



TRAVEL & ADVENTURE GUIDE



May 2025

A MediaNews Group & Tribune Media Publication

DON'T SKIP THE SOUTH SHORE

Last minute fun
with little if any risk

MUST-HAVE TRAVEL GEAR

The extras to make
your trip seamless

GREAT ESCAPES FAR & CLOSE

Time for escape
and adventure

Great escapes far away & close to home



The beaches of Algarve are magical, with caves and rock formations. (Photo Moira McCarthy)

BY MOIRA MCCARTHY

School's out, work is less invasive (sometimes) and your PTO days need to be used. Summer: It's the time for escape and adventure.

Whether you book passage to a location half a world away or escape to that cool spot you never seem to find time to visit that's close to home, summer gives us permission to not just dream, but to dive right in and do.

Consider these choices for an escape this summer. From unique to classic, you'll find your happy in these spots.

Cross the ocean for a beach: I'm usually not one to leave my coastal New England town in the summer season. After all, when it's said and done, it feels like summer's a minute and a half long, right? But an easy journey led me to magnificent Algarve, Portugal; a spot I found to be so captivating, I almost did not want to return home.

Algarve sits on the southern coast of Portugal, nearly a direct line across the sea from New England. There, the beaches are magical; with caves, breathtaking rock formations, cute seaside dining spots, quaint towns and incredibly fresh food. Oh, and the wine? You'll want to take all of it home with you.

To make choosing your base camp there simple, you can count on the Tivoli hotels (tivolihotels.com), from the family-friendly all-inclusive to the posh yet comfortable to the party scene spot; they've got what you want. Do splurge for an on-water day. I chose Thalassa Yachts (thalassayachts.com), who showed me beautiful Algarve from the ocean point of view.

Head north – way north: Jay Peak, Vermont (<https://jaypeakresort.com/>) is known world-wide for its winter perfection. Just six miles from the Canadian border, it's fabled "Jay Cloud" keeps skiers playing in deep snow when most

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At Jay Peak Resort, you'll find a top rated 18-hole golf course with views that never end. (Photo Moira McCarthy)

other spots are struggling.

But here's a secret: It's an amazing summer spot for families, adults on their own – and honestly anyone at all.

Jay's summer is centered by their huge water park, for sure. The 43,000 square foot mountain-base park brings summer to the winter months and in summer, its huge retractable roof makes it a perfect place to cool off and have fun.

But the park is just part of it. At Jay you'll also find a top-rated 18-hole golf course with challenging holes and views that never end. Their mountain is perfect for hiking, and for more leisurely days, the aerial tram takes you to the mountaintop for a view of many states and much of Canada.

There's a bevy of dining choices both on mountain and down in the quaint town (don't miss The Friday night pizza made by resort President Steve Wright; Jay Peak's employees are hands-on

with the fun). In town, check out The Belfry for an old-school mountain town vibe.

There's also a hockey and skating rink, and lodging from classic hotel rooms (abutting the water park for an easy meander) and cottages along the golf course edge. Their summer concert series is world class as well.

It's another world, without needing to flash a passport.

Christmas in July (or August): What's as good as that mid-winter escape from the bitter cold to a warm, sunny climate? How about a pop back into winter mid-summer? While ski season may seem a long time away, there's a way to get some ski days in mid summer without making the trek to Australia.

Check out New Jersey's Big Snow American Dream (<https://www.bigsnowamericandream.com/>), the only indoor, real snow, year round ski



The shadows of visitors can be seen in front of Samuel Adams' gravesite at the Old Granary Burying Ground in Boston. The graves of noted patriots Hancock, Adams, Paine, all three signers of the Declaration of Independence, are here. Paul Revere is here, as are the victims of the Boston Massacre. It's one of three cemeteries on the Freedom Trail. (AP Photo/Chitose Suzuki,File)

and snow resort in North America.

Located in East Rutherford, N.J., Big Snow has four lifts, equipment rentals, lessons and while the vertical is just 160, the fun factor feels like 5,000.

It's all set in the middle of the American Dream Shopping and Entertainment Center (<https://www.american-dream.com/>), where you can splash in a water park, get into Nickelodeon fun and shop and dine to your heart's content.

A mid-winter burst of fresh cold air fun? Might just be the perfect heat wave escape.

Happy Birthday, Constitution: Perhaps our most revered document, the United States Constitution turns 250 years old in 2026, but the celebration has already started.

And while the festivities will be national, Massachusetts, where it all began,

is a hot spot, with plenty of ways to celebrate this summer.

MA250 (<https://massachusetts250.org/>) is a program and series of events celebrating, commemorating and educating on everything from the historic – like the battles, gatherings and other events that launched our freedom, to the sublime, like the invention of the Boston Cream Pie.

All summer long, you can visit colonial encampments, commemorative concerts, lectures, parties and of course, the many classic spots that are always available. From Lexington and Concord to the Freedom Trail in Boston, this summer is the year to learn – or relearn – about our nation's fight for freedom and liberty. And here's a bonus: If you're bringing the kids, you'll not only have fun, they'll return home with enough school project topics to last years.

