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Top 5 Vacations For People Who Don't Like Big Cities

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America's busy summer season is just around the corner and vacationers across the country are about to hit the road to points near and far. But many people are hoping to avoid the large crowds and congested roadways associated with major cities like Chicago, New York and Los Angeles. Here are just five of the best small town vacations destinations, all with less than 5,000 residents.

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Carmel-By-The-Sea

With world-class art galleries, fine [dining](#) and superb lodging, [Carmel-by-the-Sea](#) has much of what a big city has to offer yet without the congestion of a bustling metropolis. Located along

(credit: Shutterstock)

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the spectacular California Coast, the artist-founded community also known as Carmel does have its share of visitors, particularly on summer weekends. But people from all over the world are easily drawn to this small, idyllic beach village all year for reasons like experiencing one of the world's most romantic spots to one of the best destinations for dining. Adding to its charm are suggested lodgings like [La Playa Carmel](#), Doris Day's historic [Cypress Inn](#), and the European-style [Hofsas House Hotel](#), with exceptional dining at Affina, Anton and Michel, Casanova, Grasing's, Vesuvio and several more. By day, vacationers can also enjoy gourmet food with [Carmel Food Tours](#), visit fabulous art galleries with [Carmel Art Tours](#) or take a self-guided tour of Carmel's finest [art galleries](#), such as Steven Whyte's Sculpture Studio, Mary Titus Studio, Weston Gallery and the Winfield Gallery. Other suggestions for things to do include an evening at the [Sunset Center](#), wine tasting at prominent spots like Caraccioli Cellars, Galante and Trio, as well upscale boutique shopping and hiking and biking around town or at nearby places like the world-famous 17-mile Drive and Point Lobos, known as the "crown jewel" of the California State Parks system.

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Duck

Located in North Carolina's Outer Banks, [Duck](#) doesn't have any campgrounds, nor does it have any hotels. But what this small town does have is the gorgeous [Sanderling Resort](#), a



(credit: aceshot1/shutterstock)

swath of vacation homes, a boardwalk with sweeping ocean views and one of the best beaches in America. Also named one of America's best coastal towns and among the best destinations for a family vacation, Duck offers many outdoor activities to enjoy, such as fishing, kayaking and canoeing, river rafting, jet skiing and [surfing](#). Vacationers can also indulge themselves in a luxury spa treatment, go boutique shopping, or simply relax right on the award-winning beach. One must see attraction nearby is the [Wright Brothers National Memorial](#), the site of the world's first successful airplane flight in Kitty Hawk, with a population of about 3,300, is the largest town in the [Outer Banks](#). For an unparalleled dining experience, the Four-Diamond, Wine Spectator Award-winning [Kimball's Kitchen](#) at Sanderling Resort is the premier choice, with other solid offerings at Aqua, Coastal Cravings, Blue Point and Paper Canoe.

Mendocino

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Often overlooked by the more visited destinations within the breathtaking California Wine Country, the small community of [Mendocino](#) and neighboring Fort



(credit: Rich Lonardo/shutterstock)

Bragg are absolutely perfect getaways from big city life. Perched along the rugged north coast of California, Mendocino has a population of approximately 1,000 residents yet is home to a disproportionate amount of unique bed and breakfasts, including [Sea Rock Inn](#) and [Brewery Gulch Inn](#), recently named the best hotel in California by Conde Nast Traveler and among the best in the world. Of course, Mendocino resides in one of the most world's finest wine regions and produces a large number of popular wine grape varieties, including cabernet sauvignon, chardonnay, merlot, pinot noir and syrah. One truly exceptional viticultural area for a day trip of wine tasting from Mendocino is the [Anderson Valley](#), home to nearly 40 outstanding wineries, with suggested stops at [Foursight Wines](#), Goldeneye Winery, Handley Cellars, La Crema and Navarro Vineyards and Winery. In addition to world-class wine tasting, there are many other local attractions to consider, such as Glass Beach and the historic [Skunk Train](#) in Fort Bragg, Mendocino Headlands State Park, Point Cabrillo Lighthouse and Navarro River State Park.

Saugatuck

Even though it isn't really a household name nationwide and particularly outside of Michigan and the rest of the Midwest,



(credit: Dean Pennala/shutterstock)

[Saugatuck](#) has been a popular vacation spot for more than a hundred years. Yet in more recent years, this tiny hamlet spread along the shores of Lake Michigan, has earned a bevy of travel awards, including named USA Today's Best Small Town Weekend Escape and Best Coastal Small Town in America. Also known as the Art Coast of Michigan and home to dozens of phenomenal art galleries, Saugatuck does draw a sizable crowd over the peak summer months, especially to cool off at [Oval Beach](#), ranked among the world's best by Conde Nast Traveler. But vacationers from all over the country also come here to enjoy other outdoor activities like sailing or gallery hopping, as well as dining at notable places like Phil's Bar & Grille, Bowdies Chophouse or the [Southerner](#), led by two-time James Beard semi-finalist and executive chef Matthew Millar. For lodging, vacationers can choose from several

award-winning [bed and breakfasts](#) like Belvedere Inn & Restaurant, Hidden Garden and Beechwood Manor, along with an assortment of reasonably priced hotels.

Snowmass

Located in the Colorado Rockies just west of Aspen, [Snowmass](#) is best known as the largest of the ski areas that comprise [Aspen Snowmass](#) and clearly among the world's best ski resorts. Yet after the snow has melted and the temperature begins to rise, this small community of about 3,000 doesn't close down for the season. Indeed, it transforms into a veritable summer playground, with activities like hiking, mountain biking, fly fishing and river rafting, along with a full lineup of [special events](#). In fact, coming up soon are the Porsche Club Rocky MTN Car Show, Snowmass Rendezvous Craft Beer Festival, Cochon Heritage Fire, an event to compliment the Food & Wine Classic in Aspen and the kick off to the summer long free concert series. World renowned for its outstanding service and hospitality, Snowmass offers an impressive collection of dining and lodging to meet every vacationers budget, while still retaining its signature small town identity. Among the choices for accommodations are Viceroy Snowmass, Stonebridge Inn and Westin Snowmass Resort, along with the many fine vacation rental properties like the Crestwood, Residences at Snowmass Club and Woodrun V. For dining, vacationers might enjoy such popular spots like Big Hoss Grill, Eight K, Sake, Slow Groovin BBQ and Venga Venga, among the many others operating nearby.



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By Randy Yagi

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