. We tried traversing the sand, zig-zagging up dune after dune, stopping to pant every few steps. The higher we got, the steeper the hills were, and the more they shifted under our bare feet. I started to crawl, digging in hand over hand until I reached an 18-inch (45-cm) ridge that extended across the tops of the dunes.

Below us, the dunes sloped downward and out – they stretched for miles, framed by the snow-topped Sangre de Cristo Mountains and the San Luis Valley. How funny it was, to see snow and sand in the same place. I couldn't stop smiling and spinning my head in every direction, trying to make sense of this anomaly of nature.

To get down, we ran and slid through the sand, leaping heel-first to dig in. The sand made the sound of scratching records as we dragged it down with us in



Canyon country, Utah



Castle Creek, Great Sand Dunes National Park, Colorado

The big five national parks in Utah get all the attention, but smaller state parks like Goblin Valley deserve more love

rivers, shrieking with joy.

The more I travel, the less often I find myself truly surprised by nature. But I've been back to the Dunes at least a dozen times since that first visit, and I've yet to grow tired of this playground. I love watching people fly down the dunes on sandboards and sleds, and sharing it with others who've never visited before. The climb never gets easier, but even on the 13th trip, the view is always worth it.

Kassandra Cloos

Goblin Valley State Park, Utah

People say that you should visit Goblin Valley State Park if you have kids. I say you

should visit Goblin Valley if you want to be a kid. There's something so delightful about the mushroom-shaped hoodoos that populate Goblin Valley. As you come to the end of the 1.5mi (2.4km) Carmel Canyon trail, you'll find them bubbling out of the valley floor like a game of Jurassic whack-a-mole. They're so goofy that they were even the star attraction of a comical fight scene in the sci-fi spoof *Galaxy Quest*.

The big five national parks in Utah get all the attention, but smaller state parks like Goblin Valley deserve more love. Nearby Arches National Park receives 1.5 million visitors per year, while Goblin Valley receives just 268,000 (not counting →

the goblins, of course). This allows you to experience similar terrain on a much more intimate scale.

Goblin Valley is an hour and a half from Arches, making it a good day trip or an easy stopover on the way to Capitol Reef or Bryce Canyon National Parks. There are six miles of trails which lead into and out of the main valley. The valley itself is a large 3mi² (7.8km²) area ideal for roaming free among the hoodoos.

You can camp inside the state park, but the nearby Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land is better. The undeveloped BLM land near Goblin Valley is so beautiful that it could qualify as its own national park. If you're self-sufficient (with food, water, tent, and a shovel), you can camp for free. The area is also one of Utah's Dark Sky Parks. So, when you're finished playing hide and seek with the goblins, you can set up camp and put yourself to sleep under the stars.

Carol Guttery

The Buffalo National River, Arkansas

I'm hiking along the 36mi (58km) Buffalo River Trail in north-central Arkansas when a herd of wild hogs stampedes across the trail. A mother hog, followed by four juveniles, dance about on their elegant little hooves for a bit before disappearing just as fast into the forest, startling a white-tailed doe that leaps out of sight as soon as I spot her.

Hiking this trail in the Buffalo River National Park Region always results in tons of up-close wildlife sightings, which is one reason it's among my favorite national parks and protected areas to visit.

Down below the trail, the Buffalo National River – America's first national river – flows through a spectacular stretch of the Ozark Mountains, winding between towering limestone bluffs and through oak-hickory forests dotted with caves and hidden "hollers" (v-shaped ravines) that feel as untouched as they must have been centuries ago.



Buffalo National River, Arkansas

Getty Images / Oana Endrey / EyeEm

While the river steals the show in the summer, I also love visiting in winter, when the leaves have dropped to open up spectacular views of the bluffs

An hour away from Eureka Springs (considered the capital of the southern Ozarks), the park draws locals and visitors year-round. These rolling mountains feature some of America's prettiest waterfalls, easy-to-reach campgrounds and cabins, miles of hiking trails, a ghost town, and a variety of canoeing and kayaking adventures.

The Buffalo National River was established in 1972 and is one of the few remaining, undammed, free-flowing rivers in the lower 48 states. The 135mi (217km) river offers challenging rapids and calm spots, but my favorite stretch is the Ponca to Kyle's Landing section.

Spanning just over 10mi (16km), this section is without a doubt one of the most scenic sections of the river. Big Bluff, one of the tallest bluff faces in America, joins Hemmed-In Hollow, one of the tallest waterfalls between the Appalachians and the Rockies, to make this the perfect kayaking day trip.

While the river steals the show in the summer, I also love visiting in winter, when the leaves have dropped to open up spectacular views of the bluffs. Though the area does get snow and ice, fall and winter are often mild – unlike the crushing, humid heat that ticks love in late summer – and

ideal for hiking or cold-weather paddling.

Heide Brandes

North Cascades National Park, Washington

One of the United States' least-visited parks, North Cascades National Park is a treasure hiding in plain sight. Just three hours from Seattle, its rugged peaks, deep forests, and alpine lakes get passed up for parks with bigger names – and bigger crowds. That means I often have the trails nearly to myself. There's nothing like a silent hike through mist-shrouded groves of ancient Douglas firs. With an abundance of day hikes, multi-day treks, and the iconic Pacific Crest Trail running through, North Cascades is forest bathing at its best.

Winter in the heart of the Cascade Mountains is even less crowded, and if you're willing to brave the cold there are more than 300 glaciers to play on. The stillness of a snowshoe walk through the park's snow-covered fields is just as enchanting as when they are covered in wildflowers.

The park engulfs some 130 glacier-fed lakes. Lake Chelan, America's third deepest, is one of them. On its crystalline shores is the tiny village of Stehekin and the park-run North Cascades Lodge. Accessible only by foot, boat, or plane, Stehekin is one of those magical places I fantasize about quitting my job for and moving to. Life is slower here – you can take the time to chat with the town gardener over a cinnamon bun the size of your head at the bakery, then rent a bike from the local school teacher. Take it on the shuttle to the top of the road and feel like a kid again careening down the gravel path, all downhill to Rainbow Falls, where the mist sprays your face. Or simply give in to the lull of the lake with some homemade ice cream on the dock and watch the flutter of swallows diving into its shimmering surface. After all, this kind of serenity doesn't come every day.

Catie Joyce-Bulay



North Cascades National Park

Shutterstock / Corbis Images / EyeEm

Behind the Wheel of an Alaskan Whale-Watching Boat

One of a handful of women captaining whale boats in Juneau, **Libby Baldwin** shares the fears, the challenges, and the unrivaled joys of spending her days with humpbacks and orcas.

It's 7am in southeast Alaska. The sun has been up for hours already, but because we're near Juneau, a capital city nestled in the world's largest temperate rainforest, it's raining, and the temperature has yet to reach 50°F (10°C). Nearly 300 days of precipitation each year keep the sky thickly blanketed in clouds. When the weather finally clears to reveal the sun, it transforms the vast stretches of channels, rivers, and old-growth forest into dazzling blues and greens; but most of the time, relentless, chilly rain is the name of the game.

This is the place I choose to live every summer in pursuit of my lifelong dream. I am a whale-watching captain, charged with an oft-overwhelming pair of responsibilities: to keep my passengers safe, and to successfully deliver an experience they're likely to have just once in a lifetime.

I have the astonishing privilege of spending my work day in the company of humpback whales and orcas. I spent six summers working as a deckhand and tour guide before I was allowed to sit for my captain's exam, a notoriously difficult four-part test administered by the Coast Guard. I was the only woman out of 25 students

I have the astonishing privilege of spending my work day in the company of humpback whales and orcas



Whale-watching, Alaska

on the course, and I'm one of a handful of women driving boats in Juneau. Every woman who's worn a deckhand's knife on their belt or stood at a vessel's helm has felt the leer of a suspicious old-timer or been asked, "You know what you're doing, little girl?" But if you show them you're tough enough, you'll find friends for life.

As a captain, your surroundings are shifting constantly beneath you, and your fellow travelers are 50ft (15m) behemoths who spend 90% of their time completely out of sight, so letting your attention drift isn't an option. You're making small decisions every few seconds for hours, measuring the desire to get your guests as close to the whales as possible against putting them or the dozens

of boats around you in danger. You're doing this for three hours at a time, up to four times a day, six days a week. It is an exhaustion you feel deep in your bones and can be downright terrifying in bad weather. It is also the purest form of joy I've ever known.

Some days, I can't see the boat in front of me through the fog, and my guests are snapping at me because they have yet to see a whale. Some days, I have to muster up excitement for the same whale I've seen all day. Some days, we see lots of whales and go home with zero tips. Some days, four-foot waves are lashing at the hull and it's all I can do to keep the boat in a straight line; but every moment, I must keep smiling, no matter how wracked my nerves, because

TRIP NOTES

Whale-watching in Juneau

There's no shortage of whale-watching companies in Juneau. Most run multiple trips, seven days a week, during the high season (May-September). Smaller boats offer a more intimate and adventurous experience, while a large vessel may have heated interiors and snack bars. The best operators voluntarily abide by "Whale Sense Alaska" guidelines, which include reduced speeds and time limits around whales. A tour typically includes sightings of humpback whales and Steller sea lions (daily), orcas (occasionally), and bald eagles. Booking well in advance is recommended, especially in June, July, and August. Cost varies by operator, but average US \$110-150 for adults, US \$100 for children, aged 3-12, and free for infants. Most tours offer add-ons including visits to the world-famous Mendenhall Glacier, city tours, nature hikes, and outdoor salmon-bake buffets.

