

Tricks, tips, and insights for booking the ultimate summer vacation.

If you haven't gotten around to booking that summer vacay yet, don't fret. We've got you covered.

Thanks to the help of a few trusty services like The Flight Deal and [Airfare Watchdog](#), travelers can book last-minute trips affordably and easily. Sites like [Google Flights](#) help you plan your entire trip, while [Momondo](#), [SkyScanner](#), and [FareCompare](#) allow you to set fare alerts and compare deals before you book.

These United States are diverse, imminently explore-able. With so many places to choose from, we've pulled together our picks and tricks for the ultimate American summer vacation

1. Summer in the City

Destination: New York City

From Memorial Day to [Labor Day](#), New York City residents make a mass exodus to the cooler climates of the nearby Hamptons and lake towns upstate, availing the Island to the hoards of tourists looking to get in on the action. Yes, it's hot, and, yes, it's a bit smelly, but what no New Yorker will tell you is New York City in the summertime is absolute magic.

From getting a reservation at one of the city's most coveted restaurants to snagging choice theater seats, to the plethora of free cultural offerings, New York City is a tourist's paradise—so long as you do it right.

What to Do:

From Shakespeare in the Park to catching a show at Brooklyn's fashionable [McCarren Park](#), summertime in New York City brings on the heat when it comes to deals. This summer, the theater's taking its act outdoors at New York's iconic restaurant [Tavern On The Green](#) in Central Park. The

outdoor series, Broadway on the Green will be running every Sunday through June 26 with upcoming performances, including *Kinky Boots*, *Fiddler On The Roof*, *Something Rotten* and *Finding Neverland* through June.

Another unique option this summer, [Shakespeare In The Parking Lot](#).

Located on Norfolk between Delancey and Rivington streets on the Lower East Side, this season kicks off on July 7 and run all summer long with a performance of *A Midsummer Nights Dream*. Shows run Thursdays through Saturdays starting at 8 p.m. Best part: it's totally free.

New to the summer scene this year, [Accomplice](#) is an immersive and interactive experience that sends people all over New York City. Aided by clues and puzzles, participants are assisted by cast members. Currently there are six shows going on including a ladies night out and a show for kids.

Where to Stay:

When it comes to [New York City hotel rooms](#), it should come as no surprise that good, affordable rooms are limited. Still, many hotel rooms are deeply discounted through the end of August.

If you find you're relatively flexible on your dates, a great way to save is by signing up for [Groupon](#) Getaway's and [Travelocity](#) to get hotel deals emailed to you directly. Another amazing option, [Jetsetter.com](#) offers some of the city's best hotels in town at a discounted rate.

Alternatively, one of the latest and greatest deals in town can be found at [The Pod Hotels](#), New York's first micro-hotel concept. With two separate midtown locations and rates as low as \$89 per night, hotel perks include VIP seats to Comedy Central's newest late-night show, April Bloomfield's Michelin Star eats and customized walking tours of some of the city's most iconic neighborhoods.

Where to Eat:

Reservations can be relatively hard to come by, which is why summertime is the best time to score a coveted seat.

[Reserve](#) is a great new app that allows you to reserve a table at otherwise tough to book spots simply by inputting the time, date, and party size for your reservation.

2. Beach Getaway



[Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater](#)

Destination: St. Petersburg/Clearwater, Florida

If your ideal summer getaway includes reading your [favorite travel mag](#) and a lot of R&R by the beach, then look no further than the beautiful beaches of St. Petersburg, Florida. With an abundance of arts, food and culture, St. Pete has got it all.

St. Petersburg, on Florida's Gulf Coast, often goes overlooked in favor of its flashier neighbors like Orlando and Fort Lauderdale. Clearwater Beach boasts a slower summer season making this one of the most desirable summer getaways.

What to Do:

There's a lot to see in St. Petersburg and there's no better time or place to experience some true local color than by visiting the St. Petersburg

Shuffleboard Club. One of the oldest and largest of its kind in the world, every Friday “The St. Pete Shuffle” is a free event complete with shuffleboard, live music, and food trucks.

