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Three World-Class Road Trips for When You're Ready to Leave New York

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April 23, 2021 | Updated: April 25, 2021 3:54 p.m.

New Yorkers have been largely confined to the indoors for going on 14 months. Now that vaccines are rolling out and temps are rising, it's time to reconsider — starting with a good old-fashioned American road trip.

With an abundance of destinations just a few hours' drive away, the world — or at least the Eastern Seaboard — is a New Yorker's oyster. Whether you're looking for a relaxing beach weekend, hiking trip or cultural sojourn to a smaller, more walkable city, you can do it all without ever having to brave the airport.

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Below, you'll find a short list of three of our favorite road trips from New York City for the next time you hear the call of the open road.

Narragansett, RI (3-hour drive)

The perfect location for a low-key beach getaway, Narragansett is known as Newport's less pretentious counterpart. There, nestled between the Pettaquamscutt River and the mouth of Narragansett Bay, you'll find uncrowded state beaches, picturesque lighthouses and bountiful seafood.

Pit Stop: Take a break midway through your drive to grab a slice of classic New Haven-style pizza from Frank Pepe's. They literally created the iconic white clam pie: a dangerous combination of clams, grated aged cheese and garlic atop a thin crust base.

Once You're There: Vacationing at the beach should be all about relaxation, with most of your time ideally spent by sand and sea. Whether you're a beach bum or a surfer, Narragansett has the right experience for you, with a public beach delivering easy access to shops and restaurants as well as reliable waves.

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For those looking to escape the crowds, three state park beaches provide some solace: Scarborough State Beach, Roger Wheeler State Beach and Salty Brine State Beach. Roger Wheeler is the perfect choice for kids who love to jump in the waves, as an extensive breakwater barrier makes for super gentle swells.

Also not to be missed is the Point Judith Lighthouse, which was built back in 1857 and still provides navigational aid to incoming ships. Nicknamed the “graveyard of the Atlantic,” the historic building provides a striking point of history along the coast, as well as a great photo opp.

Where to Eat: For a hyperlocal experience, make a stop at the uber popular Matunuck Oyster Bar, where you can order shellfish shucked right in front of you. What they specialize in is oysters, of course, which are sourced from Potter Pond right off their waterfront patio. But those who prefer clams, shrimp or the catch of the day won't leave disappointed, either.

Date night with a view is done right at the Coast Guard House, which is located directly next to Narragansett Town Beach and the historic Towers. Dine on fresh seafood entrees or steak as you take in the views of the water, or head to the bar for a sunset cocktail for two.

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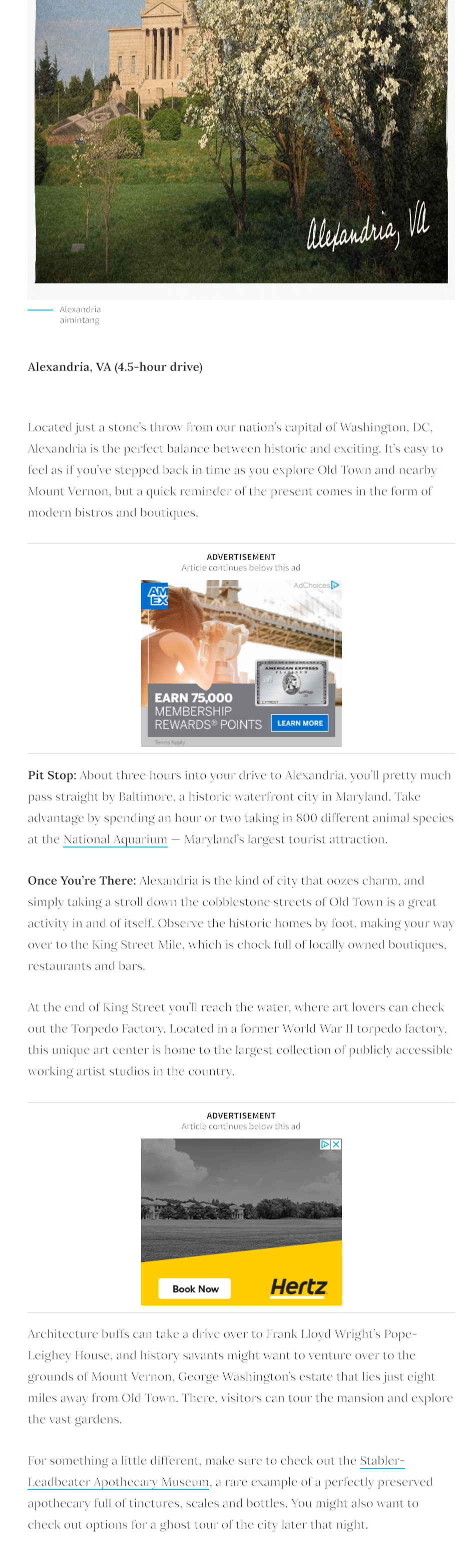
A visit to Narragansett also isn't complete without a stop by Del's for their signature frozen lemonade. Like Italian ice in New Jersey, frozen lemonade in Rhode Island is a staple, and Del's is the place to get it. When you're ready to cool down, there are two flavor options to choose from: classic lemonade or watermelon.