Other must-sees

Take a helicopter tour, then walk on a glacier or catch a ride with a dogsled team. Ride the Mount Roberts Tramway up 1,800ft (550m) for unbeatable views of the Gastineau Channel. Or for a truly unforgettable experience, book a seaplane ride and close encounter on nearby Admiralty Island, home to the world's largest concentration of grizzly bears.

Getting there

Juneau is surrounded by mountains and a massive icefield, so there is no road access. Independent travelers must fly into Juneau International Airport or take a ferry from Washington state. Flying is much cheaper, but the ferries travel the Inside Passage, one of the most spectacular waterways in the world.

everyone looks to me for how they should feel.

But some days, it is sunny enough to see every glittering peak of the snowcapped Chilkat Mountains as we zoom along at 30 knots. Some days, a woman embraces me with tears in her eyes and thanks me, because she's been waiting 50 years to see a whale. Some days, I'll be sitting with engines off in silence, and suddenly, an entire family of orcas bursts to the surface not 5ft (1.5m) away, and a starry-eyed little girl tells me she wants to be a marine biologist someday. I was that little girl on whale-watching tours, and now I lead them. Those are the days that make every tough moment worthwhile.

Travel smart with our **Safety** advice



Of Moose and Mountains: Hiking in Glacier National Park

Cyan-colored lakes, spectacular views, and surprise encounters with charismatic megafauna – **Tim Neville's** latest journey to one of his favorite parks doesn't disappoint.

“There!” the stranger booms. He lowers his binoculars and points off trail. To my right, a hillside of broom and buckwheat collapses into a wide ravine before regrouping on the other side. I squint and scan. A tree. A rock. Another rock. Wait. That rock moved.

“There!” I blurt out. Even from a distance you can see the telltale bony mitt of a moose's antler rack.

“Oh,” the stranger says, quizzically. He's an American in a navy-blue Georgia Tech t-shirt. He points 200 yards (180m) and a good 30 degrees to the left of my find. “I was looking at that one,” he says. That one is another moose accompanied by – what's this?! – a baby moose! We all gawk for a bit and then walk on feeling rather giddy. It's been a good hike, a three-moose kind of hike.

Day hikes in Glacier National Park

My wife, Heidi, and daughter, Evie, and I had rolled into Glacier National Park in northwestern Montana the day before. Glacier sometimes plays second fiddle to Yellowstone National Park, the world's first national park, which sits about six hours south. But, for all the seismic, geyser-spewing wonder of Yellowstone, Glacier sings with a wild alpine grandeur rarely

seen this side of Switzerland.

Experiencing the park, like pretty much any park in the US, is best done on foot. More than 700mi (1,125km) of trails trace across Glacier's 1,583mi² (5,000km²), and over 25 years I've seen my share of them. I've backpacked under the gaze of white mountain goats for days in the backcountry above Lake McDonald, and used the park's free shuttle buses to connect trails up and over Siyeh Pass. Step only a few feet off the Going to the Sun Road, the park's spectacular through-road that rises to more than 6,600ft (2,101m), and you'll find meadows fuzzy with flowers. Once, I eased myself into a frigid alpine lake for a skinny dip when I heard a splash along the far bank. That's the first and only time I've bathed with a moose.

Many Glacier

For this trip, we get a car-camping site at the Many Glacier Campground not far from Swiftcurrent Lake and settle in under the pines. Campgrounds in American national parks are wonderful places, a woody microcosm of the nation bound by a love for being in wild and beautiful settings. Kids roar around the campground on bicycles. Parents set out potato salad and sausages on picnic tables draped in



Moose, Glacier National Park

Once, I eased myself into a frigid alpine lake for a skinny dip when I heard a splash along the far bank. That's the first and only time I've bathed with a moose.

gingham cloths. We pull out a map and make a plan.

In all we have three days to hike in the park and we want to spend them ticking off easy to moderately difficult trails into the alpine country. We want day hikes no longer than 11mi (18km) round trip, and we plan to explore two regions of the park – Many Glacier and Two Medicine. We'll take time to sniff the asters and reward ourselves with ice cream. I pack a light fly-fishing rod in hopes of landing a rainbow trout. We're pretty sure we'll see some big mammals, too – you pretty much always do.

On our first day, the air hangs hot and smoky over the valleys, blurring the piebald peaks. It's August, fire season, so we stay low and set out on an easy hike around

Swiftcurrent Lake. Young couples float atop the denim-blue water in handmade rowboats rented from a shack near the Many Glacier Hotel, a 214-room throwback of wood and stone built in 1915 at the far end of the lake. An eagle circles overhead.

I find a small stream feeding the lake from the southwest and fish for a few hours with no luck, while Heidi and Evie hike on. They don't go far – maybe another mile. It's a little over 8mi (13km) one way from here up to a viewpoint over Grinnell Glacier, one of the rapidly shrinking features that gives the park its name. You can cut the distance down to about 8mi (13km) round trip by taking two free boat rides across two of the lakes you'd otherwise hike, including this one. →



Iceberg Lake

When George Bird Grinnell, an ethnographer and explorer, first saw the glacier that now carries his name in 1887, the ice covered more than 700 acres (2.8km²). Today the glacier spans less than 150 acres (0.6 km²).

“The glaciers would be melting anyway,” a ranger later told me. “Climate change is just speeding it up.”

Iceberg Lake and Two Medicine

Day two is our big day, a 10mi (16km) trip up to Iceberg Lake. We set out early to avoid the heat. The trail climbs steadily and steeply out of the Many Glacier area, passing in and out of the woods until it pokes through the tree line. A spur trail leads north to Ptarmigan Lake, but we carry on to one of the more stunning sites in the park: a cyan bowl of glacial meltwater cupped against an amphitheater of sheer black rock. Mountain goats wander along the cliff bands. Chunks of ice bob below. The place is so magical it can be hard to leave. But we do. That’s when we see

TRIP NOTES

Getting there

The most popular way to get to Glacier is by car. The closest airport is in Kalispell, Montana, about 30mi (48km) from West Glacier. Missoula, Montana, about 150mi (240km) south, has more frequent air service.

When to go

The joke goes Montana has two seasons: Winter and August. It’s not too far off. Snow can stack up to 80ft (24m) or more atop Going to the Sun Road. Late July is lovely as is August, though fire season can make things smoky. Expect snow as early as September.

Wildlife

Glacier is home to grizzly bears, moose, and other varieties of charismatic, but dangerous, megafauna. [Here’s how to keep yourself safe.](#) (p95)

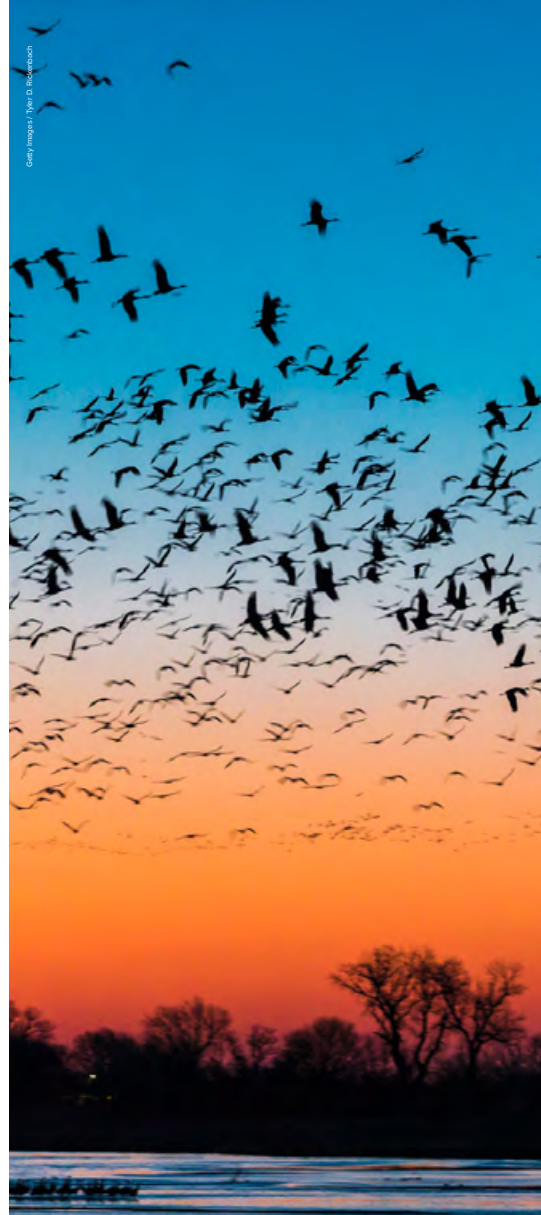
the three moose.