Inside the latest must-have travel gear

BY MOIRA MCCARTHY

The best thing about summer travel might just be the ease with which you can just pick up and go. Beach day craving? Pull on the bathing suit, grab the sunscreen and head out. Woodsy north country escape? A sweatshirt, good hiking shoes and a water bottle seems to do it.

But here's a secret true travel pros know: Behind every easy escape is that one traveler in the group who knows to pack those extras that make it all seem seamless.

If you're the behind the scenes planner of your escapes, that kind of person who buys and has at the ready those extra things that seem little but make for big fun, consider these products to be ready for your summer 2025 adventures.



The KORK Goods Ponte Vedre Weekender Bag. (Photo courtesy Kork Goods)

A CORKER OF A BAG: Finding the right carry-on or carry around, comfortable, durable and multi-useful bag has been a mission of mine for a good many years. It seemed like if I found one with the right pockets, it was difficult to carry. If it worked well on a plane, it just didn't jive with walking around or hanging out on the beach. And if the material felt right, it came across something to ruin it.

Then i met the KORK Goods Ponte Vedre Weekender Bag. Cork as a bag has been a revelation to me. It's lighter and yet just as durable (or more so) than leather. It's easy to clean and keeps its fresh look for a long time (mine has been all over the world as well as to my local beach and still looks new).

KORK knows how to design, too. The Ponte Vedre's spacious interior allows room for everything I need, from reading materials to sunscreen to water bottles and towels, it all fits and better yet – fits in a way that's easy to find. The shoulder strap is comfortable, and the bag is just plain lovely. You can snazz it up with different straps. Their other bags and accessories are great as well. <https://korkgoods.com/>

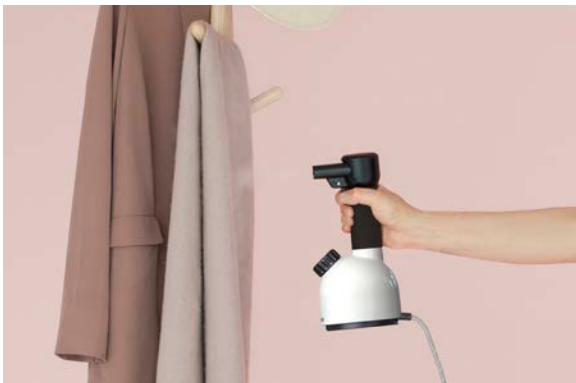


The Hover Air X1 Pro and PROMAX drone with camera. (Photo courtesy Hover Air)

DRONE ON AND ON: And on, with your own personal drone. Before you worry about lugging it around or learning how to operate a complicated device, know this: We are talking about Hover Air (<https://hoverair.com/>) and its X1 Pro, a flying camera that's light, easy to operate and perfect for catching both action video and amazing photos of your summer adventures. It's so easy to use, this tech-adverse traveling mom brings it everywhere and uses it without worry.

The HoverAir X1 Pro and PROMAX can fly over water, snow, cliffs and more. It follows you as you bike, hike, ski, or however you like to move, and captures crisp, beautiful images. It's light and easy to fit into a carryon (or a backpack on your days out), and its price point won't turn you away.

I've used it for bike treks, photos of our boat in the sea, golf course vista shots and yes, action videos of my grandkids on waterslides. You'll take it with you everywhere this summer, and all year long.



The LauraStar IGGI steamer in action. (Photo courtesy LauraStar IGGI)

WRINKLE FREE TRAVEL: I'm always drawn to cute linen outfits when shopping for a trip, but then reality hits – wrinkles are going to come before I even unpack. What's a roll your clothing in the bag traveler to do? Meet the LauraStar IGGI (<https://laurastarus.com/>), a small enough to fit in your carry-on steamer that quickly banishes wrinkles from your travel wardrobe.

It's easy to operate and works quickly – a few minutes at most are added to your getting-ready routine – and it allows you to pack what you love to wear no matter the fabric.

It does more too, like disinfecting those worrisome hotel room items like remotes, light switches and even pillows. You don't know you need this, but you do. And here's a bonus: It's also a great at-home product both for steaming clothes and cleaning in general (a friend uses hers to clean and disinfect her children's toys), which means it will stand ready for duty travel days or not.



The Paka Hoodie, made with a blend of royal alpaca fiber and nylon, is three times lighter than merino wool. (Photo courtesy Pakaapparel)

ALPACA HUGS: Summer travel is, of course, about the warm, but who doesn't love a summer day followed by a cool evening? Alpaca is fast becoming the favorite fabric for those cooler day/evening needs.

Check out Paka Apparel (<https://www.pakaapparel.com/>) and its best selling hoodie. Alpaca is softer than cashmere but more durable, lightweight but warm enough, thermal regulating (adjusting just as it does for alpacas to keep you warmer or cooler) and best of all: pretty much odor free.

