

12 TOP SPOTS FOR SUMMER

Based on the places RCI® subscribing members have been searching for the most, here are our picks for where to go this summer.

BY AARTI VIRANI



Splashing down waterslides at Aquatica waterpark, in Orlando.

KAUAI, a Modern-Day Eden

Given Kauai's natural beauty, it's only normal to spend all your time on this island outdoors. Start your adventure on the **Kukui Trail** (15 miles north of Kekaha on Kokee Rd.; 808-274-3444), a hike that descends 2,000 feet to the Waimea Canyon floor. Or check out the **Kilohana Plantation** (3-2087 Kaunualii Hwy., Lihue; 808-245-5608; kilohanakauai.com), a sugar baron's former estate (and currently a working farm) that you can explore by narrated mini-train tour. For the quintessential beach day, make your way to the idyllic waters of **Hanalei Bay** (Rte. 560, Hanalei), a two-mile half-moon of glittering sand surrounded by taro farms and art galleries.

Beach and More in PUNTA CANA

With 10 beaches to choose from, the easternmost tip of the Dominican Republic is a sun seeker's paradise. To escape the crowds, claim a sunbed on **Playa Juanillo**, in Cap Cana. Though the beach is part of the Sanctuary Cap Cana Resort, day passes for non-guests are available in exchange for an ID. If it's eco-adventures you're after, try zip lining and buggy rides at **Scape Park at Cap Cana** (Cap Cana; 809-469-7484; scapepark.com), a natural wonderland studded with orchids and cacti. For marvels of the man-made variety, head to **Altos de Chavón** (La Romana; 809-523-2424; altosdechavon.edu.do), a stunning replica of a 16th-century Mediterranean artisans village, wrought-iron details and all. It's the 33-year-old brainchild of Italian set designer Roberto Coppa.

Authentic CANCÚN

While party-hungry college students still dominate pockets of this coastal hot spot, you'll find a different side of town at **Mercado 23** (SM 23, west of Avda. Tulum), one of Cancún's main markets, which stocks everything from Maya *huipils* (woven blouses) to mounds of Oaxacan cheese. Get your art fix at the **MUSA** (Blvd. Kukulcan km 15.2; 011-52-998-848-8327; musacancun.org), a mostly underwater collection of some 500 sculptures viewable by glass-bottomed boat or on dry land in the visitors center. A 25-minute ferry ride with **Ultramar** (José López Portillo, Puerto Juárez; 011-52-998-881-5890; granpuerto.com.mx/en), departing from the Gran Puerto Cancún Ferry Terminal, will land you on **Isla Mujeres**, which has some of the area's best snorkeling. You can explore the island's southern coast by golf cart and stop at **Garrafon Natural Reef Park** (Camino Sac Bajo, Lote 26, Paraíso Laguna Mar; 866-393-5158; garrafon.com), where trails lead to the Mexican Caribbean.



From above: Along the Nā Pali Coast, on Kauai; St. Stanislaus church, set in Altos de Chavón, a replica of a 16th-century village, in Punta Cana; sculptures on view in the visitors center at MUSA, an underwater museum in Cancún.



Uncovering the RIVIERA MAYA

Meet Quintana Roo's rugged side with a day trip to nearby **Cobá**—Mayan for “water stirred by wind”—and take in ancient ruins, like **Nohoch Mul**, a temple pyramid considered the tallest Maya structure on the Yucatán peninsula (877-437-4990; alltournative.com). Or you can get up close and personal with endangered spider monkeys on an hour-long tour at **The Jungle Place** (Chemuyil; 011-52-984-116-9777; thejungleplace.com). For the shock-and-awe factor, don't miss the nightly beachside fire and acrobatics show at the tiki-theme **Blue Parrot Beach Club** (Calle 12 N., at First Ave.; no phone; blueparrotplaya.com), in Playa del Carmen.

Classic CAPE COD

East Coasters have long flocked to this nautical haven for a slice of America's past, and you'll find just that at the retro **Wellfleet Drive-In Theatre** (51 State Hwy., Rte. 6, Wellfleet; 508-349-7176; wellfleetcinemas.com). Consider ordering a root-beer float from the on-site Dairy Bar & Grill while indulging in a double feature. You can soak up some regional history at the **Heritage Museums & Gardens** (67 Grove St., Sandwich; 508-888-3300; heritagemuseumsandgardens.org); highlights include a working vintage carousel and dreamy hydrangea garden. Nature lovers shouldn't miss canoeing across glacier-carved **Gull Pond** (Schoolhouse Rd., Wellfleet). For sweeping Atlantic Ocean views, you can't beat **Marconi Beach** (Marconi Beach Rd., off Rte. 6, Wellfleet), where the bonus is a picture-perfect series of towering sand dunes.

