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Super Vacations For The Summer Months

Beach Bummed—How to Choose a Beach House Rental

Is your idea of a perfect vacation just the sight of sand and water? Relaxing on the beach, listening to the ocean waves as they gently wash up on the shore? If that is the vacation you're looking for then renting a beach house might be for you. You can rent beach houses all along the coastlines of the United States, in beautiful Spain, and sunny Italy to name just a few. If you are a family going on vacation to the beach there are some important tips you should know.

Once you've decided where you are going to vacation, the next step is to find the perfect beach house rental. Beach rentals are ideal for families. Don't stay cooped up in a tiny hotel room and eat every meal in a restaurant. The pleasure of having your own space without worrying about the kids making too much noise is a welcome respite on vacation. Beach houses can be rented out on a weekly or monthly basis, and sometimes even for just two or three nights.

Often, beach rentals are in private communities that offer other amenities that make renting even more attractive. Biking and hiking trails, golf courses, private pools and sailing are just a few of the extras you might find by renting a beach house. Most beach rentals are just a short distance away from fine dining, tourist attractions, and shopping.

Before renting a beach house, talk to the rental agent to find out what you can expect when you get there. The basic needs of a family should be the most important amenity to look for. Most beach house rentals will include appliances, cookware, utensils, and many small appliances. You will want to be sure that linens and bedding will be provided. Some of the more elaborate will also have Jacuzzi spas, whirlpool baths, and high-speed Internet connection. Of course, this will also include ready access to a beach.

Beach houses or rentals come in varying sizes. You will want to make sure that you are getting enough space for your family to be comfortable. Also, inquire about the locations of grocery stores, shopping, playgrounds, and dining that are kid friendly. Another important factor in finding a beach rental for a family with small children will be location of the nearest emergency room. Be prepared for any unexpected emergencies.

Some companies specialize in beach rentals. I found one such company in San Diego and was amazed at everything they offered. Their rentals include bikes, body boards, and other beach toys free. They have a free fitness center within walking distance of most of their rentals. They also provide a business center for those that can't get too far away from their business. This center includes free Internet service, and fax and printing capabilities.

For those with small children, cribs, strollers, and high chairs are provided. In fact, they want you to have all the comforts of home so your vacation rental includes fully equipped kitchens, all linens, cable TV, and local phone service. Most of these rentals also have a gas grill to cook your favorite entrée.

I chose to look at beach rentals in San Diego because of the perfect weather. It is a location where you can be comfortable vacationing at any time of the year. The rentals are usually close to major attractions such as Sea World, Balboa Park, San Diego Zoo, and the famous Belmont Park with the Big Dipper Roller Coaster and the largest pool found in Southern California.

Beach rentals can be anything from a refurbished 1924 cottage to a plush resort condominium. The price of these can vary depending on how much luxury you want. Some prices start as low as \$600 a week and can go up to \$5500. You are free to choose your price range and the number of extra amenities you are willing to pay for.

While searching for beach rentals, you might not be aware of some hidden costs. Most want a deposit and fees can be different depending on seasons. Lodging tax also is tacked on as well as a cleaning fee. Most fees I found were around \$75. Check on payment options, many beach rentals are owned by private owners and will only accept personal checks or money orders.

California Dreamin' - Wind Your Way Around Wine Country

California is a state that simply must be visited at least once in a lifetime. Whether you choose to travel alone or as a family, California is full of things to see and do. If you're a newly wed, planning a honeymoon, or just a romantic at heart, California is calling you. If you're looking for movie stars, go to Hollywood or Beverly Hills. If you're looking for a relaxing vacation, beautiful scenery and some sweet spirits, then wind your way around to Wine Country. Recreational places like the wineries in Napa Valley and Sonoma are waiting for you.

Napa Valley and Sonoma County in Northern California is only an hour's drive from San Francisco. Otherwise known as Wine Country, Napa Valley and Sonoma County are popular among newlyweds, honeymooners, wine enthusiasts, gourmets and other hopeless romantics who wish to enjoy all the good things in life. There are so many exquisite places to stay and visit in California's Wine Country, the choices are overwhelming, but well worth your time.

Napa Valley, which actually consists of six towns, including: St. Helena, Oakville, Calistoga, Rutherford, Yountville and Napa. Each of these towns feature their own first class wineries, spas, resorts, hotels and restaurants, not to mention the breath taking scenery of the Wine Country itself. The experience of the California Wine Country will rejuvenate your being and will create wonderful memories to last a lifetime.

Sonoma County is the birthplace of the California wine industry. Sonoma Valley is 17 miles long and sits between two glorious mountain ranges, where numerous wineries host tasting events and tours on a daily basis.

The Plaza is encircled with boutiques, adobe structures and restaurants in Sonoma's town square. For over a century, the hot springs have drawn thousands of health conscious guests to the area and even today, is host to a number of world class spas and resorts.

Some of the smaller, family owned wineries will give tours by appointment only. It would be best to call and set up the appointment well in advance of your visit to Wine Country, so you are sure to get in.

This can be a very rewarding experience, because this will give to time to have a one on one conversation with the wine makers themselves without being caught up in a group of tourists. Many of the large and small family owned wineries make themselves available for outdoor weddings and other special occasions for additional costs. Most only offer wine tasting, tours of their wineries, and host other special events.

If you are planning to visit California's Wine Country, try to make your visit in the middle of the week, because the weekends are often over crowded and that can make traveling and sightseeing fairly difficult and thus less enjoyable.

