7 Underrated Destinations For Memorial Day Weekend

Other than the typically popular destinations, many historic and worthy yet underrated places are a fantastic choice for Memorial Day weekend.

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Aerial View of Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island and Lower Manhattan Skyline

SUMMARY

- **Celebrate Memorial Day at Ellis Island with a guided tour and museum visit.**
- **Explore the birthplace of Memorial Day in Waterloo, New York with a big parade and family-friendly activities during the weekend.**
- **Visit Charleston, South Carolina for historic sites and stunning beaches to commemorate Memorial Day in a meaningful way.**

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Originally known as Decoration Day, Memorial Day is a federal holiday in the United States that honors and mourns the military personnel who died while serving in the United States Armed Forces. Memorial Day is commemorated at Arlington National Cemetery yearly, and a small American flag is placed on each grave.

Respectful Memorial Day festivities also include some of the best summer destinations in the U.S. as popular travel locations. Over the years, some fantastic places in the U.S. have become popular destinations to celebrate Memorial Day weekend, both on the history-ridden East Coast and the rugged and beautiful West Coast of America.

A projected 43.8 million Americans are expected to pack their bags for trips over 50 miles or more over the holiday weekend this year. However, these are a few of the more *underrated*

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places to go for Memorial Day in the United States that welcome summer with a salute.

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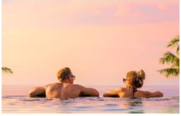

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7 Ellis Island, New York

Celebrate the first point of entry into America for 12 million immigrants between 1892 and 1954

On January 1, 1892, Ellis Island opened as an immigration station for the United States of America. It's a federally owned island in New York Harbor and features a café to take a break and a museum and library to visit. There are two ways to enjoy the museum, all for no extra cost: a guided tour with a park ranger, or a self-guided tour (with or without audio guidance.)

Ellis Island can only be reached by boat. Ferries are operated by Statue City Cruises and depart from The Battery in Lower Manhattan in New York City. The first ferry departs at 9 a.m., and the last ferry departs Ellis Island at 6 p.m. There are extended hours in the summer and during the holidays.

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In November 1954, Ellis Island officially closed as an immigration station. Beginning in 1984, Ellis Island underwent a $160 million renovation, the largest historical restoration project in U.S. history.

Just visiting Ellis Island is a celebration of the life of those who died in protecting the land of the free, and Ellis Island was the entry point to that land.

Nearest Major Airport	John F. Kennedy International Airport
Nearest Attractions	**Statue of Liberty**, **National 9/11 Memorial and Museum**, **The High Line**, **One World Observatory**
Best Places To Stay (Ranked by Travelers)	**Bryant Park Hotel**, **Pendry Manhattan West**, **Casablanca Hotel**

6 Waterloo, New York

Celebrate the birthplace of Memorial Day in the beautiful Finger Lakes region of upstate New York

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Named after Waterloo in Belgium, where Napoleon was defeated, Waterloo in New York is located between the two central Finger Lakes, Seneca Lake and Cayuga Lake.

In 1966, President Lyndon Johnson signed a presidential proclamation recognizing Waterloo as the birthplace of Memorial Day. The 25th annual Celebrate Commemorate observance during the weekend of May 24 to 26 and May 30 will bring thousands of people "home" to Waterloo. The observance will include musical performances, arts and crafts shows, children's games, a youth essay contest, and a big parade celebrating American freedom at 11 a.m. Saturday, May 25th.

Nearest Major Airport	Frederick Douglass Greater Rochester International Airport
Top Local Attractions	**American Civil War Memorial**, **Peter Whitmer Log Home**, **del Lago Resort & Casino**
Best Places To Stay (Ranked by Travelers)	**Lux Hotel**, **The Gridley Inn**, **Budget Inn Waterloo**

Ad

5 Williamsburg, Virginia

The colonial capital of Virginia is known for its restoration and re-creation of 18th-century America

Williamsburg, along with nearby Jamestown and Yorktown, forms the Historic Triangle, a place that annually captivates over 4 million tourists. At its heart is Colonial Williamsburg, a living history museum where visitors step back in time and experience daily colonial life in the streets, stores, and workshops, all brought to life by actors in period costumes.

The city invites people to explore America's founding ideals and honor the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice defending them on Memorial Day weekend, a solemn and significant occasion. This year, the event will take place from Friday through Monday, May 24 to 27. Admission is free to all active-duty military personnel, reservists, retirees, veterans, national guardsmen, and their immediate dependents.

