ULTIMATE USA
From classic cars to little houses on the prairie:
20 vintage American adventures

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Surfing in Santa Cruz

The coast road south from San Francisco, Santa Cruz is the stuff of million California close harmonies. Its classic hotel, the Dunes Inn, was built in 1950s for the first wave of surfing tourists, and if a few years ago it was not used to the future with a groovy little general store. The hotel looks straight onto Cowell's beach, a busy but time-honoured place to try surfing for the first time. Rooms look out over the ocean, and a walk along the beach brings you to the boardwalk, which has a history of more than 100 years of amusement rides and teenage employee beginnings. It may have been renamed, but the Dunes Inn still plays to its strengths, with plenty of space to store surf gear and beach towels to borrow, allowing you to lick back and relax.

New Orleans properly

New Orleans is the world's most beautiful city. It's the music, the jazz, the French Quarter in the city proper, the European architecture, and the food. The Frenchmen Hotel is a collection of rooms around a central courtyard, with all the wrought-iron balconies and decor you'd want. 504.945.5451. Frenchmenhotel.com.

Florida's wild side

The Everglades is the state park for conservation, but they're rubbish at marketing, which means their accommodation isn't well known. America's 10 largest cities, less than an hour by car from Orlando, but a million miles from the theme parks, Lake Toho has 25 miles of trails to explore, as well as canoeing and fishing. Hardy souls can opt for "primitve" camping in the most remote areas – you have to backpack in.

Route 66 by pick-up truck

The 1920s and 1930s saw American cars, from luxury to high-performance, dominating modern highways as a new generation of gas guzzlers. Blacktop Candy has polished the chrome and revved up the engine of classic cars from the era, throwing in some sandy modern additions such as seat belts, air-con, and cruise control. Naturally, a pick-up truck is always on the menu as a route 66 companion, and Blacktop Candy offers a 1955 Pontiac and a 1965 Camaro. 866.437.4027. Blacktopcandy.com. Car hire from £155 a day, plus a £300 one-way fee. Nearest airports: Chicago and Los Angeles, served by British Airways

FLW holiday home

One for architecture aficionados: a holiday home designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, in the style that architecture out of the Victorian age and brought open-plan living to America. Several of his homes are now holiday rentals, including the Taliesin House. In the leafy university town of Ann Arbor, Michigan, which lies on the edge of the Nichols Arboretum. It's the perfect place to admire his characteristic cantilevered roofs and total son on 90 degree angles. For added design thrill, the house still contains much of the original furniture — and, in the garden, Lloyd Wright's Japanese-inspired waterfall, it sleeps six.

Shaker farm

The Shakers, an offshoot of the Quakers, were America's original utopian designers, producing perfect, pared-down furniture — as a by-product of their religious fervour. Pleasant Hill, deep in Kentucky's bluegrass country, was once home to more than 500 members of the sect, and includes a farm with a full complement of their ingenious inventions. The old furniture is housed in a museum, but rooms in several of the other buildings can be
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Colorado ranch

Big skies, big bison, friendly, just big the Zapata Ranch, in southern Colorado, stretches over 103,000 sq miles — open acres of the high-altitude San Luis Valley. Part of a nature-conservation project, it is a serious working ranch, and some guests bring their own horses. Bison are left to roam free, but 200 head of cattle allow guests to try at being cowboys. What we read, however, when we wrote “and miles to go before I sleep” it does have a dishwasher. Though.

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Midcentury motel

America's vintage motels are increasingly under threat of being gussied up into design-related destinations, rather than kept as they were. One of the most charming things about the Austin Motel is that it has given up its past. It's a simple, pastoral, owned, and operated by a family, with 10 cabins and 14 acres. The rooms are on the Tinsel, the lobby décor is old, angular, but the motel is as neat as a pin, with a classic rice-paper-and-wood panel and the welcome is warm. The room rates vary by weekends and weekdays, and some are higher at the same rates. The hotel's rooftop bar is the best place to overlook the city and relax.