The Paka Hoodie, made with a blend of royal alpaca fiber (the softest and highest quality alpaca fiber) and nylon, is three times lighter than merino wool, and its flexible knitting on the sides and hood allows for ease of movement. In other words, it is comfortable, easy to pack and looks good. You'll wear it often, summer season and beyond.

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Disneyland's 70th blowout celebration



By TODD MARTENS
LOS ANGELES TIMES/TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

ANAHEIM, Calif. — The Disneyland Resort is turning 70 in July, and it has never missed an opportunity to throw a party — especially one rooted in nostalgia. For the yearlong event, a number of fan favorites are making their return, in addition to some new shows and tweaks to favorite attractions.

The festivities officially launch May 16, although not all offerings will be available right away. Some will be rolled out to coincide with Disneyland's official birthday on July 17. The celebration is planned to last through summer 2026.

Here's everything you need to know about the Disneyland Resort 70th Celebration — including details on a ticket deal.

DISNEYLAND PARK

The return of a fan-favorite parade: Evening parade Paint the Night made its debut in Anaheim during Disneyland's 60th anniversary a decade ago, and it's back for the 70th. A sort of spiritual successor to the on-again/off-again

Main Street Electrical Parade, Paint the Night has a fast-moving soundtrack, more than 1 million LED lights and glittering, shimmering floats that honor franchises such as "Toy Story," "Frozen" and "Cars." Paint the Night is a vibrant, high-energy show that intersperses dance, tech and the requisite amount of evening sparkle.

A legendary ride gets an update: It's a Small World is so filled with details — playful dolls, adorable creatures, colorful vignettes, all of it designed in the style of artist Mary Blair — that it's impossible to see all of it on one ride through. And when the attraction reopens on May 9, it will have even more characters, as Disney is adding Miguel and Dante from the film "Coco" to the ride's Mexico section. That's not the only tweak planned for this legendary ride. Coming in July will be an additional verse to its memorable song, this one written by original co-composer Richard Sherman shortly before his death in 2024. Sherman wrote the verse to celebrate the song's 60th anniversary, as the attraction opened at the New York World's



Fair in 1964 before being installed at Disneyland in 1966.

A new projection show comes to It's a Small World: The work and style of Blair also will be honored via a new projection experience that will unfold on the façade of It's a Small World. Titled "Tapestry of Happiness," this nighttime show, described by Disney as an "animated mosaic of Disneyland attractions, moments and memories," will include many songs associated with the park as well as the new tune "Celebrate Happy." Expect a projection show that digs into Disneyland history and is high on nostalgia, with no doubt a moment or two designed to bring longtime fans to tears.

An evening performance that celebrates animation: The fireworks show "Wondrous Journeys" will return for Disneyland's 70th. Introduced for the 100th anniversary of the Walt Disney Co., "Wondrous Journeys" focuses on the history of the company's animated works. Some fine print: Not every night of "Wondrous Journeys" will feature fireworks, but it remains one of Disney's better-received evening shows, as it features snippets of more than 60 films as well as nods to many shorts that helped define the studio.

Take a tour that honors Disneyland history: Disneyland will launch a new guided tour for its 70th anni-

versary, this one focused squarely on the history and development of the park. The two-hour experience, available for an additional charge, is available for booking. Disney says the tour will place a special emphasis on the park's opening-day attractions, as well as Walt Disney's original vision for the park.

Speaking of Walt ... Opening July 17 will be a show in the Main Street Opera House that will celebrate the life and legacy of the park's patriarch. "Walt Disney — A Magical Life" will for the 70th anniversary displace the show centered on Abraham Lincoln, and will feature the first-ever audio-animatronic of Disney, which the company has teased is its most lifelike figure to date. The figure, images of which the company is currently keeping under wraps, will be brought to life via audio recordings and will be situated in a setting designed to evoke Walt's office. After the show's initial run during the 70th, it will play in tandem with "Great Moments With Mr. Lincoln." The exit hall for the attraction will feature concept art for Disneyland attractions in the works.

A brand-new "World of Color" show that you can vote on: "World of Color Happiness!" is a new lagoon-based show for the 70th anniversary, this one inspired by Walt Disney's original dedication for the park. "To all who come to this happy place, welcome," Disney said in July 1955. "Disneyland is your land. Here age relives fond memories of the past, and here youth may savor the challenge and promise of the future. Disneyland is dedicated to the ideals, the dreams, and the hard facts that have created America." Although here's betting the World of Color show — sure to feature impressive fountains, projections and pyrotechnics — doesn't delve too heavily into any "hard facts."



Some of the animated works featured in the performance include "Turning Red," "A Goofy Movie," "Tangled" and "The Lion King," and it will be hosted by the blue-haired character of Joy from the "Inside Out" films. Arrive early and vote via the Disneyland app to see various "Inside Out" characters – Sadness, Anger, Disgust or Envy – given greater prominence during the show. A new song from Fitz of Fitz and the Tantrums fame will be featured in the production, and Boyz II Men have recorded a rendition of "Rainbow Connection" for it.

