

TRAVEL+ LEISURE

The Best Places to Travel in September

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Editor's Note: Travel might be complicated right now, but use our inspirational trip ideas to plan ahead for your next bucket list adventure.

We're heading into autumn, and for most of us, [summer travel](#) has been limited. [Road trips](#) have been the order of the day, and many travelers have happily discovered the beauty of local destinations. Our September suggestions may be within driving distance for some of our readers, and for others, just a short flight away, ideal if you're starting to travel again.

We start looking forward to autumn, a chill in the air, and our favorite sweater in late summer, and this year, we may be even more anxious for a change of season — and scenery. Westchester, New York offers quintessential autumn activities with pumpkins and apple picking just a short train or car ride from the city. On the subject of fruit picking, it's harvest time in wine country, and we feature Sonoma County and Oregon's Willamette Valley as two perfect places to experience the season. McCall, Idaho and Cle Elum, Washington offer natural surroundings and outdoor activities, which have special appeal at this time. Ogden, Utah and Bismarck, North Dakota combine history, good food, and fun things to do. Dunwoody, Georgia is a welcoming city near Atlanta with an encouraging mural that says, "Everything Will Be OK," which sounds about right at this time.

[COVID-19 travel restrictions](#) are constantly changing, so be sure to check for updates and plan ahead, whether you're going a few miles from home or to a new destination off the beaten path.

Sonoma, California



KAREN WIBBS/GETTY IMAGES

September is harvest time in wine country, although the exact dates are determined by the weather and the ripeness of the grapes. It's a busy time with vineyard crews bringing in the fruit, and it's a celebratory season that all wine lovers should experience at least once. In Sonoma's historic downtown, stroll among shops, wine tasting rooms, cafes, pubs, and galleries. The eight-acre town square, [Sonoma Plaza](#), is the largest in California, and it's home to the northernmost Franciscan mission in California, [Mission San Francisco Solano](#). Just a few blocks from the Plaza, the [MacArthur Place Hotel & Spa](#), a luxury boutique hotel, is an example of Victorian architecture and an ideal location for exploring Sonoma. Nearby [Cornerstone Sonoma](#) features wine tasting rooms, boutiques, artisanal foods, and Sunset Gardens and Outdoor Test Kitchen. Away from the bustling vineyards and wineries, [Sonoma Coast State Park](#) is the place for sandy beaches, secluded coves, and hiking trails. Stay nearby at the [Bodega Bay Lodge](#), set on Sonoma's rugged coast with views of the Pacific.

Ogden, Utah



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About 40 miles north of Salt Lake City, Ogden is a vibrant, modern city with a fascinating past. The creation of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 made Ogden a rowdy boomtown, and while things have calmed down since those days, the town still has great energy. [Historic 25th Street](#) is now home to restaurants, shopping, entertainment, museums, and an amphitheater. Self-guided [walking tours](#) are a great introduction to the city, or you can take a [scenic drive](#) along the Ogden River to see more of the surrounding area. Visit the [Ogden Nature Center](#), a 152-acre nature preserve featuring picnic areas, walking trails, and a variety of wildlife. Fans of history, architecture, or art will enjoy Ogden's [museums](#), Art Deco buildings, and galleries. September's weather is moderate and ideal for outdoor activities before the snowy season arrives, but no matter when you travel to Ogden, you can enjoy restaurants, pubs, and nightlife. Be sure to visit [Roosters Brewing Company](#) for a beer with some [Beehive Cheese Curds](#), both local favorites, or

go for dinner at their restaurant on Historic 25th Street. A range of [lodging](#) is available, whether you choose a campsite, bed and breakfast, hotel, or motel.

McCall, Idaho



ANNA GORIN/GETTY IMAGES

Get away to this quiet town set on [Payette Lake](#), about two hours from Boise at an elevation of around 5,000 feet. Chilly nights and daytime temperatures around 70 degrees give the feel of early autumn, and the fresh mountain air is what many of us are seeking right now. [Ponderosa State Park](#) protects half of the lake, and it includes more than 1,000 acres of natural wilderness on a peninsula that extends to the center of the lake. Hiking and biking trails, guided walks, and naturalist talks are available. There's also picnicking, swimming, fishing, boating, kayaking, hiking, biking, and viewing wildlife that includes bald eagles, hawks, geese, owls, songbirds, beavers, and more. The park offers a variety of campsites, and lake view cabins are available for overnight stays. Hot springs and [ski resorts](#) also attract visitors, especially during the annual [Winter Carnival](#) in late January and early February. In

McCall, a range of lodging includes campgrounds, RV parks, hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, and vacation rentals. The lakefront [Shore Lodge](#) on the southern shore of Payette Lake is a year-round destination with activities that include rafting on the Salmon River, fishing, visiting hot springs, and off-roading on ATVs.

Willamette Valley, Oregon



September is a lovely month to visit Oregon's wine country, with temperatures in the mid-70's, little rainfall, and autumn colors appearing on the grapevines as harvest begins. The season is always exciting, and some wineries let volunteers help in the vineyards, undoubtedly a memorable experience for wine lovers. Between the Cascade Mountains and the Coast Range, the Willamette Valley offers volcanic soil and an ideal climate for wine growing. After you've tasted the famed local Pinot Noirs, there's lots to do. You can hop on a bicycle and ride some — or all — of the 132 miles of the [Willamette Valley Scenic Bikeway](#) along country roads and through small towns. Paddle down the Willamette River in a guided kayak tour or hike through a rainforest

to waterfalls in [Silver Falls State Park](#). In Salem, Oregon's capital, stroll among historic buildings, boutiques, and galleries, or tour on two wheels on the [Historic Downtown Route](#). The Salem Ale and Cider Trail explores the craft breweries in the region, fun places to stop between wine tastings. Among the many wineries in the valley, [Brooks Winery](#) in Amity offers vineyard tours and special events in a beautiful setting. [Archery Summit](#) in the Dundee Hills features tastings in a natural underground wine cave or outdoors overlooking the vines. The views from [DePonte](#) and the rosé wine from [Furioso](#) should also be on a wine lover's itinerary. In Newburg, the [Allison Inn & Spa](#) is set among landscaped grounds featuring more than 500 pieces of Oregon [art](#), including sculptures, statues, paintings, and glass.

