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The Coolest Beach Bars In The US You Never Knew You Needed

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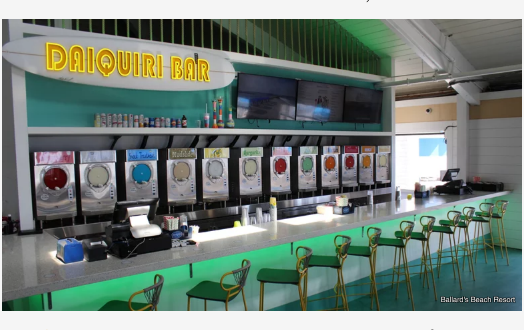
BY ALEXA MELLARDO / UPDATED: APRIL 18, 2022 9:10 AM EDT

When it comes time to plan your summer getaways, you deserve to be picky. Hear us out: A big part of your time away this summer will be filled with hazy, fun, and chill times enjoying more than a few specialty cocktails, seasonal sangrias, local craft beers, or even hard seltzers. But it's not just knowing the cool drinks to order and what's on tap that will take your season to the next level — it's knowing where the absolute coolest beach bars are in the U.S. so you can make just the right plans. After all, nobody has precious happy hours to waste at any place other than a hopping and happening beach spot — one that clearly knows what's up when it comes to the ambiance, grub, and beverages.

We here at Tasting Table are coming in seriously clutch by doing the hard work for you. We've listed specially for you all the coolest beach bars across the country that you never knew you needed to add to your itinerary as soon as possible. Why not plan to visit one, hit a few (or see them all, if you have a generous vacation package) on a summer road trip?

Ballard's Beach Resort on Block Island, Rhode Island



Ballard's Beach Resort

Ballard's Beach Resort on Block Island, Rhode Island, is all about the surf and sand, cocktails, volleyball, good food, and everything you'd dream of when you think of summer fun. From an entire frozen daiquiri bar to bubbly champagne, Jello shots, and Ballard's famous pineapple drink served out of an actual pineapple, this beach bar is exactly what you never knew you needed to experience this summer — and beyond. Be sure to grab some scrumptious appetizers, such as lobster salad sliders, clam cakes, or coconut shrimp. Don't forget to check out the sushi and raw bar as well.

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If you want to make a whole day of it, consider renting a VIP cabana at Ballard's if that's what your crew is about. In addition to a plush cabana, of course, you'll get beach and lounge chairs, a table, and lots of chill vibes for up to 12 of your bests. While you're chillaxin' and sipping at this unique beach party spot, you can expect some pretty rad live entertainment and festivals, like Block Island Country Fest, Block Island Reggae Fest, and Block Island Jam Fest. The good vibes and great reviews are always flowing. One five-star recommendation on TripAdvisor lauds the attentiveness of the staff, the quality of the fare, and the joy of having it all in front of the ocean. We'd have to agree.

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Island Gypsy Cafe & Marina Bar in the Isles of Capri, Naples, Florida

Facebook

Good vibes and times await at Island Gypsy Cafe & Marina Bar. It's a "Locally World Famous" spot on the Isles of Capri in Naples, Florida, and you can get there by land or by sea.

This cool marina bar knows the importance of happy hour, and we respect that. So much so that they have three consecutive happy hours, every day from 3 to 6 p.m. So, kick back and relax. Order some amazing apps like Bula Bula Goat Cheese (goat cheese with a macadamia nut crust, served with fresh mango salsa) or grab some black bean and tomato salsa, complete with citrus sour cream and tortilla chips.

