

10 Affordable Spots for Summer Vacation

Offering everything from world-class museums to winery tours, these getaways are bargains.

By [Kyle McCarthy](#), Contributor | June 15, 2017, at 8:00 a.m.



For a bargain Midwestern getaway, look no further than St. Louis. (GETTY IMAGES)

As we approach the July 4th weekend, the [best summer travel deals](#) are shaping up in big cities and breezy mountain towns. Even if you've been dreaming of sand and surf, these urban and hilltop getaways should entice you to try something new.

[See: [10 Cheap Summer Vacations.](#)]

Five Great City Escapes

Washington, D.C., is a summer favorite because you can roam between the heat of monuments and a variety of air-conditioned museums – all free. Don't miss the remarkable National Museum of African American History and Culture, even if you have to wake up at 6:30 a.m. to book same-day tickets online. This month, the National Museum of American History debuts an entire floor focused on the country's founding and its evolution. You'll find everything from a 12-ton sculpture of George Washington to a 9-foot LEGO Statue of Liberty, plus the actual Greensboro lunch counter that triggered one of the civil rights movement's key battles.

In [Philadelphia](#), the new Museum of the American Revolution joins the Betsy Ross House and the Liberty Bell among many great sites that bring American history to life. Play minigolf on a “historic” course in Franklin Square, stroll past striking murals and feast at the city’s celebrated top-value restaurants. In both cities, the Hilton Embassy Suites, Homewood Suites and Home2Suites “Weekenders” deal means spacious suites start at just \$119 per night.

The Midwest is packed with hidden values. The fascinating National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City, Missouri, is marking the war’s centennial with two special exhibits: the moving kids’ art show Vive L’amerique! and a display of huge photo murals by Michael St Maur Sheil. Book the Westin Kansas City at Crown Center’s “rates equal birth year” offer, in which guests pay \$189 for the first night, then the last two digits of their birth year for the second night. From there, you can walk to the museum, top barbecue joints, jazz clubs and more.

[See: [6 Grown-Up Summer Camps and Other Vacations for the Young at Heart.](#)]

[St. Louis](#) is known for its Gateway Arch, and this summer you can see much more by using an ExploreStLouis.com “Vacation Savings” guide to get 15 percent off Drury Hotel stays, plus \$250 in coupons. Kids will want to climb the giant beanstalk or dive into a bubble at the award-winning Magic House, then tour the city’s celebrated zoo, art museum, Missouri Botanical Garden and catch a Cardinals game.

There’s nothing like [New York City](#), where a building boom has made lodging a better value than ever. In addition to the free people watching, window shopping and Shakespeare in the Park, boat around 23 new ferry landings between Manhattan and Red Hook, the Rockaways and the South Bronx. NYC & Company is welcoming travelers with disabilities with a useful new website as well as guiding families (nearly 13 million, according to 2015 statistics) with help from the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Don’t miss the new drone technology show at the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum or the amazing world in miniature at Gulliver’s Gate, where visitors can make 3D prints of themselves to add to the display. Whether you book the central Best Western Premier Herald Square (\$170 per night) or its cheaper siblings in Chinatown or Queens, take advantage of Best Western’s “Go. Get. Rewarded.” deal that includes 10 percent off rates, a \$10 Best Western gift card for every night of your stay (\$20 for AAA members), plus 10 loyalty points for every dollar spent.

Beat the Heat With Mountain Breezes

Summer brings cheap flights to [Denver](#). At world-class ski resorts, enjoy off-season values in stylish condos with easy access to hiking, mountain biking, fly-fishing, golf, horseback riding and arts festivals. At Keystone Resort, with a 9,280 foot-tall basecamp just 90 minutes from Denver, there's free Kidtopia children's programming and a "Play for Free" package that includes lift tickets for kids age 12 and younger, nine holes of golf, guided hikes and fitness or yoga classes for everyone in the family, with a minimum two-night stay.

Snowmass Village, another Rocky Mountain alpine gem near the posh resort town of Aspen, has an active Very Important Kids program with group sports, nature programs and more. More than 95 percent of condos are slopeside, providing easy access to the village's free weekly concerts, outdoor cafes, arts center, 80 miles of hiking and biking trails and the authentic Snowmass Rodeo, held every Wednesday. The 'Mass Pass covers most activities, with up to \$250 discounts on three- or five-day lodging packages.

Italians boast that the best wine is found around Gavi, a cobblestoned village with a medieval fortress in the Piedmont hills. The 18th century Villa Sparina, one of the favorite wineries, surrounds an understated, luxury hideaway that draws Russian oligarchs and Milanese fashionistas to the sunset view terrace of Albergo L'Ostelliere hotel and its gourmet restaurant, pool and hiking trails among the vineyards. Elegantly rustic rooms run \$440 per night for two and include a bottle of wine, lavish breakfast, chef's tasting menu dinner and a guided tour of the wine cellars.

For an active adventure, head northwest to the Canadian Rockies. Canada is celebrating the [150th anniversary](#) of its confederation by encouraging visits to its parks, historic sites and marine conservation areas with a free Parks Canada pass valid throughout 2017. Plan an unforgettable stay at the historic Fairmont Banff Springs or Chateau Lake Louise in Alberta; Canadian dollar prices are 30 percent less when paying in U.S. dollars.

How about spending three weeks at a rustic Lake Tahoe home in the foothills of Truckee, California, with weekly deliveries from a CSA, free of charge? All you have to do is cat sit Phryne and, "it would also be great if you could water our plants and do a small amount of yard work and gardening," say the owners. That's one of thousands of offers on the community site [TrustedHousesitters.com](#), which has recently expanded from its U.K. roots, coming to the U.S. with six years' experience matching 500,000 members (\$114 per year) in 140 countries. Prefer to watch two dogs and two cats in the south of France?

[See: [15 Best Foodies Destinations in the USA.](#)]

No matter where you travel, stay current with destination news and advisories from [Travel.State.gov](#). Apply for expedited passports early, and don't forget to renew those with less than six months' validity – a barrier to entry in many countries, according to the experts at [Fastport Passport](#).

Tags: travel, vacations



[Kyle McCarthy](#) | CONTRIBUTOR

Kyle McCarthy is the author of a dozen Frommer guidebooks, contributor to many publications, and is co-founder and editor of [Family Travel Forum](#), the online community trusted by family vacation planners since 1996. Please use her Q&A [@familytravel4um](#) on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) or [Pinterest](#) and connect on [LinkedIn](#).