

Flower power

Lose yourself in East Coast gardens, from grand estates to secret retreats

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South Carolina

Step back in time to sample the quirky delights of the state's crinkly coastline

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Celebrity city guide

Brooklyn Decker reveals her top tips for Austin – the Texan capital of cool

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Explore the USA

YOUR EIGHT-PAGE GUIDE TO DISCOVERING THE BEST OF AMERICA

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AN EXTRAORDINARY ROUND TRIP

Chicago be gone. Take your skyscrapers, your neoclassical architecture, your slivers of culture – and remove yourself from my sight. Take the 1,450ft of your Willis Tower, the epic entrance hall of Grand Central Station, the Rembrandt and Van Gogh paintings of your glorious Art Institute – and fade in my mirrors. Take your blues clubs, your sports teams, your superb oyster houses – and, well, you know what you can do with those too.

These – roughly – are my thoughts as I drive through the suburb of Buena Park, on Route 41.

Behind me, the fact that Chicago is the third biggest city in the USA is all too clear. I can still see its hugeness, its buildings bristling. But while many visitors are drawn to this metropolis, I am attempting to make a swift escape from it along with the city's commuters on a busy Friday afternoon.

The saving grace is shimmering on my right. Lake Michigan does not care a jot about jams or road works. It is a thing of indisputable beauty, daubed a silken gold by the descending sunlight. It sighs and it shines. It nudges at the powdery curve of Montrose Beach, and flicks

Following 900 miles of snaking shoreline, **Chris Leadbeater** trades bustling Chicago for a Lake Michigan adventure

Shore thing Historic Big Sable Point Lighthouse, near Ludington State Park, Michigan

a supermodel's smile at the work-truants snoozing upon it. It seems to grin at me too. The joy – I remember – is that it will do this for the next 11 days.

It will take me this long – almost two weeks – to sweep around what is the third largest of North America's five Great Lakes. Only the third largest? Why yes. But the fact that this liquid behemoth is smaller in area than both its neighbour Lake Huron and the colossal Lake Superior does not make it a little fish. It has a shoreline of 1,400 miles. It is the sole member of the quintet to lie entirely in the USA – and in

doing so, it touches upon four states (Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana). To drive all the way around it means a journey of more than 900 miles; one of the great road trips in a country which, from Florida to California, is a haven for said adventures. I shrug, forget about the bottleneck. I'm in no rush anyway.

My plan is to make a clockwise circumnavigation, clinging to the lake as closely as I can throughout. And when the congestion begins to clear, I start to recall just how good an idea this is. Illinois has a prettiness to it as

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EXPLORE THE USA THE GREAT OURDOORS

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Four states on the waterfront

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Chicago finally recedes – Glencoe and its golf courses, Lake Forest and its waterside homes, Winthrop Harbor and its enormous marina.

The state line which falls directly north of the latter feels like a change of channel. For if Illinois is the TV blockbuster of the Midwest, and Chicago its Saturday-night star, then Wisconsin is its gritty cult-hit series. At least, it feels this way as I creep on the lake ever on my right, Highway 32 picking up the waterside baton through Kenosha and Racine – until Milwaukee blocks my path as a rude awakening of lofty flyovers and railroad yards.

Wisconsin's biggest city has a story which, though commonplace in the American narrative – a booming industrial 19th century, a declining 20th, a resurgent 21st – is largely untold beyond its own streets. Tourists are not a regular part of its tapestry. Yet they should be. The Harley-Davidson Museum on West Canal Street is a gleaming reminder that, while the image of the planet's most famous motorcycle brand is forever tied to the biker gangs of Sixties California, the company was founded in Milwaukee in 1903, and remains its greatest export.

Down on the water, meanwhile, the Milwaukee Art Museum is all style and grace; its white skeletal structure – a clever design which includes “wings” which rise when it is open – is visibly the work of Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava. Within, the collection shelters pieces by Wisconsin native Georgia O'Keeffe, as well as shards by Warhol and Lichtenstein. I retreat to the Iron Horse Hotel, a restored mattress warehouse on West Florida Street, plot an evening on Old World 3rd Street – where beer halls salute the German immigrants who founded the city – and ponder staying for longer.

I will not. Because I know just how many landmarks wait ahead. Green Bay, 120 miles further north, is an American icon – a small city of giant reputation. To explore Lambeau Field stadium and its museum is to touch sporting glory – the community-owned Green Bay Packers still being, with 13 national championships to their name, the most successful team in American Football history; Davids in an era of big-franchise Goliaths.

