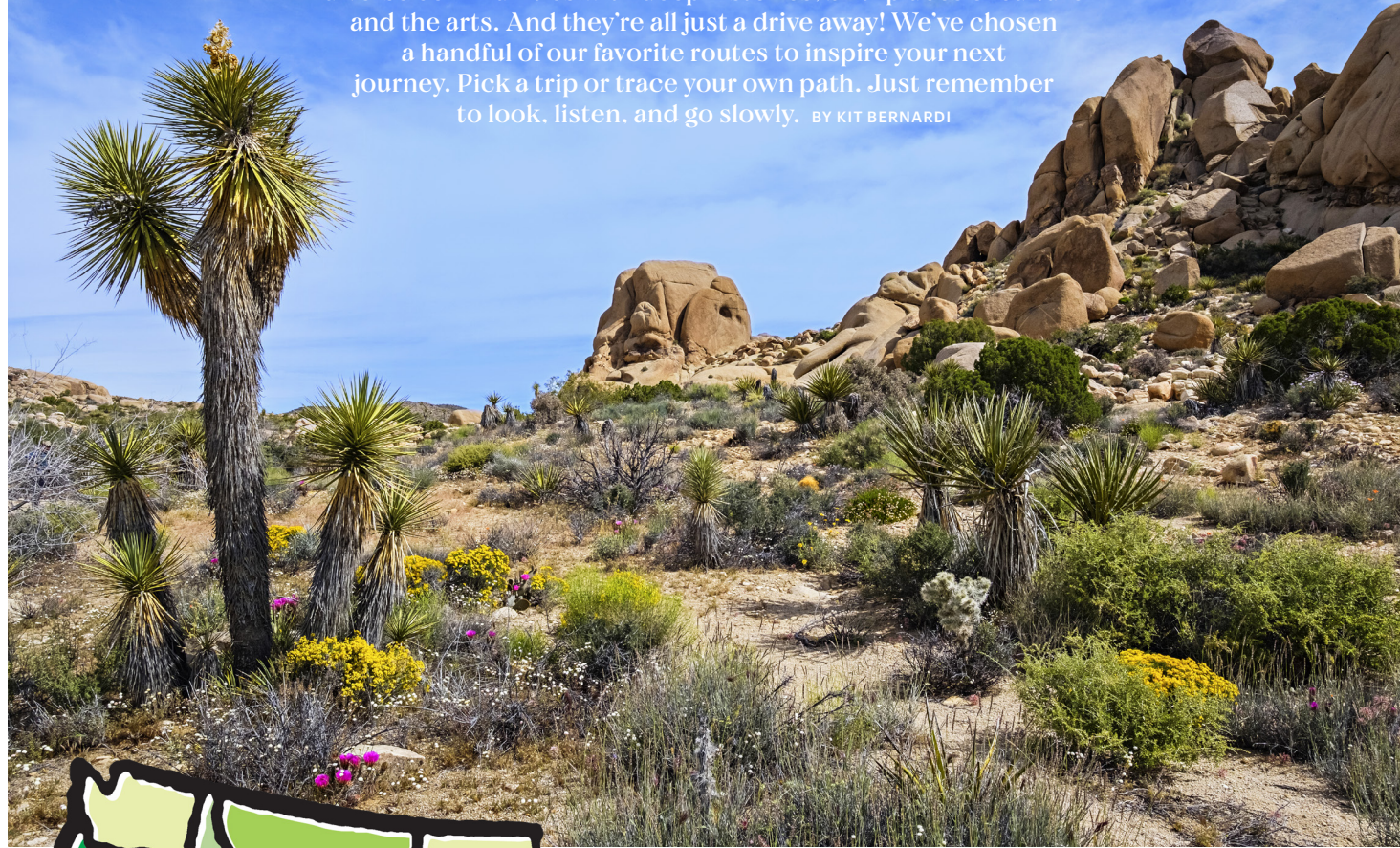


GET LOST

THE GREAT AMERICAN ROAD TRIP

Our country is full of national treasures—wild places, diverse communities with deep histories, birthplaces of culture and the arts. And they're all just a drive away! We've chosen a handful of our favorite routes to inspire your next journey. Pick a trip or trace your own path. Just remember to look, listen, and go slowly. **BY KIT BERNARDI**



Spiky cacti dot wild, wind-sculpted Joshua Tree National Park in California.

