

PLUS: Best Places to Vacation PAGE 104

WHY COLLEGE COSTS SO MUCH PAGE 118

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- ▶ 401(k)s
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See page 70



BEST PLACES



TO VACATION

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From Oregon to Maine, we picked 10 perfect places in North America to spend your summer holiday.



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OST OF THE RECENT CHANGES in the way Americans travel fall into the category of necessary inconveniences: heightened security measures, long airport waits, that sort of thing. But there is one change that's been unambiguously positive: Study after study indicates that people are increasingly leaving home to rediscover America and spend more quality time with their families. • These new priorities dovetail perfectly with the criteria MONEY uses to select the

Best Places to Vacation. Our methodology: We look for places, including side trips, that easily justify a week of one's time. They have to feature spectacular natural beauty but not be so isolated that they don't also offer a wide variety of attractions, including cultural events and some decent places to eat. And finally, we seek great values. Not that our picks must necessarily be cheap—but they need to be well worth the dollars you'd spend there. After collecting a sizable group of candidates that fit these criteria, we spent several weeks vetting ideas with travel experts and well-traveled families, culling the list to 10. We think you'll agree that this year's picks fit the bill. • We've also taken a look back at last year's selections, which we think are just as "best" now as they were then. Plus, we offer a first-hand guide to a creative vacation strategy: swapping homes with someone from a desirable destination. One other thing: Accommodation rates are for double rooms unless otherwise noted. Here's what we found, from west to east.

BISBEE

ARIZONA

FOUNDED AS a mining community in 1880, Bisbee became, by the turn of the century, the largest city between St. Louis and San Francisco. That early prosperity meant that Bisbee was built in a far grander style than most of the era's boomtowns. Today its historic downtown streets are lined with stately brick buildings and its hillsides crowded with Victorian homes—all remarkably well preserved.

None of this would justify a trip to southern Arizona in the summer, however, were it not for Bisbee's strategic position. Because it's located

nearly a mile up in the Mule Mountains, temperatures are consistently 20°F cooler than in Phoenix and 10°F cooler than in Tucson. The climate and location together make

Bisbee a unique place to enjoy the outdoors. Just outside town, hikers will find stunning views of both the Huachuca and Chiricahua mountains. And bird watchers flock to Bisbee in early July, when the nearby San Pedro River Valley turns into a hummingbird highway.

Visitors also love following the chamber of commerce's popular self-guided walking tour, which winds its way up the serpentine stairways



A STAY AT THE *Shady Dell in Bisbee features the comforts of 1950s-vintage travel trailers, complete with period furnishings.*

and narrow paths of the neighborhoods surrounding downtown. Back on Main Street you'll find a range of galleries and crafts and antique shops.

Tombstone's legendary OK Corral (where gunslingers Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday took on the Clantons) is just 20 minutes away by car. Kids love what is probably the best staged gunfight in the West. Many vivid glimpses of the area's history are even nearer at hand. Tours of the Copper Queen Mine, complete with hardhats and slickers, take you 1,500 feet belowground aboard open-car trains. As many as 47 saloons once served up libations to hardened miners in the area of town known as Brewery Gulch. (Beware: Most are now shops selling New Age art or Old West kitsch.) And the Bisbee Mining and Historical Museum, one of the country's few small-town Smithsonian affiliates, highlights the area's mineral wealth.

Bed and breakfasts are plentiful, ranging from the small and exclusive to the eclectic and kid-friendly (for a complete listing, check www.bisbeearizona.com). The Copper Queen Hotel (800-247-5829), which was built in 1902 with no expense spared, is celebrating its centennial year with a summer pack-



CLIMATE AND LOCATION *together make Bisbee a great place to enjoy the outdoors. In the nearby Dragoon Mountains, hikers explore Council Rocks, home to 1,000-year-old pictographs.*

age: \$101 gets you a double room, continental breakfast and mine and museum tour passes. And the Shady Dell (520-432-3567) allows you to stay in its assortment of 1950s-vintage travel trailers, complete with period furnishings and the occasional phonograph (vintage records provided) for about \$58 a night. Even if you don't stay at Shady Dell, come for a meal at the on-site Dot's Diner, a perfectly preserved Art Deco diner with hearty, inexpensive food and plenty of neon.