During the week, there is less traffic to deal with and some of the hotels can have lower rates. It's always best to call ahead to the hotels to make sure there is room available for you when you arrive. If you decide to use Silverado Trail as your driving route, you will encounter less traffic and have a more scenic route to enjoy. The scenery is one of the best parts of visiting Wine Country, so stop and smell the roses as often as possible.

If you are looking for a picnic area with a great view, try visiting Rutherford Hill Winery's picnic area. If you choose to use a picnic area belonging to a specific winery, you may choose to buy a bottle of wine from them as a courtesy, for you to enjoy with your picnic meal. A delicious addition to your picnic basket would be a selection of fruits, cheeses and baked goods from the Sunshine Market in St. Helena. You can also pick up your plates, napkins and utensils for your picnic while you're there.

Gordon's on Yountville is famous for their tasty coffee, which is a delicious addition to breakfast. For a scrumptious lunch or dinner, try eating at the French Laundry. There is a wide variety of fine restaurants in Wine Country from which to pick and choose, even if you don't have a reservation, you have a good chance at getting in.

Hot Holidays – Top Ten Necessities for Your Sunny Vacation Destination

Are you ready for a great vacation in a sunny, warm, and possibly sandy area? Ingredients for a hot holiday you'll remember for a lifetime are easy to plan. Here are a few to keep in mind:

First, make sure your rooms at the resort are booked in advance. Many of the best vacation resorts are fully booked ahead of time, and having reservations will make sure you have a roof over your head. In fact, some of the best destinations are booked months in advance, so do your planning early. Also remember that you may get better rates on your hotel by paying in advance.

Second, make sure your money is safe. Rather than carrying cash, use traveler's checks. If traveler's checks are lost or stolen they can be quickly replaced. Or, better yet, use a credit card. Most resorts take the major bank cards. You'll have a record of your purchases and the

ability to dispute any inaccurate claims. If your card is lost or stolen, it can also be quickly replaced and you won't be responsible for fraudulent purchases made with it. Nothing could ruin a great vacation faster than having your cash lost or stolen with no way to replace it, so don't take that chance. Use credit cards or traveler's checks and be safe.

Third, make sure the kids are taken care of. If your children are traveling with you, make sure the resort has adequate play areas and hopefully a daycare service so that you'll really have a vacation without chasing the kids through the sand all the time. Many resorts have activity directors for the children's events, and the kids will have a great time.

Next, what is the nightlife like? If you and your significant other want to dance the night away, fantastic! Just make sure that the location you pick has a reputation for quality nightlife. Warm vacation spots that pride themselves on good nightclubs include Key West – a favorite of Ernest Hemmingway; Miami the home of Gloria Estefan; Honolulu, Los Angeles, San Diego, and if you don't mind skipping the beach, Las Vegas has some of the most exciting night life on earth. And remember to take along some cab fare. Definitely don't drive when you've been drinking.

Next think comedy. Are there good comedy clubs in the area? Nothing beats a good stand up comedian. And if stand up isn't your bag, what other entertainment do you prefer. Magicians and musicians are always popular.

Water sports and excitement go together, and most warm, sunny vacation spots include plenty of both. How about parasailing or hang gliding? What about Scuba diving, snorkeling, or swimming with the dolphins? If you like the water but don't want to get wet yourself, check out the deep sea fishing if you are ocean side. If in Florida, remember all the inland lakes and the trophy bass they hold.

Number seven in our list of necessities is a practical matter. Make sure that either you speak the language of the natives, or they speak English. That makes Jamaica a great hot spot, as well as Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. Also Bermuda, Tahiti and the Dominican Republic are waiting to provide you with a wonderful vacation in paradise.

Number eight is rather simple. Is transport in and out of your vacation paradise easy? Do they have a quality airport? Or will you be driving. Make sure the transportation needs are easily taken care of.

Next, number nine, sure to be a hit with the ladies, is shopping. Does your warm sunny vacation destination have adequate shopping facilities? Nothing makes a woman happier than a chance to shop.

Finally, the top necessity for your warm and sunny destination is that it be a place you've always wanted to visit. Whether you've always desired a Florida beach, a California surfing wave, or a tropical island, make sure that your destination is one you've always wanted to visit. And number eleven, as a bonus, is to bring along the video camcorder and still photo camera so that you can record the memories of your vacation and enjoy them for years to come.

Safari So Good – What to Expect On Your Safari Vacation

Going on a safari vacation can be the experience of your life. Just imagine the sun rising over the African plain with you in your vehicle watching a pride of lions cross the horizon. What a beautiful sight it will be.

There are a number of different kinds of safari vacations to choose from. You can go on safari in a game preserve. This gives you the option of seeing a large variety of wildlife. More often than not, that wildlife variety will be dense enough in population on a game preserve that you can see more than one of each creature in their natural habitat. The photography opportunities on these safaris are amazing.

For most of the game preserve safaris, you can choose to fly directly to the lodge on the preserve or you can choose a self-driving tour that allows you the freedom to go where you want and stay as long as you want. Either option is right for a different type of person, so you might want to explore both through the available literature before you make a choice. Another safari vacation option is a walking safari.

This is a great way to see the African countryside. You can get closer than you ever thought possible to the natural landscape. You can choose the length and destination of your walking vacation. Most, though, do not offer the option of an unescorted walking tour, as it is quite easy to be lost and never heard from again on the plains of Africa.

Safety is of primary importance to the safari company, and they spend an extensive amount of time training their personnel to handle your safety needs. Most guides can regale you with stories of African folklore and the use of the various plants you will encounter on your journey. Depending on the tour you choose, you will either be sleeping in a lodge or a small tented village that will serve as your "home base" for the entire walking tour.

