

Contents



© photographer / image library



© photographer / image library

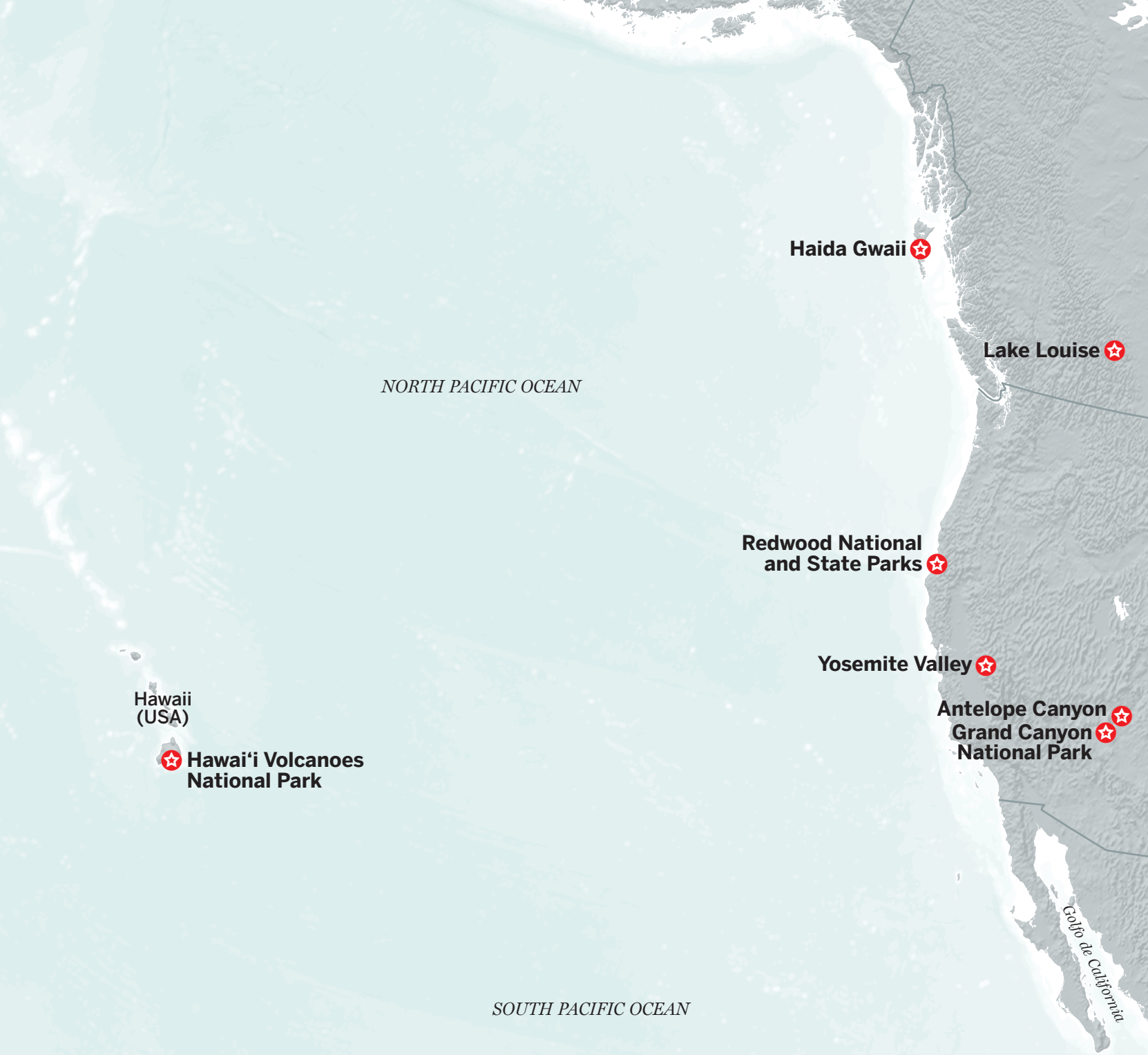


© photographer / image library

Introduction	004	NORTH AMERICA	042	Smithsonian Institution	082	Angel Falls	124	Angkor Wat	160
		Yosemite Valley	044			Venezuela			
		USA							
AFRICA	006	New York Harbor	048	Niagara Falls	086	Tikal	126	The Great Wall	164
Mt Kilimanjaro	008	USA		Canada/USA		Guatemala		China	
Lalibela	010	Haida Gwaii	052					Door to Hell	168
Ethiopia		Canada		SOUTH AMERICA	090	ASIA & THE MIDDLE EAST	130	Turkmenistan	
Pyramids of Giza	014	Antelope Canyon	056	Amazon Rainforest	092	Grand Palace	132	Golden Temple	170
Egypt		USA		Peru/Brazil		Thailand		India	
Ngorongoro Crater	018	Grand Canyon	058	Salar de Uyuni	096	Burj Khalifa	136	Terracotta Army	174
Tanzania		USA		Bolivia		United Arab Emirates		China	
Kolmanskop	022	Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park	062	Caño Cristales	100	Temple Mount	140	Petra	178
Namibia		USA		Colombia		Israel & the Palestinian territories		Jordan	
Great Zimbabwe	024	Redwoods	066	Iguazú Falls	102	Hang Son Doong	144	Forbidden City	182
Zimbabwe		USA		Brazil/Argentina		Vietnam		China	
Victoria Falls	028	The Blue Hole	070	Galápagos Islands	106	Taj Mahal	146	Halong Bay	186
Zimbabwe/Zambia		Belize		Ecuador		India		Vietnam	
Tsingy de Bemaraha	030	Mesa Verde	072	Moai, Easter Island	110	Gunung Mulu National Park	150	Sakura	188
Madagascar		USA		Chile		Malaysia		Japan	
Abu Simbel	034	Calakmul	076	Antarctica	112	Mt Everest	154	Meghalaya Tree Bridges	192
Egypt		Mexico				Nepal		India	
Okavango Delta	038	Lake Louise	078	Machu Picchu	116	Naqsh-e Jahan Sq	156	Dead Sea	196
Botswana		Canada		Peru		Iran		Jordan/Israel & the Palestinian territories	
				Marble Caves	120			Taktshang Goemba	200
				Chile				Bhutan	

Ghats of Varanasi	202	Stonehenge	242	Acropolis	284	Schloss Neuschwanstein	326	Milford Sound	362
India		England		Greece		Germany		New Zealand	
