

# The Americas



# Unsighted States

**Rachael Oakes-Ash** ignores tourist clichés and uncovers some lesser-known gems of the US.

From nature-lovers to big-city shopaholics, conspiracy theorists to those who like to get up close with small-town quaintness, the US has something for everyone.

Put the Big Apple, the Grand Canyon and Hollywood on the back burner for now and don't even think about seeing the Golden Gate Bridge, Disneyland or Waikiki until you've considered other experiences.

There are 9.16 million square kilometres of country to discover – and it's in this vast and varied land you'll find these hidden gems.

## Glacier National Park, Montana

This World Heritage Site on the US-Canadian border attracts the granola-munching type of traveller – those with plenty of adrenalin, who like their oxygen pure, their mountains rugged and their lakes pristine. If walking is your preferred mode of transport, there are 1130 kilometres of tramping trails to keep those hooves happy and more than 1000 camp sites where you can lay your swag.

Alternatively, you can give your feet a rest and explore the park's 130 lakes on horseback or mountain bike through cedar forests. If four wheels is more your thing, the famed Going-to-the-Sun Road took 11 years to build, was completed in 1932 and is a masterpiece of engineering. It is 83 kilometres of some of the most scenic wilderness in the US. But be warned: you'll want to stop the car, often, as this road is a photographer's dream. See [nps.gov/glac](http://nps.gov/glac).

## The ET Highway, Nevada

We could tell you about State Route 375 but we'd have to kill you. The Extraterrestrial

Highway, as it's known, cuts through Nevada's most famed paranormal area. The highway is home to Area 51, the top-secret military base the US Government tries to keep on the down low. Why? According to flying sources (pun intended) Area 51 has housed aliens and their spacecraft while developing time travel and intergalactic spacecraft of our own. Now I'm almost certain to have the FBI on my doorstep.

Cruise the Extraterrestrial Highway at your own risk – there are plenty of UFO-themed road stops to keep conspiracy juices flowing. Take a detour to Kershaw-Ryan State Park and Rainbow Canyon for desert oases, or find inner peace at Cathedral Gorge, Echo Canyon and Spring Valley. Just watch your back and tell your mother you love her before you go. See [travelnevada.com](http://travelnevada.com). Don't tell them we sent you.

## Park City, Utah

The be-seen crowd may wander the snow-lined streets of Park City for Robert Redford's Sundance Film Festival every January but, come summer, this Utah town makes way for opera and symphony audiences and adventurous types wanting mountain wilderness.

Biking and hiking trails link Park City's three resorts: Deer Valley, The Canyons and Park City Mountain Resort. Add the Deer Valley Music Festival, when the Utah Symphony and Opera come to play, the Canyons Resort Summer Concert Series and the Park City Jazz Festival in August and you've got culture covered.

The Utah Olympic Park also pumps it up in summer with bobsled rides at a crazy 110kmh. Then there's the fly fishing, white



Special report



water rafting and golf – all within 30 minutes’ drive from downtown Park City. We haven’t even got to the town’s bar and restaurant scene. Rest assured, it’s good. See [parkcityinfo.com](#).

New England’s coastline

It’s picture-perfect, home-baked apple pie and picket fence stuff in north-east USA, one of the oldest settled regions of the country. It is bursting with quaint towns worthy of a television miniseries but is also home to some serious style. Sure, Martha’s Vineyard in Massachusetts is favoured by New York and Boston’s elite as a seaside getaway but you don’t have to be a Kennedy to enjoy Maine’s spectacular coastline.

Act like a pilgrim and jump on board the Arabella tall ship. Yes, it looks old (that’s the point) but it’s a floating den of contemporary luxury designed to take in the four distinct seasons of New England while cruising estuaries, bays and beaches.

Maine has more coastline than California, pier-style amusement parks, a host of lighthouses including the country’s first at Portland and retail therapy at The Kittery



outlets’ 120 upmarket factory stores. See [cruisearabella.com](#) and [visitmaine.com](#).

Jules Undersea Lodge

There’s no valet parking at the Jules Undersea Lodge in Key Largo, Florida. This underwater research habitat turned “hotel” sits in Key Largo’s azure waters. Named after the author of *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth*, Jules Verne, the lodge is more self-contained apartment than full-service hotel.

Guests scuba dive to the lodge, which has air-conditioning, hot showers, stereo and DVD entertainment, two bedrooms and a fully stocked galley. There’s unlimited diving for those who stay overnight and if you haven’t dived before, the lodge offers PADI certification courses so you can get your licence.

For \$US475 (\$705) a person a night, you get all your dive gear, a gourmet dinner, breakfast and diving. See [jul.com](#).

Atlanta, Georgia

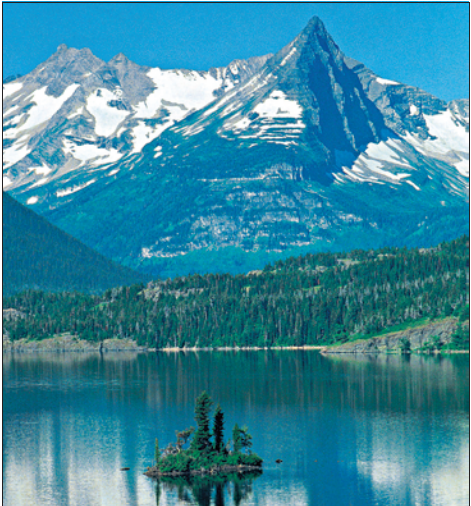
Atlanta started life as an American Indian village called Standing Peachtree before

becoming a white settlement called Thrasherville. The city played host to the world premiere of *Gone With The Wind* in 1939 and was home to the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. Its first African-American mayor was elected in 1973 and the city went on to host the 1996 summer Olympic Games.

This bustling metropolis boasts the world’s largest aquarium, has an entire underground shopping complex plus the Atlanta Civil War Museum, the Martin Luther King jnr National Historic Site and Stone Mountain, the largest piece of exposed granite in the world. Have we mentioned there’s a thriving live music scene? See [exploregeorgia.org](#).

Whale watching in Washington

The archipelago known as the San Juan Islands are scattered off the coast of Washington State, close to the US-Canada border. Depending on the tide, there are 400 to 700 islands, split between Canada’s Gulf Islands and the San Juan Islands. Fifteen of them are accessible by public ferry from Anacortes, just north of Seattle – six in the US and nine in the Canadian province of British Columbia. Start with the



Stunning ... (clockwise from far left) Martha’s Vineyard; orcas off the San Juan Islands; Glacier National Park; Martin Luther King jnr’s birthplace; Mooney Falls.

Photos: Getty Images, AFP, Lonely Planet, Photolibary.com

“majors” – Lopez, Orcas and San Juan Island – and rent a bike to explore the coastline and viewing points for the orcas (killer whales) that inhabit these waters and regularly come close to shore.

Friday Harbor is the most inhabited and most touristy destination on San Juan Island. Expect seafood restaurants, weekend farmers’ markets, charming inns and forest and mountain views. See [sanjuanisland.com](#).

**Havasu Waterfall, Grand Canyon**

The Havasupai Tribe have inhabited this area for more than 800 years and have settled in the town of Supai, where mail is still delivered by mule. It’s chopper in or a hike of 13-plus kilometres on foot, horse or mule to get to this remote village. Visitor numbers are limited.

Once in, expect to marvel at the four main waterfalls in this area. Known for their multicoloured waters with high mineral content, the Navajo, Havasu, Mooney and Beaver falls are vastly different in size and style and easily accessible from the village campsite or rustic lodge. See [havasupatribe.com](#).