

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS
IN A MODERN WORLD

relating

The Art of Small-City Travel

CRAVING AN EASY-TO-
PULL-OFF GETAWAY?
AMERICA'S SMALL AND
MIDSIZE CITIES OFFER
GREAT FUN AND EXCELLENT
VALUE. HERE, TRIP
INSPIRATION FOR FIVE
TYPES OF TRAVELERS.

The Museum of
Indian Arts &
Culture in Santa Fe,
New Mexico

Photograph by Garry Belinsky

AUGUST 2019 REAL SIMPLE 57

For History Buffs

CONSIDER: SANTA FE

TO LEARN ABOUT our country's founding, cities in the 13 colonies no doubt come to mind. But Santa Fe, New Mexico, should too: Spanish explorers established the city in 1610, a decade before the *Mayflower* reached Plymouth Rock. Santa Fe has some of our nation's oldest buildings, as well as opportunities to explore traditionally overlooked Native American history.

The Palace of the Governors is the oldest continuously operating government building in the United States. San Miguel Mission, the country's oldest church, is an adobe structure where visitors can see flecks of straw in the original mud plaster on the exterior walls. Cross the street to the city's longest-standing house, dating back to 1646.

To dive deeper into New Mexico's history and native people, head to Museum Hill, a small area dotted with museums, such as the Museum of Indian Arts & Culture, a local favorite. For a taste of frontier life, check out living-history museum El Rancho de las Golondrinas, which features original buildings from the early 1700s and actors demonstrating daily life as villagers. Many of the area's pueblos, tribes, and nations host public events; go to santafe.org for a schedule and tips.

It's worth the roughly one-hour drive to Bandelier National Monument to see cliff dwellings and carvings made by Pueblo people more than 1,000 years ago.—*Shivani Vora*



Above: Cliff dwellings at Bandelier National Monument, about an hour from Santa Fe. Left: Visitors at the Palace of the Governors.

MORE CITIES TO SEE

For civil rights and music:
Memphis,
Tennessee

For Civil War history:
Harpers Ferry,
West Virginia

IDEAS FOR EXPLORING ANY HISTORY-RICH CITY

Many cities have a **cultural resources office** or a branch of their planning and development commission (like the Historic Preservation Office and Commission in Kansas City, Missouri) that outlines preservation initiatives. Their websites can be useful for learning how the city reconstructs its history.

Call the **historical society** for info about events and tours. Ask for recommendations for neighborhoods with preserved architecture and period-inspired bed-and-breakfasts. Taking that step beyond the website almost always yields personalized ideas.

See if the **public library** has a local-history exhibit or event. Books can also be great sources of inspiration. Read one that takes place in the city you're visiting and retrace the characters' steps.
—*Jessie Kissinger*

For Outdoor Seekers

CONSIDER: BEND



IF THERE'S ONE CITY that's obsessed with the outdoors, it's Bend, Oregon. With good reason: This year-round recreation hub offers everything from mountain biking to fly-fishing right in its backyard.

Family-friendly adventure begins on the Deschutes River, which runs through town; tubing, kayaking, and stand-up paddleboarding on the river is a summertime rite. West of Bend, you'll find the Cascade Range, where mountain trails abound. When it's warm, locals swim and camp at the alpine lakes; in the winter, they ski at Mt. Bachelor, one of the largest ski areas in the United States. Located 22 miles from Bend, it offers 4,300 acres of lift-accessible terrain, plus cross-country skiing and

snowshoeing. Back in Bend, the High Desert Museum celebrates the region's wildlife and history. South of Bend, don't miss the Newberry National Volcanic Monument, site of the Lava River Cave, a mile-long hardened lava tube you can explore on foot. Maupin, a city to the north, is paradise for white-water rafters.

