

DELMARVA PENINSULA, MARYLAND

154 ASSATEAGUE ISLAND

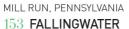
Local folklore tells that the wild horses of Assateague Island are descended from the survivors of a shipwreck, though no records confirm the tale. Encountering their wild strength and beauty on the 37-mi (6-km) long uninhabited island commands respect and a sense of awe. It is advised to observe the feral horses from a safe distance.

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 155 AMERICAN VISIONARY ART MUSEUM

While away an afternoon exploring the ways that the human spirit finds a voice through art. The colorful and often eccentric art displayed here is all by self-taught artists, resulting in some highly individualistic and creative pieces, each with its own written story attached. The sculpture garden features a 55-ft (17-m) tall, wind-powered whirligig.

HIDDEN GEM WAYNE, PENNSYLVANIA 156 CHANTICLEER GARDEN

Chanticleer is one of the most relaxing gardens you'll visit and is just 30 minutes outside
Philadelphia. With only 35 acres open to the public, it is a world away from larger, busier gardens in the country. The Teacup Garden is a secluded courtyard bursting with color; the perfect place to set up an artist's easel and let your creativity flow.



Renowned American architect
Frank Lloyd Wright designed this
house as a holiday retreat for
a private client. Built over a
waterfall in the Pennsylvanian
mountains, it exemplifies his
philosophy of harmoniously
uniting art and nature.
Fallingwater and the surrounding
Bear Run Nature Reserve is
open to the public but you will
need to book a tour in advance.



KENNETT SQUARE, PENNSYLVANIA 157 LONGWOOD GARDENS

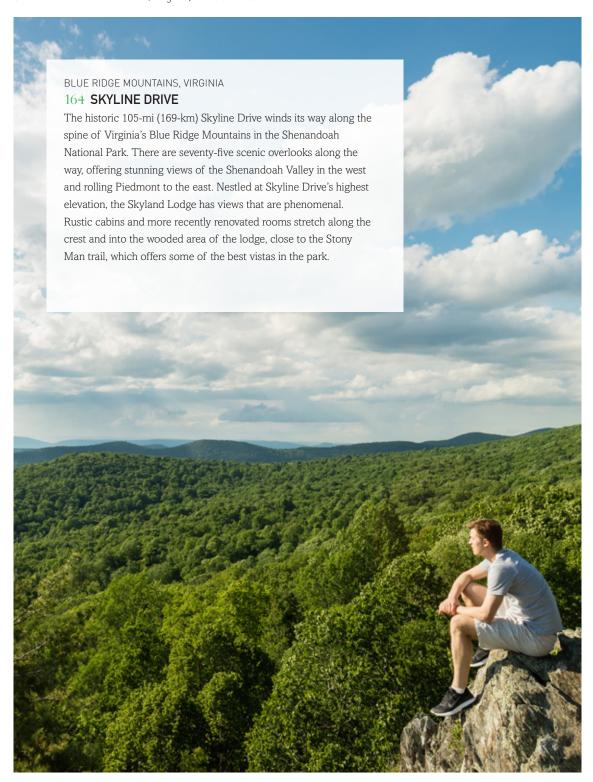
Open almost continuously since the eighteenth century, this 1,000-acre (405-hectare) oasis of gardens, woodlands, and meadows provides opportunity to wander in thought.

TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND 158 ST. MICHAELS

This small town retains the look and feel of a nineteenth-century seaport. The Inn at Perry Cabin by Belmond has airy rooms that feel restful.



Top and Above: Longwood Gardens



GEORGIA

170 COASTAL GEORGIA

Georgia's coast is wonderfully wild and unique. Fecund sea islands are lapped by salt tides and peppered with marshes, estuaries, and miles of flat beach. Roaring rivers descend from the northern mountains, marshlands teem with fiddler crabs and swaying cordgrass, and the low whisper of the Atlantic is never far away.

The seaside wilds of Georgia include fifteen barrier islands—four of these have become popular resort destinations, while the rest are accessible only by boat and are virtually unspoiled natural escapes. Each showcases the beauty of the coastline with its own distinct character and all are worth exploration.

Sapelo Island is a tangle of salt marsh and sand, and home to the Geechee people who have inhabited the coast here for more than 200 years. The Geechees have fought development of their island, and visitors must be part of an organized tour or guests of the residents.

Accessible by car, Jekyll Island is a more popular resort destination. However, it does have its own unspoiled secrets. Hidden down an unassuming palm-lined path is the visually arresting shore of Driftwood Beach, where whole trees, preserved in gray by the salt air, rest on their sides in a wild sculpture of twisted wood.