1 Life on the Edge

OREGON—PACIFIC COAST SCENIC BYWAY

The 363-mile Pacific Coast Scenic Byway (U.S. Highway 101) traces the ebb and flow of life along Oregon's western edge. Your drive begins in Astoria, where the powerful Columbia River and Pacific Ocean converge. Witness their tumultuous union from Fort Stevens State Park, site of the rusty, skeletal wreck of the Peter Iredale.

Learn about the region's fur-trading and seafaring history at the Columbia River Maritime Museum before heading 17 miles south to the town of Seaside through vast, open land where elk graze and eagles soar. Families love Seaside's 1920s-era boardwalk and beach, and the Necanicum Estuary for paddling, clamming, and birding. Hikes through the mossy, temperate coastal rain forest on the craggy cliffs of Tillamook Head in Ecola State Park offer sweeping ocean views. Next up: Cannon Beach's art galleries, boutiques, and sprawling beach. The restaurant at Stephanie Inn's pours local pinot noir and offers gorgeous views of monolith Haystack Rock jutting 235 feet up from crashing waves.

Continuing south, the cliff-hugging byway climbs and descends through bayside estuaries, tiny beach towns, and coastal state parks all worthy of a stop. Fishing village Depoe Bay is a whale-watching center, as is Yaquina Bay, landmarked by an 1871 wooden lighthouse. The 205-foot Heceta Head Lighthouse stands sentry over 800-foot Cape Perpetua as it gets pounded by the crashing Pacific waves. traveloregon.com

2 Counting Stars

CALIFORNIA—PALM SPRINGS AND JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK SCENIC DRIVE

Palm Springs is a posh starting point for exploring the Greater Palm Springs region and Coachella

Valley. But the true beauty of the region is Joshua Tree National Park, 800,000 acres blending parts of the Mojave and Colorado Deserts in a wind-sculpted, wild landscape of monolithic boulders, curious-looking cacti, and bizarrely twisted, spiky Joshua trees. Getting there can be as much of an adventure as the park itself: There are two scenic routes from Palm Springs, and art photographer Lance Gerber, who lives in the valley, prefers the hour-long drive from low to high desert on Box Canyon Road through the Mecca Hills Wilderness Area. The two-lane road threads through a narrow canyon's rock walls for 16 miles, then connects to Cottonwood Springs Road, leading to the park's south entrance. Take the drive in the late afternoon, when the sun bathes rocky terrain in ever-changing light. "The untouched desert inspires and restores me. It never gets old," Lance says.

For a more direct route through the Yucca Valley, ride California State Route 62 for 34 miles to the park's less trafficked north entrance. On the way, visit vintage shops, outsider art galleries, and funky roadside attractions like the Crochet Museum, the Beauty Bubble Salon, and Pioneertown, a semi-working Western movie set streetscape with live music—burger joint Pappy & Harriett's. visitgreaterpalmsprings.com