By the end of the trip, we’ll see two more. It happens on our final day, when we pack up camp and drive to Two Medicine in the southeast corner of the park, a fairly remote region that was once a railroad depot. We take a boat ride across Two Medicine Lake before setting out on a 4mi (6.5km) round-trip hike up to Upper Two Medicine Lake. Here the smoke from wildfires has cleared. Sinopah Mountain rises above like us like a bell.

The world up here is reduced to blues and greens with flashes of white. The views over soaring mountains and placid lakes are what keep me coming back. Some day I’ll head up and over Gunsight Pass or spend a night at the Granite Park Chalet. I’d like to see Grinnell Glacier, too, before it’s gone.

For now, though, I’m happy to hike along, the soft steps of my daughter and wife plopping along in rhythm. Suddenly, we hear some rustling off in the woods. We all freeze. A bear?

Nope, just another pair of moose.



Getty Images / Ken B. Kneibach

UNEXPECTED

Sandhill Crane Migration

The feathery squadron fans out across a cloudless sky, like lines of a composition book – thousands of sandhill cranes flying into the Platte River Valley. At a distance, the hazy lines of birds, described once as “whiffs of smoke” by legendary naturalist Dr. Jane Goodall, appear to be endless. I’m spellbound. What’s the chance that anybody could see cranes in such massive numbers within minutes?

I discovered that the possibility is almost certain – if you visit South Central Nebraska during March and early April. A key stopover point along the Central Flyway Path, the valley’s braided channels are a literal bird magnet for migrating species to rest, recover, and refuel before they continue on their journey to breeding grounds in the North.

The numbers are staggering; 80% of the world’s population of sandhill cranes migrate through the state – in total, that’s about 500,000 to 600,000 birds feasting on farmland grain leftovers and resting along protected river sandbars for six weeks. And, at four to five feet tall, with a wingspan of up to six feet, the sandhill crane is quite impressive in stature. I wanted to see this epic, annual “big bird” party with my own eyes.

The best way to view the birds en masse is at dusk or dawn, within the covert shelter of a blind, either at the Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary or the Crane Trust Nature and Visitor Center. Both organizations offer guided, educational migration tours with viewing opportunities from these enclosures.

Peering through the blind windows only a few feet from the sandbars, I see the wavy “whiffs of smoke” approaching. An inky haze begins to fill the sky. Hovering like helicopters, each bird suddenly drops down, claiming a spot on the coveted sandbar. I expect the courting rituals – dancing and curtsying – but not the deafening sound. I’m soon engulfed in the noisy vibration of fluttering wings overhead and the screeching and squawking of the crane reunion. I follow the orchestral performance with relish – it’s my portal to an event that’s been happening in the same spot for many millennia. *Gigi Ragland*



ADVENTURE

Grinnell
Glacier, Glacier
National Park

Whether your happy place is the top of a mountain or the deck of a sailboat, the extraordinary variety of landscapes in the US means the range of outdoor activities is just as broad. Find a hidden trove of fresh powder in the Colorado Rockies, tackle mountain-bike trails in North Carolina, or kayak in secret coves along Maine's rocky shore.

BLUEBIRD COLORADO

Greg Benchwick finds freedom, connection, and speed on the Rocky Mountains' famed slopes.

Skiing is about freedom. It's about exploration. It's about controlling speed and adrenaline and fear to forge a remarkable connection with the mountains, with yourself, and with all the other like-minded fools who find purity and solace in high, cold, and windy places.

I started skiing when I was just two years old – I still have a picture of me walking around the base of Breckenridge, Colorado, with red plastic skis and brown corduroys, to prove it.

Since then, I've skied resorts across the US West, and taught skiing in Vail, Colorado, and the Sierra Nevada in Southern Spain – the skiing is terrible, but the après parties are off the hook.

With the birth of my daughter eight years back, I've changed the way I view skiing as a sport and as a way of life. As I strive to hand over the sense of freedom that skiing can bring to a new generation, it's less about getting radical, and more about finding peace in a world dominated by 140-character rants, short attention spans, and little connection with our wild and open places. It's also about keeping the whining at bay – I've found bringing Starbursts for a power-up every chair lift ride helps.

Champagne powder, world-class bumps, and perfect bunny slopes

While I've skied the world, for me, there is no better place on earth to take to the slopes than in my home state of Colorado, land of Champagne powder, legendary ski resorts – 28 in all – and 300 days of sunshine a year.

I grew up here, tackling the super-fun tree paths like Schoolmarm at Keystone, and taking half-day Fridays to ski my local hill at the Broadmoor in Colorado Springs (it's closed now – and if we don't act on climate change, we'll all face a future of less snow, warmer winters, and less powder for everyone).



The Maroon Bells

While I've skied the world, for me, there is no better place on earth to take to the slopes than in my home state of Colorado

Growing up, Aspen's Buttermilk Mountain was one of my favorites. This is, without a doubt, the best learner hill in all of Colorado (and perhaps the world). Every run is wide and perfectly pitched for beginners. While a private lesson with an instructor here will top out above US \$900 a day, it might just be worth it.

Best of all, it seems nobody really skis Aspen. Mostly, they just walk around town in furry boots.

Aspen is comprised of four unique mountains. Snowmass is perfect for families with skiers of all abilities. Buttermilk is a great beginner hill. Aspen Mountain (aka Ajax) is incredibly steep and a bump-lovers'

paradise, while Aspen Highlands is home to my favorite powder run in the United States.

The hike-to-terrain Highlands Bowl is truly the stuff of Colorado legend. You'll have to earn your turns to get to this 2,500-vertical-foot (762-vertical-meter) bowl. It's about a 30-minute hike to get to the 12,392ft (3,775m) summit. From here, you have perhaps the world's finest view of the Maroon Bells peaks. Best of all, this out-of-the-way spot is patrolled for avalanches by ski patrol, so you don't need to have avalanche gear or training.

It's a special place. From the top, it offers some of the steepest powder turns around. Because the hike separates out the gapers →



Aspen

Photo: © iStockphoto.com



© Getty Images/John Wiley
Aspen

(a local word for tourists), you can almost always find fresh powder here. After a big dump, this is truly epic.

The times, they are a-changing

Skiing has changed a lot in Colorado since I was rocking my neon fanny pack and ripping sweet backscratchers on mogul runs like Drunken Frenchman at Winter Park's Mary Jane (like they say no pain, no Jane).

Snowboarding has caught on in a big way, and the resorts in Summit County (including Breckenridge, Copper Mountain, and Keystone) are often packed to the gills. Consolidation means more resorts are owned by big conglomerates. In short, skiing has gone corporate, and that sucks.

Sometimes I wonder why I do it. Why would I pay US \$209 to ski Vail for a day?

Why would I pack my feet into impossibly tight boots that make me walk like a robot? Why would I take my daughter into the cold to slide down icy slopes when there's a perfectly good TV at home?

The answer comes when the sun peeks out from the grey clouds and that big, beautiful Colorado sky appears. It's my daughter's ear-to-ear smile after she and her BFF took their first run without parents down Arapahoe Basin's steep front face. It's the feel of the wind on my cheek, the laughing crowds and whoops from the chair when I pull off my trademark backscratcher grab, and the collective feel of comradeship and community as we fly down slopes of snow and ice in a ridiculous pursuit that makes no sense on paper, but makes perfect sense in our hearts.

TRIP NOTES

Skiing Colorado is easier and cheaper than you'd think. Here are a few tips to get you started.

Skip the day lift ticket. The way to go is a season pass or four pack, such as the Epic Pass and Ikon Pass.

Pick a destination that fits your needs. Families will love Steamboat, Copper Mountain, Snowmass, and Keystone.

Snowboarders love Copper and Vail, while big-mountain riders should look to Aspen, Crested Butte (some of the gnarliest skiing in the US), Telluride, and the one-lift wonder of Silverton. While runs are a little short, the biggest powder is almost always found at Wolf Creek.

Mom-and-pop resorts are still worth it. You'll save a bunch of cash, people are friendly, and the relics of freedom and anti-establishmentarianism are alive and well on forgotten hills like Ski Cooper, Monarch, Arapahoe Basin, Purgatory, and Sunlight.

Most people fly into Denver (DIA), then schlepp up I-70 to the Summit County resorts. But Steamboat, Aspen, Vail, Telluride, and Crested Butte all have airports nearby, with regular direct flights all winter long. It's a little more expensive than going into DIA, but missing the traffic is priceless.

Colorado gets better later in the winter, but the snow can be finicky. Check out a source like OpenSnow (<https://opensnow.com/dailysnow/colorado/>) for spot-on snow forecasts.

Skiing and snowboarding are dangerous sports. Wear a helmet, ski in control, and, for heaven's sake, don't cut me off!



© Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce

UNEXPECTED

A Slice of Portugal on Cape Cod

Steering between Cape Cod's cranberry bogs and sand dunes, I spin the car radio dial in search of music. What I find surprises me, because instead of pop hits or country, I pick up the haunting sounds of a *fado* song coming from a Portuguese station.

When I moved to New England a decade ago, I discovered a region rich in languages: indigenous Wampanoag people working to revive an ancestral tongue, neighbors calling Italian greetings in Boston's North End, and the French Canadian accents I hear near my Vermont home. But it took a Cape Cod road trip to meet the Portuguese-speaking descendants of Azorean and Madeiran families who settled on the shores of Massachusetts.

