24 Vintage Vacation Hot Spots That Deserve a Second Chance

Memories are timeless. The world as it is today is different than it was for generations past. We innovate, and we evolve. We're always moving forward, looking to the next best thing. After all, we're wired to wander, destined to dream, and built to become.

But we can't reinvent the wheel.

While the allure of new destinations is undeniable, there's also an undeniable charm to the classic vacation spots that have stood the test of time. These are the places steeped in memories, where every corner tells a story and every path holds a secret.

Tradition is the echo of character through the ages. Maybe it's time to rekindle the emotions and connections that made these places unforgettable in the first place. They're out there—waiting to be part of our story.

1. Williamsburg, VA

Step back in time in Williamsburg—a place that was once the epicenter of American history and culture. Its appeal may have dimmed as flashier attractions became available over the years, but its colonial reenactments and haunting beauty beg for a revisit. On a recent trip, I stumbled upon the Billsburg Brewery. Billsburg offers a unique waterfront dining experience at the James City County Marina. They pair live music and locally crafted beer with an ever-changing lineup of food trucks. It's a really cool vibe all around.

Our Verdict: We think that blending Willaimsburg's historical value with modern-day amenities and unique eateries like the Billsburg Brewery makes it a place worth rediscovering

2. Pawleys Island, South Carolina

Serenity in its purest form. Pawleys Island was always the go-to for unspoiled beach getaways. It seems quieter now, but the charm of The Hammock Shops Village, with its local crafts and breezy vibes, still captures my heart every time.

Our Verdict: We can't get enough of the Pawleys Island vibe. The tranquil beaches and quaint shops of Pawleys Island are a serene escape that's calling us back.

3. Lake Arrowhead, California

The Alps of Southern California, they say. Lake Arrowhead's private allure has been overshadowed. It was once a secluded hideaway for Hollywood's elite but still retains some glamour of its golden days. These days, a short ride to SkyPark at Santa's Village keeps us returning for that blend of thrill and natural beauty. Maybe you can still even spot a celebrity or two breaking from the limelight.

Our Verdict: Lake Arrowhead's enchanting landscapes and unique attractions like SkyPark beckon for a fresh wave of adventurers.

4. Durango, Colorado

Adventure around every corner. Durango's Old West spirit and outdoor escapades used to draw crowds, and Mesa Verde's ancient cliff dwellings remind me why this place is special. But if that's not enticing enough, what about encountering a secret circus society? Durango's Secret Circus Society brings together a collective of artists committed to enriching the community through their street theatre and stage performances. What's more intriguing than witnessing that?

Our Verdict: Durango's adventurous spirit and historic wonders are exceptionally unique. We believe it's a destination that merits a renewed appreciation for its authentic blend of historical depth, natural wonder, and creative dexterity.

5. Cape Cod, Massachusetts

Quintessential New England. Cape Cod's lighthouses and shores were the summer dream. While it may seem quieter these days, the protected beauty of the Cape Cod National Seashore still offers that perfect, peaceful beach day. As a bit of a lighthouse geek, I can attest to their strong lighthouse game. I also find pirates fascinating, and the Whydah Pirate Museum was the perfect way to scratch that itch. But lighthouses and pirates aside, my daughter also took her very first steps on a Cape Cod beach, so it's a place that will always remain memorable for our family.

Our Verdict: With its historic lighthouses, intriguing pirate lore, and timeless coastal charm, Cape Cod offers many experiences that truly merit a fresh wave of appreciation.

6. The Poconos

Love is in the air. The Poconos were the ultimate romantic getaway and still are to some extent. But folks today tend to opt for flashier, more tropical getaways. Still, the stunning vistas from the Delaware Water Gap remind me of the area's untouched beauty, which is perfect for rekindling that spark. We still believe this region offers far more than bear sightings and heart-shaped hot tubs.

Our Verdict: The Poconos' breathtaking natural beauty and romantic allure are waiting to be rediscovered. Let's rekindle the spark.

7. St. Augustine, Florida

Where history meets the sea. St. Augustine's allure as the oldest city has somewhat faded, but walking the Castillo de San Marcos grounds always reignites my awe for this place. Every stone seems to tell a story. Catching a show at the Limelight Theatre adds a modern twist to the ancient city, blending culture with history in the most engaging way.

Our Verdict: St. Augustine's rich history and enduring landmarks like the Castillo de San Marcos deserve a revisit for their timeless appeal.

8. The Jersey Shore

Not just a TV show. In fact, we prefer not to be seen that way at all. Pop culture might have eclipsed the Jersey Shore's active boardwalk life, but the Victorian charm of places like Cape May offers a serene and picturesque seaside escape that feels like stepping into a postcard.

