

# 10 Places For America's Best Fun!

How huge is your vacation itinerary? If you've got massive museums, vast amusement parks or sprawling, high-energy cities on the list, beware. Sometimes fun can be exhausting. Consider a minimalist's approach to travel this year with these recommendations for fun places without crowds or traffic jams. They include once-in-a-life-time opportunities that won't wear you out or send you home wishing you could get a little rest. All are accessed by SkyWest Airlines' service to some of the nation's friendliest and most easy-to-navigate airports. It doesn't get better than that! There is no ranking system because these unique experiences are simply incomparable.

## America's *Best* Places To:

**GO MOUNTAIN BIKING: Crested Butte, Colorado's** terrain is so amazing it spawned the fat-tire phenomenon, or so, the locals claim. Crested Butte bills itself as the birthplace of mountain biking and backs up the brag with the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame. Housed in one of the 19th-century-structures that are typical of this old mining town, it exhibits memorabilia, vintage bikes and an overview of the sport's evolution. Admission is just \$3. Trails are free. Novices or those wanting to hone skills can sign up for the Crested Mountain Bike School and learn from experts.



**GET BACK TO NATURE: The Colorado River** photo on our cover says it all. Raft through the Grand Canyon with an outfitter such as Arizona River Runners. The Phoenix-based company offers trips ranging from a three-day introductory float from the North Rim of the Grand Canyon to Lake Meade to a 13-day oar-boat adventure that offers an intimate encounter with America's most spectacular landmark.

**ROCK CRAWL: Moab, Utah's** red peaks and pinnacles show up in plenty of commercials—often with cars perilously perched on their tippy tops. No wonder these cliffs appeal to extreme 4x4 fans. No need to be a gearhead to get in on the action. Anyone can defy gravity here with the help of a Moab Adventure Center guide at the wheel of a modified Hummer. Precision drivers deliver adrenaline-charged thrills. The scenery is a plus. Sunset tours are especially awesome.



**SLEEP CLOSE TO THE STARS: Eugene, Oregon's** Pacific Tree Climbing Institute offers a chance to spend the night in the top of an old growth Douglas fir forest. Campers sleep as high as 200 feet above the earth, snug in a tree boat. Most stay two nights. Day climbs are also available. The season extends from April until November.



**DOWNHILL SKI IN SUMMER: Mount Hood, Oregon** includes the Palmer Glacier, where winter is always in season and the public can ski all summer long. It's easy to combine a summer ski trip with Oregon's great camping, backpacking or hiking opportunities. Mount Hood is just 70 miles from SkyWest service to Portland.

**SCUBA DIVE IN THE MOUNTAINS: Heber Valley, Utah** is just 12 miles from chic Park City and 25 miles from the Salt Lake Airport. It's home to the Homestead Crater, the only warm-water scuba destination in the continental U.S. The 55-foot-deep mineral pool's water temperatures are typically 96 degrees. It's ideal for scuba divers, as well as folks who just want to relax in the therapeutic waters. Come winter, you can scuba dive and sled on the same day!



**HAVE A DATE WITH HISTORY: Duluth, Minnesota and Fort Wayne, Indiana** both trump Washington D.C. in our book. They are among nine American communities to benefit from Karpeles Manuscript Museums. These facilities take turns presenting portions of the world's largest private collection of manuscripts and documents. Abraham Lincoln's original Emancipation Proclamation, John Hancock's cover letter to the Declaration of Independence, the original U.S. Bill of Rights and handwritten works by luminaries ranging from Christopher Columbus to Mozart to Mark Twain are just part of the significant papers on display at any given time. It's all free!

**WELCOME SPRING: Carlsbad, California's** Flower Fields erupt into a cavalcade of color when 50 acres of Giant Ranunculus blossom each spring. A tourist attraction for more than 60 years, The Flower Fields feature wagon rides, special events and plenty of photo opportunities. It also benefits from easy access to the Carlsbad Airport and the beach. This year's season runs from March 1 through May 9.



**ENCOUNTER 19TH-CENTURY EXCESS: Asheville, North Carolina's** lovely setting and Southern charm beguiled George Washington Vanderbilt, who created the Biltmore, a 175,000-square foot French manor that is still the nation's largest privately owned home. Artwork, antiques and other trappings of Gilded Age opulence make it as much museum as mansion. The estate encompasses more than 8,000 acres, including 75 acres of formal gardens. It is possible to stay at a hotel located on the premises. The Asheville Airport is just 15 minutes away.

To learn more about these 10 great adventures and other fun-filled experiences visit [www.americasbestplaces.com/bucketlist](http://www.americasbestplaces.com/bucketlist) <http://www.americasbestplaces.com>.

RIVER: VIVIAN OGIER/ARIZONA RIVER RUNNERS PASSENGER

ROCK CRAWL: MOAB ADVENTURE CENTER.COM

BOY IN TREE: PACIFIC TREE CLIMBING INSTITUTE