Temples of Hampi	206	Davit Gareja	244	British Museum	288			Index	366
India		Georgia		England				Acknowledgements	368
Himeji Castle	210	Geirangerfjord	248	Ephesus	290	CERN	332		
Japan		Norway		Turkey		Switzerland			
Zhāngyè Dānxiá Geopark	212	Mont St-Michel	252	Sistine Chapel	294	Klementinum	336		
China		France		Italy		Czech Republic			
Punakha Dzong	216	Aya Sofya	254	Grand Canal	298	Széchenyi Baths	338		
Bhutan		Turkey		Italy		Hungary			
Borobudur	218	Bordeaux Wine Region	258	Plitvice Lakes	302	Trolltunga	342		
Indonesia		France		Croatia		Norway			
EUROPE	222	Rijksmuseum	262	Nemrut Dağı	306	Bay of Kotor	344		
		The Netherlands		Turkey		Montenegro			
Northern Lights	224	Giant's Causeway	266	Meteora	308				
Norway/Iceland		Northern Ireland		Greece		OCEANIA	348		
Hermitage Museum	226	Louvre	270	St Basil's Cathedral	312	Great Barrier Reef & the Daintree Rainforest	350		
Russia		France		Russia		Australia			
Cappadocia	230	Colosseum	272	Matterhorn	316	Stewart Island	354		
Turkey		Italy		Switzerland		New Zealand			
Pompeii	234	Blue Lagoon	276	Sagrada Família	318	Uluru	356		
Italy		Iceland		Spain		Australia			
Alhambra	238	Stari Most	280	Skara Brae	322	Lord Howe Island	360		
Spain		Bosnia & Hercegovina		Scotland		Australia			

- 1 The great carved heads of moai on Easter Island
- 2 See India's Taj Mahal at dawn from the water
- 3 Victoria Falls, a chasm between Zambia and Zimbabwe



North America



USA

Yosemite Valley

Yosemite Valley is a glorious tableau of wildflower-strewn meadows and thunderous waterfalls hemmed in by some of the most majestic chunks of granite on earth.

At the core of Yosemite National Park, Yosemite Valley serves up the landscape's greatest hits. A visit here is like being transported into an Ansel Adams photo. At the edge of the picture is the granite monster of El Capitan, whose sheer face draws world-class climbers. Hang out in the meadow below and you'll see the ant-size figures – and maybe even hear them – as they grapple with El Cap's ledges.