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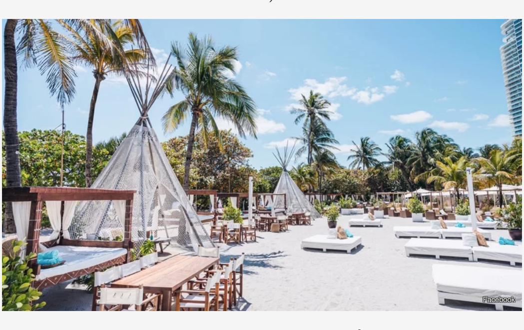
But, let's get down to business because we're visiting Island Gypsy Cafe & Marina Bar to try out some refreshing adult beverages. Consider ordering a specialty concoction like the Tipsy Gypsy Margarita, made with blue Curaçao, Quervo Gold, peach schnapps, Contreau, sour, and lime with a Grand Marnier float. Or maybe their Gypsy Punch is more your style, with flavored brandy, light rum, dark tropical schnapps, and fruit juices. Although everything on the menu is sizzling, the Capri Back Porch Lemonade is refreshingly where it's at, with a quenching combo of Deep Eddy's Tea Vodka and lemonade. Some reviewers report going again and again to this locals' favorite, even by kayak.

Nikki Beach in Miami Beach, Florida


Nikki Beach

Our next beach bar is as elusive as a receding wave. Some refer to it as an under-the-radar, undiscovered gem of South Beach, while others, like Culture Trip, know it as one of the top locations to enjoy a beach day in the city. So, you've got to wonder: Did you really even go to Miami if you didn't club it up at Nikki Beach? With an award-winning restaurant, a beach club, a nightclub on the second floor, a cabana bar, and a super cool lifestyle boutique, Nikki Beach is clearly not just a beach bar — it's a destination.

Make it like Memphis.
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If sandy, shoeless extravagance is your jam, you've got to head to Nikki Beach and order up a World Famous Nikki Beach Mojitos in strawberry, coconut, mango, or their classic flavor. In fact, you can order up a long glass, a pitcher, or a bowl — yes, a bowl — of whatever specialty cocktail that suits your fancy. Nikki Beach also serves up some pretty fabulous mocktails and healthy juices to quench your thirst in the heat. There are plenty of delicious items on the menu to order if you're hungry, like conch fritters, Sexy Salad (with lobster, shrimp, and crabmeat), tempura shrimp tacos, and artisan bruschetta, just to name a few. Nikki Beach has clubs on elegant beaches across the globe; Monte Carlo, Mallorca, and Saint Barth, for example. Partying here basically makes you a world traveler.

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The Rusty Nail in Cape May, New Jersey

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This is the kind of surfer's bar and restaurant that everyone needs to have around the corner when summer rolls around. We're talking about smokin' pig roasts, fresh berry cobbler, Jersey clam bake entrées, deep-fried mac and cheese, cornbread, live music by local musicians, a sand bar, and a cozy fire pit. Rusty Nail is pet-friendly, has shuffleboard, and a list of dreamy drinks that will make you and your crowd very happy.

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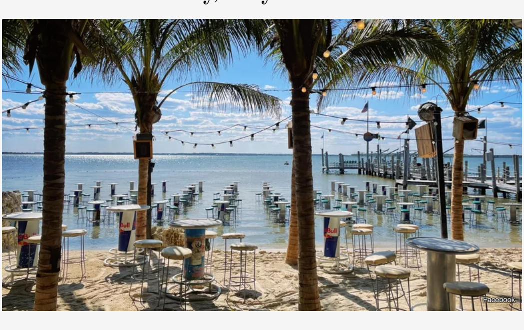
Your pup will have just as much fun as you will, as they have their very own (and well-deserved) section on the menu. You can order your BFF, aka best furry friend, menu items like a Hot Diggity Dog, or a doggie bowl with veggies or chicken. Clearly, Rusty Nail is a crowd-pleaser for the whole family! And if you're looking for some delicious to-go delights for a day of boogie-boarding and umbrellas, you can rest easy knowing that Rusty Nail's Atlantic Coast home-cooking is perfect for your beach blankets and boardwalk strolls.

