

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