Lighthouses and clambakes

Nantucket is a shipwashed island in the Atlantic that knows how to offer a fully immersive New England experience, being packed with lighthouses and, in the seasons, clambakes, newspapers, and a novel. The hotel is a luxury hotel on the island.

Porchs, rocking chairs and apple pies

The 1802 Amos Brown House, in Vermont, has been restored in the same. Historically, it was a summer home for Chicago's elite. The home has three bedrooms, a chicken coop, a wood stove and a porch, surrounded by a forest, and a beautifully varied view of the New England past. The house is a classic New England clapboard home, with a porch, and a beautiful view of the bay. The interior is detailed with original New England craftsmanship, and the home is a classic New England clapboard home, with a porch, and a beautiful view of the bay.

Dreams in moons

Above, for dinner, hit the doors. Top, to the water at Mohonk, a grown-up summer camp in New York State. Below, saddle up with the cowboys in Giants.
Hike the Appalachian Trail

Taking on the 2,200-mile Appalachian Trail — and its black bears, rattlesnakes and moose — is chaos middle-class activity in America. If you don’t want to walk all the way from Georgia to Mount Katahdin, in Maine, one easier way to sample the route is to opt for some of the Appalachian Mountain Club’s catered hikes. You’ll find them in New Hampshire and Maine, and each is a day’s hike from the next. Staying in them doesn’t require membership, but the $50 fee gives you a 20% discount on accommodation. Most of the hikes are off-road and off-grid. The staff are “cross-campers” in the AMC’s terminology — hike up with provisions. And they’ve had time to perfect it — the club has been going strong since 1876.

Non-trashy trailer park

El Cosmico, in Texas, is packed with meticulously renovated 1950s trailers, as well as scout tents and igloos. It has a reading room specialising in philosophy, history, architecture and poetry, alongside the more usual campground essentials of communal kitchen, provisions store and shower block. When you realise the campsite is in Marfa (population 2,313) — that improbable bastion of conceptual art near the border with Mexico — the camp begins to make more sense. Only slightly, but enough. Guests can rent wooden-iced hot tubs at weekends, and enjoy regular microfestivals and “happenings” in Marfa itself, arts foundations including a couple dedicated to the town’s most famous...
by its largely American visitors. The inn at Christmas Place, in nearby Niguel, too, serves the food and drink of the same era, but with a more American feel.

Dollywood

When it comes to theme parks, it has to be Dollywood. Next to Tennessee’s Great Smoky Mountains National Park, this festival of folk has a re-creation of Dolly Parton’s childhood home, her real bar has coal-fired steam trains, log flumes, rollercoasters and many more rides. And after all that activity, it’s a short drive to Aunt Granny’s Al-You-Care-It’s-Kabob, for industrial quantities of fried chicken, cornbread and pimientos. And après Rums. This is what’s good in good ol’ Southern nostalgia. It’s often taken with a hefty dollop of irony.

Getting there and around

**AIRLINES**

American Airlines 0844 811 7000, americanairlines.com
British Airways 0844 481 3400, britishairways.com
Delta 0811 221 1222, delta.com
Norwegian 0843 376 0888, norwegian.com
United 0845 180 7470, united.com
US Airways 0845 600 3333, usairways.com
Virgin Atlantic 0844 406 3366, virgin-atlantic.com

**TOUR OPERATORS**

Abercrombie & Kent 0844 805 8666, abercrombie-kent.co.uk
Audley Travel 0300 300 3000, audleytravel.co.uk
Bee Voyager 0800 318 0318, bee-voyager.co.uk
Virgin Holidays 0344 557 3839, virginholidays.co.uk

**CAR HIRE**

Avis 0800 184 1155, avis.co.uk
Enterprise 0800 800 2222, enterprise.co.uk

**VISA**

Remember, British travelers to the USA need to apply in advance for a visa waiver. $14 (€8.95) from visa@similar. For more info, see discoveramerica.com.