I am reluctant to switch off the radio when I pull into Provincetown, the town perched at the end of Cape Cod. While Plymouth, Massachusetts, is often remembered as the first landing-place of the Mayflower Pilgrims, they originally touched down right here. There's even a monument. But first, I make a beeline for Provincetown Portuguese Bakery, where a baker is rolling pieces of fried dough, called *malasadas*, in a generous layer of sugar.

Crispy and sweet, the Madeiran specialties are a favorite at the Provincetown Portuguese Festival that's held every June. To ensure a safe year on the famously treacherous coast of Cape Cod, the fishermen line up their brightly decorated boats for a traditional blessing of the fleet.

Malasada in hand, I wander from the bakery to the nearby Pilgrim Monument. Locals call Provincetown "the end of the world," but to me that fried dough was a sugary rejoinder to the nickname. Because for hopeful immigrants from the Pilgrims to the Portuguese, Cape Cod wasn't the world's end, it was their first glimpse of a new one.

Jen Rose Smith

KAUAI: BEYOND THE BEACHES

The hint is in the nickname – the “Garden Island” beckons you to venture outdoors. **Shaun Busuttill** is more than happy to answer the call of Kauai.

Kayaking down the Wailuā River

It's just after dawn, and I'm paddling up the Wailuā River en route to a “secret” waterfall. The water is a shimmering, orange-tinged mirror to the sky – so still, and so peaceful. It's just me out here, for the moment anyway, amongst the birds and the trees and the silence. My map says I'll need to bank my kayak at a small island roughly 2.25mi (3.6km) upstream, passing an old Hawaiian village on the way, before commencing a 20-minute jungle trek to reach the 98ft (30m) Uluwehi Falls, which, to be honest, isn't so much of a secret anymore – it's way too beautiful to be kept under wraps.

But Wailuā River was, and still is, sacred. Besides being Kauai's longest waterway, Wailuā River was once the center of royal power on the island. Indeed, it was here, on the river's banks, that native Hawaiian royalty came to give birth. Today, the site is a National Historic Landmark, a refuge of ancient stone temples set amongst the lush interior of the valley – it isn't called the Garden Island for nothing.

Hiking the Sleeping Giant East Trail

Not far from Wailuā River stands Nounou

There are several trails up to the summit of Nounou Mountain, but the Sleeping Giant East Trail is easily the most accessible, and photogenic

Mountain, aka the Sleeping Giant, so called because of its profile: viewed side-on from the coastal town of Kapaa, the mountain looks like a giant lying down. And that's pretty much what I want to do, right now, as I scramble up the summit – the Giant's Head – and finally reach the roof of the mountain.

The Sleeping Giant East Trail is one of Kauai's most popular hikes, and for good reason. First, at only 3.5m (5.6km) round-trip along a mostly-shaded forest trail, with just a 985ft (300m) change in elevation and minor scrambling in parts, anyone – from little Tommy to Nana Beatrice – can do it. And second, the views from the top, which compensate adequately for the slog, are sublime: a 360-degree panorama of Kauai's beautiful east, including cameos by Kalepa Ridge, the Wailuā Valley, and the sweeping coast. There are several trails up to the summit of Nounou Mountain, but the Sleeping Giant East Trail is easily the most accessible, and photogenic.

Zip-lining over Kauai's verdant valleys

I'm strapped into my harness and ready



Na Pali Coast

to fly. My legs tremble as I look across the valley, knowing that, in mere seconds, I'll be zooming over it at some significant speed. Though my nervousness might not be evident to others, nerves are to be expected. Humans weren't meant to fly.

I've driven over to Kauai's north shore, past taro plantations and under looming, rugged mountains, for a half-day adventure of zip-lining, threading my way over lush forest canopies that stretch to the horizon. The longest of the nine thrilling zip-lines is just shy of 1,312ft (400m), and you need to walk up a 33ft (10m) ramp to get to the platform. Once at the top, facing the Hanalei Mountains, there's nowhere to go but down, letting go of the fear as the zip-line roars like a small jet engine.

Sailing around the Nā Pali Coast

It's only been 30 minutes and I've already spotted three pods of Hawaiian Spinner dolphins. I'm still waiting for my first turtle

sighting, but I have the rest of the day to see one. I'm sailing along the breathtaking Nā Pali coast in Kauai's northwest, easily the island's most majestic and dramatic backdrop, featuring 3,940ft (1,200m) jagged peaks, hidden beaches, and towering waterfalls. The marine life is almost beside the point.

The Nā Pali Coast is considered the 8th natural wonder of the world, and it easily tops the list of must-dos in Kauai. This part of the island is completely inaccessible by road, so the only way to see it is on a sailing trip along its coast, on a helicopter scenic flight, or on a strenuous 11mi (18km) hike. Personally, I'd choose a sailing trip every time. Nothing beats seeing this jewel of Hawaii from its most awe-inspiring vantage point – from the sea looking up – exploring secluded sea caves and snorkeling in crystalline water where you have every chance of seeing a green sea turtle, as I eventually do.

TRIP NOTES

Getting there

Several airlines fly direct into Kauai's Lihue Airport from major cities on North America's west coast. Alternatively, take an inter-island flight with Hawaiian Airlines from Honolulu. Once on the island, the best way to get around is to hire a car.

Kayaking the Wailuā River

Kayaks can be rented from as low as US \$50 per half day including all equipment (paddles, lifejacket, dry bags, lunch containers, etc). It's also possible to join a guided kayaking and hiking tour to Uluwehi Falls.

Sleeping Giant East Trail

The trailhead of the Sleeping Giant East Trail is near the end of Haleiwa Road, off Kuhio Highway. Plenty of parking space is available.

Zip-lining

Several operators offer zip-line tours all over Kauai, all year-round. A half-day tour starts at around US \$130 per person.

Sailing the coast

Choose between a morning or afternoon cruise around the Nā Pali coast. All sailing trips depart from either Port Allen or Kikiaola Small Boat Harbor in Waimea. Half-day tours can be booked for about US \$180 per person (including lunch and refreshments).

The Kessel Run Quandary: A Moment of Truth in the Smoky Mountains

Poised at the top of the gnarliest mountain bike run in the Great Smokies' Fire Mountain Trail System, Jason Frye has a big decision to make.

Spanning the border of North Carolina and Tennessee, Great Smoky Mountains National Park sees more than 12 million visitors every year. They come for waterfall hikes and mountain views, to get a taste of the great outdoors. I go for another reason: adventure.

I grew up a few hours away and I've hiked hundreds of miles in the park, visited at least two dozen waterfalls, seen bear and elk – and crowds of visitors. So when I go to the Smokies now, it's to places the throngs haven't found yet. Today, that's where I am: straddling the saddle of a mountain bike looking down at Cherokee, North Carolina from the top of the Kessel Run, a hardcore mountain bike trail that's part of the Fire Mountain Trail System.

Yesterday, I rode the Tsali Recreation Area Trail System near Bryson City, getting reacquainted with mountain bikes and downhill rides. I worked the looping trails, going from retired logging roads to downhill runs to roads, building up my confidence as each loop increased in difficulty, technicality, and the size of the

I take off my sunglasses to wipe the sweat away and to take an unfiltered look at the wildflowers growing in riots nearby



Mountain biking, North Carolina

run. Now, I'm here at the top of the biggest run around.

I take off my sunglasses to wipe the sweat away and to take an unfiltered look at the wildflowers growing in riots nearby. The ride up contributed to my sweat, but my nerves have added just as much. I take a long drink from my water bottle and run through the decision I have to make: ride the Kessel Run or admit defeat.

It's been like this the last few times I've come to the Smoky Mountains. I blend my adventure, balancing a relaxing day with a knuckle-whitening, adrenaline-pumping afternoon. One day, I float down Deep Creek in an innertube, lounging, swimming in the few deep pools, and relishing the

cool water. The next day, I'm at Nantahala Outdoor Center boarding a bus bound for the French Broad River and an afternoon of rafting Class II and III rapids. There are big Class IV and V rapids nearby, but I'm not ready for that.

This trip has been the same, so before I headed to Fire Mountain, before I rode Tsali, I went to Cades Cove in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, one of the park's most-visited places. Here, an 11mi (18km) loop road circles a valley once thick with cabins and farms, now home to black bears and hordes of white-tailed deer. I avoided the crowds by showing up early on a Saturday morning when the loop road is closed to cars (Cades Cove is closed to

cars every Wednesday and Saturday until 10am from May through September). That ride – flat, paved, placid – is about as far away from Fire Mountain's Kessel Run as you can get.

But now I really do have to decide: Kessel Run or an afternoon of fly fishing the Oconaluftee River? Another sip from my water bottle. Another look at the mountain peaks around, at the dirt and wood track leading downhill, at the glittering ribbon of the Oconaluftee River below.

I picture myself hip-deep in the river, fly rod waving overhead, and it's settled. There's no quicker way down than the Kessel Run, though. I know I'll be donning my waders in less than 12 parsecs.