Family Favorite COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG

At **Williamsburg's period gardens** (colonialwilliamsburg.com; free) horticulturists and historians re-created 90 acres of formal beds and green pastures. Kids are bound to love The World Made Small, a collection of historical miniatures, including furnished dollhouses and soldiers' campsites, on display through September 7 at the **DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum** (326 Francis St. W.; 888-965-7254; colonialwilliamsburg.com; tickets, from \$13). For an adult evening, take in a play at the **Virginia Shakespeare Festival** (Phi Beta Kappa Memorial Hall, College of William & Mary, 601 Jamestown Rd.; 757-221-2674; wmu.edu; tickets, from \$30). And consider a day at the **Busch Gardens® Food & Wine Festival**. The theme park celebrates its 40th anniversary this year with foodie favorites of folk from Scandinavia to the Caribbean (1 Busch Gardens Blvd.; 800-343-7946; seaworldparks.com; tastings, from \$3).

Play Like a Kid in ORLANDO

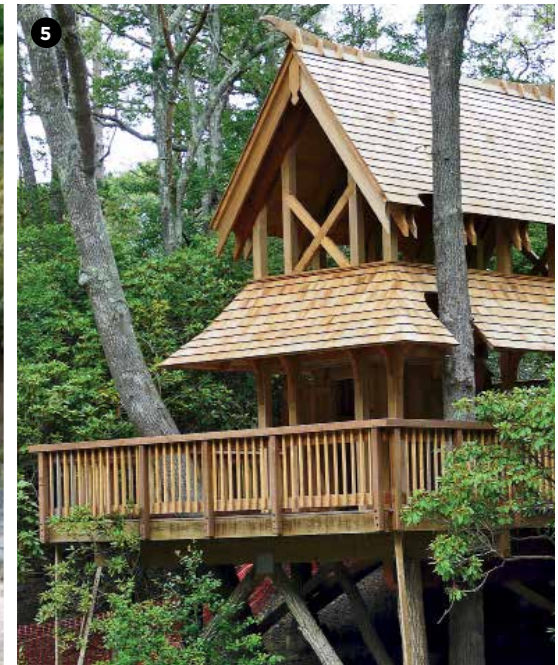
You've got to take in a theme park (or three) in a city that's a standard setter. **Universal's Islands of Adventure**® (6000 Universal Blvd.; 407-224-4233; universolorlando.com) is made for movie buffs because of cinema-inspired attractions, like the Jurassic Park River Adventure and The Wizarding World of Harry Potter. **Universal CityWalk**®, fresh from a 2014 expansion, has eight popular new eateries and cafés. For a waterpark experience, try the city's steepest tower slide, at **Aquatica** (5800 Water Play Way; 407-351-3600; aquaticabyseaworld.com), or get behind a go-kart wheel on a four-story track at **Fun Spot America** (5700 Fun Spot Way; 407-363-3867; fun-spot.com). Seeking more outdoorsy fun? An Orlando classic is the **Hoop-Dee-Do Musical Revue**, a two-hour Western-theme dinner show at Disney's Fort Wilderness Resort & Campground (4510 N. Fort Wilderness Trail; 407-939-3463; disneyworld.com; tickets, from \$59; kids aged 3 to 9, from \$33).

Summer Is Simple in MYRTLE BEACH

Daiquiri bars, T-shirt shops, arcades: Everything about this vacation spot screams classic Americana. Along the revamped boardwalk, you'll find the **Gay Dolphin Gift Cove** (910 N. Ocean Blvd.; 843-448-6550), a mammoth souvenir store—eight floors of seaside kitsch. And **Ripley's® Aquarium** (1100 Celebrity Circle; 800-734-8888; ripleyaquariums.com) attracts crowds thanks in part to Dangerous Reef, a 750,000-gallon underwater tunnel teeming with sharks. Beach lovers can park it along the three-mile stretch of **Huntington Beach State Park** (16148 Ocean Hwy., Murrells Inlet; 843-237-4440; huntingtonbeachstatepark.net), which is also the site of **Atalaya**, the palatial Moorish-style home of 20th-century sculptor Anna Hyatt Huntington.

Lowcountry Scenes on HILTON HEAD ISLAND

There's more to this resort town than golfing greens. Start with a guided horseback tour at **Lawton Stables** (190 Greenwood Dr., Sea Pines Plantation; 843-671-2586; lawtonstables.com); Shetland ponies are available for children under seven. Follow that up with a tour with **Island Explorer** (101 Marshland Rd.; 843-785-2100; dolphintourshiltonhead.com), which offers small-group nature cruises along Calibogue Sound. You may become acquainted with a few gregarious bottlenoses. A 114-step climb will take you to the top of the **Harbour Town Lighthouse** (149 Lighthouse Rd.; 866-305-9814; harbourtownlighthouse.com).



