



Sure, our [national parks are beautiful](#), [beach camping is a blast](#), and taking a [road trip](#) is a fun way to spend a few days, but sometimes you want to explore a totally new city. And for that, we've got you covered.

Here at Thrillist, we've been in the "have fun in the city" game for over a decade now, and our resources run DEEP. Which is why we tapped our crack staff of writers and editors across the country to whittle down 300-plus American cities (with populations over 90k) to the absolute 25 best for spending three days. From bars and restaurants, iconic foods, and live tunes, to museums, outdoor activities, and [cheap Airbnbs](#) (not to mention beaches, [parks](#), and ease of getting around), we took into consideration *everything* that makes for a great weekend.

It wasn't easy, but, in the end, we came up with a bucket list we think stands up to the test. And one we think you'll want to start working your way through right away -- 'cause, you know, there are only 40 weekends left in the year!

25. Sioux Falls, SD

Must-eat/drink: Smoked pheasant, or some other wild game cooked only as [South Dakotans](#) can do it, at Parker's Bistro

Don't leave without: Walking around the entire city. The great thing about Sioux Falls is that you can literally walk through Downtown (and the sculpture walk) to the serene

Falls Park, and then back through [East Bank](#), in an afternoon. The city is impeccably clean and its cutting-edge restaurants (like CH Patisserie, one of the [21 best bakeries in America](#)) and breweries can hold their own against any from a city 10 times the size. Hit Monks House of Ale Repute on the right weekend, and it'll be sampling beers from all over the Midwest in the courtyard.

Weekend highlights: It's South Dakota, so maybe going in February isn't really the move. But in the summer, you can have a great weekend there for a fraction of what you would spend in a larger town, and the walkability, cleanliness, and proximity to wilderness (Palisades State Park is only about 30 minutes away) make it a great city to try for a few days. Plus, the local hockey and basketball teams not only sell out their games, but play in two of the cooler arenas in all of minor-league sports: the Denny Sanford Premier Center and the Sanford Pentagon. -- *Matt Meltzer, staff writer*

KANSAS CITY BARBECUE SOCIETY

24. Kansas City, MO

Must-eat/drink: Ribs at [Joe's Kansas City Bar-B-Que](#)

Don't leave without: Touring [Boulevard Brewing](#) and drinking something you can't get elsewhere at the tap room

Weekend highlights: Look, if you're in Kansas City, you're clearly going to want to OD on barbecue at some point, and a pilgrimage to (no longer Oklahoma!) Joe's is a must for any fan of meat and happiness (though don't sleep on the burnt-end game at LC's). But it's not all about barbecue. It's also a legendary steak town! Skip the chains and snag a butchered-to-order bone-in filet at Anton's. A trip through brewing powerhouse Boulevard (and a few hours in its massive taproom) is a no-doubter for any beer lover, and seeing some famous bass player jump into an impromptu jazz set at the Green Lady Lounge is a can't-miss for any music lover.

Take some time out to amble around singular museum experiences like the National World War I Museum and the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, but also set aside an evening to eat and drink your way through Westport, down next-level candlelit cocktails at Julep, devour a house-smoked brisket burger at Char Bar (it had been a few hours since you had smoked meat, you were starting to twitch), and get down on some Beard Award-winning fine dining at Bluestem, whose fried chicken-slinging farm-to-table offshoot, Rye, will leave your taste buds forever changed. To review: definitely eat all the barbecue you possibly can, but leave room for more, because Kansas City's doing

too many other things well right now to ignore them. It isn't one of the country's [seven most underrated food towns](#) for nothing. -- Joe Tharp, *Thrillist* contributor

PROVIDENCE WARWICK CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

23. Providence, RI

Must-eat/drink: [Pizza at Al Forno](#)

Don't leave without: Checking out Rhode Island School of Design's Museum of Art, with over 84,000 objects housed on six floors. If you're into history (or architecture), the Rhode Island State House is a definite visit. It has the fourth-largest self-supporting dome in the entire world, and once past security, you're free to roam the halls or sign up for a tour. If you're more of a shopper, head Downtown to Westminster St, an Etsy-like emporium of stores peddling tons of locally made finds. Or, if you plan ahead, reserve a spot in one of Johnson & Wales' three-hour cooking courses -- you'll learn how to prepare everything from pastries to Indian cuisine. And finally, if your getaway is in a warmer month, do not miss [Providence's WaterFire](#), when they set the river ablaze (but not in a Cleveland-in-the-'60s kind of way).