At the picture's other side, haughty Half Dome rises over 2500m above the valley floor. This mountain is the park's spiritual centrepiece and likewise sends out a siren call to climbers. In the middle of the scene Yosemite Falls drops from a dizzying height. It's the tallest cascade in North America and it roars with an urgent force. Bridalveil Fall also steals some of the focus. Gusts blow it from side to side and it'll soak you as you hike to its base. An endless array of trails scatters throughout the valley, which remains the poster-child for nature's grandeur.



© Mimi Ditchie Photography / Getty Images

2

Travel



International

San Francisco International Airport is the main hub; it lies 200 miles (322km) to the east. Oakland, Sacramento and San Jose International Airports also serve the region and are roughly the same driving distance to the valley.



Regional

Yosemite is accessible by public transport. Greyhound buses and Amtrak trains serve Merced, where they are met by Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) buses. These travel to Yosemite Valley several times daily. In the park, free shuttle buses are a good way to get around.

Stay



Shoestring

Upper Pines Campground This campground is big and busy. Each campsite has space for your tent or RV and contains a fire ring, picnic table and food locker. Book ahead from mid-March to November. (*Sites from US\$26; www.nps.gov/yose*)



Midrange

Half Dome Village Hundreds of units squish together beneath towering evergreens. There are tent cabins and motel-style rooms, but book one of the cosy wood cabins decorated with vintage posters. (*Cabins from US\$225; www.travelyosemite.com/lodging/dining/half-dome-village*)



Flush

Majestic Yosemite Hotel The finest of Yosemite's lodging options dazzles with soaring ceilings and atmospheric lounges with huge stone fireplaces. Rooms have star mountain views. (*Rooms from US\$480; www.travelyosemite.com/lodging/the-majestic-yosemite-hotel*)

Eat



Shoestring

Degnan's Kitchen It mixes modern decor with deli-style sandwiches, pizzas, doughnuts and other baked goodies, with an emphasis on locally sourced produce. (*Mains from US\$6; www.travelyosemite.com/lodging/dining/yosemite-village*)



Midrange

Half Dome Village Pizza Deck A chatty après-hike hangout by the late afternoon. Try a speciality pizza like the Hog Heaven (pepperoni, bacon, sausage). (*Pizzas from US\$9; www.travelyosemite.com/lodging/dining/half-dome-village*)



Flush

Mountain Room Restaurant Window tables at this casually elegant eatery offer a killer view of Yosemite Falls. Plates of strip steak, grilled pork mole and local mountain trout woo diners. (*Mains from US\$21; www.travelyosemite.com/lodging/dining/yosemite-valley-lodge*)

Timing



In April and May, Yosemite's waterfalls are gushing and spectacular. It's a great shoulder-season time to visit, with crowds on weekends only.



High season is June to August, though temperatures in the valley can soar above 90°F (32°C).



Winter arrives by mid-November and peters out in early April. Cross-country skiing, downhill skiing and other winter sports abound. Roads in the valley are ploughed, but some highways will close.



Dawn breaks over Cathedral Peak and Upper Cathedral Lake on the John Muir Trail.



Half Dome and the Merced River are names that resonate in Yosemite's climbing and hiking history.



You'll spot only black bears in Yosemite, not grizzlies, but exercise caution and stow food out of their reach.

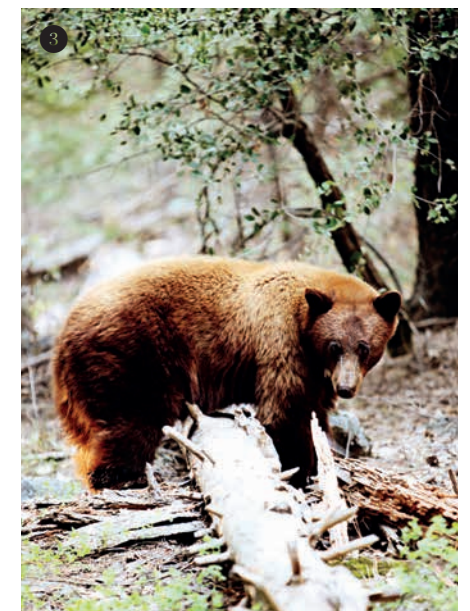
Best value itineraries

3 days

Stay in Yosemite National Park for the duration. Check out the Tunnel View lookout to drink in vistas of the valley, with Half Dome front and centre and Bridalveil Fall plunging in the distance. Spend the rest of the day strolling the crowd-free Yosemite Valley Loop trails. Next day, experience mind-altering views hiking the drenched Mist Trail to Vernal Falls and Nevada Falls. On day three, head to Glacier Point, stopping en route for a leisurely walk to vertigo-inducing Taft Point and the Fissures. Then continue past Wawona to the park's South Entrance to take a gander at the giant sequoias of Mariposa Grove.