Our Verdict: The Jersey Shore–especially areas like Cape May or Ocean City–are ready for a comeback–and the comeback is always greater than the setback.

9. Palm Springs

Where the desert meets design. Palm Springs might have cooled off since its mid-century heyday, but the tranquility of the Indian Canyons always draws me back to nature's

doorstep. And then there's the unexpected: a vacant lot inhabited by David Cerny's eight-foot-tall faceless baby sculptures. It's a bizarre yet fascinating commentary on consumerism that's as thought-provoking as it is unsettling. Only in Palm Springs.

Our Verdict: Palm Springs' blend of architectural glamor, natural beauty, and intriguing art installations like Cerny's Babies make it an endlessly fascinating oasis that beckons for another look.

10. Niagara Falls

The thundering wonder. More distant destinations might have overshadowed Niagara Falls, but feeling the mist on my face aboard the Maid of the Mist reminds me of the raw power and beauty right on our doorstep. A fun fact: Annie Taylor, otherwise known as the "Queen of the Mist," braved the falls in a barrel at 63 and was the first to survive such a feat. We don't recommend trying that stunt upon visiting.

Our Verdict: The awe-inspiring power of Niagara Falls reaffirms its status as a natural marvel that deserves ongoing admiration. Let's get up close and personal again.

11. Blue Ridge Parkway

Witness nature's masterpiece at every turn. The Blue Ridge Parkway was and still is a driver and cyclist's dream. It brings us unparalleled views of the Appalachian Highlands. Though it may seem like the road less traveled these days, the stunning nature of the Linn Cove Viaduct, curving around the mountainside, is enough to leave you speechless.

Our Verdict: The Blue Ridge Parkway brings us on a spectacular nature-laden journey. Fill up the gas tank, charge up your EV, and set your sights on this timeless road that deserves to be more traveled.

12. San Diego

Always sunny, always inviting. San Diego's perfect climate and laid-back lifestyle were once irresistible draws, but the buzz has quieted a bit in favor of more lively or fast-paced lifestyles. Still, wandering through the historic Gaslamp Quarter reminds me of the city's unique ability to blend the old with the new. Where else can you get that Victorian architecture with modern nightlife?

Our Verdict: San Diego's enduring appeal, from the historic charm of the Gaslamp Quarter to its sun-drenched beaches, calls us back to rediscover its vibrant heart.

13. Disneyland

The original kingdom of dreams. Disneyland's magic captivates every heart, but the thrill and sheer volume of newer theme parks have diverted some of that attention. Still, the park's hidden nooks, like the secret pet cemetery behind the Haunted Mansion, envelop us in layers of detail and mystery that still make this the happiest place on Earth.

Our Verdict: Disneyland's hidden treasures and enduring enchantments, beyond the well-trodden paths, call us to explore and believe in magic again.

14. Traverse City

A taste of true Michigan. Traverse City's allure as a wine and cherry haven was undeniable. But as travel trends evolved, its spotlight dimmed. That could all change with one visit to Chateau Chantal. Sitting high on the Old Mission Peninsula, this wine enthusiast's dream reinvigorates the exquisite wine-tasting experience—and the Grand Traverse Bay panoramic views are that cherry on top. Every glass is a memorable experience.

Our Verdict: Traverse City's rich wine culture, epitomized by rarities like Chateau Chantal, is a toast to the senses that signal to us all to take a fresh taste of its offerings.

15. Nashville, Tennessee

The city with a musical heart. Nashville's country music scene and Southern charm used to be the talk of the town. But somewhere along the line, old country Nashville took a turn for more pop-inspired tunes. So, while it's still a music hub, it has a different feel than old days. To switch up the tempo, take a stroll through the immersive art installations at the Frist Art Museum.

Our Verdict: Nashville's blend of musical heritage and cultural experiences showcases a city that's more than a one-hit wonder. There's more to this city when we deeply explore its well-rounded artistic nature.

16. Rehoboth Beach, DE

A small wonder by the sea. Rehoboth Beach's boardwalk, quaint shopping experiences, and family-friendly atmosphere were once summer staples. Though other beaches may have risen in prominence, the unique charm of Funland brings back a wave of nostalgia and joy. Plus, where else can you take a ride on the Jolley Trolley or grab a slice of Grotto Pizza?

Our Verdict: Rehoboth Beach's classic boardwalk charm and the timeless appeal of Funland make it a coastal retreat that encourages family fun and memories.