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Nearest Major Airport	Richmond International Airport
Top Local Attractions	**Colonial Williamsburg**, **Busch Gardens**, **Governor's Palace**, **Bruton Parish Episcopal Church**
Best Places To Stay (Ranked by Travelers)	**Holiday Inn Express**, **Williamsburg Inn**, **Colonial Houses**

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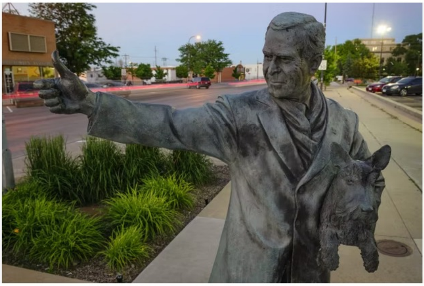
4 Rapid City, South Dakota

A gateway to the iconic Mount Rushmore, with lots of historical and family-friendly attractions



Known for its historical significance, proximity to Mount Rushmore, and a long list of things to do, the city of Presidents, Rapid City in South Dakota, is a great place to spend the Memorial Day weekend.

Known as the "City of Presidents" because of the life-size bronze president statues in downtown, Rapid City is a neighbor to the Black Hills, home to Mount Rushmore, which has more history behind it than most would know. To the city's east is Badlands National Park.

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Rapid City's Memorial Day Run is a red carpet invite, in honor of the brave, for all active and retired military with a free race entry on May 27. Rapid City hosts various events and festivals all year round to match all interests, budgets, and lifestyles. Summer Nights is a weekly concert series that runs every Thursday evening from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Nearest Major Airport	Rapid City Regional Airport
Top Local Attractions	**Mount Rushmore National Memorial**, **Bear Country USA**, **Badlands National Park**, **Dinosaur Park**, **Downtown Rapid City**
Best Places To Stay (Ranked by Travelers)	**Best Western Plus Rapid City**, **Comfort Suites Conference Center**, **Cambria Hotel**

3 Carlsbad, California

Memorial Day celebrations among sandy beaches and blooming flower fields

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North of San Diego and away from the bustle of Los Angeles, Carlsbad is the ultimate coastal playground. The small beach town just outside Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton is perfect for an action-packed getaway or relaxing retreat. It's also a great place to witness the Memorial Day parade on Monday, May 27, a heartwarming event where the community and resident service members unite in a spirit of unity and belonging to honor the fallen.

During spring, Carlsbad comes to life with the color of thousands of flower species and is a beautiful blooming destination. The military town also boasts a lively bar scene and nightlife.

Nearest Major Airport	San Diego International Airport
Top Local Attractions	**LEGOLAND**, **South Carlsbad State Beach**, **Flower Fields**, **Carlsbad Village**
Best Places To Stay (Ranked by Travelers)	**Springhill Suites**, **Carlsbad Seapointe Resort**, **Beach Terrace**

Ad

2 St. Augustine, Florida

America's oldest city is a historic yet underrated beach destination for Memorial Day weekend

In the old cobblestoned streets of St. Augustine, Memorial Day weekend takes on a special significance as the nation's oldest city pays homage to fallen service members on May 27. Throughout the weekend, various events and activities honor the military and commemorate the holiday, including a solemn tribute and wreath-laying ceremony.

St. Augustine is an integral part of Florida's rich history, with beaches, historic sites, great food, and many other things to do. Yet, it's one of the most underrated towns in the state. A perfect stretch of subtropical sand often overshadowed by the city's abundant history. Its historic downtown feels a world away from the dunes of the city's coast.

Ad

Nearest Major Airport	Jacksonville International Airport
Top Local Attractions	**Castillo de San Marcos National Monument**, **St. Augustine Lighthouse & Maritime Museum**, **St. Augustine Beach**, **St. George Street**
Best Places To Stay (Ranked by Travelers)	**Holiday Inn Express St. Augustine, Vilano Beach**, **Saint Augustine Beach House**, **St. George Inn**

1 Charleston, South Carolina

With historic sites, hosts of war memorials, and stunning beaches, it's a great place to spend Memorial Day weekend

Founded in 1670 and defined by its cobblestone streets and horse-drawn carriages, Charleston, South Carolina, holds an important spot in U.S. military history. It also has plenty to do on Memorial Day, including a ceremony on May 27. The Aiken Memorial Day Parade takes place on Laurel Street and Park Avenue.

Ad

Visitors are attracted to Charleston during all seasons for the variety of things to do and see in Charleston, ranging from historic sites such as Patriot's Point or Fort Sumter, where the first shots of the Civil War were fired, to the modern and inspiring new Children's Museum of the Lowcountry and the South Carolina Aquarium.

Several beaches in the Charleston area, like Folly Beach or Sullivan's Island, are fantastic attractions and a great place to spend time with family and friends or even on a solo trip, no matter the time of year.

Nearest Major Airport	Charleston International Airport
Top Local Attractions	**Joe Riley Waterfront Park**, **Middleton Place**, **Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge**, **Magnolia Plantation and Gardens**
Best Places To Stay (Ranked by Travelers)	**French Quarter Inn**, **Spectator Hotel**, **The Loutrel**