Weekend highlights: The academic and artistic talents of Providence's community run deep, largely due to the presence of an outstanding art school (RISD), an Ivy League university (Brown), and one of the nation's top culinary schools (Johnson & Wales). Providence is [an oft-overlooked mecca](#) of cultural offerings and intelligent, interesting people. Pedestrian-friendly streets and amazing architecture make this city a perfect place to stroll aimlessly. The state's access to the freshest seafood and local produce makes [the culinary offerings second to none](#), and there is always something happening, from hockey games at the Dunkin' Donuts Center to art gallery openings and exhibits. Rhode Island may be the smallest state, but Providence proves that bigger isn't always better. -- Sarah Anderson, *senior production assistant*

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22. Philadelphia, PA

Must-eat/drink: Cheesesteak, duh. Get one at Pat's. Or Geno's. Or Pat's. Wait, Geno's. Aw, f***k it, get one at [one of these places](#).

Don't leave without: While pics near the Rocky statue after you run up the art

museum's steps or at Pat's and Geno's in South Philly (aka "cheesesteak Vegas") will probably generate the most interest on your social media feeds, if you want to quietly [take in Philly's cobblestone charm](#), snap up a sundae from Old City's Franklin Fountain and stroll around the historic district. Or, head to Rittenhouse Square and read that book you've been meaning to finish while the city hums in the background.

Weekend highlights: Philly is more than [Wing Bowl insanity](#), *Rocky* nostalgia, and gooey cheesesteaks; it's a vibrant, unpretentious, blue-collar town and a perfect three-day destination. Between the world-class museums -- the Barnes Foundation is a must-see -- the gorgeous parks, peaceful walking trails, rockin' live-music scene, and excellent food and drink, you will have a blast ([even on a tight budget](#)). In fact, with a little insider knowledge, you can find [all kind of fun on the cheap](#). If you like a little culture mixed in with friendly comfort, Philly is the perfect place to visit. -- *Anna Goldfarb, Thrillist Philadelphia contributor*

21. Pittsburgh, PA

Must-eat/drink: [The Pitts-burger at Primanti Brothers](#) (it's a cliché for a reason, people) and [Iron City Beer](#) -- preferably at the same time

Don't leave without: Going out in Shadyside on Friday night, and curing your hangover with a trip to the Strip District the next morning

Weekend highlights: To many, [Pittsburgh is the new crown jewel of the Rust Belt](#). An ex-steel town that's evolved into a hotbed for medical, financial, and film professionals, it's one of the most prosperous cities for young folks in the country. And you know what young people like to do? As Andrew W.K. would say, "Party." It's the quintessential big-ish, small-ish city, where you will almost definitely run into people you know on a night out -- but as long as you're not on the frat-tastic Southside, you probably won't mind.

Pittsburgh may be known as a sports-crazy town, and shit -- it really is. While the six-ring Steelers have a stranglehold on the hearts of 'Burgh fans, you'd be remiss not to visit the [jaw-droppingly beautiful PNC Park](#), with its panoramic view of the city and ball team that can actually play for once in two decades. And the city's art scene is surprisingly vibrant, the main attraction being hometown boy [Andy Warhol's palatial museum](#), complete with its very own balloon room.

For drinks and eats in a distinct setting, it's hard to find a better joint than [Church Brew Works](#) -- a brewpub forged out of an abandoned church in the city's Strip District (sadly devoid of any actual strippers). Cap the night off with a drive up Mount Washington

(suckers take the incline) and a nighttime view of the city of three rivers. And seriously, don't talk shit about the Stillers if you value your front teeth. -- *Wil Fulton, staff writer*

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20. Cleveland, OH

Must-eat/drink: Burning River, Great Lakes Brewing

Don't leave without: [Figuring out that Cleveland actually does rock](#) (and no, you won't run into Drew Carey). It's the Midwestern city at the butt of 80% of fictitious origin-story jokes, but it doesn't really give a shit that it's [misunderstood](#) -- because while you were snickering, it was building up a bevy of culture without running up costs like larger cities. It has the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (fun tip: if you're in a band, bring a physical copy of your music -- you'll get in for free), a stunning new art museum, and a world-renowned orchestra. Walk pockets of town -- Lakeview, Ohio City, Tremont, and, perhaps the most literal and longstanding example, Coventry -- exploding with new energy and old charm in tandem.

