



Seeking Summer Fun On The Road

By Adam Lloyd, GimpontheGo.com

School is out. The sun is blazing. Summer is here and one truth is certain - it is time to get away! Whether you are the type of person who waits all year, eagerly anticipating the moment when you can hit the beaches and begin paying homage to the sun deity, or are more reserved, still in need of a vacation, but preferably away from the hordes and somewhat less sun drenched, here are some great travel ideas for you!

Sun, Sand, Beaches and Tans

There are literally hundreds of terrific beaches, large and small, throughout our nation. Some are ideal because they have long boardwalks lined with beach fare; some are perfect because they have hearty nightlife; some make sense because they're only a short drive away; and yet others are pure paradise because of their long stretches of white sand and idyllic water. While it would be impossible to review them all, if one of them is your choice for any of the above reasons, you can count on my thumbs up in support.

Still, two beach cities stand out as incorporating all of the ingredients, and then some, that make for a great summer beach pilgrimage.

San Diego

San Diego is a huge city with a friendly, small town feel. From its northern coastal villages, to the Harbor and Gaslamp Quarter located downtown, to Sea World, Balboa Park and the city's famed zoo, it is hard to beat San Diego as a summer vacation destination.



If you are looking for sun and surf San Diego is made to order. Temperatures regularly hover in the low to mid-eighties and a constant ocean breeze is virtually guaranteed. The grassy bluffs in Del Mar and the La Jolla Cove overlook stunning views of the Pacific Ocean, small but beautiful beaches and beach towns with delicious eateries, beach-wear boutiques and various other shopping opportunities.

Closer to downtown, Mission Bay and the adjacent Mission Beach offer numerous boating and water sports activities. The incredibly long, paved beach walkway features roller blading, inexpensive beach food, t-shirt shops and nice views of the huge beach, full of tanning bodies.

Many beaches, including Mission and La Jolla Shores offer decent wheelchair access via pathways or beach chairs arranged through the lifeguard stations. The areas surrounding the beaches are all very accessible as well, from sidewalks to shops to restaurants, access is top notch.

For your time away from the beach, San Diego has lots going on. Sea World and the San Diego Zoo are huge tourist attractions, both with solid access programs for all variety of disabilities. Balboa Park is a beautiful setting for picnics, frisbee games or simply relaxing outdoors. It is also home to many of the city's museums, all accessible with a nominal entry fee. For a taste of historical San Diego, try Old Town with its restored Spanish-style shops and restaurants. Finally, after the sun sets, the Gaslamp Quarter boasts blocks of unique restaurants, bars and night clubs.

Accessible hotels are available throughout San Diego and range in cost from

budget motels to expensive waterside resorts. There are no wheelchair accessible taxis, but Cloud 9 Transportation Services has a lift equipped van, which can be hired with 24 hours advance notice. Most of the city's busses are also wheelchair friendly.

Miami's South Beach



In contrast to San Diego's laid back atmosphere, Miami Beach is a bustling mecca for those drawn to palm trees, white sand and blue water. South Beach, in particular, with its Art Deco hotels, percussive Latin music, sidewalk cafes and roving gangs of models, feels like the center of the summer vacation universe!

There are four main thoroughfares along which all of the activity takes place, Washington Street, Collins Avenue, Lincoln Road and Ocean Drive. As the name implies, Ocean Drive borders the beach, and is where many of the cafes and hotels are located. It is also the location of the late Gianni Versace's home, and quite often you will find visitors paying homage outside the mammoth white mansion's gates. Virtually every hotel along this strip has outdoor seating for their restaurants placed along the edge of the wide sidewalk, creating a pedestrian corridor between the hotel and the tables. On crowded days, and most days are crowded, it is easier to travel along the beach?side sidewalk than squeeze through the hordes of people walking and dining on the hotel side. Surprisingly, the disabled parking spots are usually empty along this otherwise packed street.

The beach itself is stunning - incredibly long and wide, with a cement boardwalk and sea wall some twenty yards before the dunes, followed by another thirty yards of sand before you get to the water. There is wheelchair access near the beach patrol station, and a beach wheelchair is available for rent. The sand at this accessible entrance is well packed down and in a standard power chair, one can get as far as the life guard stands without sinking too much. Bring plenty of water and sun block though, the heat and

humidity are much more intense than in San Diego.

Miami Beach has an abundance of hotels to choose from and despite their venerable age, almost all have been retrofitted with accessibility features that rival new properties. Sure, there are Holiday Inns and other modern chain hotels, but half the fun of South Beach is staying in a 1930's Art Deco construct.

The dining in South Beach is excellent but tends to be a little pricey. Be sure to realize that more often than not a tip has already been added to your bill. The variety of cuisine is amazing, with Cuban, seafood, Italian and continental restaurants the favorites.

There are also plenty of shopping and non-beach activities such as nearby golf courses, fishing, boating and even a trip to the Everglades if you don't mind an hour's drive.