A third option is to rent the private Eagle Island. The rustic luxury lodge has spacious accommodation for up to ten people. It features a classic wraparound porch with a swinging bed, and an outdoor fireplace in front of a hot tub where you can watch the moon rising from the dock. Clearly, the accommodation has been designed to encourage enjoyment of the outdoors.





NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA 103 GARDEN DISTRICT

The historic Garden District is a place of opulence and beauty, with well-preserved antebellum mansions, enchanting gardens, and oodles of Southern charm. A trip on the oldest continually operating streetcar in the world, the St. Charles Streetcar, will show you the main sights of this elegant area with a dash of added romance.

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

104 SONIAT HOUSE

A trio of typical Creole town houses at the quiet end of Chartres Street make up Soniat House. Each room has been furnished with art and antiques collected by the owners on trips abroad. The rocking chair on the private balcony of room twenty-eight is a restful spot to watch the chilled-out street scene below.

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

105 LAFAYETTE CEMETERY NO.1

Lafayette Cemetery No.1 has been immortalized in film, literature, and photography, and is a popular destination for visitors to the city. Lush greenery shades the pathways through the Gothic tombs and crypts. It is a little run-down, but that just adds to the unusual atmosphere in this part of the city.

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

106 CAFÉ BEIGNET NEW ORLEANS

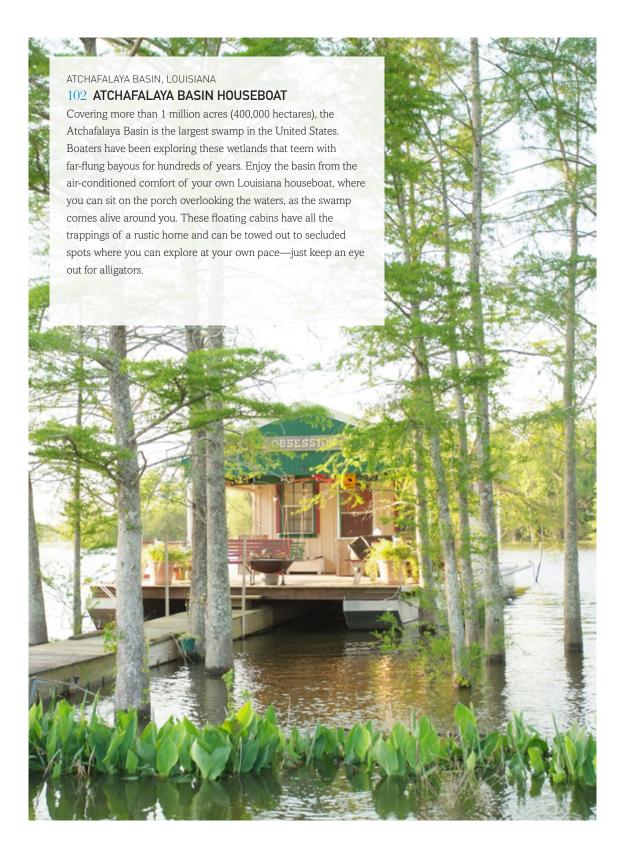
The perfect time to enjoy the busy French Quarter is early in the morning, as sunlight gilds the plants spilling from the balconies above. Do as the locals do, and head to this well-known café to relax outdoors with a coffee and a beignet—a Frenchstyle square donut that is typically enjoyed here for breakfast.

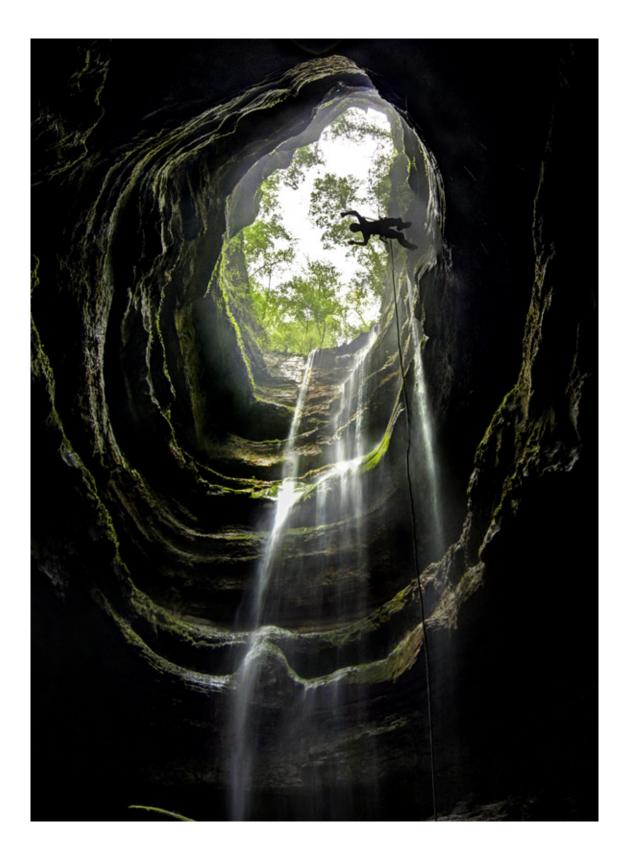
HIDDEN GEM

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

107 SINGING OAK

Perched in the heart of the City Park, a giant oak provides shade from the sultry Louisiana summer heat. Take a seat on a bench under its expansive branches, and you will hear the enchanting symphony of wind chimes coming from above, placed there by local artist Jim Hart. It is an unexpected delight.