But what of the Green Bay itself? It is there on my left when I flee the city, north-east this time, onto the Door Peninsula. This 85-mile feather of land tickles Lake Michigan's side in a soft embrace of cherry trees and orchards, farms blanketing the land in furrows of soil, 11 lighthouses dotted on its limestone flanks as a warning to careless ships. A fair precaution. At Whitefish Dunes State Park, on the east side of the peninsula, a wooden board identifies the nearby wreck of the Ocean Wave, a schooner which sank in a storm on 23 September, 1869. And yet, looking across the gentle blue of the lake amid the easy warmth of midday, I find it difficult to imagine that anyone could come to any harm here.

Perhaps the Midwest agrees with me. For when I exit the peninsula, clipping south before turning north, urban life seems to evaporate. After 55 miles on the 41, I am in the hotch-potch Wisconsin outpost of Marinette, where the River Menominee draws a line. The far bank, and the town of Menominee, belong to Michigan. But when I cross the bridge between the two, I do more than switch one state for another. I enter Michigan's Upper Peninsula – an area so undisturbed that it feels as if someone has pressed a “mute” button.

Michigan is not a place renowned for tranquility. Detroit, its rough-set “Motor City”, has long seen to that. But those who dismiss this crucial piece of the Midwest jigsaw as a blur of rust ignore the “UP” – a tranche of backwoods and bear prints which accounts for 29 per cent of the state's solid ground, but only three per cent of its population.

Maybe you have to be brave to live here. With just 45 miles of soil separating Lake Michigan on the peninsula's south side from Lake Superior on its north, there must be a fear that the two bodies of water will rise and annex the forested refusenik keeping them apart.

There are few signs of habitation as Highway 35 seeps north, the village of Cedar River skulking in



Lakeside sights clockwise from bottom left, the Harley-Davidson Museum in Milwaukee; the sundial outside the Adler Planetarium, Chicago; Lake Macatawa inlet, Holland State Park

ESSENTIALS

- ▶ [British Airways \(ba.com\)](http://BritishAirways.com); [Virgin Atlantic \(virgin-atlantic.com\)](http://VirginAtlantic.com) and [American Airlines \(aa.com\)](http://AmericanAirlines.com) fly direct to Chicago from London Heathrow. AA also flies direct from Manchester.
- ▶ artic.edu; grandhotel.com; harley-davidson.com/museum; harborhousegh.com; mam.org; nps.gov/indutheironhorsehotel.com; packers.com
- ▶ choosechicago.com; enjoyillinois.com; greatlakesnorthamerica.co.uk; greenbay.com; michigan.org; travelwisconsin.com; visitindiana.com; visitmilwaukee.org; VisitTheUSA.co.uk

the shadow of Escanaba River State Forest, JW Wells State Park an empty campground on the lip of the waves. Ford River offers a lone orange school bus, children running to houses set back among trees. At Rapid River, I turn east onto Route 2 and drift further from “civilisation”. At Ensign, a highway advert talks of dog-sled rides – a memory-jolt that winter is never far away in this northern realm. By the time I pause at Seul Choix Point Lighthouse, at the very top of the lake, I have not passed another car in 20 minutes.

The silence is seductive, and the first sight of Interstate 75 – a wide-brim beast that cuts south from the Canadian border all the way to Miami, trucks barging along it – is a shock.

But there is an antidote – the Straits of Mackinac, where Lakes Michigan and Huron lock arms, their union crowned by the Mackinac Suspension Bridge,

which carries I-75 over the gap; a Golden Gate Bridge for a colder climate. This is my cue to turn south, though only as far as Mackinaw City, where I stow the car at the docks and catch a foot ferry to Mackinac Island. No motorised vehicles have been allowed on this holiday outpost since 1898 – but with two Great Lakes as my context, I am in no mood to stray. Indeed, I move no further than the veranda of the Geranium Bar at the Grand Hotel – a Victorian dame which opened in 1887 – and watch the sun slip under the bridge with a glass of pinot noir.