Weekend highlights: Downtown is better than it's ever been, and the strip that is East 4th St, forever partitioned for pedestrians, is the only block you need for a Saturday night: eat at one of [Zack Bruell or Jonathon Sawyer's restaurants](#), catch a show at the mid-sized House of Blues, and hit the new Horseshoe Casino (inside the old Higbee's, where Ralphie saw the bottom of Santa's boot in *A Christmas Story*) for a nightcap and roll of the dice. Go to the nearby Hofbrauhaus during brunch for a full-fledged liter-beer-drinking romp and latkes, soundtracked with live polka. This is as Ohio as it gets, and you will love it. -- *Leanne Butkovic, cities editor*

19. Washington, DC

Must-eat/drink: DC has arguably the best Ethiopian restaurants in the country. The go-to spot is Dukem, located on popular U St -- order a combo sampler and throw some tibs on there for good measure.

Don't leave without: Visiting the pandas at the National Zoo -- the cub, Bei Bei, just made his debut this January

Weekend highlights: [Visitors to DC](#) can have an amazing time without spending a lot of cash. There are a ton of super-cheap places to eat and a slew of fantastic, [totally free things to do](#), like visiting world-class museums, monuments, memorials, botanical gardens, the aforementioned zoo, and the roof of the Kennedy Center -- which offers

brehtaking views. It's also a great biking city: ride down the Mount Vernon Trail, pedal from Nats Park to Kingman Island, or make a beeline for [killer local brewery DC Brau](#).

After all this exercise and thriftiness, you can blow some ducats on a meal at any of José Andrés' small-plate joints (worth it), and catch a show at [Rock & Roll Hotel, U Street Music Hall, the 9:30 Club, or the Black Cat](#) -- you might not think of DC as a place that throws down, but these spots will change your mind fast. -- *Jess Novak, cities editor*

18. Madison, WI

Must-eat/drink: The Scrambler from [Mickies Dairy Bar](#)

Don't leave without: Drinking a beer, looking at boats, and listening to live tunes, all while sitting waterside at the Memorial Union Terrace

Weekend highlights: [Madison is a college town](#), of course, and it's almost impossible to visit without realizing that; the school has gobbled up the bulk of one side of the constantly visible capitol building. Said campus is worth a walk: Bascom Hill provides the finest view in the city, the famed chairs at the lakeside Memorial Union Terrace are one of the best places I've ever consumed a pitcher of German beer, and Camp Randall Stadium is Football Saturday incarnate. But there's more! Obviously food, including campus stuff like Mickies Dairy Bar, but also, notably, Ella's Deli's acid trip of a Reuben joint, and grinning culinary assassin Tory Miller's tremendous L'Etoile.

Drinking? Yes, they drink here. Constantly! And happily. Keep that in check and you can walk basically anywhere if you really want to. There are parks galore, the zoo is actually pretty impressive, don't forget the lake that Otis Redding's goddamn plane crashed into (great for waterskiing!), and of course, it's all finished off with a healthy coat or two of [good old-fashioned Midwest Nice](#). -- *Ben Robinson, editorial director*

17. Santa Rosa, CA

Must-eat/drink: Pliny the Younger at Russian River Brewing Company. One of the world's highest-rated beers, this IPA draws lines around the block when it is released.

Don't leave without: Cycling. Because Santa Rosa is the big city in Sonoma wine country, your best bet for seeing it all is hopping on a bike and touring the wineries and

breweries; or, hell, just cycle to take in the views. The same landscapes that make for an exemplary range of wines make for a tremendous variety of vistas, from valley vineyards to gentle mountain terrain to the coast at Bodega Bay. The roads and trails are all super bike-friendly, and you can ride them whether you're an expert cyclist or just lost your training wheels.

Weekend highlights: Santa Rosa has been a popular getaway for people in the Bay Area for decades (it's only an hour and a half from San Francisco) but flying there is easier than you think -- there are nonstop flights from seven West Coast cities. And even though there are over 400 wineries in the Sonoma region to visit, you'd be remiss if you didn't spend some time in Santa Rosa. The Downtown -- with its restaurants, antique shops, and historic buildings -- is especially walkable and a nice break in between trips to the vineyards. Added bonus: Santa Rosa feels more like a small town than a wine destination and still boasts that laid-back Northern California vibe seemingly lost in some other area spots. -- *Matt Meltzer, staff writer*

16. Boulder, CO

Must-eat/drink: [Any "tap room rarity" at Avery Brewing](#)

Don't leave without: To truly take advantage of all Boulder has to offer, grab a pressed juice at Pearl St's [Wonder Press](#), and then transfer that juice to your CamelBak, because it's time to go [hiking at Chautauqua](#). Or biking. Or trail running. Or rock climbing. The numerous outdoor options are one of Boulder's many draws. Weather is another one -- the sun practically never stops shining (it also requires you to wear sunscreen, as the sun's gonna burn you pretty good when you hang out at 5,400ft). Even in the winter!