3 Into the Wild

IDAHO—PONDEROSA PINE SCENIC BYWAY AND SALMON RIVER SCENIC BYWAY

Bear, lynx, bighorn sheep, eagles, and maybe even Bigfoot thrive in Idaho's 33 million acres of federal public lands incorporating seven national forests. A river-rafting guide for outfitter OARS since 1996, Nick Grimes has seen his share of wildlife while running whitewater-rafting trips on Idaho's Salmon River. "Spending time in Idaho's public lands helps you appreciate the beauty and fragility of our wilderness and inspires protection of it," he says. Road-tripping the Ponderosa Pine Scenic Byway takes you 131 twisting miles from Boise northeast to Stanley, past preserved mining

town Idaho City and curving along the edge of road-less, rugged Frank Church—River of No Return Wilderness. Continue into the jagged Sawtooth Mountains and the Central Idaho Dark Sky Reserve (with no artificial light, stars are super-clear), spanning 1,416 square miles. Rafting trips depart from Stanley, as does the guardrail-less 162-mile Salmon River Scenic Byway. Follow it to Challis's hot springs and relax before winding north through Sacajawea's homeland to the town of Salmon. Don't leave without eating a delicious almond-cream bear claw or two from Odd Fellows' Bakery. visitidaho.org

4 Living Landscapes

SOUTH DAKOTA—BADLANDS LOOP STATE SCENIC BYWAY, CUSTER STATE PARK WILDLIFE LOOP, AND PETER NORBECK NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY

On the 39-mile Badlands Loop State Scenic Byway, pastel rock formations erupt from flat grasslands just like they do in museum-quality paintings at famed Wall Drug Store. Opened in 1931 at the intersection of I-90 and Highway 240, it still attracts road-trippers (up to 20,000 a day) for Western clothing and kitsch, homemade doughnuts,

“**THE UNTOUCHED DESERT INSPIRES AND RESTORES ME. IT NEVER GETS OLD.**

—ARTIST LANCE GERBER

and buffalo burgers, all served in a café decorated with 300 works of art by Western artists (N.C. Wyeth, Harvey Dunn, Andrew Standing Soldier). Sarah Husted, fourth-generation owner, is proud of the collection. "It depicts realities of life in the region from the late 1800s to the 1940s, priming visitors for what's down the road," she says. And what might that be? Wild animal encounters, the Minuteman Missile National Historic Site, historic Western towns, and the National Park Service's labyrinthine Wind Cave and Jewel Cave. Thirty miles southwest of Rapid City is 71,000-acre Custer State Park. Its 18-mile Wildlife Loop travels through rolling prairie, pine forests, and canyons, where you may spot elk, bighorn sheep, pronghorn, coyotes, wild turkeys, prairie dogs, and bison. ▶

Deadwood, South Dakota, takes its gold rush history seriously.



OPPOSITE, FROM TOP: OFFSET; GETTY IMAGES. THIS PAGE: GETTY IMAGES.



Find peak Outer Banks beauty at Cape Hatteras National Seashore in Nags Head, North Carolina.

5 Singing the Blues

MISSISSIPPI—HIGHWAY 61 AND THE MISSISSIPPI BLUES TRAIL

Blues greets Robert Johnson, B.B. King, and Muddy Waters grew up in the Mississippi Delta along what locals call the Blues Highway—U.S. Highway 61. Download an app at msbluestrail.org/app and choose from 189 sites on roadsides, in towns, on farms, at museums, and at train depots. To historian Scott Barretta, who cowrote the trail markers, the drive is about so much more than music. “The blues was an expression of the African American community’s sentiments on love lost, betrayal, poverty, and oppression,” he says. A good base for day trips around the Delta is Clarksdale, where Robert Johnson supposedly met the devil in his song “Crossroads.” Check out the Delta Blues Museum, next to Morgan Freeman’s Ground Zero Blues Club. Record-book-gallery-souvenir shop Cat Head Delta Blues & Folk Art is a cultural treasure (its online Clarksdale

guide is a blues traveler’s bible, cathead.biz/clarksdale-guide). For a beer-swilling bluesy night out, juke joint Red’s Lounge delivers.

