

Do a weekend vacay—for less

See the one lone weekend that has magically stayed pencil-free on your family calendar? Seize it now and Sharpie in one of these cool destinations. BY KRISTIN LUNA

The four locales in these pictures are great year-round with their amazing mixture of culture, delicious food, and sights that will make you stand back and say, *Wow*. The beauty of visiting them over a fall weekend? Your budget stays intact (thanks to off-season prices), your sanity will be restored, and you'll pack so much in that you'll feel like you stayed a week.

Yellowstone, WY

Why: Two thirds of Yellowstone National Park's yearly visitors are gone by fall, so the landscape is open for exploring without the hassle of the crowds.

Where to stay: If you're up for roughing it, check out Madison Campground, where you can pitch a tent and get cozy in your sleeping bags. If showers, sheets, and coffeemakers are more your speed, book a room at the Old Faithful Snow Lodge & Cabins, or try the Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel. *From \$21 a*



Your neighbors at Yellowstone.

night for camping and \$123 for a room; yellowstonenationalparklodges.com.

What to do: Your \$25 entrance fee (per vehicle) allows you access to the entire park. If you have little kids, grab a free 12-page activity booklet at any Yellowstone visitor center. It's filled with fun "requirements"; after kids complete them, they'll earn a badge and become official junior rangers. Make sure to hit the Grand Loop Road, Lower Geyser Basin, and Fountain Paint Pot to catch Yellowstone's famed geysers. From there, get your fill of the wildlife you came to see: bison in Hayden Valley, wolves in Lamar Valley, and elk in Mammoth Hot Springs. Then drive to the Tower-Roosevelt area, where you can gape at the



It's a 132-foot plunge!

Tower Fall is more majestic in person, if that's possible.

spectacular 132-foot Tower Fall, tucked away in a canyon.

Fun places to eat: Enjoy a hearty breakfast at the Old Faithful Inn Dining Room. The all-you-can-eat buffet is \$12.50 for adults and \$6.25

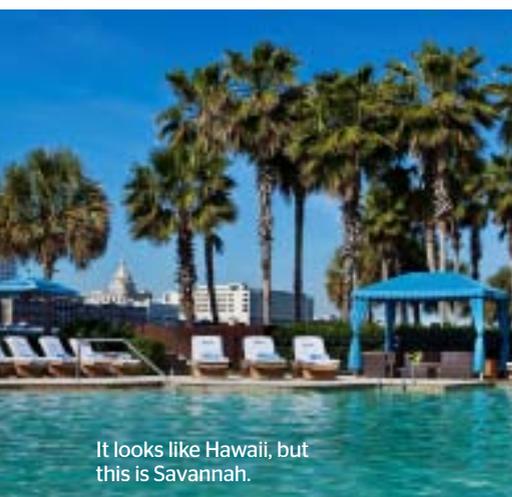
for kids. Fuel up midday on sandwiches, burgers, and fries at the Old Faithful Snow Lodge Geyser Grill. Or, if you don't want to interrupt your adventures, pick up a picnic lunch from any of the park's dining halls before you head out.

Savannah, GA

Why: October is festival month in this storied Southern town, so hit up Oktoberfest on the River (kids won't want to miss the Wiener Dog Races—tiny dachshunds compete!) or the Greek Festival, both free events.

Where to stay: The Westin Savannah Harbor Golf Resort & Spa has it all: pool, golf course, gym, even scheduled s'mores by the fire pit. Plus, from its dock you can hop on a free, scenic Savannah River ferry to the heart of the city. *From \$194 a night; westinsavannah.com.*

What to do: For a memorable ride through the city's historic district, take a Hearse Ghost Tour to see the (many!) haunted residences (\$15 per person). Then have a less spooky afternoon on nearby Tybee Island at the Marine Science Center (just \$4 for adults and free for kids 4 and younger), where you can take guided beach walks, touch live sand dollars, and trek into the marsh. ➤



It looks like Hawaii, but this is Savannah.



A little conductor's dream



Mmm, blueberries and cream!



Make a wish on one of Kansas City's dozens of fountains.

