

10 unique destinations to experience the great outdoors

Nature is calling



June 12, 2019 // By [Kae Lani](#)

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There's no better time to get outside than summer. It's the prime season for hiking, camping, biking and exploring the great outdoors. Whether you're looking for a relaxing excursion, like a stroll around the lake, or an invigorating adventure, like

backcountry camping, here are some unique experiences that may not be on your radar.

Hocking Hills, Ohio



Zip-lining through the treetops is an exciting ride for the entire family — [Photo courtesy of Explore Hocking Hills](#)

Less than 2 hours southeast of the city of Columbus is a small outdoor haven that captures some of the best adventures the Midwest has to offer. Travelers can experience incredible cliffs, explore caves and hike to spectacular waterfalls.

For families seeking thrill rides, Hocking Hills Canopy Tours offers zip-line adventures that get the adrenaline pumping. There are plenty of easy hikes including Ash Cave, Cantwell Cliffs and Cedar Falls.

[Read more: Natural beauty and Americana await in the hills of Ohio »](#)

Peoria, Ariz.



This extraordinary sunset puts the "pleasant" in Lake Pleasant — [Photo courtesy of Keith Dines](#)

Just a half-hour northwest of [Phoenix](#) and [Scottsdale](#) is the town of Peoria, a small town with big personality and access to some of Arizona's most beautiful nature. Peoria is the perfect place to grab a bite after exploring the Sonoran Desert or a day paddling on Lake Pleasant.

The town is also not far from the Castle Hot Springs, a historic hot spring renowned for its healing properties and stunning views. Peoria is proof that you don't have to disappear into the wilderness to enjoy a little outdoor adventure.

[Read more: Yes, there is another Peoria and here's why you need to visit »](#)

Boise



Most travelers don't know you can kayak on the Boise River — [Photo courtesy of Tony DiBona](#)

Many people don't think of the capital city of Idaho as an outdoor destination, but Boise, which is known as the "City of Trees," has plenty of activities that connect visitors with nature.

For starters, the World Center for Birds of Prey which is located in the golden hills of the backcountry, not far from Boise's downtown area, was our Readers' Choice Winner for [Best Idaho Attraction](#).

The Boise River Greenbelt, which is a 25-mile, tree-lined path that follows the river that cuts through the city, is one of Boise's most beloved parks and offers plenty of space for leisurely strolls, biking and even paddling down the river.

Read more: [Here's why you need to discover the beauty of Boise »](#)

Grand Canyon National Park



Watching the sunrise at the Grand Canyon is something to add to your bucket list — [Photo courtesy of Arizona Office of Tourism](#)

One of the most spectacular national parks is also brimming with outdoor adventure for all levels, ranging from leisurely sightseeing to high adrenaline excursions. You can traverse the canyon by foot, like the 19-mile round trip hike along the Bright Angel Trail, or you can raft through the canyon along the Colorado River.

Visitors can even take in the views above the canyon by either skydiving or going on a helicopter tour.

[Read more: 10 unique ways to experience the Grand Canyon »](#)

Cody, Wyo.



Old West artifacts found in Old Trail Town — [Photo courtesy of iStock / Debraansky](#)

For some Old West vibes, head to Cody, Wyoming. Built by William "Buffalo Bill" Cody, the town gives visitors an authentic Western experience. From a world-class museum dedicated to the culture and natural beauty of the region to an indoor shooting range where guests can experience replica rifles, there's plenty to see and do.

Because of its close proximity to Yellowstone National Park, many people consider Cody to be the gateway to Yellowstone. In fact, Teddy Roosevelt called the highway from Cody to Yellowstone the 50 most beautiful miles in America.

[Read more: Why you should visit charming Cody, Wyoming »](#)



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These 10 uncrowded Atlantic beaches are perfect for summer

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Lovell, Wyo.



Horses roam free at the Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center — Photo courtesy of iStock / Gary Tognoni

For over 200 years, wild horses have roamed Wyoming and at the Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center in Lovell, they still run free. Wyoming is known for stunning landscapes, so taking in these vast plains while witnessing wild mustangs is quite the experience.

To get a glimpse of this unique part of Wyoming's Wild West heritage, book a tour through the Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center. Tours are 9 am to 5 pm, and run May through October. According to our readers, this is the absolute [Best Attraction in Wyoming](#).

Read more: [See wild horses that still run free in Wyoming »](#)

Aspen, Colo.



The Maroon Bells is an incredible place all times of year — [Photo courtesy of C2 Photography](#)

There's more to Aspen than skiing (though it is worth saying this town has world-class slopes). Aspen has some of the most photogenic landscapes, gorgeous hikes and stunning places to pitch a tent. In fact, the town's beauty inspired John Denver to write "Rocky Mountain High." A John Denver Sanctuary, where the lyrics to the song are etched in stone, can be found near the Roaring Fork River.

The Maroon Bells, some of Aspen's most notable mountains, have several hiking trails and bike paths for all skill levels. You can go camping here year-round, but for the ultimate stargazing experience, The Little Nell offers tours of the stars with a bona fide astronomy expert.

[Read more: 10 reasons why you need to go to Aspen after the snow melts »](#)

Niagara Falls, N.Y.



Cave of the Winds gets visitors up close and personal with Niagara Falls — [Photo courtesy of Destination Niagara USA](#)

Sure, Canada has the better views of Niagara Falls, but the New York side is a barrel of outdoor fun! From tours through the Cave of the Winds and Pavilion, and along the Niagara River Gorge, to underground boat rides through Lockport Cave, an Industrial Revolution-era tunnel, there are plenty of adventurous ways to experience Niagara Falls.

Read more: [10 surprising reasons you'll fall for Niagara »](#)

Telluride, Colo.



Hiking around Telluride will immerse travelers in some of Colorado's most pristine nature — [Photo courtesy of Visit Telluride](#)

The entire state of Colorado is an outdoor adventure playground, but Telluride is one of those standout towns where the outdoors is deeply rooted in their lifestyle. Festivals like the Telluride Blues & Brews Festival, the Telluride Jazz Festival and the Mountainfilm film festival give locals and visitors a reason to celebrate outside.

But if you're not in town for a festival, there's plenty of hiking. There are short climbs up to Bear Creek Falls or Bridal Veil Falls, rock climbing experiences and biking trails, all of which have spectacular views.

[Read more: How to experience quaint Telluride in the summer and fall »](#)

Lake Geneva, Wis.



A trip to Lake Geneva can be as relaxing or as adventurous as you like — [Photo courtesy of iStock / csfotoimages](#)

According to our readers, the Best Small Town for Adventure is Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. With a population less than 25,000 people, there's plenty of space to roam in what is considered the "Newport of the West."

The shores in this lakeside town are lined with extravagant summer mansions, but don't let the luxury fool you into thinking Lake Geneva isn't for adventure. This town offers plenty of thrilling outdoor experiences both on and off the water!