



# **Best. Summer. Ever.**

**It's coming soon—three months of permission to play. Our list of the season's most memorable adventures will make you feel like a kid on the last day of school.**

D

o you feel it too? That irresistible pull of summer? The days are lengthening; the outdoors is calling. Get out there and try something new—from the coziest forest glampsite to the gnarliest roller coaster, from the sandiest beach to the pool where you can swim with a mermaid (really!). There's enough here to keep you rafting, laughing, stargazing, and road-tripping all season long. Now hit the road and make memories.



SUMMER FLASHBACK

**Craftiest stowaway attempt**

"During the **Balloon Rodeo**, it's busy. We're getting cancellations and additions all morning, so the number of passengers changes. A crew chief might have exact numbers, but the pilot won't. We were scheduled to take seven on the balloon, but nine boarded. We took them up on a ride. When it came time to charge people, the stowaways looked at us and said, 'You gotta pay for this?' They gave us \$20 and ran off."

—Ian Cox, pilot-owner, Wild West Ballooning, Steamboat Springs, CO

COLD

55°

Arctic Ice Room, Qua Baths & Spa, Las Vegas. caesars.com.

COLDER

43°

Nome, Alaska (average May high). visitnomealaska.com.

COLDEST

-321°

Made-to-order ice cream (using liquid nitrogen). smittenicecream.com.

ICONIC ESCAPE

**SAN DIEGO**  
IDYLL ON THE SAND

**DEEP DOWN**, we know we're spoiled. San Diegans got choice. With 70 miles of shoreline, stretching from Oceanside to Mexico, we have beaches for days, each a palm tree-decorated invitation to play. Because, let's face it—the beach makes you forget you're a grown-up. The views to the west, full of nothing but sky, suggest life can be like the ocean, open to possibility. The popular stretches of sand are like living rooms: towels spread haphazardly, coolers and bodyboards dropped upon them like paperweights, guarding against ocean breezes. Seeing people surf, jog, and skateboard takes you back to your "me" years, when a physical accomplishment cheered you for weeks. *Look!* A cartwheel. *Look again!* Another cartwheel.

Coronado feels different, like a summer storybook.

You might come by bridge, landing in a world that's shades of blue, the distant San Diego skyline glistening like Oz. The **Hotel del Coronado** appears, like a seaside cake with its turrets and tiles and conical roof. Out front, the Del's pristine shore invites all to take to the waters. Although the hotel debuted 128 years ago, the white sand is still tidy. Cruisers still pedal along Ocean Boulevard, gawking at the mansions. After hours, the sun-tired still belly up to the Del's bar, toasting their satisfaction at having fulfilled a yearning in their DNA for summer at the beach.

**INSIDER TIP** The Del holds Après-Sea sessions at the sandside Sunset Bar, starring blackberry margaritas and light bites. *Rooms from \$289, Après-Sea \$\$; hoteldel.com.* —Caron Golden



CHIARA SALVADORI

*A woody is synonymous with surf culture.*

**Woodiest**

Talk about endless summer. The cultish vehicle of the mid-century, covered with real wood paneling, a woody wagon isn't often spotted these days. But **Four Seasons Residence Club Avilara** is the proud owner of one such collectible, and guests can book it to road-trip along the unmissable PCH. One condition: You simply must blare The Beach Boys. \$395/3 hours; [fourseasons.com/northsandiego](http://fourseasons.com/northsandiego).



## TIKI

**One tiki cocktail**  
Smuggler's Cove,  
San Francisco.  
[smugglerscovesf.com](http://smugglerscovesf.com).

## TIKIER

**All-day tiki  
bus tour**  
Tiki Kon Bar Tour,  
Portland.  
Jul 10; [tikikon.com](http://tikikon.com).

## TIKIEST

**4 days of bar  
crawls, fashion shows,  
and rum tastings**  
Tiki Oasis, San Diego.  
Aug 18–21; [tikioasis.com](http://tikioasis.com).