The temptation to drop anchor comes again. Mackinac Island has long been a centrepiece of this waterworld. But the rest of Michigan is calling – Route 31 a dreamy alternative to I-75, sticking to the east bank of the lake. Together, we go down through the Lower Peninsula – via Petoskey, a scrap of a town where Ernest Hemingway spent childhood

World-class wine in Oregon's pinot noir country

Just an hour outside vibrant Portland, **Rhiannon Edwards** discovers award-winning pinot noir and glorious vine-striped scenery

Did you know they make sangria in Portland, Oregon? A full 5,576 miles from southern Spain, in the USA's Pacific Northwest, you can buy Portland Sangria – in a can. And at the very industrial and pared-back counter of Enso Urban winery, where it is made, people do buy it, and it is delicious.

Portland Sangria in a can is in a small way a symbol of everything that is great about Portland. The traditional Spanish drink is given an irreverent, some might say Portlandian, twist. Look beyond sangria, and there's a pattern: this city makes a vast quantity of tasty and desirable food and drinks – but always on its own terms, always slightly differently from anywhere else. With everything in Portland, there's always a nod to the little rebellious details. The city proudly throws itself against tradition, supporting everything new and creative.

And that's really the story of Oregon wine, made from grapes grown in the Willamette Valley, 50 miles south of Portland. The pinot noir made here is world class, but incredibly complex in taste compared to the friendly, fruity wines that put California's Napa Valley to the south on the global wine map, long ago. It makes you think the alternative nature of Oregon is a literal thing – here, even the soil is alternative and produces alternative-tasting wine.

Partly because of its complexity on the palette, and partly because of plain old snobbery, Oregon wine only began to be acknowledged in 1980, after a series of blind tastings of Oregon pinot noir in Burgundy and Paris. The organiser of the Burgundy blind tastings that put this Oregon speciality on the map? Robert Drouhin, a son of a family with more than a century's experience making wines in Burgundy – quite the seal of approval.

Today, you can visit the Drouhin family's Oregon outpost in just under an hour's drive from the city. Domaine Drouhin is a fabulous, French-looking winery, set in 225 acres of rolling vineyards in the Dundee Hills area of the Willamette Valley. It was set up in 1987 by Robert's daughter Véronique, after three seasons spent with other winemaking families from the area – on a plot of land that originally grew Christmas trees.

Standing on the veranda looking out over the grapevines that cover everything to the horizon, while sipping a glass of their finest produce, it is hard to believe anyone had to fight to convince people to back something so glorious. The sun is hiding behind cool cloud, occasionally peeking through and illuminating row upon row of grapevines, with a touch of mist on the horizon. In summer there's plenty of sun, but even when it is overcast, this is just a lovely place to be.

The lush Willamette Valley, made up of eight American Viticultural Areas (AVAs), has 74 per cent of Oregon's vineyards and makes 88 per cent of Oregon pinot noir, which, along with pears (soon to be added to sangria?), is the state's most famous export. Producers here also make other cool-climate wines including crisp chardonnay that will turn the head of even the most entrenched chardonnay snob (although they may have to be blindfolded to believe it).

So for the wine lover, or even those with a slight interest, the valley is the perfect place for a jaunt out of the city (making sure you have some sort of designated driver, of course). The roads here couldn't be further from the vast sprawling highways associated with the USA, they are closer to the narrow country lanes of rural France. And riding along you can't swing a cork without



alfresco evening drinks at The Southeast Wine Collective; right, vineyard workers in the Willamette Valley



© Darita Delimont



BS CREDIT

summers; through Traverse City, an envelope of Americana where cafés and jewellers line West Front Street. The village of Arcadia is well titled, a lofty look-out point showing the lakeside in tree-swarmed majesty. Manistee flirts with the shallows at First Street Beach. Ludington is an escapee from a postcard – the sturdy red-brick Mason County Court House dispensing American justice, Ludington State Park a pregnant bulge of dunes where road signs advise to “watch for drifted sand”.

When the 31 drops me into Grand Haven, I realise that mankind has fully reasserted its authority. There are ice-cream stores and surf-gear shops on Washington Avenue, hikers on the trail in Rosy Mound Natural Area, weighty burgers on the menu at eatery 22 Below, fellow guests on the porch of the Harbor House Inn, where rocking chairs sway in the breeze. It is Michigan at the seaside, minus the sea.