Later, bring history buffs to the Georgia State Railroad Museum, where they can walk through old locomotives and catch a ride on a 1913 steam engine.

Fun places to eat: Get a little adventurous by trying Creole dishes and wild game (like kangaroo or buffalo) at Alligator Soul, or head to Soho South Café for its popular Monte Cristo (a fried ham and cheese sandwich). But leave room for something sweet—you'll want to drop by Leopold's Ice Cream for a scoop or three of its Thin Mints flavor—Savannah is the home of the Girl Scouts and their founder, Juliette Low.

Kansas City, MO

Why: Kansas City has a distinctive art culture, from avant-garde museums to beautiful fountains and sculptures along the city streets.

Where to stay: The city's first green property, Q Hotel & Spa, offers complimentary amenities like Wi-Fi, gym passes, parking, and even on-site yoga. *From \$110 a night; theqhotel.com.*

What to do: Explore the quirky masterpieces at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art (admission is free), then hit up Hallmark's Kaleidoscope, a free art space where kids can go wild with Hallmark's leftover paper products, markers, and melted crayons. Afterward, take in the National WWII Museum (admission is \$14 for adults, \$12 for kids 6 to 17, and free for kids under 5). Be sure to climb to the top of the museum's 217-foot Memorial Tower for one of the best views of the city. Get your shopping fix at Country Club Plaza,

rife with outdoor art and Moorish architecture inspired by KC's sister city, Seville, Spain.

Fun places to eat: You can't go to Kansas City without trying its famed BBQ. Local favorite Fiorella's Jack Stack Barbecue serves big portions of slow-smoked meat. Or try upscale comfort food (like duck-fat fries—amazing) at the new gastropub Gram & Dun. And don't leave town without grabbing pastries or cookies from Natasha's Mulberry & Mott or handmade ice cream from Glacé.

Toronto, Canada

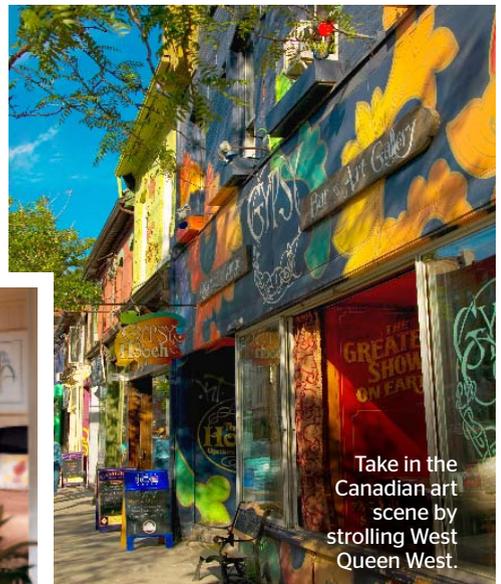
Why: This chic, cosmopolitan escape is a bit like New York City—without the hefty price tag.

Where to stay: In the heart of downtown, the stately old Fairmont Royal York is convenient *and* a bargain, considering the luxurious rooms and indoor pool. An added bonus: Kids under 5 eat free at the hotel's five restaurants, and those under 11 eat for half price. *From \$219 a night; fairmont.com/royal-york-toronto.*

What to do: Enjoy an afternoon of

free art by popping into the galleries along the mile-long West Queen West. For a totally Canadian experience, pay homage to the national pastime at the Hockey Hall of Fame (\$17.50 for adults, \$11 for children). Kids will love squaring off in a virtual shoot-out and checking out what a professional locker room looks like. And swing by the Toronto Chocolate Festival (late October and early November), which features tastings and chocolate-making exhibits.

Fun places to eat: Head to the local food vendors at St. Lawrence Market (open Tuesday to Saturday), and don't miss Carousel Bakery, where you can try the peameal bacon sandwich, made with cornmeal-coated, sweet-pickle-cured Canadian bacon—just weird enough to work! Later, for a pasta dinner that's worth the carbs and the cash, make your way to Strada 241 (entrées run about \$16). The bread, sauces, and pastries are made in-house, so it's like being at Grandma's, without all the cheek-pinching. *Buon appetito.* 🍴



Take in the Canadian art scene by strolling West Queen West.



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