You don't have to be an adrenaline junkie to get outdoors. Bend has more than 80 parks and 3,000 acres of developed and undeveloped parkland, as well as outdoor programming in the summer, like concerts at the Les Schwab Amphitheater. Boasting the most sunny days in the state each year, Bend gives visitors no excuse not to get out and enjoy it.
—*Jessica Flint*

Tubing and kayaking on the Deschutes River

MORE CITIES TO SEE

For a national park base camp: St. George, Utah

For land and sea activities: Bar Harbor, Maine

IDEAS FOR EXPLORING ANY OUTDOORSY CITY

For \$80, the **National Park Service's America the Beautiful annual pass** will admit you, any children, and up to four adults (ages 16 and up) into more than 2,000 federal recreation areas, including all national parks. If you have a fourth grader, you can get a free annual pass for the student and accompanying adults.

To learn about the flora of the region, see if the city has a **native plant society**. The nonprofit Wild Ones has 56 chapters across the country, many of which offer guided walks.

The free **AllTrails app** will show you local trails. The website and app **Hipcamp** connects campers to people with land and outdoor accommodations, like vineyards and ranches.

If you prefer word-of-mouth recs, visit a **local outdoor store**. "The people behind the desk usually own the shop or are really into the outdoors," says *Lonely Planet* writer Amy C. Balfour. "They give great advice." —*J.K.*

For Art & Architecture Aficionados

CONSIDER: PITTSBURGH

PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA, may be known for its industrial roots and Heinz ketchup, but today it's a must-visit destination for art-and-design-minded travelers.

Fans of modern art won't run out of options here. Andy Warhol was a native, and the museum dedicated to his works includes approximately 900 paintings, 100 sculptures, and 4,000 photographs. For more experimental art, check out one of the frequently changing installations by artists in residence at the Mattress Factory. Then there's the Carnegie Museum of Art, considered by many to be the world's first contemporary-art museum, with more than 30,000 objects from around the world. Don't skip the city's outdoor art and sculp-

tures either, or the interactive Children's Museum of Pittsburgh if you're visiting with budding creators.

Onto the architecture: Pittsburgh has a significant collection of neo-Gothic buildings, a style dating back to 18th-century Britain. The Heinz Memorial Chapel, with its gorgeous, 73-foot-tall stained-glass windows, is an essential stop. Bridges should be part of the lineup as well—with 446 of them in the city, they're hard to miss. Smithfield Street Bridge, built in 1881, is the oldest, while the trio known as the Three Sisters, on the Allegheny River, are the most iconic. Consider, too, some of the city's environmentally sustainable marvels, such as the Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens.—S.V.

IDEAS FOR EXPLORING ANY DESIGN-CENTRIC CITY

If you need trip inspiration, each year, the American Planning Association recognizes neighborhoods, streets, and public spaces as **Great Places in America**. Recent recipients include the Guthrie Historic District in Guthrie, Oklahoma, and State Street on the state line between Tennessee and Virginia.

"A lot of towns have artist-run spaces and amazing works happening at them," says Cara Starke, director of the Pulitzer Arts Foundation. Think small galleries, immersive environments, and converted warehouses. Track down some of these spaces via **Common Field**, a country-wide network of artist-run and independent art organizations.

For easy searching, the **Artguide** on artforum.com lists current gallery and museum shows, as well as auction previews, in 250 American cities and towns.—J.K.

MORE CITIES TO SEE

For an architectural smorgasbord: Buffalo, New York

For renowned museums and public art: Detroit, Michigan



The entrance to the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh

For Foodies

CONSIDER: ST. LOUIS

THERE'S SO MUCH to eat in St. Louis, Missouri. Bosnian cuisine, for starters. Since the 1990s, the city has become home to 70,000 Bosnian refugees, and the lunch spot Balkan Treat Box represents their heritage, with wood-fired somun (flatbread) stuffed with savory meats, cheese, and veggies. Then there's the whole pompano, a flaky white fish, at Lona's Lil Eats, where chef Lona Lou serves food inspired by her upbringing in China's Yunnan Province. And there's the fried cauliflower in the Church Basement Plate, a special at SweetArt, a vegan/vegetarian café and bakery plus gallery. These are casual, order-at-the-front places, and that's what the city does best. Even Vicia, with its nationally recognized, vegetable-focused tasting menu, hosts counter-service lunch.