Either way, chances are good that the food and lodging you enjoy will meet your standards, as the safari company you have chosen wants your return business. There are even a few last minute one day type safaris to meet your needs if you're in a hurry. Check with the safari companies to see if they have this type of option. While you will not get the full experience you might have on a longer safari expedition, you will at least get a taste of the safari lifestyle.

No matter what type of safari you choose, you can expect to see the beauty of Africa. You will most likely see all of the wildlife you've only read about, and bird watching is not an uncommon hobby to take up while you're visiting, as Africa is home to some of the best birds in the world. Moreover, you can expect to be treated in African elegance with phenomenal food, high tea, and the hospitality that is Africa.

There are a number of different things you should do to prepare yourself for your safari vacation. First, you'll want to be sure to include good walking shoes that are comfortable in your packing. You will also want casual clothes that are brown, khaki, or beige in color to better blend with the landscape. Long sleeved shirts and long pants will help you avoid the sun and biting insect. You may also want a warm jacket for cool nights.

If you intend to visit during the summer, be sure your jacket is waterproof, as monsoon season probably is not far away. You might want some nicer clothes for your evening wear, though don't choose anything too formal, as few places you will be visiting will expect it. It might be a good idea to check with your travel adviser on this point. You'll also want malaria tablets, insect repellent, and a mosquito net to keep you healthy while you're on safari.

Sun protection gear including sun block, a good hat, and some sunglasses should also be included in your baggage. Finally, be sure to keep your Visa or Mastercard with you at all times. Few places accept American Express or Diner's Club.

Set Sail by Sea—Why Cruises are the “In” Thing to Do These Days

It seems like everybody these days is setting sail, cruising around the deep blue ocean on ships the size of small cities. Travelers return from their ocean adventures with strange and marvelous tales of grand movie theaters, huge climbing walls, water slides, and mounds of delicious food, but is this the reason why cruises have grown in popularity? What is it, exactly, that makes cruises so appealing to so many people.

Perhaps it's the price. Long cruises, especially, can be expensive, and port fees, cruise cancellation insurance, and airfare (if it's not included in the price), not to mention pricey shore excursions, can destroy your vacation budget.

Just like with air travel, however, significant discounts can be found online and through travel agents, and when travelers factor in the meals, accommodation, and shipboard entertainment that are included in the fare, cruises can actually be pretty reasonable. There's also less room for the typical nasty surprises that accompany traveling to exotic locations on your own.

Unlike land tours, which offer a similar sense of security when traveling, cruises also allow passengers a great deal of personal freedom and the ability to set their own pace. If you don't feel like getting up for breakfast, then you can stay in your cabin and make it down in time for lunch. On a tour, if you miss breakfast, you might have missed the bus for the entire day, and you'll end up stuck in your hotel, while everyone else is seeing the sights.

Cruises have a definite relaxation factor that accompanies the fact that you are, essentially, staying in a floating hotel, which is one reason why cruises attract passengers who are celebrating honeymoons, birthdays, anniversaries, and family reunions.

The fact that cruises are actually carrying passengers from one port of call to the next with a minimum of fuss or fanfare is another reason for their popularity. Unlike planes, trains, or, God forbid, automobiles, passenger can sleep, eat, exercise, and even party while the ship is transporting them from point A to point B.

As mentioned earlier, the pace is slower, but for many, that's a benefit rather than a drawback of cruise travel. Also, once you get to your port of call, you'll be all rested up for duty-free shopping (in the Caribbean, at least) or scuba diving or whatever draws you to exotic locales in the first place.

Traveling also entails meeting a lot of new people—some of whom are nice and some of whom are not nice. Dealing with nasty flight attendants, shady cab drivers, and grouchy hotel clerks can add a level of stress to travel that detracts from the sense of excitement and adventure that should accompany any vacation.

Perhaps it's because everyone's so relaxed or perhaps it's because the staff is brainwashed (or desperate for a generous gratuity), but, in general, fellow travelers and staff on cruise ships seem to be a whole lot happier, nicer, and more accommodating than your average human being you encounter every day. Your fellow cruisers, who come from a variety of backgrounds, are not only happier but also more interesting to be around, and you're actually encouraged and able to socialize on a cruise.

But let's be honest. Nothing's more important to you than your stomach. Airlines understand that. It seems like, on some long-haul flights, attendants are walking around every hour with another opportunity to stuff your face. Airline food, however, will never be able to compete with cruise ship food.

Food is often the highlight of a cruise experience. Whether it's at a buffet, in a dining room, or in your cabin, the food is delicious, and there's plenty of it. In fact, you might find yourself gaining a few pounds if you're not careful. Luckily, that's what vacation is all about. If you are worried about your waistline, there are plenty of opportunities to exercise and stay fit onboard.

Finally, one of the major reasons why cruise travel is growing in popularity is the variety it offers. Over 200 cruise ships float in the world's oceans and rivers today, and that number is growing by the year.

Just like with air travel, there are the big names—Princess, Royal Caribbean, Norwegian, and Carnival—and they each have their own fleet of ships. There are also smaller cruise lines, tailored to a specific region or for a specific purpose. These days, if you do your research, you can find the perfect cruise ship to fit your needs, wants and interests.

