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WINERY

# TOP 10 Summer destinations

Summer is traditionally the time for busy executives to escape to their cottages for some much-needed downtime, but that can get a bit stale after a while, especially if the alternative might be to Hang Ten in coastal Ecuador, check out baroque-n-hearted relics in Zagreb, Croatia, or sip a glass of world-class bubbly in Osoyoos, B.C. Here are 10 destinations that combine elements of the great outdoors with unique-to-the-region highlights to put a bit of zest into the season. »**BY ALISON KENT**



## Standout tastes and sips

### Oliver and Osoyoos, B.C.

**WHY GO** Located at the southern tip of Okanagan Valley and just 20 kilometres apart, these small but mighty towns abound with mountain landscapes, sparkling lakes and riverside trails. The area is also celebrated for its exceptional terroir, making it ideal for producing some of the world's best wines. An assortment of fun-filled local festivals, including Pig Out!, the Half Corked Marathon and Festival of the Grape, keep the celebrations going.

**MUST DO** From Riesling to Viognier and Pinot Noir to Syrah, Oliver Osoyoos Wine Country features 40-plus passionate wineries. Must-visit vineyards include: Culmina Family Estate Winery (try the Triggs family's limited 2013 Hypothesis blend); family-run River Stone Estate Winery; and CheckMate Artisanal Winery, a cult favourite with a focus on producing phenomenal Chardonnay and Merlot. Fun fact: Oliver is the designated Wine Capital of Canada.

**TOP TASTES** Arrive at Platinum Bench Estate Winery & Artisan Bread Co. early in the day for the best chance of getting a much sought-after loaf of freshly baked bread. Try the chewy, wonderful Soppressata salami and Swiss cheese Epi with a glass of Platinum Bench Mur-Fi's Red or Gamay Noir.

**BEST STAYS** Spirit Ridge at Nk'Mip Resort, a laid-back luxury property surrounded by Canada's only semi-arid desert, features a variety of comfortable suites, condos and villas with full kitchens, complete with dog-friendly room options, as well as a tranquil spa and pool, gourmet restaurant and onsite store for groceries.

### Fredericksburg, Texas

**WHY GO** Situated about 110 kilometres due north of San Antonio and 125 kilometres west of Austin, this charming city boasts a kick-ass combo of German roots and Texas hospitality. It's also fast becoming a destination for oenophiles and continues to gain global attention for its top-notch wines.

**MUST DO** "The Burg" is the epicentre of Texas Hill Country, home to dozens of wineries, breweries and distilleries. It is also home to an abundance of peach and pecan orchards, Bavarian-style restaurants, delis and bakeries. For non-foodies, there are caves, wildflower trails,



as well as museums, boutiques and antique shops to poke about in.

**TOP TASTES** The culinary crew at Otto's German Bistro is dedicated to using local, organic products and has deftly created a tempting farm-to-fork menu that highlights German, Austrian and Alsatian-influenced dishes combined with bold Texan flair.

**BEST STAYS** Set on spacious grounds alongside Barons Creek and complete with outdoor pool, stone gazebo and fireplace, Fredericksburg Inn & Suites is an easy walk from many restaurants, shops and galleries. Or head 28 kilometres east, near Lyndon B. Johnson State Park & Historic Site (worth a daytime visit for viewing wildflowers and wildlife), and book a suite or cottage at Rose Hill Manor, a peaceful bed and breakfast overlooking rolling green hills, ideal for sipping wine under the covered veranda at sunset.

### San Francisco

**WHY GO** One of the Golden State's most vibrant cities is known for steep hills, cable cars, "Painted Ladies" Victorian houses and the orange-hued Golden Gate Bridge.

**MUST DO** The California Academy of Sciences in Golden Gate Park houses an impressive and interactive aquarium, planetarium and natural history museum. The park also has the de Young Museum, showcasing art, textiles

and costumes, while the nearby Japanese Tea Garden is all about tranquility, harmony and natural beauty.

**TOP TASTES** Plan ahead and book a table at Michelin-starred State Bird Provisions, whose ever-changing menu of dim sum-style small plates may include salt-baked celery root with black butter béarnaise aioli or pork belly and citrus salad. A bit less upscale, The Ramp on the waterfront offers a funky weekend brunch on a lovely, breezy patio complete with restorative Bloody Marys and piled-high chilaquiles. **BEST STAYS** Fairmont San Francisco features spacious guest rooms and suites offering stellar views of both the city and the bay. Allow time to visit Tonga Room & Hurricane Bar, a local institution since 1945 that offers tiki cocktails — including a mighty fine Mai Tai — and live entertainment aboard a floating stage complete with simulated thunderstorm.