Home to the largest, most comprehensive collection of Salvador Dali’s work in America, The Dali Museum has partnered with The Walt Disney Family Museum to announce “Disney and Dalí: Architects of the Imagination.”

Where to Eat:

St. Petersburg’s rapidly growing foodie scene goes well beyond seafood. The Gulf Coast’s [Locale Market](#) measures a whopping 20,000 square feet, while [Brick & Mortar](#), a farm to fork restaurant with a rustic setting, and [Frenchy’s](#), sited on the beach, are other must-visits.

In the heart of St. Petersburg, [The Canopy](#) comes complete with private cabanas and fire pits. Enjoy the surrounding views of Tampa Bay while sipping on one of their seasonal cocktails. If craft beer is more your style try one of the many local breweries along the [St Pete Beer Trail](#), including [Green Bench Brewery](#), St. Pete’s first microbrewery.

Where to Stay:

One of St. Petersburg’s most iconic hotels is [The Vinoy](#), a family-friendly stay with five on-site restaurants (including a ’20s-style spot), plus a spa and golf course.

3. All-American Road Trip



Getty Images/Westend61

Destination: Pacific Coast Highway

While there's certainly no shortage of [amazing, all-American routes](#), a drive along the Pacific Coast should be considered a rite of passage.

From San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge to San Diego's glitzy downtown Gaslamp Quarter, you won't find a drive with more awe-inspiring coastal views, seaside villages, rugged forest and vast terrain as the drive down the historic [Pacific Coast Highway](#). Hey, you might even hit a few vineyards, too!

Map Your Trip:

Sites like [Roadtrippers](#) provide updated maps, points of interest, natural wonders, and "weird stuff," along your route. The drive down the coast takes about 10 hours in total, but with so many places to see as you go, why rush it?

Sleep in Style:

The best sites to check out are Airbnb, VRBO (Vacation Rentals by Owner), [Roomorama](#), and [Homeaway](#).

Meanwhile, a service called [Couch Surfing](#) lets you stay on the couch of a "host" and is a great way to save a few bucks on lodgings in the meantime.

4. Embrace Your Wild Side



Spring Creek Ranch

Destination: Jackson Hole, Wyoming

Whether it's a heart-pumping white-water rafting tour, hiking, golfing or lounging, the summer "off-season" in Jackson Hole offers up a lot of ways to enjoy the Great Outdoors.

Located on a wildlife sanctuary just outside of Jackson Hole, [Spring Creek Ranch](#) is a 1000-acre retreat with Grand Teton National Park to the north, National Elk Refuge to the east, and Yellowstone to the West. It's also home to one of the longest-running hotel Naturalist Programs.

Offered exclusively to guests, wildlife and natural history safaris provide an up-close look at the local wildlife as well as some of the most dramatic landscapes in North America.

What to Do:

The ranch offers a ton of outdoor activities, like horseback riding, rock climbing, hiking, balloon rides, chuck wagon dinners, fishing and stargazing.

As one of the most popular winter resorts in the country, Jackson Hole's and the surrounding areas boasts an [abundance of activities](#) from mountain biking across ski trails to fly fishing and white water rafting. Check the [local tourism bureau](#) for cultural happenings like events and concerts in the area to make the most of your time

5. Take a Cruise



Wolfgang Kaehler / Getty Images

Destination: Alaska

While many travelers book cruises months in advance, many times the best deals land 60 to 90 days before a ship's departure, when lines are scrambling to fill those last remaining cabins. According to [CruiseCritic.com](#), Alaska's cruise season runs from May to September, with the high season typically starting in June and going through August.

How to Book:

The rule of thumb when it comes to booking a last-minute cruise tends to be the closer you get to the departure date, the lower the price of the cruise becomes. In many cases, working with a travel agent is in your best interest. They often have the inside scoop when it comes to the hottest deals and discounts, and can negotiate other cruising perks like drink packages or on-board credit.

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