TRIP NOTES

In addition to campgrounds in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, there are plenty of places to stay in Bryson City and Cherokee. Campgrounds cater to tents and RVs, and there's glamping in yurts and vintage trailers, rustic cabins throughout the area, and even the high-roller suites of Cherokee's casino hotel. I switch it up, going for the big sky views of a mountaintop campsite one trip, and chic Airstream glamping the next.

Bike rentals are available through several outfitters, depending on where you're riding. In Cades Cove, the Cades Cove Camp Store has a fleet of bikes available for those car-free mornings. For mountain bikes, try outfitters in Bryson City. And for whitewater rafting on tame or wild water, stop by Nantahala Outdoor Center to book a trip.

EXPLORING THE MAINE COAST BY BOAT

From discovering hidden coves to joining the crew on a working lobster boat, **Barbara Rogers** explains why Maine's rugged shoreline is best experienced by sea.

The typical Maine vacation involves lying on the beach, visiting lighthouses, and eating lobster on a wharf. I prefer to explore Maine's rocky coast by sea each summer – it introduces me to the local wildlife and shows me aspects of the region that land travelers can never experience. Whether aboard a kayak or a windjammer under sail, I feel every movement of the sea and appreciate its power.

Kayaking in Acadia National Park

I'm not sure who was more surprised, as I silently rounded the sloping rock, me or the seal 10ft (3m) from my kayak. The seal hesitated, clearly unsure whether to stay or slide off into the water. He chose the latter and was gone in a splash. The swells grew larger as my husband and I headed across the bay. We played our kayaks like surfboards as we rode the waves, little black-and-white guillemots coasting through the water beside us.

Looking a live lobster in the eye as it tries to catch my hand in its snapping claw is quite different from meeting one on my plate

Visitors seldom venture to the Schoodic Peninsula, north of the main part of Acadia National Park on Mount Desert Island. Only here in Frenchman's Bay can we paddle with just seals and eagles for company, beach on tiny islands, or explore the sea caves that pierce the solid wall of cliffs on uninhabited Ironbound Island. Devil's Den is an eight-foot gap that opens into the island's interior, one of the park's secret places and only reached by kayak.

Catching lobster in Portland

Looking a live lobster in the eye as it tries to catch my hand in its snapping claw is quite different from meeting one on my plate. I was grateful for the thick rubber gloves Captain Tom had given me when I boarded his lobster boat, *Lucky Catch*. I was helping haul big wire traps over the side and retrieve these tasty, if feisty, crustaceans as part of his 1.5-hour lobstering trip. I had never been on a working boat and I learned that there's a lot

more to catching lobster than hauling traps.

Sustainability laws, for example, which is why we were measuring this one to determine its age. Tossing undersized lobsters overboard, along with a hitchhiking hermit crab, we add a bag of bait herring before dropping the trap back into Casco Bay. This is how all 130 million pounds (60 million kg) of Maine lobster are harvested annually, by hand and trap by trap, in boats like *Lucky Catch*. Back in Portland Harbor,

we could buy our catch at a discount, and a dockside restaurant cooked it; lobster doesn't get fresher than that.

Sailing on a Maine windjammer

Red sails against the two masts formed an ever-changing pattern overhead as I lounged on the deck of the 95ft (29m) ketch *Angelique*, sailing through the waters of Penobscott Bay. It was two days into my week-long windjammer cruise and →



Cathy Images / Peter Dennen

A lobsterman prepares bait on Casco Bay



Kayaking in Acadia National Park



Puffin, Eastern Egg Rock

already I was comfortable with the moving deck and the rhythms of shipboard life. My husband Tim, who loves any craft under sail, was happily hoisting sails, hauling lines, and taking turns at the helm; my 12-year-old daughter Mary staked out a perch on the flat deck-house roof, handy when it was time for her favorite job of furling *Angelique's* red sails. Me? I gave an occasional hand, but was happy leaning against a chest on the deck, watching the shore slide past.

That proved surprisingly absorbing. We passed little fir-clad islands shaped like hedgehogs, larger ones with summer cottages and an occasional lighthouse. In the evenings, we'd put in at a deserted cove or tiny village where the only businesses were artist studios and an ice cream stand. One night, the crew built a driftwood fire on the beach and we feasted on fresh corn and lobsters. For an idyllic week, without phones or email, we played tag with porpoises, waved at lobstermen, and watched osprey soar overhead, following the winds and tides and often not knowing where we were or caring where we anchored that night.

Spying on puffins

I'm not normally a birdwatcher. But puffins? They're different, and on a cruise to Machias Seal Island I discovered that I could watch them for hours. There are two places in Maine to see these denizens of chilly North Atlantic waters: Egg Rock, off Boothbay Harbor, and the larger colony at Machias Seal Island. Puffins nest on these remote outcrops in the summer to raise their pufflings, sharing the island with nesting razorbills, murrelets, and Arctic terns.

We saw all of these on our cruise from Cutler, but the puffins stole the show with their big, bright-colored bills and orange feet. I discovered that I'm enchanted by their stuffed-toy shape and bouncing walk, and by the way they seem dressed in little tuxedos that make them look like ducks playing penguin.

As we slowly circled the island, we had plenty of chance to watch them on the rocky shore, flying, diving, and bobbing up and down in the water. Although this is a trip for birders, not a sightseeing cruise, the puffins provided plenty of entertainment for me.

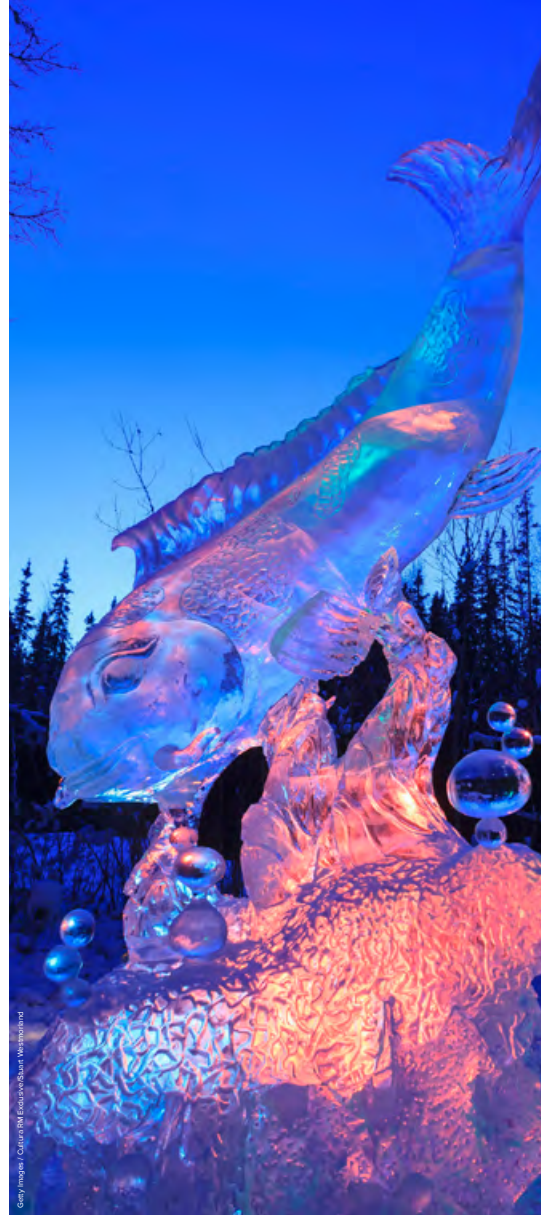
TRIP NOTES

Catching lobster
Cruises leave from Portland; others leave from various Maine ports, but not all are hands-on experiences. Trip cost: US \$35 for adults, US \$20 for children.

Kayaking in Acadia National Park
Kayak rentals and tours are offered all along the Maine coast, in Acadia at Bar Harbor and Southwest Harbor. Half-day guided tours cost about US \$50.

Sailing in a Maine windjammer
Windjammers sail from Camden and Rockland, on cruises ranging from three days to a week. Six-night cruises begin around US \$1,000, shorter from about US \$600.

Puffin watching
Cruises sail from New Harbor, Boothbay Harbor, and Cutler; prices begin at US \$35, children US \$15. Learn about local puffin conservation projects at the Project Puffin Visitor Center in Rockland.



Getty Images / Cultural IM / Expressive / Westlightphoto

UNEXPECTED

World Ice Art Championships

I can't help but think of Robert Frost's famous philosophical puzzle as I stroll through the World Ice Art Championships in Fairbanks, Alaska: will the world end in fire, or ice? Judging by the shimmering, phantasmagoric sculptures at the Tanana Valley Fairgrounds, it won't be ice. Though they may be standing still, these sculptures are far too lively to represent the end of anything.

More than 100 experts from Europe, Asia, and North America have turned one-ton (927kg) blocks of ice into vibrant depictions of mythical beings, wild animals, and historic scenes. Alaska's second-largest city is a reliably frigid venue for the planet's best ice carvers to work outdoors from mid-February to the end of March. Happily, this is also an excellent time to view the Northern Lights.

I'm bundled up against temperatures that can dive below 14°F (-10°C), but Fairbanks' sheltered location with little wind means I can wander the festival grounds in comfort. Arthurian jousting, Wagnerian apocalypse, soaring griffons, and elvish fairylands – the sculptures depict universes both real and imagined.