### Louisville, Kentucky

**WHY GO** Chiefly known as host of the world famous Kentucky Derby, Louisville also has a spirited vibe, dynamic music scene — bluegrass, country and otherwise — and is, of course, Bourbon Country. Mint julep, anyone? **MUST DO** The Urban Bourbon Trail includes more than 20 bars, restaurants and hotels, each with at least 50 different bourbon options and





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some have more than 150. Pick up or download the official Urban Bourbon Trail passport, but be sure to check out Fourth Street Live!, a semi-enclosed food, retail and entertainment complex that includes the Jim Beam Urban Stillhouse. Complete with small working distillery and bottling line, visitors can take home a personalized bottle of bourbon.

**TOP TASTES** Proof On Main is equal parts restaurant, cocktail bar and art gallery. Share one of its cheese and charcuterie platters then tuck into “ham & clams” spaghetti bouillabaisse with mustard greens and rock shrimp,

all while surveying current art installations inside, outside and around the restaurant.

**BEST STAYS** The Seelbach Hilton is a grand 114-year-old hotel property dripping with opulent décor, stately rooms and an elegant, rich history located a short block from Fourth Street Live! F. Scott Fitzgerald found inspiration here and incorporated elements of it into *The Great Gatsby*. Visit the hotel’s famous Bavarian-style Rathskeller, and then order a champagne and bourbon in the Old Seelbach Bar, which has been painstakingly restored to its early 20th century grandeur.

## Notable road trips and treks

### Fredericton

**WHY GO** Considered the cultural capital of New Brunswick, Fredericton is home to the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, a recently expanded gem that houses more than 5,300 works by celebrated masters, including a significant Salvador Dali collection, and emerging artists from Canada and beyond.

**MUST DO** Walk or cycle the trail from downtown via the Bill Thorpe Walking Bridge to The Picaroons Roundhouse, a historic and restored site that’s home to Picaroons Traditional Ales, where you can sip award-winning craft beer on a patio overlooking Saint John River.

**TOP TASTES** Fredericton Boyce Farmers Market, a Saturday morning tradition since 1951, is a bustling gathering spot featuring more than 200 vendors, both indoors and out. It has an emphasis on fresh local foods and artisanal products, including charcuterie, baked goods, apple cider vinegar and maple syrup. Food Alley’s selection of popular samosas are worth the wait.

**BEST STAYS** Located on the riverbank and with its own docks, Delta Hotels by Marriott Fredericton offers well-appointed guest suites and is an easy stroll or bike ride from downtown. Nearby and also overlooking the river, Quartermain House B&B is a charming heritage property featuring three guestrooms and serving a multi-course hot breakfast in a sunlit dining room.

### Olón and Montañita, Ecuador

**WHY GO** These breezy beachfront towns on the Pacific coast are a 2.5-hour drive from Guayaquil airport (which offers flights to the Galápagos Islands). A bit off the beaten path, tiny Olón is lower key while Montañita has more restaurants and shopping options, along with a grooving, youthful vibe. A surf enthusiast’s utopia, the weather is sultry year-round, yet marginally cooler and drier during summer.

**MUST DO** Surf lessons and board rentals abound in both towns. If you’d rather sit back and watch, do so in shaded comfort while sipping a pint of lemon-ginger or chili-hibiscus cider at Montañita Brewing Co. June through November is also Ecuador’s whale-watching season.

**TOP TASTES** Most every eatery offers the local favourite of mixed seafood ceviche with a side



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of fried plantain “patacones.” In Montañita, Lido Beach Grill is the way to go, especially for its craft cocktails and crisp calamari with beet aioli. In Olón, popular Mi Cotinga Beer & Wine Garden offers delicious yet decidedly non-Ecuadorian fare, and you can buy a bottle or two of imported Chilean wine or European cheese on the way out. Or head to Grillo’s for unique spins on pizza and tasty pasta dishes. **BEST STAYS** Home and condo vacation rentals are popular and often the best way to go. But in Montañita, Dharma Beach Hotel has spacious themed suites and is ideally located for both beach access and in-town activities.

### Seneca Falls, N.Y.

**WHY GO** This quaint, historic town with a picturesque waterfront is widely believed to have been the inspiration behind the fictional town of Bedford Falls in *It’s a Wonderful Life*, Frank Capra’s classic film, including the bridge that was so pivotal to Jimmy Stewart’s character, George Bailey.

**MUST DO** Seneca Falls is the ideal location to anchor a visit through New York State’s

Finger Lakes Region and its countless trails, waterfalls and gorges, including the shorelines of Cayuga and Seneca Lakes, not to mention more than 70 wineries. For birdwatchers, Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge is a nesting habitat for numerous waterfowl and a breeding ground for migratory birds.

