

# Welcome to Western USA

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

## Great Outdoors

When it comes to scenery in the West, the hyperbole is usually on point. Awesome. Epic. Once-in-a-lifetime. But what gives Western views extra punch? The sounds of adventure – whoosh! splash! clink! – rippling across the landscape. Surfers, kayakers and beachcombers flock to the Western coastline, which stretches north from the sunny shores of San Diego to the bluffs of central California and on to the rocky beaches of Oregon and Washington. Red rocks, gorges and prickly-pear deserts lure hikers and cyclists to the Southwest, where the biggest wonder is the 277-mile Grand Canyon. Meanwhile, in the Rockies, skiing, ice climbing and mountain-biking never looked so pretty or sounded so fun.

## Regional Food & Wine

Regional specialties are as diverse as the landscapes. One commonality? Chefs and consumers alike are focusing on fresh and locally grown food, a locavore trend that started in the West. This eco-consciousness has also been embraced by wine producers, who are increasingly implementing organic and biodynamic growing principles. And speaking of winemaking, Napa and Sonoma now share the spotlight with Washington, Oregon, central California and Arizona.

## Urban Oases

Western cities have distinct personalities. 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 then there's Las Vegas, a glitzy neon playground where you can get hitched in the Elvis Chapel, spend your honeymoon in Paris and then bet the mortgage – all in the very same weekend.

## Hands-On History

Museums? Save 'em for later. First you'll want to climb a ladder into a cliff dwelling, poke around the ruins of a Pony Express station, or simply join the congregation inside a 1700s Spanish mission. What else is there to explore in the West? Crumbling forts. Abandoned mining towns. A former Titan Missile silo. Wander historic sites like these for up-close and evocative links to the region's not-so-long-ago past.



## Why I Love Western USA

By Amy C Balfour, Writer

There's a new adventure or awesome view after every bend in the trail. My first glimpse of the Grand Canyon (not including a first look as a toddler) came after a mad dash from my car to Mather Point during a cross-country road trip. I've been hooked on the West ever since. I subsequently spent seven years in Los Angeles, using the city as a launchpad for exploring Western beaches, deserts, mountains and some truly glorious national parks, not to mention lots of great restaurants. The West is a special place, worth an extended visit.

**For more about our writers, see page 480**