The burble of humanity grows louder as I pass Holland, South Haven, Lake Michigan Beach. But now, Interstates 196 and 94 are covering the hard miles, the roar of engines swelling. Outside Grand Beach there is a final change of allegiance, and I am into Indiana. Ahead, there will be freight containers on the water at Burns Harbor, and steel mills at Gary; the lake put to work, Chicago but 30 miles beyond.

But before I complete the circle, plunge back into the conurbation, Lake Michigan has one last delight to offer. Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore is a fitting end to an odyssey of such length, dusty paths ebbing down between grassy hillocks; the waves, not for the first time, doing convincing impressions of the ocean. Here, along 25 miles of beach, is the Atlantic in microcosm, the Pacific in pocket-sized form, the horizon lost where the sky and the water make an indelible pact.



hitting a vineyard. Vineyards to the left, vineyards to the right. This is wine country – and it really is quite beautiful.

Although the Drouhin family make excellent wines, they weren't the first to stick a grape in the ground here. The Letts' family's Eyrie Vineyard, also in the Dundee Hills, was the trailblazer, founded by David Letts in 1966 “with a few grape plants and a theory”.

Up to the north in the fresh Chehalem Mountains, the Adelsheim vineyard dates back to the early Seventies. Both still welcome visitors with open arms today – no sooner are you down the drive than you are in the tasting room, and having your palate educated by a knowledgeable Oregonian. Perhaps because of their underdog origins there's also a notable absence of snobbery – it is a great place to ask questions, find new things and importantly, relax. They do things differently here.

The area's problem, if it can be called that, is that there's simply so much to see. Even relative newcomers, such as biodynamic pioneers Bergström, founded by the family of the same name in 1999, produce nine pinot noirs and two chardonnays, all of in-demand quality. You could spend half a day with these fascinating wines alone.

And back in the city, a clutch of urban wineries has opened too – in outlets such as The Southeast Wine Collective – a large warehouse-type building, where small producers use the grapes of the valley and some from California too, to make their own rich blends, and people like us can sit next door in the industrial-looking bar and try it all out.

Start looking and there's a barrel-load of these city-dwelling wine producers making and serving all manner of concoctions – everything from elegant pinot noir to sangria in a can. With their creative spirit, they follow those who pioneered Oregon wine. In country and city, we visitors can happily enjoy the fruits of their labour.



10 GREAT EAST COAST GARDENS

From urban retreats to grand estates, America's public gardens are as diverse as its geography. Sarah L Stewart lists her East Coast favourites, where you can lose yourself among native blooms and wondrous landscapes

Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, Virginia [above]

The centrepiece of this 50-acre Richmond garden is its classical conservatory, the only one of its kind in the mid-Atlantic region. Inside, semi-tropical palms, cycads, orchids and succulents flourish beneath its gleaming 63ft dome. Beyond the glass, a maze of outdoor gardens awaits. Highlights include the tranquil, conifer-filled Asian Valley, a lakeside cherry tree promenade and a hillside rose plot crowded with nearly 2,000 bushes. Little ones will love climbing (and foraging in) the century-old mulberry tree in the Children's Garden.

► lewisginter.org
► *When to visit: April and May for cherry blossoms, peonies and other spring flowers; May for ripe mulberries*

Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens, Maine

New England's largest botanical garden is also one of the few in the USA situated directly on the coast. Occupying 270 acres along the labyrinthine shoreline of Boothbay, this garden marries classic Maine woods with abundant seasonal blooms.



Though closed to visitors for most of the winter, in spring the garden erupts into tens of thousands of tulips. A riotous summer ensues, including profusions of rhododendron, roses, lilies and hydrangeas. Amble the network of woodland trails to spot nearly two dozen nature-inspired sculptures, plus natural features like a placid, multi-tiered waterfall.

► mainegardens.org
► *When to visit: May for best bulb bloom*

New York Botanical Garden, New York

Established in 1891, this National Historic Landmark includes the largest remaining section of the old-growth deciduous forest

► *When to visit: June for peak rose bloom*

► *When to visit: March through May for magnolias and lilacs; November for autumn colours*

that once blanketed the city. The unspoiled tract, which features pathways first trodden by Native Americans and trees dating back to the colonial period, influenced the garden's



founders to select this 250-acre site in the Bronx. Today, the garden encompasses more than one million plants, a handful of historic buildings and a sense of peace that's often hard to find this close to Times Square.