**TOP TASTES** Go casual and order the messy yet scrumptious Beef on Weck at Parker’s Grille & Taphouse on Fall Street. This local favorite consists of warm, thinly sliced roast beef on a caraway-spiked kaiser-like roll (known as kummelweck) spread with horseradish and dipped in au jus. Another beloved regional classic is The Reuben Dog, made with sauerkraut and a quarter-pound Zweigles hot dog.

**BEST STAYS** The Gould Hotel, also on Fall Street and just a short walk away from Parker’s, is a modern boutique hotel overlooking the river and featuring cozy suites, a comfortable restaurant (also offering Beef on Weck) and live music on Fridays. The original hotel first opened nearly a century ago, but it has been recently revitalized to showcase its architectural features, albeit with an updated stylish flair.

## Significant historic highlights

### Edinburgh, Scotland

**WHY GO** Take in the rich culture, historic highlights and beautiful landscapes of Scotland’s capital city by strolling down The Royal Mile, visiting museums free of charge (always) and climbing aboard the Royal Yacht Britannia, former yacht of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. **MUST DO** Join a guided tour of the breathtaking grounds of Edinburgh Castle, which has presided over the city for centuries from high upon its great rock through many a battle and siege. Also fascinating, though not for the faint of heart, The Real Mary King’s Close Tour reveals another side of Old Town Edinburgh’s history hidden far beneath the cobblestoned roads.

**TOP TASTES** After touring the castle, dine like royalty at The Witchery by the Castle on côte de boeuf with bone marrow crumb and Chasseur sauce, or take it down a notch and order the seared local scallops, crispy pancetta, green peas and mint.

**BEST STAYS** Your ship awaits, quite literally.





Fingal is a floating hotel recently opened and operated by Royal Yacht Britannia that is permanently berthed at The Shore of Leith. Its 23 cabins are beautifully styled, inspired by Fingal's maritime heritage and offer an amazing experience, especially the stunning presidential suite.

### Zagreb, Croatia

**WHY GO** Croatia's capital, with more than 900 years of storied history behind it, is renowned

for its Austro-Hungarian architecture, Gothic-styled churches and cathedrals, and streets lined with outdoor cafés seemingly tailor-made for maximum people watching. **MUST DO** Established in 1880 and housed in a neo-Renaissance palace, the Museum of Arts and Crafts was created to preserve traditionally made design objects, including ceramics, sculptures, paintings, furniture, printing and bookbinding, clocks, watches and photographic equipment. For the curious, the Museum

of Broken Relationships, located in the lovely baroque Kulmer Palace, is a quirky yet oddly touching homage to — you guessed it — doomed romances and the broken-hearted.

**TOP TASTES** The culinary team at Pod Zidom Bistro & Wine Bar in historic Jelacic Square excels at creating mouth-watering dishes using seasonal local ingredients, including Istrian truffles. The wine list features local vintages such as Croatian Malvazija. **Bonus:** There's a terrific view of Zagreb Cathedral from the terrace.

**BEST STAYS** Hotel Le Premier Zagreb is centrally located near the Meštrovic Pavilion, and housed in an early 20th-century palace. It offers a five-star experience in a luxury boutique hotel setting, complete with spa and restaurant with a Michelin star chef at the helm. Book a King Superior Suite or the penthouse presidential apartment.

### Seoul, South Korea

**WHY GO** South Korea's capital, steeped in centuries of history and home to more than 10 million residents, is a charismatic, cosmopolitan city that is equal parts tranquil and energizing with the Han River flowing through its core and mountain vistas in the distance.

**MUST DO** Located in the heart of downtown, Changdeokkung Palace is one of the nation's most honoured architectural and historic treasures, a UNESCO World Heritage site and originally home to the royal family. For arts and culture enthusiasts, the Leeum Samsung Museum of Art is divided into two galleries: one showcasing traditional Korean art, including a stunning display of crafted Celadon pottery; the other featuring contemporary art. **TOP TASTES** Soju, fermented and distilled from rice or other grains, is a top libation of choice throughout Korea. The traditions behind soju are integrally woven into the culture, with many customs and precise rituals surrounding its consumption, often culminating in some sort of drinking game. Be sure to include anju (drinking snacks) such as haemul pajeon — a crispy fried seafood and green onion pancake — to accompany said drinks. Gun-bae!

**BEST STAYS** The Grand Ambassador Hotel is a five-star hotel with six restaurants and modern amenities conveniently located downtown, providing easy access to many shopping, dining, sightseeing and entertainment options. **FPM**