South Beach, itself, is easily walkable and very accessible with virtually no need for using motorized transportation. However, if you do need to drive, the only accessible cab service I'm aware of is Key Biscane Taxi.

Alternative Summer Settings

It is hard to beat the beach on a beautiful summer afternoon, but it's not hard to understand why you might want to avoid overwhelming traffic, noisy crowds and bathing yourself daily in sun block. For those looking to buck the summer travel trend, try heading north.

Anchors Aweigh



There may not be a better time than summer to visit Alaska. Pleasant temperatures (upper 60s), burgeoning wildlife and relatively few tourists make our 49th state a perfect vacation destination. Juneau, Anchorage and even Nome have tours, hotels and transportation set up for disabled visitors, but a wonderfully convenient way to view the great white

north is via cruise ship.

All of the larger cruise lines offer a variety of Alaska tour packages. Some include inland train excursions or wilderness tours, but one of the most beautiful options is a 7 night journey through the inside passage. Among the most disability friendly lines, Princess, Royal Caribbean, Norwegian and Celebrity, each has a slightly different inside passage cruise.

Settling into one of between six and fourteen accessible cabins on the various ships, you will be transported as close to Alaska's awe-inspiring glaciers as humanly possible. Stops in Ketchikan, Juneau, Skagway, Hubbard Glacier, Valdez and Seward among others, provide ample opportunity to explore Alaska's natural beauty and welcoming residents.

Whether your desire is to experience native Inuit culture, art (ivory carvings and wooden totems) and history or watch herds of elk, bears and moose in their natural habitat, Alaska has it all. The sheer beauty of the snow capped mountains, flower-strewn valleys and crystal clear lakes, is enough to have breathless visitors speeding through rolls of film.

Of course, while the Alaskan countryside is the real attraction, one cannot forget the lure of all the shipboard amenities during a cruise. Fine dining several times a day, casino games, theater, swimming pools, night clubs and any other number of diversions await you after your time communing with nature. Wilderness and pampering in the same day is quite a combination. When it comes to an Alaskan summer cruise the last thing you'll be thinking about are the over populated beaches further south.

The Great White North, Eh?

Often described as America in the 1950's, Vancouver, British Columbia is an ideal summer destination for anyone seeking a temperate, relaxing break from the summer travel crush. Located on Canada's west coast, just north of Seattle, Vancouver is a magical city with the most genuinely friendly locals outside of Hawaii.

Set between the Pacific waterways and the Canadian Rockies, Vancouver's topography is visually stunning. Palm trees and sailing ships at the coast are framed by powder-white mountain tops off in the distance. Temperatures rest perfectly in the upper 70s and the air smells of flourishing nature, despite Vancouver being a large urban center.

Unlike many foreign destinations, accessibility in Vancouver is virtually up to speed with the States. Hotels, restaurants, attractions and even some public transportation options are more than ready to meet your accessibility needs.

Within the city of Vancouver, there are a number of "must see" attractions. Robson Street, with a London like atmosphere, is a prime shopping location. Great stores, from quirky to swank, populate the street for a fun way to spend some time and money. Remember, the U.S. dollar goes further in Canada. There is also historic Gastown, boasting cobbled streets, harbour themed shops and good viewing of the cruise ships awaiting their journeys north to Alaska. Granville Island is another area not to be missed. Old warehouses have been converted and now house what can best be described as an artist colony. Craft boutiques and a large market offer a wide variety of the artisans' works.

The University of British Columbia and the Museum of Man are another terrific way to learn about Vancouver, specifically its anthropology and the culture of what Canadians call the "first nations people." Another diversion from Vancouver's unique shopping is Stanley Park. Situated at the city's

center, it is reminiscent of New York's Central Park, only in a lovelier setting. Tennis courts, golf courses, jogging trails, gorgeous fields and a famed sea wall, all set on a large peninsula make Stanley Park an exhilarating oasis in an otherwise urban area.

Finally, a wonderful hour plus, accessible ferry ride brings you to British Columbia's warmest spot, Vancouver Island. Here you will find the city of Victoria, Vancouver's capitol and one of the most beautiful gardens you will ever experience: Butchart Gardens. Fifty acres of flowers, spectacular views, meandering paths and expansive lawns are complimented by a spectacular night time illumination, fireworks and regular jazz performances. It feels almost like Disney's magical landscaping without the rides. There is an \$18 Canadian entry fee for adults, but it is well worth it.

Hit the Road

Summer's "unofficial" start is but days away. Follow your instincts and desires about what type of getaway you'd like, but by all means do take a vacation. It wouldn't be summer without one!

Visit Adam Lloyd's travel website for people with disabilities at <http://www.enabledonline.com/BackIssues/June2001/www.GimpontheGo.com> or email him at Editor@GimpontheGo.com.

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