Weekend highlights: For one of the smaller towns on this list, Boulder holds its own in terms of outdoor activities, food, beer, weather, and general beauty. Sure, it's not exactly dirt-cheap to hang out here, which costs it a few points in the ranking. But the outdoor stuff is free. Oh, and there's legal weed. Some people visit for the weekend solely for the bud, but when the weekend smokers travel back to their home states, there's no chance that cannabis is the only reason they want to come back. -- *Lee Breslouer, staff writer*

15. St. Petersburg, FL

Must-eat/drink: The Crank IPA at Cycle Brewing, one of the [10 best breweries in Florida](#)

Don't leave without: Checking out Jannus Live, not so much just to catch a show but because it's the centerpiece of the main stretch of bars on Central Ave (located in a courtyard in the middle of the block). The restaurants in the area are part of an exploding food scene that few outside of Florida know exists, but you can easily fill a weekend trying places like The Mill and Birch & Vine. Then heading for craft cocktails at Cask & Ale or Mandarin Hide, or beers at Cycle Brewing or 3 Daughters.

Weekend highlights: [St. Petersburg is quickly becoming](#) the East Coast's answer to San Diego: a place once known for its impeccable beaches that's now the cool, smaller city with great beer, innovative food, and far fewer people to share it with than its larger neighbors. Not only that, but there's also [Fort De Soto Park](#) with one of the best beaches in Florida, [Clearwater](#) or Siesta Key and MORE beaches, the Rays, and even a Dali Museum. -- *Matt Meltzer, staff writer*

14. Asheville, NC

Must-eat/drink: Pulled whole-hog BBQ at Buxton Hall

Don't leave without: Hiking. Or biking. Or doing SOMETHING outdoors. Yeah, Asheville's got one of the [best beer scenes in America](#) but going to the Blue Ridge Mountains without getting ON the mountains is like going to New York and not eating pizza. There're literally 2,000 miles of hiking and mountain-biking trails here, plus a 60ft natural water slide in Pisgah National Forest. And the Biltmore -- the [most beautiful place in North Carolina](#) -- is here too!

Weekend highlights: If you're into beer, and the outdoors, and live on the East Coast, Asheville is like your Portland or Denver (without, ya know). But it's a far more affordable destination than either of those, and boasts a lot more in a smaller area. Sierra Nevada just opened its only East Coast outpost here, and Asheville has more breweries per capita than any city in the US. Getting there can be tricky (the airport only serves seven cities and has four airlines), but it's not a bad drive from much of the Mid-Atlantic. And once you're there, the city is incredibly walkable -- so even if you ignore our advice and shirk the mountains, you can burn off all that beer and barbecue just strolling from one place to another. -- *Matt Meltzer, staff writer*

13. Chicago, IL

Must-eat/drink: [A burger at Au Cheval](#)

Don't leave without: An architecture boat tour, [closing down a 4am bar](#), catching some comedy, getting out of Downtown

Weekend highlights: [If you've never been to Chicago](#), it's understandable that there are certain obligatory boxes you're going to want to check, which is fine. Get that selfie in front of the Bean before hitting a museum or the aquarium if you must. Take an architecture boat tour (actually a fantastic intro to Downtown and the lakefront). Hit Second City or iO for some [world-class comedy](#), and (obviously) consume the local holy trinity of [deep dish](#), [Chicago-style dogs](#), and [Italian beef](#).

But you're doing yourself a serious disservice if you spend your whole weekend tethered to the Downtown area, because [the neighborhoods](#) are where you find the city's true pulse. Head north to Wrigleyville if sports are your thing, or to Lincoln Square for some [Half Acre beer](#) and [incredible pie](#) if they aren't. Head west and walk [the 606](#), a repurposed discontinued train line linking four of the city's most vibrant (and delicious) neighborhoods. Head south to Bridgeport for the White Sox, yes, but also for Maria's, a hybrid beer bar/bottle shop some call a "slashie" that you won't want to leave. Just don't spend your whole weekend within a couple of blocks of Michigan Ave, because you're better than that. --Matt Lynch, executive editor