9 days

After the waterfalls and granite monoliths in Yosemite, continue the outdoor action in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. Tour the groves of ancient trees, ethereal caves and the show-stopping river canyon. After two days make a break for San Francisco, a hilly beauty spread between ocean and bay. Jump aboard a cable car, hop a ferry to Alcatraz, cross the Golden Gate Bridge and fork into the city's slew of chowhound restaurants for the next three days. For the finale, enjoy the vineyards of the Napa Valley. The trip is around 520 miles (837km) total.



© Mark Read / Lonely Planet



USA

New York Harbor

New York City covers an enormous amount of ground, but a bang-up list of iconic sights huddle around the harbour.

The Statue of Liberty raises her hand as the local superstar. Hop on the ferry, sail out to Lady Liberty and prepare to pinch yourself as you climb up inside the monument, peer out from her crown and see the world's most famous skyline spreading out before you. Ellis Island floats nearby, America's most famous gateway, where you'll hear the stories of some of the 12 million immigrants who passed through the site.

The Brooklyn Bridge rears up to the east. Though the poetic spanner looks magnificent from the water, the real thrill is crossing it on foot under its crisscrossed cables as you soak up the soul-stirring views. The harbour's backdrop is a roll call of architectural big shots, including crazy-tall One World Trade Center and the neo-Gothic Woolworth Building. Perhaps the most harbour-y marvel of all is the Staten Island Ferry. Board one of the hulking orange commuter boats and behold cinematic vistas of the luminous skyline, Verrazano-Narrows Bridge and the Statue of Liberty. And get this: the 25-minute ride is free, proving that wonders never cease.



Travel



International

Three airports serve as entry points: John F Kennedy International Airport, LaGuardia Airport and Newark Liberty International Airport. All have bus and/or train transport into the city that takes roughly one hour.



Regional

Amtrak trains link Washington DC, Philadelphia and Boston to NYC's Penn Station multiple times daily. Once in NYC, the subway is the main way to get around. The popular bike-share programme Citi Bike provides excellent access throughout the core areas. Ferries depart for Staten Island at downtown's southern tip. Ferries to Liberty and Ellis Islands depart from nearby Battery Park.

Stay

\$

Shoestring

Club Quarters World Trade Center This chain hotel keeps things affordable with clean, modern rooms at reasonable prices. (Rooms from US\$180; www.clubquartershotels.com/new-york/world-trade-center)

\$\$

Midrange

Gild Hall The property's entrance leads to a library and wine bar exuding hunting-lodge chic. Rooms fuse Euro elegance and US comfort with glass-walled balconies. (Rooms from US\$229; www.thompsonhotels.com/hotels/gild-hall)

\$\$\$

Flush

Greenwich Hotel Nothing about Robert De Niro's hotel is generic. Each of the 88 individually designed rooms has aged-wood floors and bathrooms with opulent Carrara marble or Moroccan tiling. (Rooms from US\$650; www.thegreenwichhotel.com)

Eat

\$

Shoestring

Arcade Bakery This little treasure in the vaulted lobby of a 1920s office building trades in beautiful, just-baked goods, including artful sandwiches and superb almond croissants. (Mains from US\$10; www.arcadebakery.com)

\$\$

Midrange

Da Mikele It channels *la dolce vita* in Tribeca with its weeknight *aperitivo* (5pm–7pm) and light, beautifully charred pizzas good enough to make a Neapolitan weep. (Pizzas from US\$17; www.luzzosgroup.com/about-us-damikele)

\$\$\$

Flush

Locanda Verde The buzzy brasserie showcases modern, Italian-inspired fare such as house-made rigatoni with rabbit genovese or grilled swordfish with eggplant caponata. (Mains from US\$27; www.locandaverdenyc.com)

Timing

● Summers can be scorching, though the season also brings a lineup of festivals and free outdoor concerts. Winters are cold and not without blizzards. Spring or autumn offer the best weather in which to explore.

● In the evenings, 'dress to impress' remains the rule at many restaurants, bars and venues, so bring at least one evening dress or long-sleeved shirt, pair of trousers and smart shoes.

Best value itineraries

3 days

After a day of cruising the harbour highlights, spend the following day in Midtown and work your way north, visiting the Empire State Building, Times Square, Broadway and the Museum of Modern Art. On the third day, make a break for Central Park to escape the urban madness with meadows and rowing boats, then head next door to the Upper East Side, where the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Guggenheim Museum offer vast halls full of treasures. In the evening seek out a jazzy bar in the East Village.