Carthay Circle will spring to life each night. The façade of the park's upscale restaurant, Carthay Circle, will morph into a performance space. While Disney hasn't detailed too heavily what audiences may expect to see on the building, expect a projection-based show with inventive lighting and music. The projections and lighting will be set to the 70th-anniversary theme song, "Celebrate Happy," which is to be recorded by the Jonas Brothers.

New surprises adorn Toy Story Midway Mania! While not the first video game-inspired ride, Toy Story Midway Mania! was quite possibly the first successful imple-

mentation of one. The ride works well with what is now known as Pixar Pier, a land full of carnival rides and games. It still holds up thanks to its simplicity. Of course, a unique ride vehicle – a carnival car with a spring-action launcher – doesn't hurt. Now, the 2008 attraction will receive an ever-so-slight makeover for the 70th. Look for new animations that nod to the festivities peppered throughout the ride's digital games.

A Pixar-focused daytime parade makes a comeback: Last year California Adventure unveiled a new daytime parade, "Better Together: A Pixar Pals Celebration," and it's returning for the 70th. Colorful floats that nod to recent films like "Luca" and "Turning Red," the latter complete with a larger-than-life red panda Mei, are contrasted with smaller, more playful units that touch on "Toy Story" and "Monsters, Inc." Throughout, there's an underlying theme of friendship.

Dining, merchandise and more

A barbecue buffet, with a side of duck. Duck isn't on the menu, but a certain waterfowl is the star of this dinner at the Grand Californian's Storytellers Cafe. Donald's Tales of Adventure Dinner Buffet

launches May 16 and features what's described as a campfire-style barbecue. Expect spareribs, fried chicken, prime rib and more, and look for the likes of Donald, Daisy, Clarabelle, Goofy and Pluto in new adventure-inspired outfits. Reservations are recommended and the meal starts at \$62 for adults and \$36 for children.

Specialty merchandise abounds: Disneyland is launching multiple merchandising lines for its 70th anniversary, some of which have already started to infiltrate the parks. The so-called "celebration collection" features brash colors and new collaborations with Loungefly and Dooney & Bourke. The "castle collection" is just that, featuring regal wear and jewelry inspired by Sleeping Beauty Castle, while the "vault collection" is where all those seeking Disneyland nostalgia will want to head. The vault collection will be released in waves throughout the year, the first rendition looking at Disneyland maps. The "Disneyland Resort 70th Anniver-

sary Walt Disney Nostalgia Collection" is said to boast vintage-style accessories and attire outfitted in some of Walt's famous quotes. There's plenty more, including pocket watches and charms, and a giant interactive key that will light up and play music as guests explore the park.

And you can see it all for a (slight) discount: Disneyland fans willing to commit to more than a day in the park can take part in a limited-time ticket offer. An anniversary ticket is on sale now, good for visits from May 16 to Aug. 14. It's a three-day, one-park-per-day ticket that sells for \$360, which works out to \$120 per day. That's a slight savings, as peak spring and summer tickets typically can't be found for less than \$142 per day and can run as high as \$206. Those who opt in for a four-day \$400 ticket will be able to access the parks for \$100 per day. The tickets do not have to be used on consecutive days.

A HISTORIC HOME AND STEAM MUSEUM

Photo: Carin Macnamara



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Camping with kids

By LYNN O'ROURKE HAYES/FAMILYTRAVEL.COM
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

Camping, in all its modern manifestations, is an increasingly popular go-to strategy for families eager to opt outside.

Whether you pop into a van, take an RV or toss up the tents, the fresh air can provide genuine relief from toasty temperatures, close quarters or the latest challenges to your work-life balance. It can also stir a lifelong interest in the natural world. If you are inclined to camp with the kids, here are five ideas to consider.

HEAD FOR THE BACKCOUNTRY

For the purest connection to nature, make your way off the beaten path. Hike, paddle or float into a pristine location where your family can learn or hone wilderness skills. During the hottest months, consider a location at a higher altitude to take advantage of cooler temperatures. At the same time, make sure it's a destination suitable for the ages and abilities of your crew. Encourage each person to take responsibility for the adventure, whether that be early research, carrying a small pack, collecting kindling or serving as master storyteller around the fire. For the youngest set, consider a practice round in the backyard or a nearby park. That way, if weather or unforeseen forces create a kink in your plans, warm and dry shelter is nearby.

For more: www.nps.gov; www.thedyrt.com

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than 500 locations in North America and access tent sites, RV hookups, cabins, unique lodging (think authentic teepees), playgrounds, pools, and a range of recreational facilities. Many locations are pet friendly.

For more: koa.com

ARE YOU A GLAMPER?

If staking a tent is not your idea of fun, glamping, or glamorous camping, might be for you. The walls may be canvas, but the experience is anything but ordinary. High-thread-count bedding, luxury furnishings, heated floors, fine dining and uncommon outings often led by top-notch guides define the experience in locales around the world.