JACKSON COUNTY, ALABAMA

113 NEVERSINK PIT

Experienced climbers have the advantage of being able to descend the staggering sixteen-story drop from the leafy surface to the stark bottom of this geological marvel in Jackson County, Alabama.

Lush ferns drip down the ledges at the entrance in spring, and ribbony waterfalls accompany you on the way down as you pass rare flora clinging to the limestone shelves. These are sensitive and endangered ecosystems that people are prohibited to touch. On a summer's night, the bioluminescent fungi *Armillaria mellea* decorate the depths and are easily mistaken for the enchanting luminosity of glowworms. The limestone sinkhole of Neversink Pit is 40 ft (23 m) wide at the top, opening out to a cave floor that spans more than double that area.

If you descend, take a moment at the bottom to enjoy the feeling of being in the very bowels of the earth. At 162 ft (49 m) above you, the sky seems a long way away. Venturing this deep underground, you feel like an explorer discovering something that few humans have seen before. Your only company down here is a colony of bats.

The Southeastern Cave Conservancy bought the sinkhole in the 1990s to preserve it for future generations. The group maintains the pit and has established two permanent rig areas at the mouth of the site, to discourage the use of trees to rig climbing ropes. While rappelling to the cave floor is the most incredible way of experiencing Neversink Pit, even for those without the climbing permit, it is still a unique place to visit. From the pit hole, shafts of daylight illuminate the drop, and you can see all the way to the bottom.

The region is well known for its scenic beauty and outdoor recreation, but many may not be aware of the hidden natural world that lies beneath the surface. The dissolving of layers of porous limestone belowground has been fundamental in the formation of the landscape in northern Alabama. Areas are marked by sinking streams, subterranean drainage, large springs, caves, and sinkholes like Neversink Pit. Along with adjacent states suffering the same issues, the area has become the caving capital of the country, with Jackson County having the most in the state. Neversink Pit is accessible via a fairly strenuous thirty-minute hike from a small parking area on an unnamed road.



FLORIDA KEYS, FLORIDA

171 ISLAMORADA

Encompassing six islands in the Florida Keys, Islamorada is known as the Village of Islands. This little string of pearls (well, keys)—
Plantation, Upper and Lower Matecumbe, Shell and Lignumvitae (lignum-vite-ee)—shimmers as one of the prettiest stretches of the Keys. It is world-renowned for its sport fishing, and there are ample opportunities to participate or otherwise enjoy the rich marine life around the islands. Wander through the Morada Way Art & Cultural District for a dose of inspiration when you are bored of the beach. Islamorada stretches across some 20 mi (32 km), from Mile Marker 74.

FLORIDA KEYS, FLORIDA

172 DRY TORTUGAS NATIONAL PARK

Reachable only by boat or seaplane, the Dry Tortugas are considered to be one of North America's most remote and least visited national parks. Your rewards for making the effort are snorkeling amid coral reefs, and an abandoned but beautifully preserved nineteenth-century fort to explore.

HIDDEN GEM

FLORIDA KEYS, FLORIDA

173 QUIET COVE KEY

Quiet Cove Key offers total seclusion on an exposed fossilized reef island, with hiking trails meandering through the mangrove trees and plenty of fishing and kayaking opportunities. There's no property on this island; instead guests stay on a 38-ft (12-m) houseboat that sleeps up to seven people. Camping on the island is also welcome.

FI ORIDA

174 SANIBEL ISLAND

Off the west coast of Florida at Fort Myers, Sanibel Island's beautiful sandy beaches are the main draw for visitors here. Bowman's Beach is the island's most popular stretch for swimming, while Blind Pass Beach is a bit more off the beaten path and is a great place for shell spotters to collect conches and cockles, as well as the occasional shark's tooth.

EVERGLADES, FLORIDA

175 EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

Native American inhabitants called the Everglades the "River of Grass." It is an expansive area of wetlands and swamps, grasslands, and prairies that stretch across your entire field of vision. Explore the contented flow of the park by canoe along peaceful flatwaters and deep into lush subtropical mangrove forests full of rare wildlife.