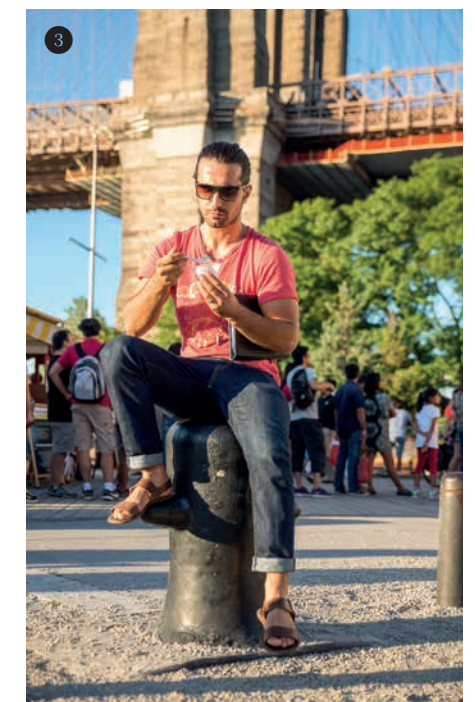
7 days

It's tough to leave the city that never sleeps, but after three whirlwind days in NYC change it up with a trip to Philadelphia. Rich history meets small-town charm here. There's Independence Hall, the Liberty Bell, a burgeoning food, art and music scene, and the famed cheesesteak sandwich to bite into. A couple of days should do it, then move on to Washington DC. Wander around the Smithsonian Institution's troves, Capitol Hill's political sights and the Mall's iconic monuments. It's 95 miles (153km) from NYC to Philly, and 140 miles (225km) from Philly to DC, all easily doable by Amtrak train.

1 The Statue of Liberty, a gift from France, has graced New York Harbor since 1886.

2 The city lights at full wattage, seen from the cobblestoned waterfront area of Dumbo.

3 Hot, hot summers in NYC demand plenty of iced tea and ice-cream stops.





CANADA

Haida Gwaii

The beguiling and unspoilt islands, known as ‘Canada’s Galápagos’ for their unique wildlife, offer a lost world of Haida culture and superb natural beauty.

You have to make an *effort* to reach Haida Gwaii. The dagger-shaped archipelago of some 450 islands lies off British Columbia’s northern coast, remote and sparsely populated and not exactly brimming with transport options. But you know it’s worth the trek the moment you step into the mist-veiled scene. Colossal spruce and cedars cloak the wild landscape, their clean scent lingering wherever you go. Bald eagles and bears roam the ancient rainforest, while sea lions and orcas patrol the waters. Visit one of the starkly beautiful beaches and you’ll feel how nature ramps up its power out here: strong winds blow, the surf pounds and flotsam drifts in from across the Pacific.

The islands’ real soul, though, is the resurgent Haida people. Gwaii Haanas National Park provides an immersion into the culture. Local guides take you by kayak or inflatable boat to age-old villages where hot springs bubble up and weathered totem poles stare eerily out to sea – places so hushed it seems as if you’re the first person ever to set foot on the land.



2

Travel



International

Vancouver International Airport is the closest hub. It has flight connections to Haida Gwaii's main airport at Sandspit (on Moresby Island) and its smaller airport at Masset (on Graham Island). The other option is to drive 1500km from Vancouver to Prince Rupert in northern British Columbia and catch the ferry to Haida Gwaii. The boat takes eight hours and docks at Skidegate Landing (on Graham Island).



Regional

Ferries link Graham and Moresby Islands. There's no public transport on the islands, so you'll need a car, which you can rent on site or bring over on the ferry.

Stay



Shoestring

Premier Creek Lodging This friendly lodge has eight beds in a hostel building at the back; and 12 rooms in the main building that range from singles to spacious studios with views, kitchens and porches. (*Dorms from C\$30/US\$23, rooms C\$50/US\$38; www.qcislands.net/premier*)



Shoestring

Golden Spruce Motel Urs, the owner of the simple yet comfortable Spruce, gives a warm welcome and runs a good breakfast cafe. (*Rooms from C\$76/US\$58; www.goldenspruce.ca*)



Midrange

North Beach Cabins Tucked into the dunes of beautiful North Beach are six cosy escapes. You're totally off the grid, with only fabulous views and endless sandy strolls to entertain you. (*Cabins from C\$100/US\$76; www.northbeachcabins.com*)