Dunwoody, Georgia



Less than twenty miles from Atlanta, Dunwoody is a city with personality and much to offer in addition to its convenient location. To mark its tenth year as a city in 2018, Dunwoody created a film series, [Dunwoody Defined](#), to tell its story. A center of trade, agriculture, and manufacturing for more than a hundred years, Dunwoody is still a favorite shopping destination

with [Perimeter Mall](#)'s over 150 retailers, including major department stores. In addition, [Spruill Center for the Arts](#) offers classes, exhibits, art, handmade crafts, and gifts. Temperatures in the low 80s with cooler nights make September ideal for enjoying the outdoors, and Dunwoody's seven parks include places for skateboarding, hiking, biking, tennis, ziplining, and more. At [Dunwoody Nature Center](#), relax in a hammock or head for a hiking trail. Zipline through the treetops or challenge the obstacles at [Treetop Quest](#), where courses of varying difficulty are available. A variety of places to stay in Dunwoody include the boutique [Le Meridien Atlanta Perimeter](#) with poolside cabanas, the [Crowne Plaza Atlanta Perimeter at Ravinia](#) with an outdoor beer garden, and all suite [Staybridge Suites](#).

Westchester County, New York



JENNIFER LEHMAN/GETTY IMAGES

Just north of New York City in the Hudson Valley, [Westchester County](#) is bordered by the Long Island Sound and the Hudson River, an ideal destination in early autumn. Beginning in mid-September, the [Great Jack](#)

[O'Lantern Blaze](#) fills Van Cortlandt Manor's historic grounds with more than 7,000 illuminated, hand-carved pumpkins. Get into the Halloween spirit and plan a visit to nearby Sleepy Hollow, made famous by Washington Irving's story. Lakes, rivers, waterfalls, and [parklands](#) throughout the county offer plenty of opportunity for enjoying the outdoors. [Museums](#) and [historic homes](#) demonstrate Westchester County's rich past. The [Westchester Farm Trail](#) recognizes the area's 300-year-old agricultural heritage, connecting 13 farms and orchards from Sleepy Hollow to North Salem. Hands-on experiences like picking apples, making maple syrup, and interacting with livestock are both entertaining and educational. An hour from Manhattan, the new [Abbey Inn & Spa](#), located on historic Fort Hill, a key post during the Revolutionary War, features a spa, restaurant, bar, and more than 50 acres of scenic walking trails. Further north, [Troutbeck](#), an estate hotel in Amenia, offers outdoor spaces that include picnic areas, campfire sites, hammocks, and a natural spring.

Cle Elum, Washington



JOHN COLETTI/GETTY IMAGES

If you're longing for nature, outdoor activities, and early autumn's chilly evenings, Cle Elum, about 95 miles from Seattle in the heart of the Cascades, could be your perfect destination. The city's name means "swift water" in the language of the Kittitas Native Americans. Incorporated in 1902, the city had thriving lumber and coal mining operations, and it was a popular ski destination until the 1930s. The 1914 [Carpenter House Museum](#) was the mansion of Cle Elum's former mayor, Frank Carpenter, and it still contains the family's original furnishings. Visitors to the [Telephone Museum](#) can see the last operator-assisted switchboard of Pacific Northwest Bell, as well as artifacts from the town's coal mining days. Also a remnant from those early times, the [Coal Mines Trail](#) passes historic mining sites along Crystal Creek for a moderate hike or bike ride. Cle Elum's many [parks](#) offer lakes, picnic areas, wildlife viewing, horseback riding, and more. [Accommodations](#) in the area include RV parks, hotels, motels, ranches, and luxury resorts. [Suncadia Resort](#), set on more than 6,000 acres of forested mountain landscape, offers hiking, biking, kayaking, paddle boarding, golf, horseback riding, fly fishing, and lovely places to relax and enjoy nature. Stay in the [Lodge](#) high above the Cle Elum River, the luxurious [Inn](#), or a condo or [vacation home](#).

Bismarck, North Dakota



FRANZ-MARC FREI/GETTY IMAGES

The state capital, Bismarck is set on the east bank of the Missouri River, across from the city of [Mandan](#), named for the Great Plains Native American tribe. The Art Deco [capitol building](#), the tallest in the state at 19 stories, is part of a complex that includes the State Supreme Court, State Library, and Liberty Memorial. The [North Dakota Heritage Center](#) and State Museum tells the history of the state through artifacts and interactive exhibits from prehistoric times to the present. Ride a bike along one of the many [trails](#) through towns and next to the Missouri River. Visit the historic town of [Buckstop Junction](#) where buildings dating back more than a hundred years are preserved and open for tours. History fans will also enjoy the [Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center](#) and the full-size replica of the fort where the expedition wintered in 1804 to 1805. The [Dakota Zoo](#) in Sertoma Park is home to more than 600 animals representing over 125 species. Camp along the Missouri in [Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park](#) with a variety of campsites, cabins, and tipis. Fishing, mountain biking, horseback riding, and tours are available.