## Fishiest

Anyone fascinated by the life aquatic should have the Great Barrier Reef on his or her list. But for the Northern Hemisphere's next best thing, buy yourself two tickets: one to Phoenix's **Sky Harbor International Airport**, the other to **OdySea**. When the 200,000-square-foot Scottsdale aquarium opens this summer, it will be the largest in the Southwest. Besides a "March of the Penguins," OdySea will boast a Great Barrier Reef tunnel filled with chocolate surgeonfish and regal angelfish. \$33; [odyseaaquarium.com](http://odyseaaquarium.com).

## Hot tub-iest

It's a boat! It's a hot tub! It's a... hot-tub boat! Take this unique vessel for a spin around **Seattle's Lake Union**, admiring the skyline from the comfort of a private hot tub equipped with waterproof speakers and a cooler. Clothing required. \$350/2 hours; [hottubboats.com](http://hottubboats.com).

Thrill-  
seekiest

A 45-foot slide might sound like kid's play. But what if it's glass-enclosed and glides from the 70th to the 69th floor on the exterior of the West Coast's tallest skyscraper? That's another story entirely. **Skyslide** opens in late June (as of press time) in L.A.'s U.S. Bank Tower, bringing with it epic selfie opportunities. \$33; [skyspace-la.com](http://skyspace-la.com).



## SUMMER FLASHBACK

Nastiest  
Northwest  
dessert  
experiment

"One of the worst ideas I ever had was a **Crab Roll Neapolitan**. The ice cream was a crab bisque layered with vanilla and lemon water. I grew up in the Northwest and ate a lot of Dungeness; to me, crab is so nostalgic. I wanted to create something with that funky flavor, but ultimately it was miserable: Crab and sugar should not go together. If I try to make another ice cream with crab, you'll know I've gone off my rocker."  
—Tyler Malek, head ice cream inventor, Salt & Straw, Portland and L.A.

A large white safari tent is pitched on a wooden deck in a lush, wooded area. Inside the tent, a bed with a wooden headboard and a striped blanket is visible. A wooden chair sits on the deck in front of the tent. In the background, there are rustic wooden buildings with corrugated metal roofs. The scene is surrounded by tall, leafy trees, creating a serene and natural atmosphere.

*Where else but  
El Capitan Canyon  
can you sleep in a safari  
tent and tour  
Santa Barbara by  
Segway?*

## Glampiest

Purists scoff at the idea of a camping trip that includes fine linens, throw rugs, and wine tastings. They will definitely want to avoid **El Capitan Canyon resort**, a luxe outpost north of Santa Barbara with tricked-out tents, cabins, and yurts. The Safari Cabin Suite has an en suite bathroom and an indoor fireplace. From \$170; [elcapitancanyon.com](http://elcapitancanyon.com).



SUMMER FLASHBACK

## Most classified river-rafting trip

"It was former First Lady Laura Bush, her friends, the Secret Service, and a Navy SEAL. The SEAL was there to rescue Mrs. Bush in case she fell out. At every big rapid, the Secret Service would ask her to move boats, then

huddle around her. On the second day, when they asked her to move boats, she whispered to the guide, 'Keep going; pretend you don't hear it.'"  
—Brad Niva, *Morrison's Rogue Wilderness Adventures*, Merlin, OR

## Artiest

When the **San Francisco Museum of Modern Art** reopens on May 14 (after a three-year closing), it will have more gallery space than MoMA in New York. More square footage equals more art on display; you'll see works by Diane Arbus, Chuck Close, Wayne Thiebaud, and Andy Warhol. The real masterpiece, however, is design firm Snøhetta's light-filled interiors and public spaces, including a terrace with a vertical garden. You'll need a day. \$25; [sfmoma.org](http://sfmoma.org).