Local carvers offer workshops where I try my hand at this art, and I find it is nowhere near as easy as it looks, even though I'm wielding a small electric saw meant for delicate shaping.

"You're working without a net," explains my instructor because, once it's sawn or ground away, ice cannot be put back. And, although this is a winter art, it turns out heat is the final touch: I smooth all my ragged surfaces and curves with a small blowtorch, and wind up with a mediocre, faceless, alien-planet monolith. As always, best to leave the real work to professionals.

Eric Lucas



Mt. Redoubt, North Cascades National Park

Getty Images / Michael Thomson

TRAVEL SMARTER

NEED TO KNOW

Ready to explore your boundaries and plan your own US adventure? First, check out our expert tips to help you travel smarter and protect yourself against weather, crime, and other dangers. What's the best way to get around? How can you ensure you're traveling responsibly? What should you do if you encounter a bear? Learn all that and more.

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Climate & Weather

The USA's size and varied topography and weather mean you can have an unforgettable holiday experience somewhere, any time of year.

There's never a bad time to go on vacation in the USA. While the west coast's maritime climate is mild year-round and Hawaii is consistently balmy, some regions enjoy four distinctive seasons — sometimes all in one day.

Beware Mother Nature's fickle moods at certain times of year. Unless you like it hot and steamy, summer might not be best for a Southeastern sojourn. Expect searing summer temperatures in desert states, including California, Nevada, Utah, and Arizona.

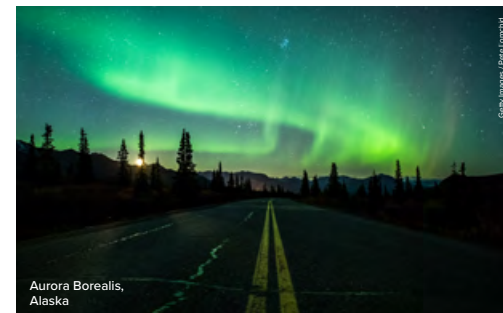
From June to November, hurricanes can affect Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic coastal states, with late August and September typically the peak. Spring brings tornado threats to a swathe of the Great Plains known as Tornado Alley.

Here is when to travel where, and what to watch for:

Winter (December-February)

Powder hounds can get their fix in the Pacific Coast Ranges and Rocky Mountains of the West or the Appalachians in the East. Or dodge the cold with a winter sunshine escape in Florida.

Highlights: winter is less crowded at popular national parks like Yosemite and Yellowstone. See Yosemite's rare firefall in February, when Horsetail Fall resembles cascading flames in the low sun. Yellowstone is stunning in the snow, with wolves easier to spot.



Aurora Borealis, Alaska

Getty Images / Alex Lomond

Spring (March-May)

Spring comes late in northern states and higher elevations, but makes up for it with an explosion of blossoms.

Highlights: wildflowers bloom in the alpine meadows of the Four Corners region where Arizona, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico meet. Or visit Nebraska for the spectacular, annual sandhill crane migration.

Summer (June-August)

Ski resorts become mountain playgrounds. Beaches beckon on every coast and lakeshore. National and state parks offer adventures (and visitors) galore. Snowmelt and warmer weather makes summer perfect for white-water rafting in Colorado.

Highlights: go whale watching off Maine, Massachusetts, and Long Island. Or watch the world's largest colony of urban bats leave their downtown Austin, Texas bridge roost every evening at dusk.

Fall (September-November)

Autumn brings a kaleidoscope of colors and harvests of grapes and pumpkins. The fierce heat of summer dissipates in desert states and the Deep South.

Highlights: see the brilliant golds of Colorado's aspens and glorious foliage across New England, the Great Smokies, and Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Fall is also the start of Northern Lights season in Alaska.

Peter Ellegard

Beware Mother Nature's fickle moods at certain times of year. Unless you like it hot and steamy, summer might not be best for a Southeastern sojourn

Getting Around

Planes, trains, or automobiles – **Peter Ellegard** has tried all of these ways to get around the USA, including RVs (aka motorhomes). Each has advantages and disadvantages.

It's easy to forget just how big this country is. More than 1,500mi (2,415km) from north to south and nearly 2,700mi (4,345km) across, the continental USA spans four time zones. So, what's the best way to explore its cities, rural communities, and beyond?

Flying

For long-distance journeys, where time matters, flying wins. It's also good value, as competition from low-cost airlines has driven ticket prices down.

But because airline routes radiate from large hubs, getting from A to B often involves flying via C and even D if traveling between regional airports. Domestic baggage allowances are lower than on international flights and you'll pay for every bag. Factor in the extra time at airports and the hassle of security screening, and its appeal wanes.

Hit the road

Built around the automobile, the USA is crisscrossed by multi-lane freeways and state highways. Driving is a joy and inexpensive thanks to low fuel prices; I rarely spend more than US \$40 on a tankful of gas (as it's called here).

Expect traffic jams driving in and around big cities. The five most-congested cities are Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, Atlanta, and Miami.



RV camping in the Arizona desert

Road signage can also be confusing. Missing a turn or taking a wrong freeway exit can scupper plans

Overnight parking at city hotels is also expensive, even more so for valet parking.

Renting a car in one state and dropping it off in another typically incurs a hefty one-way drop-off fee, sometimes hundreds of dollars.

Road signage can also be confusing. Missing a turn or taking a wrong freeway exit can scupper plans – as I discovered on an early Miami trip when I got lost for hours trying to find the Everglades and accidentally drove onto the old, banked Miami racetrack after a wrong turn. Thankfully, these days you can rent a GPS unit along with your car for around US \$10 a day, or use a smartphone app.

Trains and buses

Why not relax and see the USA by train?

Long-distance routes are limited, but offer wonderful, scenic journeys like Amtrak's Los Angeles-Seattle Coast Starlight train.

Long-distance buses are popular and affordable, operated by Greyhound, Megabus, and other companies. Bear in mind some longer journeys may involve several changes of bus.

City transportation

Most American cities have minimal public transport – usually only buses – although some have light-rail systems, with Uber, Lyft, and taxis as alternatives. Notable exceptions include New York's huge subway system, Washington DC's metro, San Francisco's BART network and cable cars, Boston's subway, New Orleans' street cars, and Chicago's L trains. Los

Angeles is also expanding its six-line Metro Rail system ahead of hosting the 2028 Olympics.

Homes on wheels

My favorite way of exploring the USA? Nothing beats trundling around the great American outdoors in an RV with all its home comforts, stopping where you want to brew a cuppa and dine al fresco.

It isn't cheap; family-size RVs can average less than 10 miles (16km) per gallon and camping fees in national parks and popular areas add up. But it's the most fun you can have on four wheels.

Just don't lock yourself out, as I did when stopping to empty the trash at my final Wyoming campground, prior to a three-hour drive back to Denver to drop it off.

Responsible Travel in the US

As a traveler, your choices and behavior have an impact. Here's how to ensure it's positive.

Support the local economy

Steer clear of chain hotels, stores, and restaurants – by dining in local cafes, shopping in independent boutiques, hiring local tour guides, and staying in family-run lodging, you'll help support local jobs and have a more genuine experience, too.

Keep it real

Seek out experiences (cooking classes, dance performances) that celebrate the local culture and traditions in an authentic way and help keep them alive. Avoid manufactured experiences that are put on solely for tourists.

Protect wildlife

Don't harass, touch, or feed wild animals, and always keep a safe distance. Support local conservation efforts by respecting guidelines and barriers designed to protect wildlife. Avoid activities where wild animals are exploited for profit, used for selfies, or otherwise forced to interact with humans.

Minimize your footprint

Avoid plastic water bottles – instead, carry a large, reusable water bottle and refill it. If hiking or camping, pack out any trash you carry in.

Top 9 Safety Tips for the US

With multiple big cities and vast areas of wilderness, the US presents its share of hazards. Here are the main concerns travelers should be aware of.

Street safety

In any big city (US or otherwise), there are places where travelers [need to take care](#) at night or during the day; whether it's securing your belongings and being aware of your surroundings as you walk in crowded areas, or avoiding known high-risk areas where crimes may occur.

Gun violence

The United States has a high level of gun possession. Unfortunately, with that comes [gun-related crime](#), and it's not limited to mass shootings. The chances of being randomly targeted are slim, but if you stroll into the wrong area, your risk of being caught in the crossfire of violence increases. Always ask locals which neighborhoods or blocks to avoid.

Terrorism

Terrorism has now become a global issue, and no country is immune. Since 9/11, there have been several terror-related incidents in cities across the United States, including places that international visitors may frequent. Wherever you travel in the United States, it's important to keep yourself informed via local news reports and government advisories. [Be aware of your surroundings](#), particularly in crowded locations such as popular

attractions, monuments, shopping malls, protests, on transport, and in places of worship. But bear in mind that statistically, the odds of being a victim of a terror attack are very low.