Clockwise from above left: Climbing the Nohoch Mul pyramid, near Playa del Carmen; a tree house at the Heritage Museums & Gardens, on Cape Cod; one of Colonial Williamsburg's re-created period gardens; Diagon Alley, at the Wizarding World of Harry Potter, part of Universal's Islands of Adventure, in Orlando; strolling the Myrtle Beach boardwalk; horseback riding at Lawton Stables, on Hilton Head Island.



Head South to the **FLORIDA KEYS**

An irresistible blend of Southern hospitality and tropical charm greets those heading to this archipelago of nearly 1,700 islands. **Dry Tortugas National Park** (100 Grinnell St.; 800-634-0939; drytortugas.com), composed of a bird-and-marine-life sanctuary, a 19th-century fort and some of the most vibrant coral reefs on North American shores, is a constellation of seven small isles accessible by a daily ferry from Key West. Pint-size tourists are bound to adore **Theater of the Sea** (84721 Overseas Hwy., Islamorada; 305-664-2431; theaterofthesea.com), which features natural lagoons and daily dolphin and sea-lion shows. And a nightly celebration in **Mallory Square** (400 Wall St., Key West; mallorysquare.com), showcasing craft exhibits, street performers and food carts, can be a great place to catch a fiery Florida sunset.

Sophisticated **SAN FRANCISCO**

It can seem as if there's no such thing as too much fog—or too many farmers markets—in the City by the Bay. Survey it all atop **Coit Tower** (1 Telegraph Hill Blvd.; 415-249-0995), whose observation deck delivers panoramic views of the Golden Gate and Bay Bridges. Then you can get in touch with your inner science geek at the **Exploratorium** (Pier 15; 415-528-4444; exploratorium.edu), a 46-year-old museum that's chock-full of playful exhibits that let you dissect everything from a baseball to a cow's eye. No trip here is complete without a day in iconic **Golden Gate Park** (415-831-2700; golden-gate-park.com): It attracts more than 13 million people annually with its windmills, waterfalls, Japanese tea garden and legendary **Conservatory of Flowers** (100 John F. Kennedy Dr.; 415-831-2090; conservatoryofflowers.org).

A Sip of **NAPA**

Epicures and oenophiles from all over the world come here for wine-country excursions. One of the most spellbinding may be to **Castello di Amorosa** (4045 Hwy. 29, Calistoga; 707-967-6272), a Tuscan-style castle where visitors can wander clandestine passageways and taste handcrafted Italian-style wines. Get a different view of the valley by cruising the Napa River with **Napa Valley Adventure Tours** (1147 First St.; 707-224-9080; napavalleyadventuretours.com) along restored wetlands and beside Napa's historic downtown. And for a peek into California's rural heritage, plan on an afternoon at **Bale Grist Mill State Historic Park** (3369 Hwy. 29, St. Helena; 707-942-2236), where you can leave with a bag of polenta, spelt or rye ground with millstones on-site. 5



From above: A performer in Mallory Square, in Key West; colorful blooms at San Francisco's Conservatory of Flowers; outdoor dining at Napa's Bale Grist Mill State Historic Park.



PHOTOS: OPENING SPREAD: SEAWORLD ORLANDO; KAUAI VISITORS BUREAU; SHUTTERSTOCK; JASON DECAIRES TAYLOR/THE-STILLS LIFESTYLE AGENCY/MUSA UNDERWATER ART MUSEUM/ WEST COAST MARINE NATIONAL PARK ISLA MUJERES, PUNTA CANCUN; PUNTA NIZUC; SECOND SPREAD: SHUTTERSTOCK(2); JUDIE SELLECK; THE COLONIAL WILLIAMS-BURG FOUNDATION; UNIVERSAL ORLANDO RESORT; DIDI SUMMERS; THIS SPREAD: BOB KRIST/FLORIDA KEYS NEWS BUREAU; TODD WORLEY; BALE GRIST MILL STATE PARK



STAY

RCI AFFILIATED RESORTS NEAR SOME OF THE FEATURED DESTINATIONS INCLUDE:

Presidential Suites by Lifestyle Punta Cana AI D813

Sleek, fully furnished suites and a duo of free-form swimming pools along the Cortecito shoreline. *Avda. Alemania, El Cortecito, Punta Cana, Dominican Republic*
MEMBER REVIEWS: "Like we were at a private beach."
"Nice, new rooms."

Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Punta Cana—All Inclusive A791

Thirteen pools, nine restaurants and a 5,000-square-foot fitness center make this an action-packed destination. *74 Blvd. Turístico del Este km 28, Punta Cana, Dominican Republic*
MEMBER REVIEWS: "Pools and bars everywhere!"
"Didn't need or want to leave the resort."

Hotel y Villas Solaris Cancún 1396

A private beach and wide range of activities (scuba diving, windsurfing) are the crowd pleasers at this all-inclusive. *64 Blvd. Kukulcán km 19.5, Zona Hotelera, Cancún, Mexico*
MEMBER REVIEWS: "Great for young families."
"Right on the beach."

