

10 ski towns that are even better in summer

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Bald Mountain, Sun Valley Resort, Idaho.

Image: [Steve Dondero/Courtesy of Sun Valley Resort](#)

Growing up in the [Bay Area](#), a trip to [Lake Tahoe](#) was a frequent winter occurrence, with plenty of [ski resorts](#) ready to welcome me for a day on the slopes. But over the past decade, my passion has shifted from carving snowy trails down the mountain to exploring the wildflower-covered trails in summer, when live music events and days on the water take over.

And Lake Tahoe is far from the only ski town that truly comes alive in the summer. Here, a few mountain destinations that shine brightest when the snow melts.



Performers at the River Run Summer Series at Sun Valley Resort, Idaho.

Image: [Hayden Gilmour/Courtesy of Sun Valley Resort](#)

Sun Valley is surrounded by a whopping five mountain ranges, and visiting in the summer offers plenty of opportunities for hiking, golfing, fly-fishing, and other outdoor adventures. But summer also means a full lineup of arts and cultural events in town and neighboring Ketchum for when you want to get off your feet.

What to do in summer:

- August's Sun Valley Music Festival offers a month's worth of free classical music performances at the Sun Valley Pavilion. Shows kick off at 8:30 p.m., just as the sun is setting. The Welcome Center has everything you need (lawn chairs, blankets, snacks), so you can just show up and enjoy the performance.
- On Wednesdays from late July to early September, the River Run Summer Series extends its chair lift service to 7 p.m. so you'll have more time to hike the Bald Mountain trails—then settle in for live music, food trucks, and an outdoor bar.
- To see "Baldy" a different way, ride the gondola up for dinner at The Roundhouse, where the "fondue for two" is a must-try.

[Explore more things to do in Sun Valley.](#)



Diana's Baths, North Conway, New Hampshire.

Image: Timmy Dreams/Tripadvisor

Nestled in New Hampshire's White Mountains, North Conway's big summer draws are its swimming holes and waterfalls (Diana's Baths is a go-to for both), covered bridges, and hiking trails. It makes for a great stop on a Northeastern road trip, since there's a little something for everyone in the car.

What to do in summer:

- Hop aboard the kid- and pet-friendly Conway Scenic Railroad to see the area from the rails.
- Cranmore Mountain Resort is a personal fave for group trips. Adrenaline-seekers can speed down the mountain coaster, while chiller folks can ride the low-key chair lift up to take in the mountain views.
- North Conway has plenty of breweries with outdoor seating, like Tuckerman Brewing Company. Order some locally brewed beers and a few brick-oven pizzas (try the crab rangoon pizza!) to share with your crew.

Explore more things to do in North Conway.



Ziplining at Epic Discovery at Breck, Breckenridge, Colorado.

Image: Management/Tripadvisor

Want to avoid windy mountain roads in the driver's seat? Take a shuttle from the Denver airport to Breckenridge, which you can explore on foot or on one of the communal e-bikes.

What to do in summer:

- Families and history buffs will enjoy the Country Boy Mine, where you can venture into the decommissioned mine on a one-hour guided tour and then try your luck at panning for gold.
- Don't miss a visit to the 15-foot-tall wooden Breckenridge Troll, accessible via the town's free bus service.
- I'm all about the views when visiting "Breck" in the summer, and the gondola ride to EPIC Discovery is my favorite way to take them in. A ropes course, mountain coaster, alpine slide, and plenty of hiking and mountain biking trails await.

Explore more things to do in Breckenridge



Aboard M.S. Dixie II, on Lake Tahoe.
Image: BOLDMissionHills_KS/Tripadvisor

Lake Tahoe's big draw come summertime? Unsurprisingly, the lake. There are a million and one ways to get on the water—staying in South Lake Tahoe makes it easy to access boat and kayak tours and visit other nearby alpine lakes, such as Echo Lake and Fallen Leaf Lake.

What to do in summer:

- My favorite way to get out on the water is an evening LED glow kayak tour, where you can enjoy the area as the sun sets behind the mountains.
- If you don't want to work for the views, head out on the M.S. Dixie II paddlewheeler from South Lake Tahoe for a scenic tour of the south shore and Emerald Bay.
- When I'm visiting with my kids, Camp Richardson Resort is our go-to spot to spend the day on the lake, with a long sandy beach, bike and kayak rentals, and a lakefront restaurant.

[Explore more things to do in Lake Tahoe](#)



Family hiking trail at Big Sky Resort, Montana.

Image: Angela H/Tripadvisor

Families heading to [Big Sky](#) will love the spacious vacation rentals at [Big Sky Resort](#) and easy access to the resort's summer fun. When I visited with my family, we booked a shuttle from the airport in [Bozeman](#), then used the resort's shuttles to get around.