Vacation by Boat—Five Tips on Selecting Your Destination

So you've decided to set sail and spend your next vacation cruising in the lap of luxury on boats the size of small cities to exotic ports of call. Now, how do you decide which cruise to choose and where to go when the number of choices can be staggering? By being aware of a few simple guidelines and suggestions, you can narrow your choices down and find the perfect ship to the perfect destination.

First, decide how long you want to cruise for. A lengthy transatlantic voyage is obviously out of the question if you only have a long weekend to spare for your vacation. Cruises that last only three to four days are inexpensive, but you'll only visit one or two ports. Plus, your fellow passengers are more likely to be of the youthful, partying variety. Week-long cruises are the most popular, are relatively inexpensive, and generally visit more ports of call.

Seven days, however, can pass by very quickly, and your fellow passengers are still more likely to be partiers. Finally, cruises longer than seven days allow you to visit more ports of call in more exotic locations, such as South America or the Mediterranean, and you'll be more relaxed with more sedate fellow passengers. Unfortunately, the amount of money and vacation time required can be cost-prohibitive. Knowing how much time you have to spend on a cruise necessarily narrows your choices of where you will be able to travel.

If more exotic locations do appeal to you but you have a shorter timeframe, you can always assess the viability of flying to your locale and then taking a three or four day cruise once you are there. For example, cruising to an Asian country can be extremely expensive, but once you're in China, a cruise down the Yangtze is pretty reasonable.

Next, consider how much money you have to spend. There is a great deal of variability in prices, and you can constantly find great deals on the Internet or through a travel agent. Just don't forget to factor in port charges, cruise cancellation insurance, and airfare—if it's not already included in the price of the cruise. Knowing your budget in conjunction with your timeline will help you narrow down your choices.

Time and money are not the only deciding factors. Other factors include whether you want to travel in the summer or in the winter, whether or not you want a cruise that will allow you to explore your hobbies, and how many ports you want to stop in. Nothing is more frustrating than being stuck at sea, while you know that you're sailing past gorgeous, sun-drenched islands.

Some destinations are easily accessible and actually more popular in the winter—the Caribbean, Mexico and the Panama Canal, for example—but travelers have to beware of hurricane season. Alaskan and European cruises, on the other hand, are typically not available in the winter.

In addition to money, time and itinerary, consider any possible preferences you might have for a particular cruise ship. While differences between the ships have narrowed over time, some are a bit more luxurious than others. Read evaluations of cruise ships online or in travel publications, interview acquaintances, or ask a travel agent.

Finally, once you have decided how much time you have, how much you want to spend, who you want to cruise with, and where you want to go, you will often face having to decide between very similar options. Let's use, as an example, the Caribbean. How do you know whether you want to go East or West? What in the world is the difference? Both have sandy beaches, clear blue water, and plenty of sun; both offer a variety of water sports and opportunities for shopping; and both are located in practically the same place geographically.

If you check out the time you spend at sea, however, the ports of call you visit, and the shore excursions offered, you will find slight differences between the two. Eastern Caribbean cruises usually set off from Florida, spend less time at sea, and hop from island to island, visiting places like Puerto Rico and St. Maarten. You will have more opportunities to shop and to enjoy the beach.

Western Caribbean cruises, on the other, visit ports of call that are geographically farther apart, such as Cozumel and Jamaica. They depart not only from Florida but also from Texas and

Louisiana, and they spend more time at sea. Shore excursions, however, are more unique than simple beachcomber activities, including opportunities to see Mayan Ruins and lush tropical rain forests.

In the end, remember that, with all of the options available for your next cruise, now is not the time to sacrifice what you really want—whether it's the opportunity to have your hair braided in Nassau or whale watch in Alaska.

Withstanding the White Water Rapids – Preparing For a High Adrenaline Adventure

A rafting trip is the perfect vacation for everyone in your family. There are few things in this world better than rushing down a river, feeling the water splash on your ankles, and squealing with delight all the way. There are a number of things, though, that you should do to prepare for your white water vacation with your family.

Think safety first and above everything else. If you go with a rafting company, they can help guide you on the safety tips you need to know. If, however, you are choosing to go it alone, here are some safety tips to help you prepare. First, be sure you have a personal flotation device, like a life jacket, on each family member at all times. Even if you are a good swimmer, white water currents can be a serious danger, and a flotation device can help save your life or that of a family member when you get in a tight situation.

Proper clothing is also important. Be sure to wear fabrics that dry quickly. You should also wear lightweight shoes, as heavier shoes can make swimming more difficult should you fall in. Good equipment is also essential. A solid raft and good paddles can make your experience much safer, though this shouldn't be an issue if you've chosen to work with a rafting company to rent your equipment.

If, however, you're borrowing something from a friend or a brother-in-law or something like that, it can be a good idea to inspect the equipment thoroughly. Finally, be sure everyone in your party has the ability to handle the rapids you'll be facing. You don't want to get in over someone's head. If that happens, people can panic, the boat can turn over, and you'll lose everyone and everything.

Another thing to consider is the special equipment you may want to take along on the trip. Not just any life jacket will do. You want ones that are specifically rated for rafting. Moreover, you'll need waterproof bags to carry your gear. The last thing you want to find is soaking wet gear after a long day of fighting the river.

Finally, be sure both your boat and your paddles are rated for the kind of river use you'll be putting it to. If they're not, either rent some that are or buy some that are. White water rafting is a unique sport with unique equipment needs, and realizing that from the start can make your vacation go much smoother.

