

Best places to travel, things to do Labor Day weekend 2018

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Say goodbye to summer. But do it with a bang, courtesy of Condé Nast Traveler contributor and travel expert Mark Ellwood. He's here to help you find Labor Day [destinations](#) that are vibrant, colorful and memorable.



According to Ellwood, domestic flight prices are historically low for Labor Day weekend. The last time prices were this low was back in 2014. Being [flexible with days](#) can also help you save, and you can save the most money by leaving Saturday, Sept. 1, and returning Wednesday, Sept. 5.

Despite what you'll hear, there is no magic time to buy, but prices do go up the closer you get to your dream departure date. So book early. Need ideas? Read on for great [family](#) ideas.

San Francisco
San Francisco Alamy Stock

Family-Friendly Spot: San Francisco

Stay at: [Hotel Del Sol, a Joie de Vivre hotel](#)

A renovated 1950s motor lodge, the tropical-themed Hotel de Sol (complete with an outdoor saltwater pool) is located in San Francisco's Marina district, just steps away from independent boutiques, outdoor eateries, Fort Mason Center for Arts and Culture and Fisherman's Wharf. While visiting, there's plenty to do:

- See the Giants play.
- Visit Union Square Live to get free tango lessons with Claudio Ortega (DJ/dance lesson) and the Bay
- Area Argentine Tango Association.
- See a free production of Shakespeare in the Park ("A Midsummers Night Dream").
- Visit the Sausalito Art Festival just across the bay.

Outdoorsy Adventure: Sandpoint, Idaho

Stay at: [Schweitzer Mountain Resort](#)

Located 12 miles from the town of Sandpoint in Idaho's northern panhandle, Schweitzer Mountain Resort offers lift-served mountain biking, hiking and village activities for the whole family. From the summit, enjoy 360-degree views of three states, Canada and the impressive Lake Pend Oreille.

- Labor Day weekend is the final blast of the summer with the resort's 26th annual Fall Fest. More than 75 regional craft beer and ciders will be on tap with four days of free live music on the mountain.
- The Bonner County History Museum has its first free Saturday of the month, so swing on by.- History lovers? Visit the Sandpoint Renaissance Faire.

Beachy Fun: St. Petersburg/Clearwater, Florida

Stay at: [Postcard Inn on the Beach](#)

This glorious town is known for its award-winning beaches and record-breaking 361 days of sunshine per year. Not only is it a beach lover's paradise, it's also an ideal destination for art lovers and foodies.

- The destination has more than 31 museums, including the Dali Museum, the Imagine Museum and the recently debuted James Museum of Western and Wildlife Art.
- The area is also home to an emerging food scene with hotspots such FarmTable Cucina by Michelin-starred chef Michael Mina.

Philadelphia

PhiladelphiaMatt Rourke / AP

City Outing: Philadelphia

Stay at: [The Independent Hotel](#)

From Friday, Aug. 31, through Monday, Sept. 3, look forward to the megamusic festival Made in America, featuring Nicki Minaj and [Meek Mill](#), plus many others, or see a festive fireworks show on the Delaware River and swing by fun outdoor spots like Blue Cross RiverRink Summerfest and Spruce Street Harbor Park.

- Other weekend highlights include remarkable exhibitions like "Modern Times: American Art 1910-1950" at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and "Leonard Bernstein: The Power of Music" at the National Museum of American Jewish History

- There's also a handful of summer programming in Philadelphia's historic district including Once Upon a Nation's free storytelling sessions, the free Military Muster events at Signer's Garden and "Storytime in the Square" in Franklin Square.

Editor's note: TODAY staffers are no slouches when it comes to [travel](#). Here are a few picks our own editors love.

Hip City Outing: Downtown New York

Stay at: [The Standard, High Line](#)

The hotel is cool, but as we like to say: Location is everything. You're steps away from the High Line, the aboveground green space that's a leafy downtown mecca. You're stumbling distance away from great shopping. Plus, your stomach won't go empty given the restaurants nearby, including Del Posto, if you're down for a splurge, and Chelsea Market, if you want to explore.

- You can do some serious whale watching off the New York coast, thanks to the area's ever cleaner waterways.

- Buy a daily pool pass and get a swim with the best wraparound view of midtown Manhattan at the [Parker New York hotel](#), which is also located right next the city's main posh shopping thoroughfare, Fifth Avenue.

- Feel the tennis love at the U.S. Open, which runs until Sept. 9.

- Swing by the Washington Square Outdoor Art Exhibit to feed your inner Picasso.

Sarasota

Sarasota Shutterstock

Relaxing Family Fun: Sarasota, Florida

Stay at: [The Ritz-Carlton Sarasota](#)

This is quite possibly one of the most comprehensively amazing places we've ever stayed. Everything, from the infused water served at the pool to the kids' activities planned daily, is perfection. You have to work your hardest not to relax. The hotel, as well as its surroundings, is pristine.

- Lido Beach is divine, as are the lobster rolls sold there. And to work them off, go for a bike ride down Sarasota's Legacy Trail and Venetian Waterway Park. The Ringling museum is a must-see when you're tired of lazing around in the sun.

- Check out the 72nd annual Labor Day Regatta, which takes place Sept. 1-2 and draws hordes of competitive sailors from around the country.

- History buffs can visit the Pioneer Days Festival, which concludes with a Labor Day parade.

Western Vibes: Austin, Texas

Stay at: [Lone Star Court](#)

Let's be clear: There's already a ton to do in this vibrant, homey Texas city. Visit the original Alamo Drafthouse movie theater, or experience authentic country music at the Broken Spoke. Or try some of the best Japanese food we've ever had at Uchiko (a favorite of local [Brooklyn Decker](#)). And of course, see those famous bats fly out from under the Congress Avenue Bridge. After that, relax at the Lone Star Court, which features ranch breezeways with rocking chairs and a pool in the center of the courtyard.

- Get your laughs on at the [Out of Bounds Comedy Festival](#), a seven-day stand-up extravaganza. - Admire some art at the first free Sunday at the Bullock Texas State History Museum.

- And don't leave without trying the succulent meats at Stiles Switch BBQ and Brew.

Chicago

ChicagoGetty Images stock

Summer Nights: Chicago

Stay at: [Kimpton Hotel Palomar](#)

Want some serious city views? Then go for a swim at this hotel's indoor pool, which overlooks the Windy City's River North neighborhood. Oh, and enroll in the rooftop fitness classes, which give new meaning to breaking a sweat. The location is especially ideal for interior decor fans because it's near the massive Merchandise Mart, and borders the Magnificent Mile. Plus, September and October are two of the best months to visit Chicago because the temps are mild and pleasant, as opposed to frigid or sweltering.

- Listen up at the Chicago Jazz Festival, which runs from Aug. 30 through Sept. 2.

- **Chow down at the Great American Lobster Fest from Aug. 31 through Sept. 2.**