12. Portland, OR

Must-eat/drink: The porchetta and dirty fries at Lardo, signature poached chicken at Nong's Khao Man Gai, Pok Pok wings, the creme brulee at Blue Star Donuts, barrel-aged Negronis at Clyde Common, charcuterie at Imperial, brunch at Tasty n Sons, and about [900 beers from one of the dozens of breweries](#)

Don't leave without: [Eating at a food cart](#). Probably [outside a strip club](#). After you've gone on a hike in an inner-city old-growth forest as a primer for a [bike-based brewery crawl](#), but before you stand in line for fancy ice cream and comment on how you should totally move here before a man with an asymmetrical haircut tells you it's getting too expensive.

Weekend highlights: Basically, [everything you've heard about Portland is true](#). It's the best beer city in the world. It's at the forefront of food trends, but manages to remain relatively inexpensive compared to other cities when it comes to having a good time, despite what the locals tell you. There are [more parks than strip clubs](#). Which is crazy, because holy shit there's a strip club on every corner, and they're less creepy perv-hangs than [date spots](#) where people just hang out. So, yeah, Portland's pretty weird. And wonderful.

It's also extremely easy to get around. You could spend all day strolling one of the neighborhoods, which basically seem like somebody stapled a bunch of disparate small towns together and plopped a big-ass river in the middle, making it easy to stroll from a New York-ish cluster of boutiques and condos, then find yourself in an area that looks like hipster Shangri-La and smells like organic corn dogs. It's bike-friendly. Transit ranges from bus to tram to light rail to streetcar. If you get lost, well, it's pretty easy to get un-lost. Or just find yourself wandering an unfamiliar area putting everything possible in your mouth, concert hopping, or just sitting back on one of the hills watching the sky turn the color of a trippy oil painting. -- *Andy Kryza, Food & Drink editor*

11. Seattle, WA

Must-eat/drink: [Dick's Deluxe at Dick's Drive-In](#)

Don't leave without: Spending some time in the city's parks. The Pike Place Market (and, of course, the original Starbucks) is going to be your default daytime activity, but the Washington Park Arboretum has the largest Japanese garden outside Japan and is [downright spectacular in the spring](#). Discovery Park has jagged cliffs, a lighthouse, and sweeping views of Puget Sound and Mount Rainier. But for the best views of the Olympics and the water, head to Richmond Beach Saltwater Park.

Weekend highlights: [Seattle might be the most beautiful city in America](#) on a sunny day ([with the most beautiful skyline](#)), of which there aren't that many. So go in August. That's about the only time you're guaranteed one, and its first weekend is Seafair, the biggest weekend of the year in Seattle that doesn't involve football (it does, however, involve hydroplane races, ship tours, and a ton of on-the-water fun). Though the Downtown is walkable, to really experience all Seattle has to offer you'll probably want to rent a car. The city's neighborhoods, like Ballard, Fremont, and Capitol Hill, are almost small cities unto themselves, and each one has enough great bars, restaurants, and art to fill an entire weekend. --*Matt Meltzer, staff writer*

10. San Diego, CA

Must-eat/drink: The [fish tacos at Blue Water Seafood Market](#); a beer at one of the [many fantastic local breweries](#) (Green Flash, Ballast Point, Stone, etc.)

Don't leave without: [Finding the sea caves](#) hidden at the end of the National Park Service trail past Cabrillo National Monument. Oh, and maybe go during low tide so you don't die.

Weekend highlights: [The beauty of San Diego](#) (aside from, like, the actual physical beauty) is that you're getting more of a [collection of unique towns and experiences](#) rather than one tight space. From Gas Lamp, East Village, and Little Italy's Downtown vibes chock-full of new fangled restaurants, taprooms, and delightful rooftops; to the hep, eclectic offerings of North Park and Hillcrest; to the fancy people drinking and watching ponies run around things in Del Mar; to the chill hippie beach town vibes of Encinitas and Carlsbad; and whatever happens on those horse farms in Rancho Santa Fe, you've got options, man. And that's BEFORE we've even mentioned the beaches. -- *Kevin Alexander, national writer-at-large*

9. New York, NY

Must-eat/drink: [Pastrami sandwich at Katz's Deli](#)

Don't leave without: Waiting in line for the best smoked fish of your life at [Russ & Daughters](#), drinking on a random person's rooftop, visiting a [weird museum](#), eating pizza in [Brooklyn](#) and dumplings in Queens, drinking at [a dive bar](#) until 4am, and ending a night at a 24-hour diner

Weekend highlights: You could spend a century in New York and still never eat, see, and do everything you're "supposed to do." You'll probably feel compelled to eat at the [city's best restaurants](#) and check things off your [bucket list](#) like [burgers and pizza](#) and [cocktails](#), and you should by all means try a sampling of each of these -- but there's also a wealth of less-hyped activities and foods and drinks to be seen and had in [New York City](#).

