



A Roundup of America's Great Road Trips

Summer travel is supposed to feel easy, but these days, thanks to rising airfare, added fees and crowded airports, getting to your destination can feel like a struggle ... which sets the wrong tone for a vacation. If you're not exactly eager to head to the airport right now, we have some good news: Some of America's best summer getaways are closer than you think, conveniently located just off major highways and within an easy drive of key cities. That means you can pack up the car, bring what and who you want, and hit the road to destinations that are known for outdoor adventure, history, family fun and standout local flavors.

Shenandoah County, Virginia: Great Outdoors Road Trip

Tucked into the Shenandoah Valley, this stretch of small mountain towns in Virginia invites visitors to step away from the hectic pace of city living and into a more relaxed rhythm that's shaped by rivers, trails and mountain scenery. In small towns like Woodstock, Strasburg and Edinburg, summer slows down just enough to let you explore it all by foot, kayak, bicycle, motorcycle or even horseback. Ways to enjoy the great outdoors in Shenandoah County include:

- Hiking or mountain biking at [Bryce Resort](#), a year-round retreat that offers trails, lift-served biking and a full array of water sports at Lake Laura.
- Kayaking, paddling and fishing along the Shenandoah River, with plenty of public access points for a relaxed day on the water.
- Exploring miles of trails in the [George Washington National Forest](#) or [Seven Bends State Park](#), where shaded paths and mountain views offer true outdoor resets for those escaping a bustling city.
- Riding horseback with [Secret Passage Ranch](#) or tackling [OHV trails](#) through the county's backroads and forested terrain for a more adventurous take on summer exploration.

How to Get There: Interstate 81

Driving Distance from Major Cities:

- 1.5 hours from Washington
- 2 hours from Baltimore
- 4 hours from Pittsburgh
- 4 hours from Philadelphia



Paddleboarding on Lake Laura
Credit: Shenandoah County Tourism

Allegany County, Maryland: American History Road Trip

This part of Western Maryland had a front-row seat to countless important moments in American history. Since the nation's infancy, Cumberland has served as one of the United States' most significant transportation hubs ... for covered wagons, canal boats, trains, automobiles and bicycles. Along the way, this region – affectionately dubbed “The Mountain Side of Maryland” – also played a quiet but important role in the journey to freedom via the Underground Railroad. A sampling of ways in which visitors can experience history in this mountain destination includes:

- Starting a journey of any length at “[Mile Marker Zero](#)” of the old National Road. A small monument still exists downtown, situated right outside the historic [Western Maryland Railway Station](#), which reminds visitors that this city was also a significant stop along railroad lines.
- Sightseeing on the [Western Maryland Scenic Railroad](#), whose year-round steam and diesel trains make the 16-mile loop between Cumberland and Frostburg and offer such themed seasonal rides as ice cream trains, sunset on the mountain and more.
- Exploring the tunnels underneath the [Emmanuel Episcopal Church](#), which was a stop along the Underground Railroad. Tours are available on request and subject to availability.
- Riding or hiking the towpath of the [Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historic Park](#), the 184.5-mile historic waterway that connected the nation's capital to the mountains of Western Maryland. Construction began in 1828, and by 1850 the canal reached its western terminus in Cumberland — where visitors can still experience this engineering marvel today.
- Staying in a new (but old) hotel. An adaptive reuse project is breathing new life into a long-vacant Victorian-era building in historic downtown Cumberland. [The Wills Hotel](#), set to welcome its first guests in June, is the destination's first boutique property.

How to Get There: Interstate 68

Driving Distance from Major Cities:

- 2 hours from Baltimore, Pittsburgh or Washington
- 4 hours from Philadelphia or Cleveland

- 5 hours from New York City

Bowling Green, Kentucky: Family-Friendly Road Trip

Located in South Central Kentucky, Bowling Green is the perfect summer stop for families looking to trade airport lines for the freedom of the open road. With unforgettable attractions, classic Americana and plenty of sweet treats, this is a kid-approved destination packed with fun. Some of the top family-friendly activities in Bowling Green include:

- Catching a [Bowling Green Hot Rods](#) baseball game at the downtown ballpark, where summer nights come with fireworks and a side of tasty snacks.
- Cooling off with a stop at [Chaney's Dairy Barn](#), known for farm-fresh ice cream, playground fun and the chance to interact with adorable cows.
- Spending the day at [Beech Bend Park & Splash Lagoon](#), which features a water park and classic amusement rides.
- Exploring [Lost River Cave](#), where guided boat tours take visitors underground through one of Kentucky's most unique natural attractions. During the summer, the cave's former nightclub is transformed into an underground movie theater that features kid-friendly movies. (The movies are for members only, but an annual membership costs less than taking your family to a standard theater ... and it comes with other perks, too.)

How to Get There: Interstate 65

Driving Distance from Major Cities:

- 1 hour from Nashville
- 2 hours from Louisville
- 2.5 hours from Lexington
- 3.5 hours from Cincinnati
- 4 hours from St. Louis



*Exploring Lost River Cave's Offerings
Credit: VisitBGKY*

Ascension Parish, Louisiana: Foodie Road Trip

Located along Interstate 10, the highway that connects New Orleans to Baton Rouge, Ascension Parish lives up to its nickname “Louisiana’s Sweet Spot.” This is a destination where food takes center stage. The menu of ways visitors can taste the incredible flavors of Ascension Parish includes:

- Sipping their way along the [Louisiana’s Sweet Spot Cocktail Trail](#), which runs through July 31 and features locally inspired drinks offered by 20 participating restaurants and distilleries.
- Tasting something sweet at [The Cane Sugar Toffee Company](#), a beloved stop for handmade confections that feature an agricultural staple of the parish ... sugarcane!
- Digging into the parish’s signature dish in Gonzales, the [Jambalaya Capital of the World](#), where jambalaya shows up at festivals, restaurants and dinner tables alike.

How to Get There: Interstate 10

Driving Distance from Major Cities:

- *30 minutes from Baton Rouge*
- *1 hour from New Orleans*
- *2 hours from Biloxi*
- *3 hours from Jackson*
- *3 hours from Mobile*
- *5 hours from Houston*

From outdoor adventure to family fun, these destinations offer everything you need for a summer well spent ... no airport required. With the freedom to pack what you want and explore at your own pace, it’s a reminder that getting away doesn’t have to be complicated. Sometimes, all it takes is a full tank, a packed trunk, a great playlist and a destination that’s just down the highway.