Where to Stay: Staying at the Break Hotel feels like you're at a supersized beach house: the boutique inn only has 16 rooms, and each offers a laid-back, high-end vibe. From the Break you can easily stroll over to Scarborough State Beach, or stay on property and relax by their saltwater pool. Catch sunset with a cocktail in hand from their rooftop lounge.

Also an option is the charming Shore House, located in a large Victorian-style property across the street from the beach. Its nautical feel helps lend itself to the overall beach energy of a Narragansett weekend, and clean, modern-feeling rooms and ocean views make it an easy choice.



Alexandria
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Alexandria, VA (4.5-hour drive)

Located just a stone's throw from our nation's capital of Washington, DC, Alexandria is the perfect balance between historic and exciting. It's easy to feel as if you've stepped back in time as you explore Old Town and nearby Mount Vernon, but a quick reminder of the present comes in the form of modern bistros and boutiques.

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Pit Stop: About three hours into your drive to Alexandria, you'll pretty much pass straight by Baltimore, a historic waterfront city in Maryland. Take advantage by spending an hour or two taking in 800 different animal species at the National Aquarium — Maryland's largest tourist attraction.

Once You're There: Alexandria is the kind of city that oozes charm, and simply taking a stroll down the cobblestone streets of Old Town is a great activity in and of itself. Observe the historic homes by foot, making your way over to the King Street Mile, which is chock full of locally owned restaurants and bars.

At the end of King Street you'll reach the water, where art lovers can check out the Torpedo Factory. Located in a former World War II torpedo factory, this unique art center is home to the largest collection of publicly accessible working artist studios in the country.

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Architecture buffs can take a drive over to Frank Lloyd Wright's Pope-Leighey House, and history savants might want to venture over to the grounds of Mount Vernon, George Washington's estate that lies just eight miles away from Old Town. There, visitors can tour the mansion and explore the vast gardens.

For something a little different, make sure to check out the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum, a rare example of a perfectly preserved apothecary full of tinctures, scales and bottles. You might also want to check out options for a ghost tour of the city later that night.

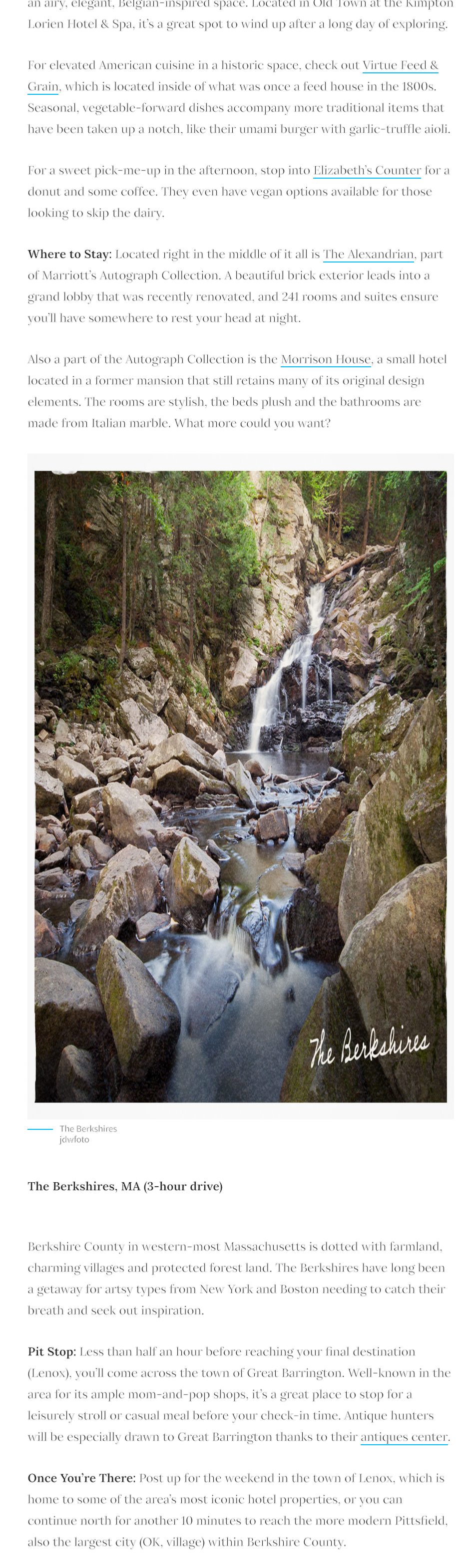
Where to Eat: French brasserie Brabo Brasserie is a must-go, where you can drink beer and chow down on locally sourced, approachable French fare in an airy, elegant, Belgian-inspired space. Located in Old Town at the Kimpton Lorien Hotel & Spa, it's a great spot to wind up after a long day of exploring.