► nybg.org
► *When to visit: Early May for peak azaleas; October for autumn foliage*



designed the nation's oldest public rose garden, with more than 15,000 bushes and 800 varieties. The park – which is free to visit – includes a sunken shade garden, a plot carpeted in thousands of tulips each May and a stonewalled section of heritage roses, known for their intricate petals and sweet scent.

► elizabethparkct.org
► *When to visit: June for peak rose bloom*



is this 47-acre enclave, once the private estate of a prosperous pharmaceutical family. The carefully-tended landscape now includes a fragrant spring orchard, a thriving tropical

Teacup Garden and the Ruin Garden, which grows atop the stone foundation of one of the family's homes.

► chanticleergarden.org
► *When to visit: December through April for pleasant temperatures and less humidity*

► *When to visit: May to October for blooming water lilies, plus cooking demos each weekend in the outdoor edible garden*

mark on this rambling estate in the Blue Ridge Mountains. The grounds surrounding the property's 250-room Vanderbilt mansion range from the bright, orderly Walled Garden to the bountiful Azalea Garden, one of the nation's best collections of the native shrubs. Channel Olmstead's reverence for the restorative power of nature with a stroll on the estate's trails.

► biltmore.com
► *When to visit: Early May for peak azaleas; October for autumn foliage*



The largest recorded tree in the Sunshine State – a cluster fig specimen with a trunk wider than a bus – resides at this tropical paradise near holiday Fort Lauderdale. It's one of about 20 champion trees and more than 3,000 other species of flora that grow here, within a rare remnant of jungle that

► flamingogardens.org
► *When to visit: May to October for blooming water lilies, plus cooking demos each weekend in the outdoor edible garden*



remains amid south Florida's sprawling development. Located on the eastern fringe of the Everglades, the 60-acre property was a citrus grove in the Twenties and Thirties; today it's home to a wildlife sanctuary featuring alligators, Florida panthers, peacocks and its namesake pink birds.

► ladewgardens.com
► *When to visit: Mid-summer to see hundreds of naked-lady lilies blooming amid the hunt scene*

Inspired by his travels through England in the Twenties, landowner Harvey Ladew transformed 22 acres of his rural estate into what the Garden Club of America deemed the nation's most outstanding topiary garden. Decades later, flowers give the garden

garden remain largely unchanged, including an aromatic section featuring more than 100 varieties of lilac and a Moraine Garden where alpine plants blanket rocky deposits

► *When to visit: March through May for cherry blossoms, peonies and other spring flowers; May for ripe mulberries*

splashes of colour, but the main attraction remains its meticulously carved sculptures.



Interspersed throughout the landscape you'll find swimming swans, whimsical swirls, precise pyramids and the park's most iconic scene – a remarkably realistic reproduction of a fox hunt, with horses, men, hounds and fox frozen in foliage.

► atlantabg.org
► *When to visit: May to October for blooming water lilies, plus cooking demos each weekend in the outdoor edible garden*



region's best collections of aquatic plants (complete with 5ft-wide lily pads) and an assembly of Andean orchids adorning a granite waterfall. There's even something for your taste buds: Linton's, a new eatery in the garden, with a menu by chef Linton Hopkins.

► newjerseybotanicalgarden.org
► *When to visit: December through April for pleasant temperatures and less humidity*



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► *When to visit: June for best bulb bloom*

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For more about the Great Gardens of the USA exhibit at the RHS Hampton Court Flower Show, visit tgr.ph/visittheusa

PRIZE DRAW

VisitTheUSA.co.uk and the Royal Horticultural Society are giving 10 readers the chance to win a pair of tickets each to the 2016 RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show and visit the Great Gardens of the USA, an exhibit designed by Sadie May Stowell in conjunction with Austin, Charleston and Oregon.

Thursday 7 to Sunday 10 July. With its wealth of floral displays and show gardens, it is the perfect place to find inspiration for your own garden.

There is also the opportunity to attend fascinating talks by leading horticultural experts such as *Love Your Garden* presenter David Domoney, botanist James Wong and television chefs Jean-Christophe Novelli and Gennaro Contaldo,

who will talk about growing and cooking with fresh produce. Children can enjoy the wide variety of family activities offered at the show on Family Saturday, and all ages will love the new Butterfly Dome. Hundreds of shops and stalls brimming with gardening products and gifts also offer great shopping opportunities. Competition closes on 30 June. For full details, terms and conditions and to enter the prize draw, please visit telegraph.co.uk/visittheusa



