

Welcome to Eastern USA

Flanked by megacities New York City and Chicago; landscaped with dune-backed beaches, smoky mountains and gator swamps; and steeped in musical roots, the East rolls out a sweet trip.

Mighty Metropolises

Brimming with 8.4 million people, the megalopolis of New York looms like an alien mother ship over the East, offering a mind-blowing array of culture, cuisine and entertainment. Cloud-poking Chicago, power-brokering Washington, DC and fiery, Latin-fused Miami rise up close on its heels as other one-of-a-kind cityscapes. Look deeper to find the captivating old quarters of New Orleans, reborn from waterlogged ashes, and raw-edged Detroit, where young DIY devotees are flocking to transform the abandoned city.

Beaches & Back Roads

Some of America's best beaches are on the East Coast, from the wild dunes and whale-rich waters of Cape Cod to the taffy-shop-lined boardwalks of Ocean City or the coral reefs of the Florida Keys. Inland, nature puts on a show in the swampy Florida Everglades, wolf-howling Boundary Waters, mist-tipped Appalachian Mountains and New England's forests, which blaze red, orange and yellow each autumn. Slowpoke byways unfurl throughout so you can soak up the landscapes, from historic Civil War battlefields to kitschy roadside attractions.

Chowhounds' Smorgasbord

Good eatin' reaches epic proportions here: hulking steamed lobsters with melted butter in Maine's seafood shacks, bagels and lox in Manhattan's delis, saucy barbecue ribs in Memphis' roadhouses, butter-smothered biscuits in North Carolina's diners, hot-spiced gumbo in New Orleans' cafes...and for dessert, thick slices of berry pie in the Midwest's supper clubs. You'll certainly work up a thirst, which you can slake with the region's sweet white wines, microbrewed beers and home-grown bourbon.

Cultural Cradle

The museums here are the nation's greatest hits: the Smithsonian, housing everything but the kitchen sink; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, a city-state of treasures; and the Art Institute of Chicago, hanging Impressionists by the roomful. Explore the roots of the blues, jazz, and rock and roll at musical meccas such as Memphis' Sun Studio, where Elvis got his groove on; Cleveland's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, for artifacts like Jimi Hendrix' Stratocaster; and the juke joints of Clarksdale, where blues slide guitar first pierced the air. For sky-high designs, Chicago and New York are drawing boards for the modern era's great architects.



Why I Love Eastern USA

By Karla Zimmerman, Writer

I love the big city/rural mash-up in the eastern part of the country. You can be surrounded by skyscrapers in Chicago for breakfast, then two hours later be driving beside clip-clopping horses and buggies in Indiana's Amish country. You can be in the corridors of power in Washington, DC's Capitol for lunch, then hiking mountains in Virginia's dreamy Shenandoah National Park 90 minutes later. Throughout the region the music rocks, exquisite beers flow, and back-road diners, rib joints and lobster shacks tempt you into yet another slice of pie. Mmm, pie...

For more about our writers, see page 672