Go see "The Nasty Show" at [the Comedy Cellar](#), a stage that everyone from [Louis C.K.](#) to Jerry Seinfeld has frequented, or check out one of our legendary [live-music venues](#) in Harlem. Eat your way through Chinatown for [less than \\$5](#) and then ride the 7 train out to Flushing for the best [wontons in hot chili oil](#) of your life. Or, to see the Mets.

As for the other Met (the museum), if it feels stifling, go visit the Whitney or the Museum of the Moving Image instead. If it's warm out, bike to the [Cloisters](#) or walk the Coney Island Boardwalk or head out to [Rockaway](#) for burgers on the beach. Before you drink cheap beer until close at a dive bar, treat yourself to one or two cocktails at a [classic "old New York" bar](#) that'll transport you back to the '20s. There are plenty of reasons to not spend your three-day trip waiting in line for [speakeasies](#) and Cronuts (though... those aren't the worst ideas either...) -- *Lucy Meilus, New York editor*

8. Savannah, GA

Must-eat/drink: Oliver's Lunch (with both sausages) at Zunzi's. And when they ask you if you want both sauces, you must reply with a rousing, "SHITYEAH!" Just trust us.

Don't leave without: Doing some kind of historic tour. Yes, it's cheesy, but there are plenty of cities where you can eat and drink; none of them have the collection of squares and historic homes of Savannah. Even the ghost tours here aren't completely corny, and since the city is so small, all of them are walkable.

Weekend highlights: Again, the city is small, so even if you opt to stay outside the historic district, you can park your car and walk to pretty much everything once you're there. It's a getaway city for most Southerners outside Florida, but it's also got an artsy, quirky side from all the SCAD (Savannah College of Art and Design) students living in town. So you might easily find yourself standing between a dude in a "Cocks" hat with 'Bama bangs and a girl with a pierced lip and full sleeves.

The bar scene is one of the best in the country, mostly because you can get beers to go and wander from bar to bar. This is part of why Savannah is one of the world's biggest St. Patrick's Day destinations, but the party isn't relegated to just March. Kevin Barry's on River St is the iconic Irish pub and a great place to start the night. But if you want to get a more local experience, hit up Jen's and Friends, which serves both beers in cans and \$7 martinis during happy hour.

Beyond the history and nightlife, Savannah's also got a pretty solid beach about 10 minutes away at Tybee Island, where during low tide you can walk nearly a quarter-mile out into the ocean. -- *Matt Meltzer, staff writer*

7. Las Vegas, NV

Must-eat/drink: Wicked Spoon buffet at The Cosmopolitan. It turned the "buffet" concept on its head by offering better food in smaller portions, including tender cuts of meat from an in-house butcher shop. The idea is to sample lots of different gourmet dishes, rather than scooping as much mashed potatoes and shrimp cocktail onto your plate as possible.

Don't leave without: Getting some action. [Las Vegas](#) is the [hookup capital of the world](#) and you can be a scoundrel on the prowl even if you don't have a spouse back home. Invest in a table at a nightclub, spend a mortgage payment on bottle service, and watch the eye candy magically wander in your direction. [OMNIA at Caesars Palace](#) is a

good choice if you like big-name DJs and crazy stuff that hangs from the ceiling. Or you can save a few bucks and have an actual conversation (if you're into that sort of thing) at a [historic dive bar off the Strip](#). Even the lobby bars in the casinos are great spots to meet someone new, especially all three levels of the Chandelier bar at the Cosmopolitan. Just be careful your new friend isn't looking for a business transaction. Despite [popular misconception](#), brothels are limited to outside county limits.

Weekend highlights: Don't blow all your vacation money on gambling. It's easy to get caught up in the excitement of (maybe) scoring a big jackpot, but if you're prone to [rookie mistakes](#), stick to the penny slots. Speaking of mistakes... you'd be making one if you think everything in Vegas happens on the Strip. Make a detour Downtown where a new [restaurant and nightlife boom](#) is taking place. And if you need some peace and quiet, you're just a [short drive away](#) from the mountains of Red Rock Canyon, the water of Lake Mead... and whatever you may or may not find at Area 51. -- *Robert Kachelriess, Thrillist Las Vegas contributor*

[TIESTO](#)

6. Miami, FL

Must-eat/drink: [Ropa vieja](#) and Cuban coffee. Go to Versailles in Little Havana for the true experience.