For more: glamping.com; www.pawsup.com

SLEEP IN SOMETHING SPECIAL

Why settle for a tent when you can snooze in a treehouse, a yurt, an Airstream, a Conestoga wagon or a cozy cabin in the forest? From

dreamy escapes tucked high in the trees to seaside options that promise the pleasures of a cooling night breeze to lakeside vintage cabins, these unique lodging experiences will provide memories that last long after the vacation ends.

For more: www.airbnb.com; www.vrbo.com

TREAD SOFTLY

Whether camping in the backcountry or day hiking in a nearby state park, practice Leave No Trace principles to minimize impact and to avoid trail erosion, invasive species, polluting water and other unintended consequences of your adventure. Be sure to plan ahead, dispose of waste properly, and leave what you find. Be considerate of other visitors and keep a proper distance from wildlife. Consider reaching out and learning from organizations like Mountain Mamas, that work to protect our natural resources and public lands.

For more: www.int.org; www.mtnmamas.org



Don't skip the South Shore as you make your Cape escape



Plymouth has plenty of history, and beautiful coastal scenes as well. (Photo Moira McCarthy)

By MOIRA MCCARTHY

As a long-time travel writer, I love to share my favorite destinations, especially last-minute spots that work well for summer yet feel like you planned them out months ahead.

These are places I know I can count on for last minute fun with little if any risk. Consider these easy but oh-so-worthy adventures this summer season.

I'm a proud lifetime South Shore gal, and I often guide friends coming to Massachusetts to visit Boston or the Cape to dedicate a day or more to the smaller, less touristy but lovely towns of the South Shore.

Call it the Tour de South Shore, the route(s) I send friends on always bring rave reviews. By taking the long way from Boston to your Cape trip (or vice versa), you'll find an escape within your escape – one that might just beat out all the rest.

Via car, you can leave Boston, hug the coast and meander through nature and history always within a quick jaunt to top-notch food and other fun.

First, there's Quincy, perhaps one of the most historical and overlooked spots in the state, if not the nation. Quincy boasts most of the John Adams family (and generations after) homes,

including Peacefield, the "Summer White House" for both Presidents John Adams and John Quincy Adams. Built in 1731, it was home to the Adams family for four generations.

Today, as part of Adams National Historical Park, it is open for tours and visits. Its library is magnificent and in its garden you'll find a rose trellis, still growing, planted by Abigail Adams herself.

Quincy is also home to the United First Parish Church where you can visit the burial site of both of those presidents, a ship building museum and more.

Quincy center is walkable and home to a foodie community that rivals Boston. You can do a full day there easily.

In Hingham you'll find history as well, but for outdoor fun and unrivaled views of Boston, make time to walk, hike or picnic at World's End (<https://thetrustees.org/place/worlds-end-hingham/>). You'll find 251 acres of beautifully maintained coastal landscape, both green land and shoreline, with views of the city skyline, light-houses and the Atlantic ocean.

Then take a ride to nearby Hull and walk Nantasket Beach, wide open and beautiful. Should you want, there's also the fabulous Hull Lifesaving Museum (<https://hulllifesavingmuseum.org/>), giving a fascinating look at how sea rescues evolved.



The rugged shoreline of Nantasket Beach. (Photo Moira McCarthy)

org/), giving a fascinating look at how sea rescues evolved.

In Scituate, take a drive out to the Cedar Point Lighthouse, but before you do, read up on its history, including the story of the "American Army of Two," two young women who are believed to have saved the nation from attack during the War of 1812 there. For added fun, visit the town's Maritime and Irish Mossing Museum, an important historic story unknown to many.

And then there's Plymouth, the coastal town where it all started. Sure, it gets its hits from those who find The Rock underwhelming, but there's so much

more. Plymouth is home to one of the nation's most revered living museums, Plimoth Patuxet (<https://plimoth.org/>), the Mayflower II replica, many historic homes, 27 miles of pristine waterfront and beaches, and a main street area with countless visit-worthy mom and pop restaurants.

Park and leave your car – the town's See Plymouth electric

vehicles are free to ride (<https://seeplymouth.com/>) so you won't need your car much. Consider booking a whale watch or sunset cruise on the Captain John Boats (<https://www.captjohn.com/>) and if you love woody nature, visit the Myles Standish State Forest.

The last town before you cross over the Cape Cod canal, Plymouth is worthy of at least a full day – if not more.

The South Shore gets overlooked by those rushing to the Cape (which is worthy on its own). This summer, take the long way. You might just choose it as your full destination next time.



Peacefield in Quincy, the Summer White House of two presidents. (Photo Moira McCarthy)

Make the Hammond Castle part of your summer visits



Step inside the breathtaking home of one of the most prolific inventors of the 20th century, John Hays Hammond, Jr. Hammond Castle Museum is a dynamic STEAM museum, blending its historical significance as both a historic house and a lapidarium. Inside, you'll not only discover ancient, medieval, and Renaissance architectural elements and artifacts—including stone archways, sarcophagi, grave markers, and an extraordinary collection of stone and marble works—but you'll also find a vibrant museum offering STEAM-based exhibits, fresh educational programming and cultural arts special events.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and Reader's Choice Best of the North Shore BONS) winner by Northshore Magazine and a TripAdvisor Traveler's Choice award recipient for the last three consecutive years, you can trust that your visit will be an unforgettable experience. The Museum is open daily from April through the end of the year and open most national holidays.