From Clarksdale, head 42 miles south on U.S. 278/U.S. 61S to Cleveland’s Dockery Plantation, considered the wellspring of the blues. Legend Charley Patton lived here on and off over 30 years, influencing visiting blues pioneers Howlin’ Wolf, Tommy Johnson, Willie Brown, and Pops Staples. Grab lunch at nearby Airport Grocery, which dishes out hot tamales, barbecue, catfish, and burgers. msbluestrail.org

6 The Civil Rights Movement

ALABAMA—ALABAMA CIVIL RIGHTS TRAIL AND SELMA TO MONTGOMERY NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY

Start your trip into America’s Civil Rights history in Birmingham, where 60 bombings targeting African Americans earned the city the nickname Bombingham in the 1950s. Downtown’s Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, an interactive museum, showcases

the inequalities in America from the late 1800s to the present. It anchors the 36-acre Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument, with landmarks throughout the city representing the civil rights struggle: the 16th Street Baptist Church, site of the tragic 1963 bombing that killed four young Black girls; Kelly Ingram Park, site of 1960s demonstrations and commemorative statues portraying the police violence peaceful protesters endured; the Gaston Motel, the 1963 headquarters for the impactful Project C civil rights campaign, which opened as a museum this year; and music mecca the Carver Theatre, where Duke Ellington, Dizzie Gillespie, Bessie Smith, and the Temptations performed. Visit the Alabama Jazz Hall of Fame, opening in summer 2021. From downtown, it’s a 10-minute drive northwest to the vibrant Smithfield neighborhood, which locals call Dynamite Hill because of the 50 bombings of resident activists’ homes and churches. Nearby in the Collegeville neighborhood, see Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth’s Bethel Baptist Church, meeting place for civil rights discussions (also bombed three times).

An hour east of Birmingham on I-20, visit the Anniston Freedom Riders National Monument, then head south to the Tuskegee Airmen airfield museum to understand two important chapters in desegregation. Drive U.S. Highway 80 along the 54-mile Selma to Montgomery National Scenic Byway, tracing the route 2,000 peaceful activists walked during the 1965 Voting Rights March, from the landmark Edmund Pettus Bridge to the Alabama State Capitol Building in Montgomery. Don’t miss Dr. Martin Luther King’s Parsonage Museum, the Rosa Parks Museum, and the heartrending National Memorial for Peace and Justice, documenting thousands of African American lynchings. If this all sounds heavy for a road trip, it doesn’t have to be, says Barry McNealy, a local high school history teacher who leads tours for the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute: “Visitors learn how ordinary people have the power to

affect their realities, inspire others to change, and transform the world.” civilrightstrail.com

7 Flight and Freedom

NORTH CAROLINA—OUTER BANKS NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY

A two-lane, 138-mile road plus 25 miles of ferry crossings connect islands etched with stories of breaking barriers between earth and sky, slavery and freedom. Roanoke Island, the gateway to the Outer Banks, was first home to the Carolina Algonquian tribe, then Sir Walter Raleigh’s Lost Colony, the New World’s first English settlement, which mysteriously disappeared. On the same shores in 1863, America’s first Freedmen’s Colony, founded by runaway slaves, thrived until the Civil War ended. Fort Raleigh National Historic Site’s free exhibits and walking trails trace these human histories.

On the Outer Banks’s northern beaches, Orville and Wilbur Wright completed the world’s first successful airplane flight at Kitty Hawk in 1903. Darrell Collins, retired park ranger and aviation historian at the Wright Brothers National Memorial in Kill Devil Hills, says you should experience the area as the Wright Brothers did, at Jockey’s Ridge State Park in Nags Head, where “natural, 100-foot-tall sand dunes are alive and moving.” If you’re a thrill-seeker, book a hang-gliding tour