Don't leave without: Spending as much time as you can on the beach, or at the very least going out on the water. [Miami is a lot more than just South Beach](#) now, too; in a weekend you can see some of the best street art in the world in Wynwood, feel like you're in another country in Little Havana (or, if you're adventurous, [Hialeah](#)), and get a big-city experience among the steel-and-glass towers of Brickell.

Weekend highlights: The Miami you know from rap videos isn't really accessible unless, well, you're a rapper. So don't think you'll be making it rain at strip clubs and rolling around in a Bugatti all weekend. Come to Miami to enjoy some of the best food, nightlife, and beaches in America, and absolutely pack your wallet. Next to Manhattan it's the most expensive place in country to party. But, hey, at least the beach is free. -- *Matt Meltzer, staff writer*

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5. Charleston, SC

Must-eat/drink: [The Pluff Mud Porter at Holy City's taproom](#) north of town, and a duck club from Tattooed Moose

Don't leave without: Spending any time beyond King St. Sure, the main drag is fantastic -- but so is pretty much every other part of town. Go to Battery Park, down at the peninsula's point, and take in the view of Fort Sumter while kicking back under century-old oaks. Go east to the water and scope the Ravenel Bridge from the warehouse district, one of Charleston's fast-developing neighborhoods. Hop a cab north to [Edmund's Oast, one of the finest beer bars in the whole damn country](#). You could spend the weekend on King St and be perfectly happy, but [it's just a small slice of Charleston](#). You'll be glad you ventured away from it.

Weekend highlights: It's hot and humid in the summer. Like, very, very hot and humid. So if that sounds sticky, try to plan a trip in the spring or fall. You'll get more bang for your lodging buck if you find a rental or hotel on James Island, West Ashley, or North Charleston. Husk is just one of Charleston's near-limitless restaurant offerings. A rental car is not essential (both Uber and Lyft operate here, and there are several cab companies) but it's a huge help if you plan on exploring the fringes of the city. --*Dave Infante, staff writer*

ALFIE PHOTOGRAPHY/SHUTTERSTOCK

4. Austin, TX

Must-eat/drink: [Brisket at La Barbecue](#)

Don't leave without: Swimming in Barton Springs, eating your weight in brisket, two-stepping unironically, and finding a new favorite band

Weekend highlights: [Jaded old Austinites](#) bemoan the fact that the city has become a revolving door of festival-goers, conference attendees, and bachelor party hooligans, but the reason Austin's tourist economy has flourished in such a sometimes-frustrating manner is because it's just such a damn nice place to spend the weekend. Its reputations as both the live music and barbecue capital of the world is well founded: you'll find a dozen [barbecue places](#) that out-smoke most other major cities, and the wealth of local musical talent on any given night put even huge cities like New York or LA to shame.

Aside from barbecue, the food scene runs the gamut from chicken trailers to tweezer

cuisine and approaches each style with a scrappy nature that you don't see in more-established food cities. Beer fans will find a six-pack of fantastic breweries worth visiting, the cocktail scene is on the serious come-up, there's no better place for [sloppy bar-crawling](#) outside of New Orleans or Memphis, and you can (and will) two-step with either a 75-year-old cowboy or a 25-year-old bearded dreamboat. In terms of non-gluttonous options, there's a few solid historical stops to fill in the daytime hours (the state capitol building and LBJ Museum), but every minute not spent eating or drinking should probably be spent submerged in Austin's antidote to triple-digit summer heat, Barton Springs. -- *Dan Gentile, staff writer*

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3. San Francisco, CA

Must-eat/drink: Half-cracked crab and oysters from [Swan Oyster Depot](#); literally any cocktail from Trick Dog

Don't leave without: Wandering up one of the many random staircases that help you climb [SF's famous, tiring-as-hell hills](#). The Lyon steps in Cow Hollow, for example, put you right into the Presidio, and give you an Instagram-worthy view of the Golden Gate, Alcatraz, and the Bay. And the ones on 16th Ave are [worth checking out too](#).