Eat



Shoestring

Moon Over Naikoon This tiny community centre-cum-bakery is housed in an old school bus in a clearing about 6km from Masset. The baked goods and coffee are brilliant. (*Snacks from C\$3/US\$2.30*)



Midrange

Charters Restaurant The numbers are small: six tables, three entrées. But the pleasure is great: simply delicious food, such as seafood fettuccine and fresh local halibut. (*Mains from C\$15/US\$11*)



Midrange

Haida House The Haida-run restaurant cooks up excellent, creative seafood and other dishes with island accents, such as Haida favourites with berries. (*Mains from C\$20/US\$15; www.haidahouse.com*)

Timing



The best weather is from May to September. July and August are the warmest months, while May gets the most hours of sunshine.



Be prepared for rain year-round, though it is generally short lived. The east coast of the islands is drier than the west coast.



Download a free copy of the Haida Gwaii Visitors Guide (www.gohaidagwaii.ca), which has all kinds of useful trip-planning information.



The drama of Peel Inlet is typical of landscapes along Haida Gwaii's west coast.



Remote Rennell Sound is prime hiking and surfing territory.



Bald eagles, here perched on a totem pole at Haida Gwaii, are a common sight in the skies above.

Best value itineraries

5 days

It's such a lengthy journey to reach Haida Gwaii, and so unhurried once you arrive, you'll need at least five days to give it its due. Spend a day at the Haida Heritage Centre and browsing local shops and galleries. Allow a few days to explore the islands' windswept beaches and hike the rainforest trails. Then tour remarkable Gwaii Haanas National Park for as long as your budget allows.

14 days

After your Haida Gwaii travels, take the ferry to Prince Rupert. From there, hop on the ferry to Port Hardy on Vancouver Island. Book ahead as it only sails a few times per week. The 15-hour journey plies the Inside Passage, lauded for its fjord-like scenery and whale sightings. From Port Hardy, drive southeast. Stop in Nanaimo for a spin through the Old City Quarter, and in Chemainus for a look at the little community's many murals. Your next stop is Victoria, BC's pretty capital, 500km from Port Hardy. Enjoy a few days of great restaurants, breweries and bohemian shops, then ferry to Tsawwassen (1½ hours) for some time in Vancouver. The city's gob-smacking sea-to-sky nature and first-rate foodie scene are a perfect way to end the trip.



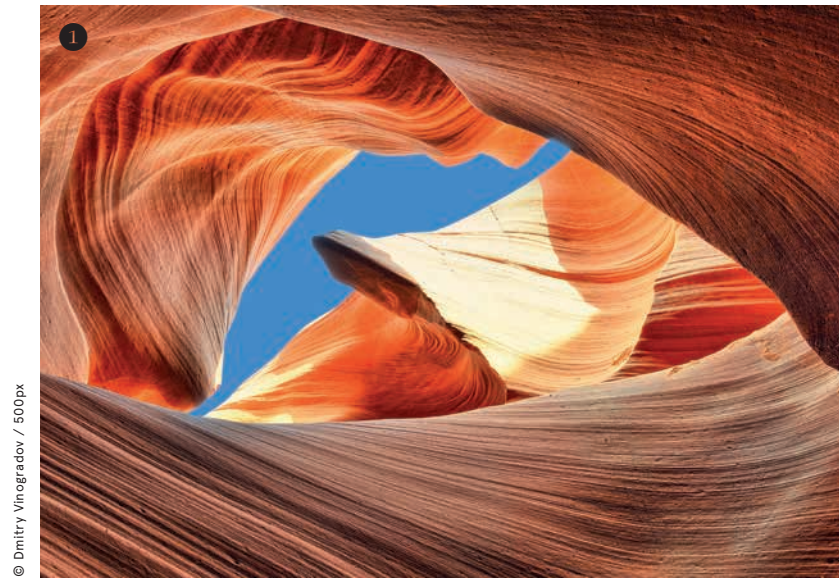
USA

Antelope Canyon

Wind and water have carved a cathedral of red-hued, swirling sandstone, where light and shadow play hide and seek.

Unearthly in its beauty, Arizona's Antelope Canyon is certainly in the running for the title of world's most-famous slot canyon. You know the type: impossibly narrow, deep gorges etched like wrinkles into the face of the earth. Antelope is particularly prized for its magical lighting, a symphony of shapes and textures that are a photographer's dream. Ready the camera, because when sunbeams fall through the canyon's openings and strike the wavy walls, they spark a heavenly red-gold-pink-tangerine glow.