An additional thing to consider is what to wear while you're on the river. You'll want to dress according to both the water temperature and the air temperature, as you'll spend most of your day getting at least a little wet. During the summer months, shorts and a t-shirt are a good idea. On cooler days, you'll probably want a wet suit. It can help you keep warm, and it is quick to dry. For a bit of extra warmth on those cool days, you might consider fleece or wool jackets and sweaters. Wearing a cotton jacket or sweater will not keep you warm, as it will sap your body heat. Fleece and wool have the ability to provide insulation even when wet.

Sun protection is also essential, no matter what season you choose to raft in. You need both a high-powered sun block and sun glasses to protect yourself. You might even want a hat to protect the top of your head, your neck, and your ears from the sun. Sunburns can happen every easily when you're out on the river all day, and you can prevent soreness and injury by packing a bit of sun protection.

Finally, be sure to pack the perfect meals for your trip. You want things that are easy to prepare, tasty, and nutritious. It can be a good idea not to pack anything that needs to be refrigerated, because once your cooler is out of ice, the side of the river is a bad place to stop and get more. More than anything, though, after a long day on the river, you'll be both tired and hungry, so packing something that is easy to prepare that will fill you up is essential.

Putting Around—Great Golfing Vacations in the United States

If you are a golfing enthusiast and live in the part of the country where you can't golf year round, a golf vacation is the perfect vacation for you. These golf vacations can be an all-inclusive vacation or a vacation where you choose a central site and branch out from there. There are some wonderful golfing vacation areas in the United States but we will only explore a few of what is actually available.

Some golf vacation packages available are:

- Myrtle Beach
- Hilton Head
- Tampa/St. Petersburg
- Jacksonville
- Miami
- Orlando
- Las Vegas
- Phoenix/Scottsdale
- San Diego
- Asheville

This is just a list of ten locations you can go for a wonderful relaxing golf vacation. Let's look at a few of them.

Myrtle Beach, South Carolina in one of the premier golf destination sites on the East Coast. It features more than 100 courses and boasts of miles of great beaches and coastlines. It also

has a lively nightlife that includes, dance clubs, country music shows, Broadway shows and many pubs and local bars. Myrtle Beach usually enjoys more than 200 sunny days a year and has a mild climate that allows for golfing vacations at any time of the year.

In Phoenix, Arizona, there are several wonderful golf resorts. It also has more than 100 courses available to choose from with the wonderful desert views to help you appreciate our Native heritage. While you are there, you can visit ancient native villages, and see many cultural exhibits and Southwestern Native American art. Many weekends also have concerts available to attend.

Another wonderful choice in the Phoenix area would be a bed and breakfast. These are popular because it gives you a taste of the culture of the area. In addition, as the name implies, it offers breakfast and sometimes other meals for a fee.

Las Vegas, the gambling capital of the United States is also a great location for a golf vacation. While golfing, you can enjoy the breathtaking view of the Spring Mountains and the Las Vegas Skyline. Many courses offer spectacular desert landscapes and tricky sandstone bunkers that will be a challenge to any golfer. Wanting some nightlife? Las Vegas is usually only an hour drive away with all of the shows and casinos to visit, there's no chance you can get bored.

Hilton Head, South Carolina is only 12 miles long but this small island has at least 22 golf courses. Not only do you have the spectacular golf courses but also you are only a short distance away from some spectacular tourist sites. Palmetto Dunes Plantation and Pinckney Island National Wildlife Preserve are just two of the Historical attractions to visit while you are at Hilton Head.

Baja California offers an amazing array of luxury resort for avid golfers. The southern tip of Baja hosts many wonderful golfing locations as well as many other attractions. You can visit Sea World, San Diego with all of its attractions and many miles of beautiful sandy beaches. You can even visit Los Cabos, which is considered a rough, rowdy, but charming town.

If you live in a part of the country that is hot and sultry in the summer, you may be in the market for a golfing vacation in a cooler location. One of those locations is Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Only two and one half hours north of Chicago it offers superb championship caliber courses in the Midwest region. The area offers some wonderful hotels but also has several different bed and breakfasts that will allow you to soak up the local flavor. If you also want to include some shopping and nightlife, Milwaukee is just a short distance north of this golfing paradise.

Colorado Springs, Colorado also has a unique atmosphere you won't find anywhere else in the United States. The high altitude adds to the distance a ball will travel, some say up to 10%. What a challenge to adjust your golf game to high altitude and see your ball fly through the air and perhaps give you one of the longest drives ever.

Many other areas feature wonderful golfing vacations in the United States. Searching online will help you to find the golfing vacation you would enjoy most.

The Big Deal About "The Big Ditch" - Top Ten Reasons To Make the Grand Canyon Your Family Holiday

The Grand Canyon is one of the best places to visit on your family holiday. This amazing location was carved over thousands of years. It is beautiful. The many activities it has to offer can be pleasurable for the whole family. The canyon experience is bigger than just the visit, it is the full body experience you can treat your senses to during and after your visit. You will be making memories for years to come as you seek solace in the vast spaces of the Grand Canyon. There are several good reasons to make the Grand Canyon your next family holiday.

The first reason to make the Grand Canyon your next family holiday is the accessibility options for everyone. Because the Grand Canyon is quite large, facilities vary by location. The National Park Service offers wheel chairs for free, and you can obtain temporary parking permits for the ease of your special needs visitors. There are many programs that are specifically designed for visitors with special needs, and several of the overlooks and scenic spots have wheel chair accessible routes.

Another reason to make the Grand Canyon your next family vacation spot is because of the educational programs offered. The National Park Service has designed some wonderful environmental educational programs specifically for you and your family. They can help you and family members understand the importance of preserving the canyon while explaining some of the canyon's mysteries to even the youngest of participants.