Sample the bread at Union Loafers or the croissants at Comet Coffee. Stay at a hotel in the bustling Central West End or rent a house near Tower Grove Park and walk to the Saturday-morning farmers' market, where you'll find cured meats from Salume Beddu and goat cheese from Baetje Farms. Try one of chef Gerard Craft's restaurants, like Pastaria. Check Urban Harvest STL's website (urbanharveststl.org) for a schedule of happy-hour events at their rooftop farm. Head over to Bulrush for cocktails made with native Missouri botanicals, like paw-paw (imagine a combo of melon, mango, and banana).—J.K.



Above: An assortment of dishes at Balkan Treat Box. Left: The city skyline's iconic Gateway Arch.

MORE CITIES TO SEE

For biscuits and breweries:
Asheville,
North Carolina

For everything from pierogi to fine dining:
Cleveland,
Ohio

IDEAS FOR EXPLORING ANY FOODIE CITY

Wander around the **farmers' market** for a true sense of the local cuisine. Connect with bakers and cheesemongers and taste in-season fruits and vegetables you might not find at home.

Craving international food? Research the city's **immigrant communities**. In recent years, small and midsize cities (like Clarkston, Georgia, and Omaha, Nebraska) have been taking in more refugees than traditional gateway cities, and many of these newcomers are importing delicious recipes.

For fine-dining ideas, search for winners of the prestigious **James Beard Foundation** awards, which are given to chefs across the country—not just in the big cities. Before going, check the restaurant's website to make sure the winning chef still works there. People in the industry often move around, and the food and experience at a restaurant can change when they do.—J.K.



For Beach Lovers

CONSIDER: ST. PETERSBURG

IF IT FEELS NEARLY impossible to find a beachy destination that's easy to get to, has plenty to do in case of rain, and is family friendly, St. Petersburg, Florida—or St. Pete, as the locals call it—may be the answer. This historic city is famous for its great weather and is just a 25-minute drive from the Tampa airport. After you've dropped off your bags in the city, take a 15-minute car ride to St. Pete Beach, the Gulf-facing barrier island just across the channel. Walk north along the beach from Pass-a-Grille to the iconic pink Don CeSar hotel. If you want to beach-hop, Treasure Island, Indian Shores, and Clearwater Beach are all close by. Itching to get out on the water? Make a reservation with See Through Adventure for an easy paddle

through the bayous in a transparent canoe. If you're lucky, you'll spot a majestic manatee.

In town, stroll down the marina from St. Pete's other pink icon, the Vinoy Hotel, to the Dalí Museum, which houses the most Salvador Dalí paintings outside Spain. Head to the Sunken Gardens, a century-old botanical explosion of palms and orchids. Explore Central Avenue, a stretch of restaurants and boutiques that starts at the bay—about a mile inland, you'll come to the hip Edge district, near the Tampa Bay Rays' Tropicana Field. Stop by Green Bench Brewing Company, the coffee shop and cocktail bar Intermezzo, and the Imagine Museum, devoted to studio glass, with works by Dale Chihuly and Toots Zynsky.—*Anna Maltby*

A boardwalk beach entrance in St. Petersburg

IDEAS FOR EXPLORING ANY BEACH CITY

To avoid boardwalk chaos, visit a **state or national park beach**, like Grayton Beach State Park on Florida's Emerald Coast west of Panama City, or First Landing State Park in Virginia Beach, Virginia. "You're still in Virginia Beach, but it's a little more quiet and nature-based," says Balfour.

Check that the water is safe for swimming with the **Swim Guide** app—or use its map of more than 7,000 beaches, lakes, and rivers. Then scroll through **Meetup** for free yoga classes, biking groups, and tours.

Most importantly, help protect the waterways. **Pack a no-waste picnic:** Fill a lunch box with finger foods (no need for plates or plastic utensils) and bring cloth napkins. When leaving the beach, check the area carefully for all your belongings. Pick up garbage you see, even if it wasn't yours, and toss it into a bin.—*J.K.*

MORE CITIES TO SEE

For dog-friendly beaches:
Santa Cruz, California

For surfing and scuba:
Rincón, Puerto Rico

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