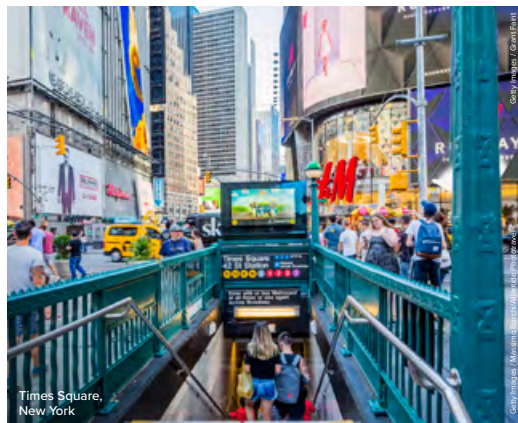
Transit safety

Whether it's by rental car, taxi, campervan, train, bus, or plane, there are multiple ways to get from A to B in the US. In cities like New York and Washington DC, [public transport](#) reigns and is a cheap way to get around. Visitors need to take care when traveling at night and on busy, packed peak-hour services which can be tempting for pickpockets. For nomads wanting to road-trip across the country, [a bit of preparation](#) can help make sure your trip is a safe one, rather than breaking down in the middle of nowhere, miles from help.

Health

The US is notorious for its expensive health care system, so whether you're road-tripping, hiking, or snowboarding, it's vital to have [travel insurance](#) which includes cover for emergency medical expenses, medical evacuation, and 24/7 emergency assistance, plus other benefits

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depending on your needs. If you're in the wilderness, check your body for ticks after walking beneath trees or through tall grasses. Ticks can cause many illnesses such as Lyme Disease and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, which are spread across the United States. If not treated promptly, these diseases can have long-lasting complications. [Learn more about how you can stay healthy while traveling in the US.](#)

Bear safety

The US has an incredible variety of wildlife, including moose, wolves, bison, alligators, and mountain lions, but is probably best known for its bears – they can cause serious injury or even death if provoked, so it's [important to take precautions](#). Park rangers are your best resource for information on local bear activity. If camping, make sure food is secured in bear-proof containers, and consider carrying bear spray if hiking in areas bears are known to frequent.

Snow safety

The US offers fantastic skiing and snowboarding, for all ages and experience levels. But things can and do go wrong if you're not careful. [Ways to avoid accidents](#) or injury include wearing a helmet, sticking to open trails in the resort, staying within resort boundaries, making sure your gear is up to warmth and safety standards, and keeping an eye on the weather.

LGBTQ safety

There are many well-established and vibrant [LGBTQ](#) communities across the United States, not just in urban centers but in regional towns as well. LGBTQ people have most of the rights that same-sex people have, however discrimination unfortunately still exists in many locations and industries. Unfortunately, recent years have seen an increase in gay hate crimes, transphobia, and homophobia. But despite these challenges, there are many places which welcome LGBTQ travelers with



open arms, and annual Pride celebrations continue to grow each year.

Tornadoes and hurricanes

Tornadoes occur annually in the US, with most forming east of the Rocky Mountains in a place dubbed "Tornado Alley". Although not officially defined, Tornado Alley extends from the border with Canada down to northern Texas. Tornadoes also occur in southern states such as Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida, and north-central states like Indiana. The main tornado season is spring, with more than 1,000 tornadoes touching down in the US each year. Although short-lived, tornadoes can cause widespread damage to homes and infrastructure, and also cause fatalities. Stay tuned to local radio and TV stations – if the area you're in is under a tornado warning, seek shelter indoors (in a room without windows, preferably underground).

Hurricanes are another natural hazard which cause significant damage and loss of life each year. Hurricanes form out over the tropical, warm waters of the Caribbean and track their way north and west towards the mainland United States. Hurricane season in the US is June through November. To learn more about staying safe during a hurricane, [check out our article for preparation and survival tips.](#)

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Festival Calendar

Celebrating history and culture, music and literature, long-held traditions, and just plain weirdness, interesting festivals happen all over the US, in every season of the year – and they're well worth planning your trip around. Here is just a small sampling.

January/February National Cowboy Poetry Gathering

The Gathering is a week-long celebration of the arts and crafts of cowboy culture, with real-life wranglers reciting poems, singing songs, or telling stories about life on the range. You'll also find workshops on everything from poetry writing to hat making to cooking Western fare.

Eiko, Nevada

January/February Whitefish Winter Carnival

Based loosely on a Nordic tradition involving the god Ullr and a yeti, this festival includes a Penguin Plunge in a frozen lake, a Viking parade, and a skijoring competition (where skiers are pulled by horses).

Whitefish, Montana



Hemingway Festival, Key West, Florida

1.5 million bats streaming out from under the Congress Bridge at dusk is as good a reason as any to celebrate

February/March

The World Ice Art Championships

More than 100 experts from Europe, Asia, and North America turn one-ton (927kg) blocks of ice into vibrant depictions of mythical beings, wild animals, and historic scenes. The Northern Lights often make an appearance as well.

Fairbanks, Alaska

Early March

Frozen Dead Guy Days

A cross between Monty Python and the zombie apocalypse, this festival features three days of frosty, death-themed merriment and silly games, including more than 30 live bands, costumed polar plunges, and frozen-turkey bowling.

Nederland, Colorado

May

Fiesta Asia

This free street fair coincides with Asian Pacific American Heritage Month and is part of the month-long DC Passport event. Highlights include live martial arts and dance, as well as interactive hula, Bollywood, and belly dancing lessons.

Washington, DC

June

Mermaid Parade

Founded partly to raise the self-esteem of a so-called "entertainment" district, this event is the largest art parade in the US. More than 3,000 costumed participants and a half-million spectators gather for an American version of a summer solstice celebration.

Coney Island, New York

Mid-July

Hemingway Days

Honoring the famed, bearded, burly writer who lived and worked here for much of his life, this festival includes a Hemingway look-alike contest, literary events, and a three-day marlin-fishing tournament.

Key West, Florida

August

Bat Fest

1.5 million Mexican free-tailed bats streaming out from under the Congress Bridge at dusk is as good a reason as any to celebrate. The festival also features bat costumes, two stages of live music, and food and craft vendors.

Austin, Texas

August/September

Appaloosa Music Festival

Held in the Shenandoah Valley about an hour from Washington, DC, this roots-based music and camping festival is one of the best places to see up-and-coming bluegrass, Celtic, Americana, folk, and country musicians from around the country.

Front Royal, Virginia

August/September

Southern Decadence

The name says it all – with six days of costume contests, drag shows, concerts, and parades, this event is not for the ascetic. The biggest LGBTQ party in the South has also been called the "Gay Mardi Gras," with all the merriment and indulgence that implies.

New Orleans, Louisiana

Second week of September

Fiestas de Santa Fe

Bring your troubles to Santa Fe. Founded in 1712, this fiesta is billed as the longest-running community festival in the US. The highlight is the Burning of Zozobra, aka Old Man Gloom, a 50ft tall (15m tall) puppet set aflame to cast off worries.

Santa Fe, New Mexico

Mid-October

Wellfleet Oysterfest

The oyster beds off the coast of this Cape Cod town are considered some of the world's greatest. Oysterfest honors the town's deep shellfishing heritage with two days of music, storytelling, cooking demonstrations, and nature walks, but



Trailing of the Sheep Festival, Idaho

the hands-down highlight is the Oyster Shuck-off competition.

Wellfleet, Massachusetts

Mid-October

Trailing of the Sheep

Started as a way to reduce conflict between ranchers and newcomers, this festival preserves the history and culture of Idaho sheep ranching and herding. There's traditional dancing, music, and crafts, but sheep are at the center of the event, including a 1,500-sheep parade down Ketchum's main street.

Ketchum, Idaho

The name says it all – with six days of costume contests, drag shows, concerts, and parades, this event is not for the ascetic

50 states. Countless adventures. Make sure you're covered.

Whether you're visiting from another country or another state, travel insurance can help protect you if and when things go wrong.

The land of the free (and the home of the brave) is as marvelously eclectic as it is grand and vast. Whatever region you're roaming – whether you're exploring a quaint small town or a remote geological wonder – here are a few things to know about travel insurance cover.

Medical emergencies

The United States has one of the most expensive and complicated health care systems in the world. Even a brief consultation with a doctor could do some damage to your wallet, not to mention that an emergency (hospitalization, evacuation, or a repatriation home) could cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, as well as ruining your trip. Travel insurance can help you and your family with medical emergencies and the associated expenses when you're out of town on a trip (it's not the same as health insurance, which is for routine or ongoing medical care when you're at home).

Our emergency assistance team can support you 24/7 to give you advice on what to do in the case of an emergency. This could be locating suitable medical facilities where you can be seen by health care professionals or arranging ambulance transportation and overnight hospital stays if that's what your case requires. Be sure to check in with the team to get the okay on what your plan is able to cover.

Adventure

Skiing, snowboarding, and hiking

The country's terrains have an adventure for every level of sportsman, from novice to near-expert, and every traveler should have the appropriate tier of travel insurance to match. Depending on your country of residence and your travel insurance plan, World Nomads provides cover for activities such as hiking, trekking, and alpine, cross-country, and helicopter skiing.

Caveat: some exclusions apply, including activities above certain elevations, mountaineering and solo expeditions, and search-and-rescue missions. Be sure to check your policy carefully to see what is and isn't covered.