Little ones ages 4 and under are welcomed free with a reservation and on-site parking is available.

Learn more and plan your visit at www.hammondcastle.org



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'Coolcations' soar as travelers seek escape from summer heat



Travelers appear to be shifting their focus away from traditionally warm European hot spots and turning toward cooler destinations, like Geiranger fjord, Norway, for the summer of 2025. (Sebastian Czapnik/Dreamstime/TNS)

BY LAURIE BARATTI/TRAVELPULSE

With the massive heat waves we've witnessed over the past few summers, both in the U.S. and abroad, it comes as no surprise that travelers appear to be shifting their focus away from traditionally warm European hot spots and turning toward cooler destinations for the summer of 2025.

According to leading travel insurance comparison platform Squaremouth, there has been a notable increase in the popularity of "coolcations" — trips to regions known for their milder climates and outdoor appeal. Countries such as Iceland, Norway, Canada, Scotland and Ireland are seeing a surge in visitor interest, drawing travelers away from sun-drenched destinations like

Spain, Italy and France.

Iceland has emerged as the front-runner in this travel trend, experiencing a year-over-year growth of more than 30%. The country's accessibility, particularly for East Coast travelers, has made it an increasingly attractive option.

Norway follows closely behind, witnessing a 27% increase in travel insurance purchases compared to the previous summer. Its "right to roam" policy, which allows visitors unrestricted access to the country's breathtaking fjords, mountains and coastlines, continues to appeal to adventure seekers and those in search of nature's splendor.

Canada and Scotland have also seen significant growth, with Canada up

by 25% and Scotland experiencing a 21% increase in popularity. Rounding out the top five, Ireland has climbed in ranking among Squaremouth travelers, moving from the 12th most desirable destination last year to breaking into the top 10, with a 17% rise in interest.

"With an increasing number of travelers seeking unique coolcation experiences this summer, the demand for travel insurance is growing as well. Whether you're exploring outdoor adventures or immersing yourself in local traditions, travel insurance provides peace of mind for increasingly expensive trips, ensuring your summer getaway remains as stress-free as possible," said Ned Tadic, manager of public relations at Squaremouth.

Travelers embarking on either cool- or warm-weather international vacations this summer can benefit from the peace of mind that comes from investing in comprehensive travel insurance plans to safeguard their trips.

Coverage options should include:

Trip cancellation: Protection for non-refundable travel expenses in case of unforeseen cancellations or interruptions.

Medical coverage: Reimbursement for unexpected healthcare expenses while traveling abroad.

Travel delay: Compensation for costs incurred due to significant, uncontrollable travel delays.

Luggage protection: Coverage for lost, stolen or delayed baggage.

Hurricane and weather protection: Reimbursement for cancellations or interruptions caused by adverse weather conditions.

And, for travelers planning adventurous activities, such as hiking Icelandic volcanoes or skiing in Norway's alpine regions, selecting a policy with specialized adventure coverage is crucial.

The coolcations trend isn't the only one currently gaining traction among today's travelers. According to a Harris Pool survey conducted on behalf of cash-back platform Rakuten, "dealcations" are also the order of the day. Dealcations indicate that travelers are increasingly selecting destinations and experiences based on how much money can be saved and the ability to use cash-back rewards to help pay for the trip.

Visit at travelpulse.com./Tribune News Service

New Universal Epic Universe



BY ADRIAN RUHI

MIAMI HERALD/TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

ORLANDO, Fla. — “It’s alive! It’s alive!”

That iconic quote from the 1931 film adaptation of “Frankenstein” ushered in an era of classic monster movies for Universal Pictures. Now, almost 100 years later, it’s helping Universal herald a new era of theme parks in Florida.

Ahead of its grand opening on May 22, the Miami Herald recently got an early view of Universal Epic Universe, the company’s third theme park in the Sunshine State — fourth if you count Volcano Bay water park — and the first major park in the Orlando area in 26 years, when Universal’s Islands of Adventure opened its gates.

Located about five miles southeast of the existing Universal Orlando Resort, the new complex — which NBCUniversal spent about \$7 billion to create, according to the New York Times — includes Epic Universe, as well as three hotels. And there’s plenty of expansion space for future additions.

During the preview, we got to explore all five of Epic Universe’s fantastic worlds, which are entered through tunnel-like portals inscribed with memorable quotes from the corresponding franchises:

Celestial Park is the astrologically themed entrance and hub of the

park. Meant to “put the ‘park’ back in ‘theme park,’” this ornate Victorian world is home to winding paths, flowing fountains, an abundance of dining options and the park’s entry icon, the towering Chronos portal.

Super Nintendo World is a highly interactive homage to the characters and experiences of the beloved Japanese video game maker, including participating in your own Mario Kart race.