A third reason to make the Grand Canyon your next family vacation spot is the Junior Ranger programs available just for your kids. Once your kids participate in the program, they will know how to help preserve our national parks for years to come. Moreover, they learn fun facts about the Grand Canyon, participate in some great activities, and can act as representatives of the Grand Canyon to everyone they know. They get a special badge, and they get to participate in a swearing in ceremony to help them feel special.

A fourth reason to make the Grand Canyon your next family vacation spot is the history behind the canyon. You and your family can learn about the forming of the park. You can also investigate current preservation methods as well as current archaeological study methods. You can learn how the changes in the Canyon have been documented throughout the years, and the cultures it has served as a center for over the course of time.

A fifth reason to make the Grand Canyon your next family vacation spot is the number of exercise related activities you can engage in while you're at the canyon. You can go whitewater rafting, biking, or hiking. All of these will not only allow you a closer relationship with the location, they will also help your family to realize the importance of exercise in nature within their own lives.

A sixth reason to make the Grand Canyon your next family vacation spot is the availability of auto touring. There are a number of areas in the Canyon you can visit from the comfort of your car. This means no special equipment, no complaining about the long walks or the heat. It will just be you and your family in the environment of your vehicle while taking in the sites of the Canyon.

A seventh reason to make the Grand Canyon your next family vacation choice is the lovely camping opportunities it offers. If you and your family love go camping, the Grand Canyon is the place to do it. They offer everything from cabin style camping to RV parks to traditional tent camping.

Once your campsite is set up, there are a number of great camping activities to engage in including picnicking, swimming, and best of all, hiking in the shadow of the Canyon. For a new experience, try a mule ride to the bottom with a camp out overnight. You simply cannot beat the beauty of the canyon from a camper's perspective.

An eighth reason to make the Grand Canyon your next family vacation is the wildlife viewing opportunities you will have. In addition to being a beautiful spot for bird watching, the canyon approximately 355 bird, 89 mammal, 47 reptile, 9 amphibian, 17 fish (including five native species), and thousands of aquatic and terrestrial invertebrate species. This can mean a fun learning experience for you and your family.

A ninth reason to make the Grand Canyon your next family vacation spot is the viewing of the natural environment. The Grand Canyon is one of the greatest natural features on our planet, and there is a lot to learn from it. By seeing the canyon, you will learn about types of rock, erosion, and desert habitats. This will help sharpen your science skills.

The final reason to make the Grand Canyon your next family vacation spot is the number of air tours available. Seeing this natural wonder from the ground is great, but seeing it from a helicopter or a plane will make your vacation more memorable than ever.

Plan your next vacation to the Grand Canyon and you won't be sorry.

The State Park Pass - Why Frequent Campers Love It

Camping is a great past time or mini vacation that can be enjoyed as an individual, as a couple or as a family. Many people enjoy camping at state parks, where the amenities are plentiful and the fees are affordable. The wonderful thing about the state park systems is that they offer ample opportunities for the public to enjoy the great outdoors as nature intended. No matter what state you live in, there's almost always a state park within reasonable driving distance from your home.

State parks are great for camping when they are less crowded during the weekdays, but on the weekends and in the warmer months, they become very busy. Most people seek out the more secluded areas to camp in for more privacy and so they are not bothered with rowdy nearby campers. Having a reasonable distance between campsites is more desirable to campers and this is considered when choosing a state park to purchase a pass from. Not many people choose over crowded state parks with campers elbow to elbow, they want their own space.

The best way to plan a camping trip to a state park is to first select which state park you want to camp at, check the availability of the campsites and get the reservation information you need and then obtain a pass. Most of this information is available online with comparable charts to

make it easier to choose a state park with all the amenities you're looking for.

Especially if you are a camping enthusiast that frequently goes camping at a particular state park, obtaining a pass can be a great benefit. Some passes can give you rights to a specific location and you can buy these passes each time you visit or by the season or the year.

Campers love these state park passes because it allows them easy access to a fantastic facilities used to make your camping experience more comfortable and more enjoyable. Some of the amenities state parks will offer are: clean restrooms, hot showers, convenience stores, tackle shop, boat rental, boat launches, marinas, weekend movies, playgrounds, small beach, hiking trails, fire pit, horse riding and other planned activities.

Although the restrooms are public, they are often kept clean and sanitary. The stores are great for buying food and necessities, because no matter how carefully you plan, something will most likely be forgotten. Being able to rent a boat is great if you enjoy boating, but don't actually own a boat and you won't have to lug a boat to and from the campsite. The playgrounds, weekend movies and other planned activities are wonderful for keeping the kids busy so mom and dad can relax and enjoy themselves.

Many of these state parks also offer electric, water and garbage or dump stations for your convenience, but may charge a small fee in addition to your state park pass to use them extra amenities. All of these amenities are regularly offered to those RV campers and to those campers who use tents and sleep with nature.

Many of these amenities may vary from state to state and park to park and are to be considered a privilege and used responsibly. Any irresponsible usage of the state parks amenities can revoke your rights to use them and any violation of rules can have you banned from the park.

For many of those outdoor enthusiasts, no summer is complete without spending quality time in the great outdoors. Camping is the best way for some people to get away from their everyday lives and to commune with nature and find the peace and relaxation their body needs. Camping is the perfect way of getting away from the television, computer, telephones, traffic and everything else that can distract a person from the ultimate relation the body needs.

