



welcome to Western USA

Great Outdoors

Western landscapes inspire ‘oohs’ and ‘ahs,’ but it’s the sound of adventure – Whoosh! Splash! Kathunk! – that gives the scenery its punch. The big draw is the western coastline, stretching from the sunny shores of San Diego north past the bluffs of central California to the rocky, mood-filled beaches of Oregon and Washington. Red rocks, plunging gorges and prickly-pear deserts are traveler bait in the Southwest where the biggest wonder is the Grand Canyon, a 277-mile stunner that shares its geologic treasures with a healthy dose of fun. In the Rockies, skiing, ice climbing and mountain-biking never looked so pretty. The best of the outdoor west? It’s encapsulated in northwest Wyoming, where

beauty and adventure were given their due in 1872 with the creation of majestic Yellowstone, America’s first national park.

Grapes, Green Chiles & Going Local

Travel in the west isn’t *just* about ogling the scenery. It’s also about immersing yourself in the culture, which is code for ‘digging into the food.’ Several dishes are representative of local strengths and traditions: fish tacos in San Diego, Sonoran dogs in Tucson, steak and potatoes in the Rockies, green chile sauces in New Mexico and wild salmon in the Pacific Northwest. Regional specialties are as diverse as the landscapes. But these days there is one commonality –

Landscapes and legends draw adventurers to the West, where a good day includes locavore dining, vineyard wine-sipping, cowboy history and whoa-dude outdoor fun.

(left) Colorado River, Grand Canyon National Park, (p339), Arizona.
(below) Venice Boardwalk, (p71), Venice, Los Angeles.



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chefs and consumers alike are focusing on fresh and locally grown, a locavore trend that started in the West. Even better? This eco-consciousness has been embraced by wine producers, who are increasingly implementing organic and biodynamic growing principles. And speaking of winemaking, it's more diverse these days too, with Napa and Sonoma sharing the spotlight with Washington, Oregon, central California and Arizona. All here to play – and stay.

Urban Oases

Very rarely should one dare say, 'Life is good.' But gazing upon twinkling city lights from the rooftop of the Standard Hotel in downtown Los Angeles certainly qualifies as one

of those times. Sip that martini, flash that tan and embrace the urban cool. In every region of the West – except the northern Rockies – there's a big-city anchor bursting with museums, malls and restaurants. The differences? In California there's the hey-bro friendliness of San Diego, the Hollywood flash of Los Angeles and the bohemian cool of San Francisco. Further north in Seattle, cutting-edge joins homegrown, often over a cup of joe. Cosmopolitan chic meets plucky frontier spirit in Denver, while patio preening and spa pampering give Phoenix a strangely compelling spoiled-girl vibe. And last there's Las Vegas, a glitzy neon playground where you can get hitched, spend your honeymoon in Paris and then bet the mortgage – all in the very same weekend.