**SUMMER FLASHBACK**

## Quickest Elizabethan costume change

“Try 60 seconds flat. Every year, there’s a wardrobe change that seems impossible to execute. Last summer’s was in *Head Over Heels*. During one song, the actor had to change into a large Elizabethan dress; then down to bloomers, corset, hat, and gloves; then back to a big dress. In one minute, she had to put on a full farthingale skirt, another skirt, a bodice, a standing collar, gloves, a wig, a headpiece, and a neck ruff. She was attended by six people, two to handle the wig alone. Somehow, they pulled it off every single time.”  
—Chris McNamara, costume director, and Nancy Zaremski, crafts supervisor, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Ashland

**TRIPPY**

Drive **Route 66**.  
[historic66.com](http://historic66.com).

**TRIPPIER**

Explore the West’s backroads by **Airstream**.  
[airstream2go.com](http://airstream2go.com).

**TRIPPIEST**

Someday, from New Mexico’s **Spaceport America**, you’ll be able to fly to the moon.  
[virgingalactic.com](http://virgingalactic.com).

## Half Dome-iest

When **Rush Creek Lodge** welcomes guests June 15, it will be the first new hotel near Yosemite in a quarter of a century. A half-mile from the park’s west entrance and on its own 20 acres, Rush Creek has everything you’d expect from a High Sierra stay (fireplace in the main lodge, wood-fired oven in the tavern). But it also surprises with an indoor treehouse, a gold-panning stream, and a saltwater pool. While the lodge may be new, the in-room extras (board games and radios) are as classic as the woody setting. *From \$375; [rushcreeklodge.com](http://rushcreeklodge.com).*

**HITTING A HIGH NOTE**

## SANTA FE MOST SPECTACULAR TAILGATE PARTY

**BY THE TIME** you take your seat at **The Santa Fe Opera**, the show has already begun. An amber glow washes the stage long before the first note hits the air. And that has nothing to do with the lighting technicians. Sitting atop a mesa, the venue has no sides and no walls behind the stage. That means every storm cloud, every breeze, every sherbet-like swirl of pink and orange that paints the endless desert sky finds its way into the performance. You might’ve paid for Puccini or *The Magic Flute*, but really you’re here for the distractions, and they start in the parking lot, where

tailgating—yes, tailgating—could mean anything from a chili burger cook-off to a multicourse feast. If one of Santa Fe’s hit-and-run summer thunderstorms blows through during the show, you’re in for a treat: For a few moments, no soaring aria, no impassioned instrumentals, can match it. It’s a show stealer. *From \$35; [santafeopera.org](http://santafeopera.org).*

**INSIDER TIP** Tapas-loving opera fans can pick up a show-ready box at La Boca. Plan to tailgate? Arrive early—the festivities begin three hours beforehand. \$\$\$; [labocasf.com](http://labocasf.com).  
—Christopher Hall



ROBERT RECK

**S** **DIGITAL BONUS** Majestic hikes, gorgeous beaches, and more summer fun: [sunset.com/summertrips](http://sunset.com/summertrips).

## Swirliest

It's love from the minute you happen upon Charlie, a 1961 Mister Softee truck belonging to **CVT Soft Serve**. The L.A. creamery dishes out the basics: chocolate, vanilla, and a twist. Fans include Bill Murray, Courteney Cox, Halle Berry, and the editors of *Sunset* magazine. [cvtsoftserve.com](http://cvtsoftserve.com).

### SPLURGY

**\$2,000**

20 Hands Duo Massage for two (80 minutes). Grand Wailea, Maui. [grandwailea.com](http://grandwailea.com).

### SPLURGIER

**\$10,000**

All-inclusive seven-night Chakra Tune-Up, with 28 spa treatments. Aja Malibu. [ajamalibu.com](http://ajamalibu.com).

### SPLURGIEST

**\$28,000**

103-day national park tour, from Honolulu to Las Vegas. [globusjourneys.com](http://globusjourneys.com).

## Screaming-est

For a car, 53 mph doesn't sound very fast. But we're talking about that velocity on turns, inversions, and barrel rolls, along the rails of the newest roller coaster at NorCal's **Six Flags Discovery Kingdom**: The Joker. Buckle up, and don't text and scream. From \$66; [sixflags.com/discoverykingdom](http://sixflags.com/discoverykingdom).

