

[Travel](#)

Ease back into traveling with a Midwest getaway



• Promenade Park, the first phase of a massive downtown redevelopment project in Fort Wayne, Ind., has become a thriving urban center for recreation, arts and culture. *Courtesy of Visit Fort Wayne*

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Sick of self-isolating? Cheer up, regional travel destinations are beginning to open during the COVID-19 pandemic so you can start thinking ahead to a Midwest road trip. Here's what's new and what's worth another look.

A caveat: Contact destinations before venturing out to ensure changes in the prevalence of the coronavirus have not caused further closings or restrictions. And be sure to follow safety precautions, including wearing masks where warranted and maintaining social distancing.

Facelift for Indiana's second city

Once just another Rust Belt city, Fort Wayne, Indiana, is getting a makeover with \$880 million in real estate development and downtown revitalization. In the first phase of this

facelift, it returned to its historical riverfront for last summer's opening of Promenade Park joining the city's three rivers, the St. Marys, the St. Joseph and the Maumee, to create a \$20 million urban center for recreation, arts and culture. Visitors experience the 4.2-acre park in a 560-foot treetop canopy trail, amphitheater, dining garden, riverboat cruises and kayak rentals.

The park is near Fort Wayne's existing riverfront offerings, such as its bike trails, The Old Fort where buildings reopen July 4, and Science Center reopening Wednesday, June 17, with limited admission. Face coverings are recommended and a one-hour cleaning break is at 1 p.m. daily.

Just a block and a half away, The Landing is a residential/retail development on the spot where Erie Canal boats once docked. Its restaurants, brewery, coffee bar and roastery are formulating reopening plans. A new boutique hotel will open next door later this year. Designed by Barbara Bradley Baekgaard, co-founder of Fort Wayne-headquartered Vera Bradley, it will have 124 rooms, a marquee food and beverage option, rooftop bar and retail space.

Speaking of Vera Bradley, known for its handbags, luggage and accessories, the Vera Bradley Annual Outlet Sale was canceled this year, but mark your calendar for next year's big event, April 7-11. More than 45,000 shoppers usually attend to hunt for bargains at 40% to 60% off retail prices.

An annual event still on the 2020 calendar, the Johnny Appleseed Festival celebrates the life of nurseryman John Chapman. It features food, crafts, antiques, a children's area, roving entertainment and farmers market Sept. 19 and 20.

While exploring what's new in Fort Wayne, visitors should plan a visit to some of its most popular established attractions, such as the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo, rated one of the Top 10 zoos in the country. It is reopening July 4 with timed tickets.

For details, call Visit Fort Wayne at (800) 767-7752 or see visitfortwayne.com.

Water fun in Branson

Water is the keyword for new attractions in the Branson, Missouri, area. Aquarium at the Boardwalk will bring the oceans to the Ozarks after it opens this fall in the Highway 76 Entertainment District. Visitors can experience bioluminescence in the Jelly Fish Infinity Room, watch sharks swim around them from a clear tunnel, feel a cownose ray in a Touch Pool and climb through a "Kelp Forest" in this 46,000-square-foot aquarium.

Elsewhere in the Branson area, Silver Dollar City theme park opens for the season Monday, June 15. To comply with social distancing, guests must reserve the dates they wish to visit and will be required to wear a mask. When it opens later this summer, the

park's Mystic River Falls will be the tallest raft-ride drop in the Western Hemisphere, at 4.5 stories. Eight-passenger rafts will ascend an 82-foot tower to a water channel nearly a half-mile long.

Two separate attractions with a water theme already are open to guests: White Water theme park reopens Wednesday, June 17, and Showboat Branson Belle reopens Saturday, June 20, with reduced seating capacity and mask requirement.

Pristine water features are part of the attraction -- and the frustration -- at the new Payne's Valley Golf Course at Big Cedar Lodge. The first public-access golf course designed by Tiger Woods pays tribute to Ozarks native and World Golf Hall of Fame member Payne Stewart. It is open for preview play with some restrictions, including one person per cart unless accompanied by someone from the same household.

For details, call the Branson/Lakes Area Convention and Visitors Bureau at (800) 296-0463 or see explorebranson.com and Silver Dollar City at (800) 888-7277 or silverdollarcity.com.



The Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, designed by I.M. Pei, marks its 25th year on the shore of Lake Erie in Cleveland. - Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier

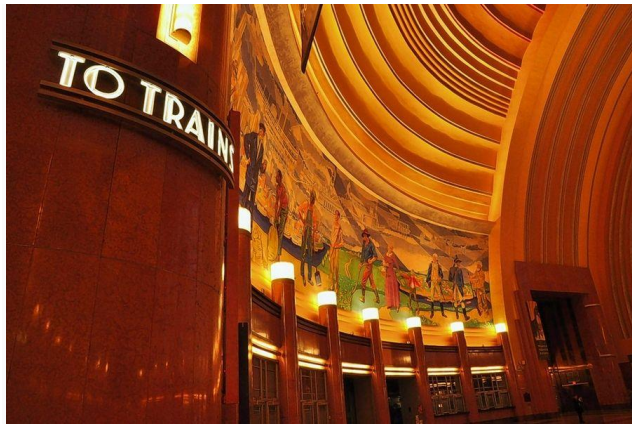
Rock out in Cleveland

This year marks the 25th the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame has occupied the I.M. Pei-designed building on Lake Erie in Cleveland. It plans to reopen for limited admission on Monday, June 15, with timed tickets, temperature checks and the expectation that

visitors wear face coverings. Visitors will want to check out the new "Play It Loud" exhibit showcasing about 130 of rock's most recognized instruments and "The Garage" where they can play and record their own hits on drums, guitars and keyboards. This year will bring special attention to Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix, both of whom died 50 years ago. Artifacts on display include Joplin's eyeglasses and beads and a Mosrite double-neck guitar played by Hendrix. Also on display are John Lennon's glasses and British passport showing his birth 80 years ago this October.

Mark your calendar for the 2020 Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony pushed back from May to Nov. 7 at Cleveland's Public Auditorium. This year's celebration will see Whitney Houston, The Notorious B.I.G., Nine Inch Nails, Depeche Mode, T Rex and The Doobie Brothers inducted into the Hall of Fame.

For details, call Destination Cleveland at (800) 321-1001 or see thisiscleveland.com or call the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame at (216) 781-7625 or see rockhall.com.



The restored art deco Union Terminal train station in Cincinnati, Ohio, houses the Cincinnati Museum Center and recently added the Nancy & David Wolf Holocaust & Humanity Center. - Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier

Holocaust Museum at restored Art Deco depot

Union Terminal opened in 1933 in Cincinnati, Ohio, and after a \$228 million renovation in 2018 restored its stunning Art Deco design. The terminal served as a Midwest transit point for World War II GIs as well as refugees who often arrived with only the clothes on their backs.

It now houses Cincinnati Museum Center, reopening Friday, July 17. The center houses three museums, an OMNIMAX theater and the new Nancy & David Wolf Holocaust & Humanity Center. Experience the stories of Holocaust survivors in oral histories and family artifacts. Interactive kiosks raise the broad issues of genocide, civil rights and hate crimes both past and present.

For details, call the Cincinnati Museum Center at (800) 733-2077 or see cincymuseum.org.



Indy cars take a warm-up lap before the running of the Indy 500, rescheduled to Aug. 23 this year. - Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier

Rev up for a rescheduled Indy 500

If you have long wanted to experience the Indy 500 but Memorial Day weekend never worked out, this year is your chance. The world's largest single-day sporting event has been postponed to Aug. 23. In Speedway, Indiana, just outside Indianapolis, 33 drivers will begin the race around the 2.5-mile oval while partyers set up in the infield. By the time the checkered flag waves, drivers who haven't been eliminated will have made 200 laps, a total of 500 miles.

But the race is just the climax of events, including more than a week of practice and qualifying races culminating with Carb Day, on Aug. 21 this year. Fans hang out around the garages and Gasoline Alley, hoping to snag a photo or autograph of their favorite drivers and a close look at the cars.

All eyes will be on downtown Indianapolis the following day, Aug. 22, for the annual Festival Parade, the only 500 Festival event held every year since its founding in 1957. It often draws a crowd of 300,000 spectators gawking at marching bands and giant character balloons. Celebrities passing by on floats and in cars might be TV and film actors, pro athletes, country music singers, rock stars and legendary Indy 500 racers. All 33 drivers in the next day's big race ride the parade route in convertible pace cars, lining

up three abreast in staggered groups arranged in the same starting position they'll take on the track.

For details, call (317) 492-8500 or see indianapolismotorspeedway.com or 50ofestival.com, call Visit Indy at (800) 323-4639 or see visitindy.com.



Fall foliage lines the roadway in Whitefish Dunes State Park in Door County, Wis. -
Courtesy of Jon Jarosh-DCVB

See fall colors in Door County

Last year Door County, Wisconsin, was voted the best destination for fall foliage in USA TODAY's 10Best Readers' Choice travel award contest. It was the latest in a series of awards the peninsula has won for its spectacular displays of autumn hues. Flanked by water for nearly 70 miles, Door County enjoys longer-than-average fall colors usually peaking around mid-October.

Leaf peepers delight in a self-drive circle tour of the peninsula, up the Lake Michigan side, across "Death's Door" to Washington Island and back along Green Bay. Those who don't want to drive can tour by trolley, boat or kayak. Visitors can climb a lighthouse and lookout tower for a treetop view. More than two dozen farm markets and specialty food stores offer autumn favorites. Fall festivals round out the autumn experience: Pumpkin Patch Festival is Oct. 10 and 11 and Sister Bay Fall Festival is Oct. 16-18.

For details, call Destination Door County at (800) 527-3529 or see doorcounty.com.

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