For elevated American cuisine in a historic space, check out Virtue Feed & Grain, which is located inside of what was once a feed house in the 1800s. Seasonal, vegetable-forward dishes accompany more traditional items that have been taken up a notch, like their umami burger with garlic-truffle aioli.

For a sweet pick-me-up in the afternoon, stop into Elizabeth's Counter for a donut and some coffee. They even have vegan options available for those looking to skip the dairy.

Where to Stay: Located right in the middle of it all is The Alexandrian, part of Marriott's Autograph Collection. A beautiful brick exterior leads into a grand lobby that was recently renovated, and 241 rooms and suites ensure you'll have somewhere to rest your head at night.

Also a part of the Autograph Collection is the Morrison House, a small hotel located in a former mansion that still retains many of its original design elements. The rooms are stylish, the beds plush and the bathrooms are made from Italian marble. What more could you want?



The Berkshires
jdvsfoto

The Berkshires, MA (3-hour drive)

Berkshire County in western-most Massachusetts is dotted with farmland, charming villages and protected forest land. The Berkshires have long been a getaway for artsy types from New York and Boston needing to catch their breath and seek out inspiration.

Pit Stop: Less than half an hour before reaching your final destination (Lenox), you'll come across the town of Great Barrington. Well-known in the area for its ample mom-and-pop shops, it's a great place to stop for a leisurely stroll or casual meal before your check-in time. Antique hunters will be especially drawn to Great Barrington thanks to their antiques center.

Once You're There: Post up for the weekend in the town of Lenox, which is home to some of the area's most iconic hotel properties, or you can continue north for another 10 minutes to reach the more modern Pittsfield, also the largest city (OK, village) within Berkshire County.

Nature is the name of the game in the Berkshires, and experiencing all the hiking, fishing and biking you can will ensure a satisfying weekend. Make sure to rest up the night before and caffeinate the morning of your first full day foray into nature, then head over to the highest point in Massachusetts to hit the trails. Mount Greylock soars nearly 3,500 feet up and is covered in trails for all levels of adventuring.

Also worth a trip is the state's biggest park, October Mountain State Forest, the name of which was supposedly coined by Herman Melville, who was inspired by the colorful foliage he could see from his home in Pittsfield.

You'd be remiss to not also take advantage of the art galleries and museums in the Berkshires, like The Clark Art Institute. Originally founded in 1955, the collection boasts an impressive array of French Impressionists and early photography, but its gorgeous grounds and pastoral surroundings alone make it worth a trip.

Where to Eat: Start your day with some fuel from No. Six Coffee Roastery and Cafe, a locally beloved spot that once served as a train station before being transformed into a coffeehouse complete with the gallery of a local artist.

The quintessential Berkshires hot spot, Mezze Bistro + Bar, is where you should enjoy your first dinner after a full day of adventuring. It's been around for a while, having been co-founded by Nancy Thomas and Bo Peabody back in 1996, but remains one of the area's best farm-to-table joints, with locally sourced fare and house-made pastas.

Also worth a visit is Nudel, a cozy spot with menus that change nightly and exclusively call upon ingredients sourced from small Berkshires farms. Expect inventive dishes like spicy harissa and root vegetable soup, or pork belly “chicharrones” with grilled radicchio.

Where to Stay: If you've chosen to stay in Lenox, tap into the full Berkshires getaway experience by staying at Blantyre, a Tudor-style mansion and estate built back in 1902 during the Gilded Era. The luxe hotel is set amid more than 100 acres of lawns and woodlands, and is a member of the intensely coveted Relais & Chateaux hotel group.

Another great option is Guest House at Field Farm, which dates back to 1948 and can be found within an astounding 300 acres of preserved land. Hike on miles of undisturbed trails before heading back to the property, which features artwork from the likes of Noguchi and Eames.

For those seeking a more contemporary vibe, book your stay at Hotel on North, a 45-room boutique property in a historic building in Pittsfield. Rooms feature handcrafted furnishings, and the entire ethos of the hotel is based around art and the idea that no line should be created perfectly straight. Fittingly, it's located just an eight-minute walk from the Berkshire Museum.

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