## Sudsiest

Pop quiz: Many call this city Beervana, as it overflows with craft brewers. The state designates July as **Craft Beer Month**. During that time, more than 450 beer-y events occur, including a Brewers Festival in a waterfront park. Where are you? Answer: It's Oregon Craft Beer Month; the Brewers Festival is in Portland. Now go get yourself a weird beer. [oregoncraftbeer.org](http://oregoncraftbeer.org).

*CVT Soft Serve announces its truck's location via Twitter (@CVTSoftServe).*

## Splashiest

Jumping into a swimming hole is a quintessential warm-weather moment, even if that hole is called The Crack. After a 3.5-mile hike on the Bell Trail alongside Arizona's Wet Beaver Creek, you'll be ready to cool off lickety-split: Take a flying leap off the reddish sandstone cliff into this inviting pool near Sedona. [www.fs.usda.gov/coconino](http://www.fs.usda.gov/coconino).



ANDREW PEACOCK

LIGHT SHOW

## GREAT BASIN SUMMER UNDER THE STARS

**DRIVING ACROSS** eastern Nevada toward the Great Basin, surrounded by dusty gray earth, scruffy plants, and little else, you can't help but notice what isn't here. Traffic. People. Civilization. This national park's impossibly remote location, on U.S. 50 (aka "America's loneliest road") guarantees the kind of peace that is a thing of the past in summer. It also promises the night skies you might remember from a long-ago desert camping trip or a July vacation as a kid.

Around here, they say that "half the park is after dark," and it's true. After spending the day marveling at wizened

bristlecone pines across the landscape, you snuggle into a sleeping bag beneath the stars. The thick swath of them is clearer than you remembered, like looking through a telescope. All around, you'll hear oohs and aahs as meteors zip across the sky, creating a show better than any manmade fireworks.

**INSIDER TIP** During a meteor shower, no telescopes are required. Just bring a blanket and watch the shooting stars burn across the sky. *Eta Aquarids: May 6–7; Perseids: Aug 12–13. Campsites \$12; [nps.gov/grba](http://nps.gov/grba).* —Lisa Trottier

## Sandiest

Does anything say summer louder than a long, sandy beach? Washington State boasts a strand where you can stroll for 28 miles. In addition, on July 23, Long Beach hosts a bona fide sand sculpture competition, **SandSations**. But you can play in the sand any day, anytime. [sandsationslongbeach.com](http://sandsationslongbeach.com).

Channel your  
childhood—and conquer  
the sand—on a  
retro beach cruiser.



## Bounciest

The Colorado River has its ups and downs. You'll understand when you raft **Westwater Canyon**, launching two hours from Moab, Utah, onto waters calm enough for swimming. As the canyon narrows and the walls rise, the ride really begins, spinning you through such rapids as Funnel Falls, Sock-it-to-Me, and Last Chance. Welcome to the West's backcountry. From \$685; moabadventurecenter.com.



SUMMER FLASHBACK

## Closest Revenant-like call

"I was fishing with a father, Jeff, and his future son-in-law, Joe. At one point, Joe and I saw a grizzly and her cubs heading toward Jeff. Joe and I started screaming, but Jeff couldn't hear us. We jumped up and down and waved. Jeff smiled and waved back. Finally, I ran closer and screamed, 'Bear!' He dropped his rod and walked very briskly. The sow didn't see him. Then the three of us just sat and watched them walk away." —Pat Straub, owner, Gallatin River Guides



SUMMER FLASHBACK

## Orneriest pack animal

"My mule Shadow is my right-hand woman. I always give her apples. At lunchtime during trail rides, I hook her up and she sleeps. On one ride, nobody wanted their apples, so I went to put them

in my saddlebag on her back. She must have thought I was a mountain lion. She kicked my shoulder, and I flew 15 feet. The guests were stunned. The next day, Shadow came up to me

and put her head on my heart. She was apologizing. I said, 'It's okay, girl. We all fall asleep and get spooked sometimes.'" —Christen Rak, mule wrangler, Grand Canyon National Park

## Cruisiest

The scenery on the M/V *Chichagof* is otherworldly, naturally; it's Alaska, after all. But **Alaskan Dream Cruises** isn't your ordinary trip: Many of the Cultural Heritage Guides are Alaska Natives, and they'll share stories en route. "Become a True Alaskan" will immerse you in nature, but no matter the trip, kids can visit the wheelhouse and adults can join the Killer Whale Club by jumping in the (freezing) water. From \$4,249/8 days; alaskandreamcruises.com.