Dark Universe pays tribute to Universal’s heritage of classic monster movies, complete with the “It’s Alive” quote above its portal, a haunting windmill that dramatically catches fire several times per hour, and one of the most impressive and technologically advanced dark rides ever built.

The Wizarding World of Harry Potter — Ministry of Magic transports visitors to the 1920s Paris of the “Fantastic Beasts” movie franchise as well as the 1990s Britain of the main Harry Potter stories.

How To Train Your Dragon — Isle of Berk is a family-friendly viking paradise full of immersive moments based on the DreamWorks animated movie franchise.

So what can you expect to experience when the park officially opens?

HERE’S AN INSIDE LOOK:

WHAT ARE THE BEST RIDES AT EPIC UNIVERSE?

Epic Universe has 11 rides, and three are showstoppers that rank among the best attractions in Florida:

Harry Potter and the Battle at the Ministry is a simulated elevator ride (that not only goes up and down, but every other direction as well), which thrusts riders into a mission to find the villainous Dolores Umbridge on the day she’s set to stand trial for the crimes she committed in the Harry Potter book and movie series. After traveling through a jaw-dropping queue that takes you into the British



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Ministry of Magic, you board a ride that feels like a hybrid of two beloved Florida attractions: The Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man (at Universal's Islands of Adventure) and the Twilight Zone Tower of Terror (at Disney's Hollywood Studios). Blending live sets, crystal-clear enormous screens, and animatronic figures so fluid they could pass for real people, Battle at the Ministry is Epic Universe's ultimate statement piece.

Monsters Unchained: The Frankenstein Experiment is a modern twist on both a classic haunted house attraction and Universal's historic monster movies. With an overwhelming amount of animatronics (including Frankenstein's monster, Dracula and the Phantom of the Opera) and a next-gen version of the robotic arm vehicles previously used for Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey at Islands of Adventure, this powerhouse pushes the boundaries of theme park technology.

Stardust Racers is the park's signature roller coaster featuring two intertwined, dueling tracks: Pulsar (the slightly more intense green side) and Photon (yellow). With multiple launches, a relentless pace and a "Celestial Spin" maneuver that puts you mere inches from another train full of upside-down riders, this "shooting star across the cosmos" is a must-do for thrill seekers.

HOW TO PET A DRAGON — AND CAST A SPELL

Beyond rides, Epic Universe provides a



surprising amount of interactive elements and experiences that were first teased in the existing Harry Potter lands in their two previous Florida parks. Casting spells with new second-generation wands (\$85 each) trigger all sorts of "how did they do that?" effects in the windows and shops of 1920s Paris in the Ministry of Magic world, including floating feathers, talking portraits, and mystical creatures emerging.

In Isle of Berk, guests learn how to pet a dragon, as they meet with human viking Hiccup and his dragon buddy Toothless. The convincingly lifelike dragon blinked, smiled and moved its head in reaction to each person's touch. Elsewhere in the world, a robotic dragon blasted passersby with an icy blast, and a baby animatronic dragon hopped with and reacted to a small girl, much to her delight.

And in Super Nintendo World, guests with Power-Up Bands (\$42) can hit the familiar question-mark boxes of the Mario universe, track their Mario Kart score and play drums like Donkey Kong to unveil hidden effects and Easter eggs.

WHAT IS THERE TO EAT AND DRINK AT THE PARK?

Each world in Epic Universe is overflowing with themed food and drink items.

Mushrooms are appropriately a staple of the Super Nintendo World menus. In Dark Universe, Das Stakehaus serves a "blood orange" chicken sandwich with black buns and a grisly red sauce. And the nearby Burning Blade Tavern is a monster hunters' hangout, complete with the severed heads of creatures behind the bar and a giant windmill outside that periodically catches fire.

In Celestial Park you can grab unique pies at the kitschy Pizza Moon, which recalls Jules Verne's stories about fantastical trips into space, or exotic cocktails at Celestiki, an outdoor bar billed as an outpost of Universal's Volcano Bay water park. But the grandest option is Atlantic, a waterside, seafood-centric, fine-dining location with a mostly glass exterior that looks like a giant aquarium.

IS EPIC UNIVERSE GOOD FOR KIDS?

Will your kids love Epic Universe? It depends how old (and how tall) they are. Nine out of the 11 rides have a height requirement (ranging from 34 inches for Yoshi's Adventure in Nintendo World to 48 inches for multiple rides, including Stardust Racers and Monsters Unchained), and the remaining two attractions require a supervising companion for riders under four feet tall.

Besides the luxurious Constellation



Carousel, the dragon-themed Fyre Drill water ride and Yoshi, there's not much for children under 40 inches, and especially not for infants or toddlers. But there's plenty to enjoy for elementary-aged kids and older.

WHERE CAN I STAY WHEN VISITING THE PARK?

Epic Universe is paired with three new hotels, bringing Universal Orlando's total to 11, all of which Universal runs in partnership with Loews Hotels. Twin budget-friendly options Stella Nova Resort and Terra Luna Resort are already open and offer space and discovery themes with pools, bars and quick-service dining options.