Get our smart, flexible **Travel Insurance** here



Water sports

From white-water rafting to sea kayaking, World Nomads provides cover for a wide range of activities taking place on lakes, rivers, and oceans. Some activities have conditions (such as the accompaniment of a licensed guide) or exclusions to the level of activity. Additional premiums may apply.

Things to avoid

Encounters with nature can be awe-inspiring and educational – up until you inadvertently get hurt. Travel insurance can provide protection for accidents and injuries when you act responsibly – but not when you're feeding bears in the woods or petting porcupines; gallivanting in the remote backcountry; or teetering at the edge of a cliff or geyser for the ultimate selfie. The consequence of going head first into an iffy situation? You're not covered.

Travel insurance doesn't cover everything. All of the information we provide is a brief summary. It does not include all terms, conditions, limitations, exclusions, and termination provisions of the plans described. Coverage may not be the same or available for residents of all countries, states, or provinces. Please carefully read your policy wording for a full description of coverage. WorldNomads.com Pty Limited (ABN 62 127 485 198 AR 343027) at Governor Macquarie Tower, Level 18, Farrer Place, Sydney, NSW, 2000, Australia is an Authorised Representative of nib Travel Services (Australia) Pty Ltd (ABN 81 115 932 173 AFSL 308461) and is underwritten by certain underwriters at Lloyd's. World Nomads Travel Lifestyle (Europe) Limited (CN 601852) markets and promotes travel insurance products of Nomadic Insurance Benefits Limited (CN 601851), First Floor, City Quarter, Lapps Quay, Cork, Ireland. Nomadic Insurance Benefits Limited is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland. WorldNomads.com Pty Limited markets and promotes travel insurance products of Nomadic Insurance Limited (License No.1446874), at PO Box 1051, Grand Cayman KY1-1102, Cayman Islands. World Nomads Inc. (1585422), at 520 3rd Street, Suite 201, Oakland, CA 94607, plans are administered by Trip Mate Inc. (in CA & UT, dba, Trip Mate Insurance Agency) at 9225 Ward Parkway, Suite 200, Kansas City, MO, 64114, USA, with 24-hour and Assistance Services provided by One Call Worldwide Travel Services Network, Inc. and plans underwritten by Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company and affiliated companies, Columbus, OH. World Nomads (Canada) Ltd (BC: 0700178, Business No: 00185379 7942 RC0001) is a licensed agent sponsored by AIG Insurance Company of Canada at 120 Bremner Boulevard, Suite 2200, Toronto, Ontario, M5J 0A8, Canada. World Experiences Seguros De Viagem Brasil Ltda (CNPJ: 21.346.969/0001-99) at Rua Padre João Manuel, 755, 16º andar, São Paulo – SP, Brazil is an Authorized Partner (Representative) of Zurich Minas Brasil Seguros S.A. (CNPJ: 17.197.385/0001-21) at Av. Getúlio Vargas, 1420, 5th floor, Funcionários, Belo Horizonte, State of Minas Gerais through the SUSEP Process 15414.90107/2015-77. All World Nomads entities listed above, including Nomadic Insurance Benefits Limited, Nomadic Insurance Limited and nib Travel Services (Australia) Pty Ltd, are subsidiaries of nib holdings limited (ABN 51 125 633 856).

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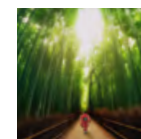
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Meet Our Contributors

True Nomads all, our writers are world travelers bound by the desire to truly understand the countries they visit.

If you'd like to contribute, keep an eye on our [Assignments page](#), where you can apply for upcoming opportunities.



Claudia Alarcón
UNITED STATES

Claudia is a Mexico City-born writer based in Austin, Texas, where she covers dining, drinking, and travel, with a focus on local ingredients.



Libby Baldwin
UNITED STATES

A writer and USCG-licensed captain, Libby eschews comfortable year-round employment to share her passion for whales and ocean stewardship.



Joel Balsam
CANADA

Joel and his partner, photographer Stephanie Foden, are Canadian freelance journalists and digital nomads who are permanently on the road.



Imani Bashir
UNITED STATES

A former sports broadcaster, now a full-time writer, Imani is raising her son as a global citizen and has lived in Poland, Egypt, and China.



Sarah Bence
UNITED STATES

Sarah is a Michigan native and global nomad who loves raising awareness of misrepresented or disadvantaged communities and places.



Greg Benchwick
UNITED STATES

Greg lives in Colorado and writes about travel and adventure for publications worldwide, while also working on sustainable development for the UN.



Ashley Biggers
UNITED STATES

An award-winning travel journalist and contributor to *CNN* and *Fodor's Travel*, among others, Ashley lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



Rebecca Bodenheimer
UNITED STATES

Rebecca is an Oakland-based freelance writer and cultural critic who publishes on a range of topics, including Cuban culture and society.



Heide Brandes
UNITED STATES

Heide is an award-winning journalist and editor. Besides freelancing full time, she's a medieval warrior and professional bellydancer.



Shaun Busuttill
AUSTRALIA

A freelance travel writer and photographer originally from Australia, Shaun loves writing about adventure, culture, and the human condition.



Kassondra Cloos
UNITED STATES

Kassondra is a freelance travel writer and former crime reporter. When not on deadline, she can be found road tripping around the American Southwest.



Peter Ellegard
UNITED KINGDOM

Peter has been exploring the world for 35 years as a travel writer, editor, and photographer. The USA is one of his favorite destinations.



Jason Frye
UNITED STATES

Author of multiple guidebooks, Jason writes about food and travel across the American South and around the world.



Joseph Furey
UNITED KINGDOM

Joe hit the road in his teens, and he's barely stopped for gas since. Writing credits include *The Guardian*, *National Geographic*, and *Vice*.



Anthea Gerrie
UNITED KINGDOM

Anthea is based in the UK but travels the world in search of stories. Her special interests are art, architecture, culture, food, and drink.



Carol Guttery
UNITED STATES

Carol is a travel writer, photographer, and philanthropy consultant whose travels have taken her to 44 countries and territories.



Elle Hardy
AUSTRALIA

Elle loved traveling so much that she made a way to make a living out of it. Hailing from Australia, she has visited over 70 countries so far.



Elizabeth Heath
UNITED STATES

Former Florida girl Elizabeth now lives in the hills of central Italy, where she writes about culture, travel, and culinary adventures.



Stefani Jackenthal
UNITED STATES

Stefani is an adventure travel and wine journalist and elite endurance athlete who has competed and reported from around the world.



Katie Jackson
UNITED STATES

Born in Montana, Katie was raised on a farm before being educated in the concrete jungle of NYC. She covers travel, food, and other lifestyle topics.



Allyson Jennings
AUSTRALIA

Allyson is a scientist, conservationist, and explorer. When she's not out on her next adventure, she's producing travel safety content for World Nomads.



Maura Johnston
UNITED STATES

A writer, editor, and journalism professor based in Boston, Maura is a contributor to *Pitchfork*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Entertainment Weekly*.



Katie Joyce-Buly
UNITED STATES

Katie is a freelance writer based in the Pacific Northwest of the US, where she fell in love with adventure and mountains.



Eric Lucas
UNITED STATES

Eric's work focuses on the meaning of travel and human culture, with special emphasis on sustainability and indigenous peoples.



Neil McRobert
UNITED KINGDOM

Neil is an ex-academic who ditched a particularly bad job to roam around the US and Canada, doing odd jobs and living precariously for a year.



Aaron Millar
UNITED KINGDOM

An award-winning travel writer, journalist, and author, Aaron is *The Times of London's* North American travel specialist.



Tim Neville
UNITED STATES

A frequent contributor to *The New York Times*, Tim has scaled glaciers and cycled hundreds of miles to report his stories.



Shoshi Parks
UNITED STATES

Shoshi is a recovering academic, travel junkie, and national park aficionado who specializes in writing about travel, history, and food.



Gigi Ragland
UNITED STATES

A freelance travel writer based in Colorado, Gigi writes about outdoor recreational experiences for a variety of online and print publications.



Frances Rivetti
UNITED STATES

Frances is a Northern California-based freelance journalist who travels the greater San Francisco Bay Area in search of extraordinary stories.



Barbara Radcliffe Rogers
UNITED STATES

Barbara is a travel and food writer specializing in her native New Hampshire, the northeastern United States, and southern Europe.



Ed Salvato
UNITED STATES

Considered one of the world's leading experts on gay travel, Ed is co-founder and editor-in-chief of *ManAboutWorld* magazine.



Jen Rose Smith
UNITED STATES

With a home base in Vermont's Green Mountains, Jen writes about travel, adventure, and culture around the globe.



Bill Sullivan
UNITED STATES

Born in California, Bill has traveled extensively around the globe, and now wanders the western US looking for the authentic Western spirit.



Allison Tibaldi
UNITED STATES

Allison is a New York City-based travel and food writer. She's lived in Rome, Melbourne, Toronto, and LA, but a piece of her heart remains in NYC.



Elen Turner
NEW ZEALAND

Elen is a travel writer and editor who divides her time between New Zealand and Nepal, with previous lives in the UK, Japan, and US among others.



Gina Zammit
UNITED STATES

Gina is a Connecticut-based freelance journalist, SATW Lowell Thomas Award recipient, world traveler, and self-proclaimed cat lady in training.

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