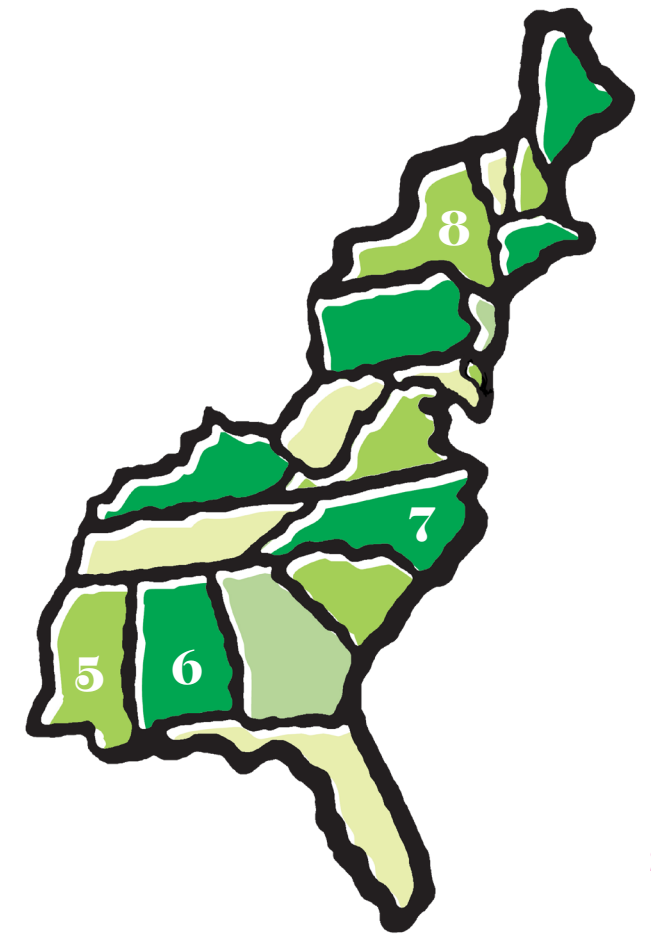
of the park; if you like your feet on the ground, hike the dunes in the morning for stunning ocean views.

Centuries of shipwrecks are strewn along Cape Hatteras National Seashore’s 70-mile coastline, hugged by North Carolina Highway 12. Pull off to walk the beach and you may see weathered pieces from the crumbling wrecks pulled from the depths by a storm. Sea turtles nest on pristine beaches as hawks, ospreys, and eagles coast overhead. Stop at roadside shacks run by generations of fishing families selling crab, oysters, and shrimp. Beachcomb on Ocracoke Island, Blackbeard’s one-time hideout, where locals called High Tiders speak in an Elizabethan English-like brogue. outerbanks.org

8 Fruits of Centuries

NEW YORK STATE—TACONIC STATE PARKWAY

The Hudson River Valley has fed Americans for centuries. Today, the national historic area’s 3,500 farms stock the kitchens of James Beard Award-winning restaurants in New York City and well beyond. Hop on Interstate 87, U.S. Route 9W, or U.S. Route 9—all adjacent to the river and weaving among charming cities in the valley—or the scenic 104-mile Taconic State Parkway. Then hop off and navigate secondary roads winding through the picturesque region. Along the way, stop at u-pick



farms and roadside markets full of seasonal fruits and vegetables and local hard cider, honey, and cheese. Farm-to-table restaurants flourish in art-loving cities Cold Spring, Beacon, Kingston, and Hudson. Full of NYC “expats,” they have much of the style of the city in smaller, quainter packages. The restaurants at Hyde Park’s Culinary Institute of America, off Route 9, showcase students before they take their places at top restaurants around the country. Walk off lunch at the Vanderbilt and Roosevelt mansions.

On N.Y. 208 in Gardiner, stop at Wright’s Farm for apples, cherries, peaches, pickled dilly beans, and scratch-baked pies. Enjoy live music and beer at Gardiner Brewing in the family’s 1905 dairy barn-turned-brew pub. Farm co-owner Tammy Wright Boylan sums up the ethos of the area: “Coexisting with farming makes you hopeful by nature. Every season is a new beginning, another chance to plant what sustains us all.” travelhudsonvalley.com ■

The charming AMVETS Bridge on the Taconic State Parkway will carry you on your way to New York’s gorgeous Hudson Valley.



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