It's important to show respect for all amenities in the state park, camp responsibly, and clean up after yourself. If you make a mess, clean it up. If something breaks, tell the park rangers about it immediately, so it can be fixed or replaced in time for the next campers. Especially if this is a state park that you would like to return to, leave the campsite in the condition you have found it, or even better.

Yee Haw! A Dude Ranch Vacation Holiday

Taking a dude ranch vacation can be one of the best experiences you'll ever have. Just take a moment to imagine the best vacation you've ever been on. You'll experience cool mountain air, wide open plains, steady horses that can take you to freedom from your typical nine to five job,

fishing for bigger prey than you've ever imagined, and some perfect quiet time with your family. There are many things to think about as you prepare for a dude ranch vacation.

Dude ranches evolved after most of the west had been explored. Eastern tourists could get to the great west by train, and most wanted to see what it had to offer. However, settlers in the west were little prepared to take on tourists, and the great dude ranch was born to offer eastern tourists a vacation sport with all of the amenities they might expect during a time of vacation.

Most of the earliest dude ranch visitors stayed for long periods of time, and they were guests in the ranchers' home. Each ranch had its own variety of things to do, depending upon the owner of the ranch. Many ranchers noticed that it was not only the natural beauty of the surroundings that continued to attract the visitors, but also the ranch experience itself. As a result, ranches began to develop programs for guest, build lodges, and start working on attracting visitors (and the profits that came with them).

The first thing you need to do to prepare for your dude ranch vacation is to choose a ranch. This can be a bit daunting, because there are literally thousands of choices you have to make. The first thing to do is to narrow down a location for you dude ranch holiday. You can choose from ranches across the country, but the National Dude Rancher's Association has ranches in British Columbia, Alberta, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, South Dakota, Wyoming, California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Arkansas.

The location you choose will determine some of the activities you will participate in. You should choose a ranch in a location you want to visit. You should also choose a ranch that has some fun and exciting activities that you would enjoy participating in. Don't forget to factor in price ranges, because many dude ranches have varying prices at varying accommodations, so you want to be sure to choose something that will best fit your budget.

Once you've made your dude ranch selection, you can start looking forward to the activities you'll enjoy. While activities to vary from location to location, most have a pretty standard set that will be available at all locations. One of the best, yet not often considered activities to engage in while you're on a dude ranch is hiking. Dude ranches are located in the most beautiful regions of the country.

Many are even adjacent to national parks or other public lands. This means you and the whole family can set aside a day for drinking in nature's beauty from the comfort of your feet. Another good activity on a dude ranch is fishing. There are many ranches that are located along some of the best fly-fishing rivers. Others have beautiful mountain ponds on their land that see little activity from anyone except the guests of the ranch. Those fish are just waiting to bite your hook.

Learning about natural history is another great activity to engage in while on a dude ranch. You can find some fantastic artifacts like bones and arrowheads. You can also look at some amazing land formations while you are visiting. Most ranches even offer optional overnight pack trips for that authentic cowboy experience.

You can take a horse and experience the beauty of the natural countryside while living experience you've only heard of like sing-a-longs and cooking over the open flame. When night finally falls, you can sleep with the stars as your night-light. One final activity you can enjoy on a dude ranch is the four star relaxing accommodations. Most ranches have hot tubs and pools in addition to their ranch like amenities. You can relax with a good book while watching the kids play in the pool.

Backpacking Vacation—Five Favorite U.S. Backpacking Destinations

Backpacking is a combination of hiking and camping. The backpacker carries his supplies and equipment for all of his eating and sleeping needs. The gear will include food, water, and shelter. Backpacking allows hikers to go deeper into remote areas to get away from modern civilization.

Backpacking requires you carry your supplies with you and will reduce your speed and less ground can be covered in one day. Backpacking trips are usually a weekend or sometimes longer. If it is longer, planned food and supply drops are worked out in advance so the backpacker won't be weighted down with a heavy backpack.

In popular backpacking locations, hike-in camps are available. Sometimes a camp is no more than a clearing of level patches of ground. Some are more, with free hiking huts available for backpackers.

Backpackers are always on the lookout for the lightest possible gear to carry. If they don't carry water, they will carry a filter or purifier to allow them to drink from lakes and streams. If there is water to be found, there isn't any need to carry several large containers of water. Food is typically freeze-dried and can be reconstituted with hot water. Popular products combine high-energy content with low mass and volume.

The backpacker's version of the golden rule is: To have beautiful and pristine places to enjoy, help make them. At a minimum, don't make them worse. Leave only your footprints behind.

Five favorite U.S. backpacking destinations are easy to find and beautiful to explore.

The Grand Teton National Park. This beautiful national park is found in western Wyoming. Set up as a national park in 1929, it boasts of nearly 200 miles of trails for hikers. The rock formations that make up the Grand Teton area are roughly 2500 million years old and are made from sandstone, limestones, and various types of shale. The rocks also contain volcanic deposits.

The vegetation includes beautiful trees that are able to survive the cold windy slopes, such as the Whitebark Pine, Sub-alpine Fir, and Engelman Spruce. Evergreens are more often found on the valley floor and other species of trees, including, aspens, cottonwood, willows, and alders are found around the moist soil near rivers and lakes.

Yellowstone National Park. This Park is located just north of the Grand Teton National Park and is a rich source of trails for backpackers. The park has many of the same species of vegetation and animals. Yellowstone is part of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and many animals travel between the two parks.

Some of the animals you will see while backpacking in either park are Moose, American Bison, Elk, Black Bears, Mountain Lion, and Wolf. Some of you will be glad to know that although the park has four different species of reptiles, none are poisonous.