The signature hotel, Universal Helios Grand Hotel, bookends Epic Universe and offers a dedicated entry for its guests into the park. It officially opens with the park on May 22, but an early preview of the resort offered an up-close look at the enormous statue of Apollo (god of the sun) that sits at the edge of the hotel and the theme park, an elevator mural that magically animates into a story about the transition between day and night, and a constellation-adorned rooftop bar providing unparalleled views of the park below.

IF YOU GO

One-day tickets for Epic Universe start at \$139 for guests 10 and older and \$134 for children between the ages of 3 and 9. Tickets are also available in various multiday configurations that include admission to Universal Orlando's other parks.



10 family-friendly, budget-conscious US vacation destinations

Buildings and walkways along the Salt River Project canal in downtown Scottsdale, Arizona. (Chris Curtis/Dreamstime/TNS)

JOHN METCALFE
THE MERCURY NEWS/TNS

With everything happening in the world, sometimes you just want to get away. And for folks who don't want to leave their significant other or children behind while they take their dream vacation, you'd better get away somewhere family-friendly.

Fortunately, the travel wizzes at National Geographic have you covered. The magazine's Taryn White recently put together a guide to 10 family-friendly vacations in the United States, with some rather surprising choices. Ever thought of introducing your family to the wonders of ... Boise, Idaho? Or what about the much-fabled magic of Cleveland, or the paradise that is Scottsdale,

Arizona (record high temperature: 122 degrees Fahrenheit)?

The guide is based on a recent survey from the Family Travel Association, which indicates that family group travel – especially the kind that's easy on the budget – is going to be a big trend this year.

"These groups can encompass multigenerational family units or groups of families traveling together," the association's president, Ken Shapiro, told National Geographic. "Trips where grandparents take their grandkids, known as 'Skip-Gen' travel, are also very popular."

In no particular order, here are the hot picks for 2025.

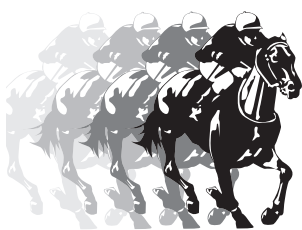
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC'S TOP 10 FAMILY-FRIENDLY VACATIONS:

1. Asheville, North Carolina
2. Boise, Idaho
3. Virginia Beach, Virginia
4. Keystone, Colorado
5. Washington, D.C.
6. Scottsdale, Arizona
7. Cleveland, Ohio
8. Palm Springs, California
9. Salt Lake City, Utah
10. Anna Maria Island, Florida



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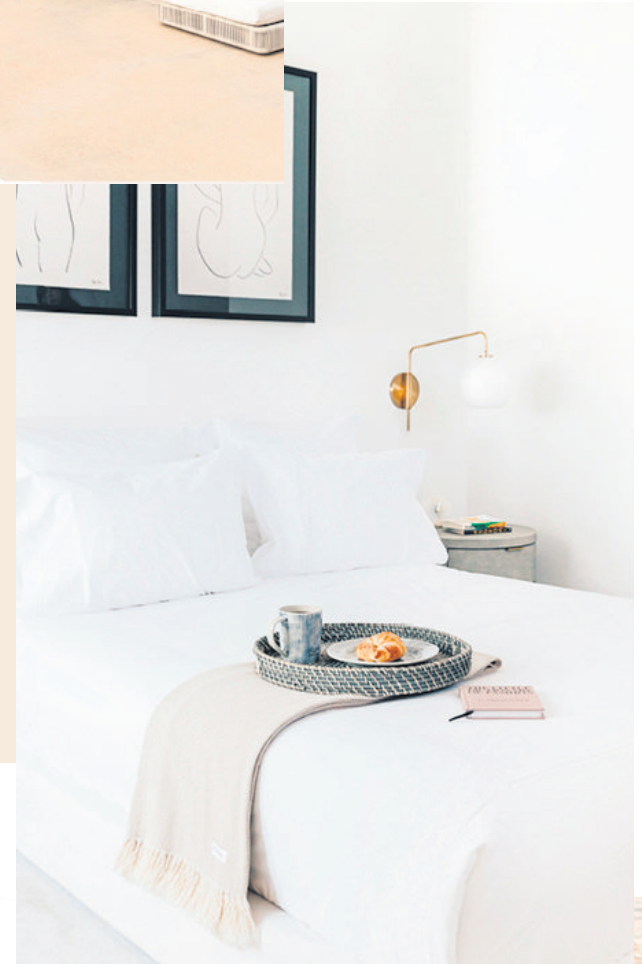
THE BELMONT STAKES RETURNS TO SARATOGA FOR 2025!

Highlighted by the 157th edition of the Belmont Stakes on Saturday, June 7, the 2025 Belmont Stakes Racing Festival will begin on Wednesday, June 4, and continue through Sunday, June 8. The four-day Festival at Saratoga Race Course will include 27 stakes races with the richest purses since the launch of the multi-day Belmont Stakes Racing Festival in 2014.

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