Sunset Royal Beach Resort 2465

A beach-facing all-inclusive property in Cancún's buzzing hotel zone. *Blvd. Kukulcán km 10, Zona Hotelera, Cancún, Mexico*
MEMBER REVIEWS: "Exceptional staff."
"Downtown, the malls, restaurants and shopping—all within walking distance."

Mayan Palace Riviera Maya 6635

Expansive condominium-style suites make up this lush resort, home to a swimming pool that's accessible around the clock. *Carr. Federal km 48, Cancún, Mexico*
MEMBER REVIEWS: "Perfectly maintained."
"Great for a romantic getaway."

The Grand Mayan Riviera Maya 6974

Shares amenities with resort above.
MEMBER REVIEWS: "Like paradise on Earth."
"Offers a number of amazingly varied amenities and activities."

El Dorado Royale, a Gourmet Inclusive Resort, by Karisma 6290

Highlights at this adults-only hideout include a team of star chefs. *Carr. Cancún-Tulum km 45, Riviera Maya, Mexico*
MEMBER REVIEWS: "This resort set high expectations and then exceeded them."
"The grounds were immaculate."

Presidential Villas at Plantation Resort 4220

It's hard to believe that this palmetto-lined resort, located in a bird sanctuary, is just 10 minutes from bustling Myrtle Beach. *1250 U.S. Hwy. 17 N., Surfside Beach, SC*
MEMBER REVIEWS: "Clean, well-stocked rooms."
"Very kid-friendly."

Vacation Village at Parkway 4940

A dynamic activity center and 2,168 units within a short driving distance of Orlando's theme parks. *2949 Arabian Nights Blvd., Kissimmee, FL*
MEMBER REVIEWS: "The perfect home base for visiting the parks."
"Enjoyed the nightly fireworks from the balcony."

Holiday Inn Club Vacations at Orange Lake Resort—West Village 0670

There is no shortage of family-friendly activities at this Florida mainstay. *8505 W. Irlo Bronson Memorial Hwy. (Rte. 192 W.), Kissimmee, FL*
MEMBER REVIEWS: "If you have kids, this is the resort for you!"
"Beautifully furnished."

Sheraton Vistana Resort 0450

Purchase tickets in advance for area attractions when you stay at this laid-back all-villa resort brimming with perks, like a massage facility and playground. *8800 Vistana Centre Dr., Orlando, FL*
MEMBER REVIEWS: "All the amenities you need for a really easy and fun holiday."
"Upgraded units."

The Fountains 7605

A 54-acre retreat with a waterpark. *12400 S. International Dr., Orlando, FL*
MEMBER REVIEWS: "Activities are geared to families."
"Exceptionally beautiful."

DID YOU KNOW?

This time last year, nearly 45% of RCI summer exchange vacations were already booked! Don't wait to book—you might miss out on your dream destination!

For complete member reviews (as member reviews have been condensed) and additional resort listings, visit RCI.com or call 800-338-7777 (Weeks) or 877-968-7476 (Points). Club Members, please call your specific Club or RCI telephone number.

OTHER VACATION OPTIONS:

Pure Kauai

5118 Iolani Place, Princeville, HI; 808-828-6570; purekauai.com; doubles from \$300 a night

Colony of Wellfleet

640 Chequessett Neck Rd., Wellfleet, MA; 508-349-3761; colonyofwellfleet.com; doubles from \$295 a night

Wedmore Place

5810 Wessex Hundred, Williamsburg, VA; 866-933-6673; wedmoreplace.com; doubles from \$165 a night

Bay Watch Resort & Conference Center

2701 S. Ocean Blvd., North Myrtle Beach, SC; 866-469-7853; oceanaresorts.com/baywatch; units from \$166 a night

Palmetto Dunes Resort

21 Executive Park Rd., Hilton Head Island, SC; 843-785-7300; wvrhiltonhead.com; units from \$149 a night

Bahama Bay by Wyndham Vacation Rentals

400 Gran Bahama Blvd., Davenport, FL; 863-547-1200; bahamabay.com; units from \$99 a night

The Marquesa Hotel

600 Fleming St., Key West, FL; 305-292-1919; marquesa.com; doubles from \$210 a night

Hotel del Sol

3100 Webster St., San Francisco, CA; 415-921-5520; jdvhotels.com; doubles from \$309 a night

Villagio Inn & Spa

6481 Washington St., Yountville, CA; 800-351-1133; villagio.com; doubles from \$340 a night

RCI® TIP Not sure where you want to travel this summer? Visit RCI.com and use the Vacation-Type filters to help you search. Whether you are looking for the beach, a family vacation, a spa getaway or other vacation experience, RCI.com can help find a vacation that is right for you.