17. Ocean City, Maryland

Into mini-golf? There is no shortage of courses on this east coast playground. Ocean City was the go-to for sun-seekers and thrill-riders, but as options expanded, its star dimmed. But they've still got all the trappings of a classic boardwalk. To change things up, track down some wild horses. Assateague Island is just a short drive away, offering an untamed contrast to the boardwalk's buzz.

Our Verdict: Ocean City's lively boardwalk and the enchanting wild ponies of Assateague Island make it a destination that still promises adventure and wonder.

18. Nantucket

A whaling era relic turned serene getaway. Nantucket's cobblestone streets and lighthouse-studded coastlines were once summer highlights. Though it's become quieter, the Nantucket Whaling Museum's tales of the sea keep the island's adventurous spirit alive and appealing. I've never had a better lobster roll than the one from Walter's Deli.

Our Verdict: Nantucket's rich maritime history and quaint charm, preserved in places like the Whaling Museum, call for a journey back to this tranquil island. Let's not neglect the lobster rolls, either.

19. Florida Keys

A timeless string of tropical paradises. The Keys were once the ultimate escape to turquoise waters and sunsets. While they've faced environmental challenges, the underwater wonder of snorkeling at John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park reveals a hidden paradise beneath the waves that's straight-up inspiring. But seriously, we need to enjoy this place while we

still can. The NOAA's 2022 Sea Level Rise Technical Report paints a grim picture of its future.

Our Verdict: The Florida Keys' laid-back vibe and underwater marvels are a tropical haven awaiting rediscovery—and we need to enjoy it all while we still can.

20. Martha's Vineyard

An island untouched by time. Martha's Vineyard was the epitome of quaint summer elegance, but with the allure of international destinations, it's been somewhat forgotten. The Flying Horses Carousel in Oak Bluffs is the nation's oldest platform carousel. Unfortunately, it was closed for the season when I visited, but just seeing it reminding me of the simple joys that still make this island a magical escape.

Our Verdict: Martha's Vineyard's timeless charm and treasures like the Flying Horses Carousel, deserve to be cherished as a quintessential New England retreat.

21. Route 66

The Mother Road of America. Route 66 captured the spirit of adventure and the open road, but the fast pace of modern highways leaves it somewhat in the rearview. Still, the gaudy charm of roadside attractions, like the Cadillac Ranch, keeps the spirit of old road trips alive and kicking. Come on—who doesn't love a good, old-fashioned road trip?

Our Verdict: Route 66's historic path is dotted with unique Americana. Let's return to the road to revive this classic road trip adventure.

22. Gatlinburg, Tennessee

Gateway to the Smokies. Gatlinburg was once the go-to for mountain enthusiasts, but newer resorts seem to have shifted the spotlight. However, putting natural beauty aside, the Great Smoky Arts & Crafts community is the largest independent gathering of artisans in the US showcasing their talents. You can find anything here, from hand-blown glass to intricate quilts. It's like stepping into a living gallery—every piece tells a story of Appalachian craftsmanship.

Our Verdict: Gatlinburg's gateway to natural splendor shines equally for its arts scene. The Great Smoky Arts & Crafts Community is a haven of unique creativity and skill, inviting a rediscovery of this mountain town's rich cultural heritage.

23. Los Angeles, California

Ah—the city of angels. The rise of other metropolises has no doubt challenged L.A.'s glittering allure. Still, the timeless appeal of places like the Griffith Observatory reminds us why this city's lights shine so brightly. But there are loads of hidden highlights within the city's confines. If you love geeking out on all things literature, head out to The Last Bookstore. You'll find this eccentric veiled beauty in a century-old bank building. It features a record store, comic book store, art studios, and even a famous book tunnel. Every nook and cranny of this place tells a story beyond the pages.

Our Verdict: Los Angeles is still the city where stars and stories align. From Griffith Observatory's celestial wonders to The Last Bookstore's literary labyrinth, L.A.'s blend of scenic marvels and cultural enclaves shines as brightly as ever. There are endless possibilities. We just need to take a look around.

24. The Catskills

The Catskills have been the city slicker's getaway for decades. Its aura gives us a much-needed dose of tranquility. There are endless things to do here, and Halloween is reason enough to make the trek. The Catskill's *Peace, Love & Pumpkins* festival at the Bethel Woods Center for the Arts doesn't disappoint. Meander through the garden trails and come face to face with an array of hand-carved jack-o-lanterns and glowing pumpkin art—everything from Woodstock legends to dinosaurs and Big Foot is on display.

Our Verdict: The Catskills offer far more than a backdrop for relaxation. Experiences like *Peace, Love & Pumpkins* bring us an authentic artistic expression that we simply can't find anywhere else. It's one of the many reasons we believe the region is ripe for a tourism renaissance.