Yosemite National Park. Yosemite is located in California at the base of the Sierra Nevada mountain range. The park is largely made of granite rock and remnants of older rocks. Ice slopes were created about a million years ago and the movement of the ice masses going down slope sculpted the U-shaped valley that attracts the most visitors.

Over three million people visit the park yearly and most are attracted to the giant Sequoia groves that are found there. Many wonderful sites for backpackers to visit besides the Sequoia groves are O'Shaughnessy Dam, Yosemite Valley, Hetch Hetchy Valley, Half Dome, North Dome, Mariposa Grove, and Tenaya Lake.

Many beautiful waterfalls also can be seen and enjoyed by backpackers and hikers. Yosemite's black bears were once famous for stealing food by breaking into parked cars. Once used as a tourist attraction, the park now discourages interaction between black bears and humans. Backpacking is open between late spring and early fall. If you are thinking of an overnight trip into the backcountry, a wilderness permit is needed. Also required, bear resistant food storage.

Mesa Verde National Park. This Park is located in Southwestern Colorado, 35 miles west of Durango. Mesa Verde is Spanish for green table. The park is specifically known for the "cliff dwellings" which were built by communities of people from around 600-1300 A.D. These cliff dwellings are some of the most preserved in the United States and offer a peek at the lives of the ancient Pueblo people. Plan to spend a day or two to thoroughly explore the ancient sites and beautiful landscape.

Great Smoky Mountain National Park. This beautiful park is one of the most visited national parks. Found in both Tennessee and North Carolina it has beautiful slopes and boasts of the quality of the remnants of Southern Appalachian mountain culture. You rarely find snow in the parks low to mid elevations. Typically snows of an inch or more only happen a few times each winter. In the higher elevations, it snows more often and several park roads may be closed to traffic because of deep snowfalls.

Marriage Made in Mexico - Five Dream Destinations for Weddings

If you're getting married, or know someone who is, weddings can be quite complicated and expensive. Even if it's a common wedding held in a church followed by a reception and honeymoon, there is a lot of planning and cost involved. Couples can cut those costs in half and save on all the time and frustration of planning a wedding by seeking out a travel agent to plan a dream destination wedding.

Weddings that are held in a vacation location, typically away from the betrothed couple's hometown, are called destination weddings. In the recent years, these destination weddings have been rapidly increasing in popularity. Some destination weddings involve couples eloping to an adventurous and exciting location, while others choose to invite a few close family and friends to celebrate with them. Many couples even find themselves saving money by planning a destination wedding.

There are so many beautiful locations in different parts of the world with great accommodations and beautiful sightseeing adventures. Narrowing all of these locations down to five dream destination wedding locations was a difficult but necessary task. Creating the perfect wedding is not easy; the hardest part of getting married is choosing the location. Listed below are the five most popular major locations for dream destination weddings:

1. Mexico. Two of the most beautiful locations to hold a destination wedding reside in Mexico. Cancun is paradise for the romantics and the white powdery beaches and blue water make for a perfect setting for wedding on the beach. The Cancun Hotel Zone and the Bahia de Mujeres is known for the best swimming areas. Cozumel is just off of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula has some of the world's best diving. Cozumel has attractive resorts that contrast with the empty stretch of beaches with a tropical atmosphere. Mexico is great for those betrothed couples who enjoy water sports and sun washed beaches.

2. Hawaii. As the fun in the sun capital of the Hawaiian Islands, Oahu is such a rich and rewarding experience far beyond the pristine turquoise water, the long sandy beaches and the harsh mountains. Here lies a legacy of royalty, luxury and relaxation. Maui is the perfect place to create memories to last a lifetime. Get married and enjoy your honeymoon in Maui and embrace what the entire Hawaiian Islands have to offer. The perfect weather all year round, uncrowded beaches and wonderful accommodations, Maui is the perfect place to tie the knot and embark on new adventures with your loved one.

3. Jamaica. Come to Jamaica to be embraced in the rich culture, the tropical climate and easy lifestyle. Enjoy a beautiful wedding surrounded by an island of natural beauty. Waterfalls, jungle mountain tops and pristine white sand beaches like the Negril, Montego Bay and Ocho Rios are waiting for you to indulge yourself in their beauty. Don't forget the fine cuisine and local entertainment to complete the Jamaican experience. What's more beautiful than a Jamaican wedding on a white sand beach or near a majestic waterfall in the perfect climate?

4. Bermuda. An island paradise and considered one of the worlds most beautiful islands, Bermuda is embellished with lush gardens, attractive pink sand beaches, coral reefs and a strong tradition of hospitality towards the islands guests. The island offers wonderful hotels, resorts and other accommodations that is sure to make your stay as wonderful as it can possibly be. Bermuda is an island you will want to come back to, again and again.

5. Las Vegas. The marriage capital of the world with well over 100,000 couples obtaining marriage licenses every year and the only place you can get legally married by a rhinestone studded Elvis impersonator. As one of the hottest wedding and honeymoon destinations, Las Vegas, is the place to go to elope or for a planned dream destination wedding.

No matter how many times you have been to Las Vegas, there is always something new to experience every time you return. Despite its reputation, there is more than just gambling in this city. A new trend of ultra hip nightclubs and resorts are developing to join the already established nightclubs like the House of Blues at Mandalay Bay, Baby's Nightclub at the Hard Rock Hotel, Coyote Ugly at New York New-York and Studio 54 at MGM Grand.

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