The canyon lies on Navajo land and is a sacred space. Guides take you either to the Upper Canyon, known as *Tsé bigháníliní* ('the place where water runs through rocks') or the Lower Canyon, called *Hasdestwazi* ('spiral rock arches'). The latter wins the prize for eye-popping formations, though they hide in a surreal underworld reachable only via steep staircases and tight rock passages. Meanwhile, the Upper Canyon offers easy access at ground level and it's pretty darn photogenic in its own right. Alas, the antelopes that once grazed around the canyon's rim and gave it its name vanished ages ago.



© Dmitry Vinogradov / 500px

© Rob Hammer / Getty Images

Travel



International

Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport and Las Vegas' McCarran International Airport are each about 275 miles (443km) from Page, the closest town to the canyon. You'll need a car to make the trip.



Regional

Antelope Canyon is about 7 miles (11km) from Page. The site is on Navajo land and the only way to visit is on a guided tour. See www.navajonationparks.org for details.

Stay



Shoestring

Lake Powell Motel The sweet and simple lodging was originally constructed to house Glen Canyon Dam builders. Four units have kitchens. A fifth smaller room is held for walk-ups. (Rooms from US\$139; www.lakepowellmotel.net)



Midrange

Best Western View of Lake Powell Hotel Perched on the edge of a hill overlooking Glen Canyon Dam, the property provides modern guestrooms, a swimming pool with a spectacular view and free breakfast. (Rooms from US\$180; www.bestwestern.com)



Flush

Lake Powell Resort This bustling hotel offers beautiful vistas and a lovely little pool perched in the rocks above the lake. Rates for lake-view rooms with tiny patios are worth the extra money. (Rooms from US\$199; www.lakepowell.com/lodging/lake-powell-resort)

Eat



Shoestring

Big John's Texas BBQ Cheerfully occupying a former petrol station, it's a friendly place to feast on pulled-pork sandwiches and ribs. Live music lets loose several evenings of the week. (Mains from US\$13; www.bigjohnstexasbbq.com)



Midrange

Bonkers Impressive murals of local landscapes cover the walls inside. The restaurant is open for dinner only and serves good steaks, seafood and pasta dishes. (Mains from US\$18; www.bonkerspageaz.com)



Midrange

Blue Buddha Sushi Lounge The food and drinks at this ultra-cool hideaway hit the spot after a hot and dusty day of exploring. There's steak and seafood, too. (Mains from US\$20; www.bluebuddhasushilounge.com)

Timing

Lighting conditions are best around mid-morning between April and September – the peak season – but the other months bring smaller crowds and a more intimate experience.

During peak season it's wise to reserve a tour as far in advance as possible.

The Upper Canyon is more accessible, while the Lower Canyon involves climbing steep staircases.



Marbled rust reds and oranges find their complementary colour in Arizona's bright blue skies.



Tour company guides will steer you towards the best photo angles.



Above ground visit a ranch and head out into the Sonoran Desert from Tucson.

Best value itineraries

3-4 days

Go canyon to canyon. After a day of photographing trippy rocks at Antelope Canyon, point your wheels towards the Grand Canyon. Pick a rim – the 125-mile (200km) drive is equidistant to either – and hang out for a few days. At the North Rim be sure to gawp at the view from Bright Angel Point, hike the Widforss and North Kaibab trails, and saddle up for a horseback ride. At the South Rim stroll the Rim and South Kaibab trails and hit the eye-popping overlooks of Hermit Rd.

10 days

After your three-day canyon excursion, rejoin town life again in groovy, outdoorsy Flagstaff. Walk downtown, loaded with ecofriendly restaurants, coffee shops and breweries. The next day continue south to Sedona, an otherworldly place of crystal shops, galleries and crimson buttes. Soak it up for a few days, then move on to Phoenix, Arizona's sprawling capital city, prime for terrific southwestern food and intriguing museums. Spend your remaining couple of days even farther south, taking in Tucson and its artsy 4th Avenue district, studying cacti at Saguaro National Park and gun-slinging in Tombstone. The jaunt is about 550 miles (885km) in total.



© Kris Davidson / Lonely Planet



USA

Grand Canyon

The jaw-dropping, red-rock chasm of the Grand Canyon embodies the scale and splendour of the American West, captured in dramatic vistas and dusty trails.

The sheer immensity of the canyon is what grabs you first: it's a two-billion-year-old rip across the landscape that spans 277 miles (446km) in length and plunges up to 6000ft (1829m) in depth. There is nothing like arriving at the edge and taking it all in – the vastness, the crimson buttes, the long drop down. Sunrises and sunsets are particularly sublime, with the changing light painting the canyon in unbelievably rich hues of vermilion and purple.