What to do in summer:

- One of my favorite things to do in Big Sky with kids is to take the Ramcharger 6 or Swift Current 8 chairlift up the mountain and then hike down. Guided hikes are available at the resort if you don't want to navigate yourself.
- Not only is Big Sky a stunning ski resort, but it is within driving distance of the west entrance of [Yellowstone National Park](#), making it the perfect jumping-off point to explore on a [guided tour](#).
- Take advantage of the on-site activities at the lodge, including ziplining over the ski slopes, archery, and disc golf.

[Explore more things to do in Big Sky.](#)



Family mountain biking at Park City, Utah.

Image: [Courtesy of Visit Park City](#)

Park City is known for its extensive and diverse mountain biking trail network, making it a popular spot for two-wheeled summer adventures. With more than 450 miles of trails winding through alpine meadows, aspen groves, and high-elevation ridgelines, there's a route for every type of rider, from beginners looking for a scenic outing to experts chasing that adrenaline-pumping descent.

What to do in summer:

- Those looking for a downhill thrill can use the bookable Transit to Trails system to access high elevation trailheads, or access single-track trails via the Crescent lift or Red Pine Gondola, which have bike haul availability.
- If paved trail riding is more your speed, you can rent a bike at Canyon Mountain Sports or Legacy Sports, or use one of the e-bikes available through the Summit Bike Share program.
- When you're ready for a more chill experience, book some time on the river on a fly fishing excursion, or soar over the mountains in a hot air balloon.

[Explore more things to do in Park City](#)



Outdoor patio at Stowe Cider, Vermont.

Image: Management/Tripadvisor

If a romantic summer escape is calling your name, set your sights on Stowe. The charming mountain town is dotted with boutique inns and cozy cabins, perfect for unwinding after a wandering hand-in-hand along scenic trails.

What to do in summer:

- Stroll through the storybook downtown, where Stowe Mercantile tempts with local treats like chocolate bon bons and maple candies.
- Sugaring season only lasts from late February through early April, but you can still go for a maple-syrup tasting at Nebraska Knoll Sugar Farm in summer.
- Swing by Stowe Cider for a tasting and live music (most Fridays and Saturdays).
- Unwind with a couples massage at The Spa at Topnotch Resort—cap it off with a soak in their indoor whirlpool beneath a cascading waterfall.

Explore more things to do in Stowe



Exterior of the Million Dollar Cowboy Bar, Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

Image: arlutz73/Getty Images

Summer brings the [Jackson Hole Rodeo](#) to town, and it's the perfect excuse to get decked out in cowboy boots and a ten-gallon hat for a night on the town. If you didn't bring them from home, don't worry; you can shop for high-end western wear at [Kemo Sabe](#) and custom hats at [JW Bennett](#).

What to do in summer:

- Find a seat on the saddle bar stools at the [Million Dollar Cowboy Bar](#), where live music is always on deck and western dancing is a must.
- Take in the stunning beauty of Wyoming on a beginner-friendly trail ride across rivers and through shaded forest with [Jackson Hole Outfitters](#).
- Climb into a covered wagon to head to the cookout with [Bar-T-5](#), where you'll enjoy a satisfying meal of roast beef, baked beans, corn, and more, all while being entertained by cowboy antics and live music.

[Explore more things to do in Jackson Hole](#)



Lake Louise, Banff, Canada.

Image: Andrew Peacock/Getty Images

If you haven't experienced the stunning turquoise blue of [Lake Louise](#) in the summertime, you are missing out. By mid-June, the lake's winter ice layer is usually melted, so you can see it in all its glory from the many lakeside forest trails of [Banff National Park](#).

What to do in summer:

- Hiking to the [Lake Agnes Tea House](#) is an especially fun way to experience this part of Canada, as you are rewarded with sandwiches, soup, and your choice of over 100 loose-leaf teas.
- If you're really up for some adventure, try heli-hiking with [White Mountain Adventures](#). You'll be transported by helicopter to a high-alpine meadow, where you'll have a few hours to hike before heading back to civilization.
- For a quintessential Canadian experience, paddle a canoe on Lake Louise or the Bow River and observe the park's diverse wildlife.

[Explore more things to do in Banff](#)



Outdoor dining at Black's Pub, Whistler, Canada.

Image: Management/Tripadvisor

Yes, the après-ski vibes continue well into the summer in Whistler, where you'll find patios packed with sun-soaked hikers and mountain bikers, with craft beer flowing.

What to do in summer:

- Whistler Village is full of lively restaurants, including the Beacon Pub & Eatery, with a noon-4 p.m. happy hour (Sunday-Friday), when shareable plates and poutine (of course) are on the menu.
- Try out summer bobsledding at the Whistler Sliding Centre, and then toast to your bravery at Black's Pub, a bi-level tavern with mountain views.
- Ride the Peak 2 Peak gondola that connects Whistler and Blackcomb Mountains for scenic views and access to high terrain trails.

[Explore more things to do in Whistler](#)