CASTAWAY\*

**Isla Espiritu Santo**  
visitmexico.com.

CASTAWAY-ER

**Tofino, Vancouver Island, B.C.**  
tourismtofino.com.

CASTAWAY-EST

**Wrangell Island, Alaska's Inside Passage**  
wrangell.com.

\*Measured by travel time to the nearest Starbucks

## Farmiest

About 45 miles north of Bend, Oregon, is our version of Provence. Wine. Fields of lavender. Cheese farms. **Good Bike Co.** runs tours past the meadows and fields; the rides are 15 to 25 miles, and there's a farm stop with wine and cheese tastings. From \$75; goodbikeco.com.

## Most colorful

In summer, Snowbird, Utah, becomes Wildflower City, as lupines, sunflowers, and bluebells blanket the slopes. During the **Wasatch Wildflower Festival**, join a ranger for a guided hike (Jul 29–31). cottonwoodcanyons.org.



## Hawaiiest

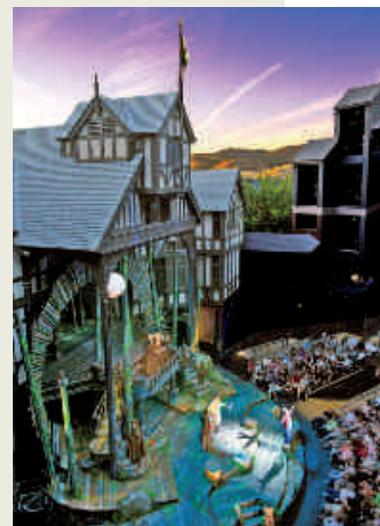
There, under the palms—is that a mermaid? No, you haven't been out in the sun too long; that's Madeline, the pool-dwelling mermaid at Maui's **Grand Wailea** resort. Waterslides, gro-totes, and a rope swing beckon like a siren's song. Jump in! From \$525; [grandwailea.com](http://grandwailea.com).

CENTER STAGE

## ASHLAND NOT JUST FOR SHAKESPEARE NERDS

**SILENCE YOUR CELL** phone. It's the announcement you hear before performances at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Our advice? Keep it silenced; Ashland demands all your attention. Since the festival's debut in 1935, this tiny town has delivered a blockbuster double bill: Tony Award-winning theater and a slate of summer's greatest hits, Southern Oregon-style. That means hikes in the forest and Rogue River rafting trips, not to mention a restaurant scene that upstages the most precious of food precincts. It also means slowing down to a time when strangers stopped to talk in the street, and bookstores wheeled inventory onto the sidewalk on sunny days. Call it Mayberry, or the Forest of Arden, or 16th-century Verona. Ashland can be all those things and more; you just have to stop and listen.

**INSIDER TIP** Come evening, crowd in at the pre-curtain Green Show in front of the theaters. It's free outdoor entertainment at its best: puppets, mariachis, and maybe jugglers dressed like jesters from Shakespeare's time. [osfashland.org](http://osfashland.org).



Blue skies and palm fronds: a classic summer horizon

## Brightest

We Americans get but one night of July fireworks. Vancouverites get three: July 23, 27, and 30. More than a million people gather on English Bay to watch the show, the **Celebration of Light**. Three nations showcase their pyrotechnic prowess ... to music. Yep, it's a blast. [hondacelebrationoflight.com](http://hondacelebrationoflight.com) 🎆

Reported by Alison Gwinn, Christine Ciarmello, Megan McCrea, Nino Padova, and Caroline Hetzel