You won't spend your entire time staring at the hole in the ground, though. You'll also saddle up a mule and ride down into said hole. Or you'll hoof it on trails that wind through sagebrush, over coyote tracks and past timeworn pictographs etched into the rocks. Even a short dip below the rim gives an appreciation for the canyon's staggering scale and awesome silence. Two locations are the gateways into the abyss: the South Rim, which is busier and stocked with psychedelic viewpoints, and the North Rim, prime for quiet hikes in the piney air.



© David Madison / Getty Images

Travel



International

If headed to the South Rim, fly into Phoenix's Sky Harbor International Airport (230 miles/370km, 3½ hours) or Las Vegas' McCarran International Airport (273 miles/439km, 4½ hours). For the North Rim, fly into Las Vegas (266 miles/428km, 4½ hours). You can rent a car at the airports.



Regional

Regularly scheduled shuttle buses service the South Rim from the airports in Phoenix and Las Vegas, as well as from the towns of Sedona, Williams and Flagstaff. Getting to the North Rim is more of a challenge. A shuttle (mid-May to mid-November) runs from rim to rim, but otherwise the only way to reach the North Rim is by car.

Stay



Shoestring

Bright Angel Lodge The 1935 log-and-stone building has easy charm. Expect bright, handsome, simple rooms (fridge but no TV) only steps from the canyon rim. *(Rooms with/without bath from US\$110/89; www.grandcanyonlodges.com)*



Midrange

Kachina & Thunderbird Lodges Don't be put off by the institutional-looking exterior. Inside are modern, comfortable rooms with fantastic views of the Rim Trail and canyon beyond. *(Rooms street-side/canyon-side from US\$234/254; www.grandcanyonlodges.com)*



Flush

El Tovar The public spaces of the 1905 hotel ooze old-world national-park glamour. Some rooms are lovely, others are standard, but the location at the canyon's edge can't be beaten. *(Rooms from US\$228; www.grandcanyonlodges.com)*

Eat



Shoestring

Bright Angel Bicycles & Cafe at Mather Point Fuel up on grab-and-go sandwiches, wraps, snacks and coffee, and then rent a bike. *(Mains under US\$10; www.bikegrandcanyon.com)*



Midrange

Maswik Pizza Pub Hunker down for a slice or whole pie to enjoy over a Grand Canyon Pilsner. Veggies can chow on the pesto pie. *(Pizzas from US\$18; www.grandcanyonlodges.com)*



Flush

El Tovar Dining Room Dark-wood tables are set with china and white linen at this classic restaurant. Breakfast favourites here include pancakes with prickly-pear syrup and blackened trout with eggs. *(Mains from US\$20; www.grandcanyonlodges.com)*

Timing



High season is May to September, when it is very hot and many places to stay sell out. August brings monsoon rains.



March, April, September and October are the cooler shoulder months.



In winter, snowfalls bring frosted vistas, but also treacherous roads and trails. South Rim visitors slow to a trickle, while North Rim facilities close between mid-October and mid-May.

Best value itineraries

3 days

Take in the South Rim sights, using Grand Canyon Village as your base. Check out the village's historic buildings and museums, then continue on the Rim Trail to Mather Point. Rent a bike and ride along the rim to the trailhead of the South Kaibab Trail and Yaki Point. The next day, wake up early and head down Bright Angel Trail. Hike and shuttle overlook-to-overlook along Hermit Rd, descend a little into the canyon on the Hermit Trail and shuttle back to the village. On your final day, hike the South Kaibab Trail to Cedar Ridge for a picnic lunch before returning.

9 days

After three days at the Grand Canyon drive northeast to immerse in Antelope Canyon (see p56), another unearthly beauty. Spend the night in Page. The next day, motor northwest to Bryce Canyon National Park, where golden-red-rock spires shimmer like trees in a magical stone forest. Zion National Park rises a short distance southwest, prime for vertigo-defying hikes in a landscape of sand, stone and sky. Allow three days between the parks. Continue southwest to Las Vegas and roll the dice for your last few days. The journey is about 500 miles (805km) in total.



Views from both rims are equally stunning: the South Rim has more official overlooks, while the North Rim is quieter.



Descend deep below the rim for a closer look at a mind-boggling record of geologic time.



The emerald-green Havasu Falls are one of five stunning waterfalls within Havasupai tribal lands. Visitor numbers are limited.



© lucky-photographer / Getty Images