Weekend highlights: Yes, we know that the tech boom and influx of people during the last few years have created animosity for a specific type of selfish city-exploiting people (namely tech bros and compassionless landlords), and that most of the rest of the country now views us in the stereotypes of newspaper articles and tone-deaf letters to our mayor. But guess what? It's still a damn amazing and unique city, with beautiful hills and vistas and eateries and architecture you can't find anywhere else. We still have one of the best city parks in the world (Golden Gate) with acres of trails that spill you onto the most random things, like nerds in full knights' armor practicing their crossbows and swordplay, and our buffaloes.

The Mission still has the smallest concentration of the [best burritos in the world](#) (La Taqueria, El Farolito, etc.) and might actually be the [best square mile to eat and drink](#) in the United States. The Ferry Building feels like it should be a tourist trap selling SF sweatshirts and Alcatraz keychains, but instead offers up a dozen truly incredible eateries to hit before you cruise across the water to one of many postcard-worthy Marin towns. And speaking of tourists, if you want to play things that way, there are certainly worse things to do than eat fresh crab or bread bowls of chowder, or sip original Irish

coffees in North Beach. Just avoid SoMa, bring a jacket, and embrace those hill-inflicted inevitable calf cramps, and you'll be just fine. -- *Kevin Alexander national writer-at-large*

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2. New Orleans

Must-eat/drink: [Any classic New Orleans cocktail](#)

Don't leave without: Wandering aimlessly through the Quarter, preferably with a drink in hand. There's no better way to take in the architecture, stumble upon some music, and discover the hidden nooks and crannies of the old neighborhood.

Weekend highlights: Tucked throughout the Quarter and [hidden among the neon haze of Bourbon are bars](#) like Kingfish, whose bar program was created by premier cocktail historian Chris McMillan, the French 75, helmed by Chris Hannah (one of the world's best bartenders), and Broussard's Empire Bar, whose Ramos Gin Fizz is a testament to a lost decade of cocktail craftsmanship.

You can take a ride around the Carousel Bar while sipping a Pimm's Cup or walk over to Latitude 29, the lone bar created by Beachbum Berry, the man who resurrected the Tiki movement. Waiting to soak up all that booze are granddames of the city, like Antoine's and Brennan's, and [relatively newer restaurants](#), like Sylvain and Cane & Table, which take advantage of the dark, comfortable charm of the 'hood, while plating creative, new dishes.

You can also duck into Preservation Hall or hop along Frenchmen's strip of jazz clubs, and don't be surprised if you run into at least three impromptu dance parties -- the natural reaction to street performers here -- when you round a random corner, just because music flows so freely through those streets and within culture. The city is [captivating and engaging and filling](#) and, well, it'll probably leave you hungover, and then, since all of those riches were just in super-walkable Downtown, the city'll rope you back for yet another weekend. -- *Liz Childers, senior cities director*

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1. Nashville, TN

Must-eat/drink: [Hot chicken/a Goo Goo Cluster \(or three\)](#) and a Bushwhacker at Edley's

Don't leave without: Going to church, and we mean the Mother Church

Weekend highlights: [Nashville](#) is rapidly becoming as synonymous with food as it is music -- hello hot chicken and BBQ! -- attracting as many celebrity chefs as musicians and plenty of opportunities for delicious collaborations. (Planning a trip in the fall? Check out Music City Food + Wine Festival, founding members include Kings of Leon and chef Jonathan Waxman.) Take a guided tour of all the foodie hotspots with Walk Eat Nashville, hop on a [Nashville Brew Bus to explore the local craft breweries](#), or treat your party to whiskey tastings at nearby distilleries like Nelson's Green Brier Distillery and Corsair Distillery.

Having a great time in Nashville doesn't mean you have to [deplete your savings](#). There are more than 150 venues in town and many of them offer [live music every night for FREE](#). And the honky tonks on Lower Broad play all day long, too -- just don't forget cash for the tip jars. You can even catch a show while buying records at Grimey's New & Preloved Music or attend a live-to-acetate recording at Jack White's Third Man Records.

While you definitely should hit Ascend Amphitheater, a 6,800-capacity outdoor venue on the riverfront, if you want to take in a larger act, there's no better sound in town than one coming from Ryman Auditorium. As for sports, depending on the season you're visiting, you've got the Tennessee Titans, Nashville Predators, and the new 10,000-seat First Tennessee Park to enjoy a Nashville Sounds game. (Watch from the outfield on the patio of The Band Box with a frozen whiskey and Coke in hand. Just a suggestion.) -- *Kendall Mitchell Gemmill, Thrillist Nashville contributor*

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