Seacrets in Ocean City, Maryland



Seacrets in Ocean City, Maryland, is not any old beach bar. No, the secret to Seacrets is that the bar is on the beach. And not just on the beach — it's in the water. You can order up some jerk chicken, shrimp, or Maryland crab dip for an appetizer while your toes are in the water. How is that for kicking off the beach vibes? When it comes to refreshments, check out the thirst-quenching delights like Frozen Orange Crush, which is triple sec, orange vodka, Sprite, and orange juice, or an Electric Lemonade, made of a lovely frozen blend of Blue Curaçao, sour mix, and Seacrets Lemondrop. There's even the buttery Dirty Banana, which has coffee liquors, banana, and cream.

Oriental Trading

Overall though, the best part about Seacrets is the seating situation. You and your crew can grab a table on the sand or in the water, so you never have to come in from the ocean. Another cool thing about Seacrets is they have their own distillery, Seacrets Distilling Company, where they're whipping up quality spirits for use in your beverages. From blueberry vodka to coconut rum, you can't go to Seacrets without trying these handcrafted sips. This beach bar also serves as a regional music venue, with a stage that hosts concerts all season long. Okay, maybe the best part about Seacrets is all of Seacrets.

Duke's Waikiki in Honolulu, Hawaii

Facebook

Duke's Waikiki got more than its name from famed Olympic surfer Duke Kahanamoku, it also got his seriously laidback, good-natured attitude too. There's a beachy dress code, (we're talking surf trunks, bikinis, and no shoes — aka the best kind of dress code), and a prime location on the beaches of Honolulu. The aloha vibes are so strong and beautiful here that Duke's is even doing good while you're libating — the bar's Legacy of Aloha program sees a 1% donation of profits going towards deserving local causes, supporting local agriculture, and adding to an employee scholarship program.

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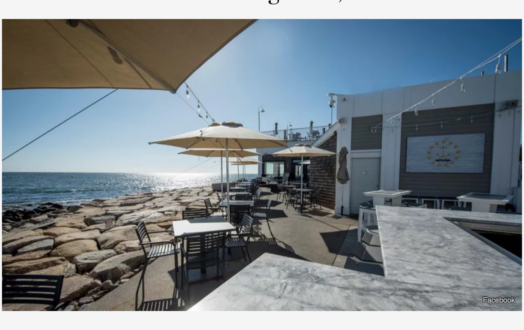
Duke's is open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and the food is oh-so-delicious. You can enjoy appetizers like poke tacos or crab wontons. Their creative beverages are a blast to order. Take a sip of their signature cocktail, Duke's Mai Tai (fresh Hawaiian juices, two types of rum, and a dash of "aloha"), or a Pog or Mango Cocktail (juice slushie with 100% locally grown fruit and your choice of spirit) while enjoying the phenomenal view of Diamond Head. To top it off, there are wickedly sweet treats for dessert, like Kimo's Original Hula Pie. It's made from toasted mac nuts, a heavenly chocolate cookie crust, hot fudge, and macadamia nut ice cream.

Coast Guard House in Narragansett, Rhode Island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The Coast Guard House in Narragansett, Rhode Island, is a beach party goer's delight with hashtag views for days to make your Instagram followers so envious of your weekend plans. You can start your visit with all the East Coast seafood; a delicious cup of lobster bisque, a jumbo shrimp cocktail, or even a fresh lobster roll. Next, you'll have to order a bubbly glass of Prosecco, refreshing rosé, or some local beer. If specialty cocktails are more your jam, Coast Guard House has you covered with some special options. You'll love the Pineapple Whip, made with fresh pineapple, Captain Morgan Pineapple, Malibu Pineapple, pineapple juice, and vanilla ice cream. And if you need a caffeine kick to start your Coast Guard time off right (or to right yourself after a long day), order up the Coast Guard Cold Brew, complete with espresso, Jameson Cold Brew, and crème de cacao, cream, and caramel.

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One reviewer on TripAdvisor gave Coast Guard House five stars but wished they could award it with more. Not many beach bars can beat the vibes at this sweet waterfront spot during golden hour and sunset, so grab a table with your pals and gear up for making some coastal memories. You can even create them in the winter, with one of the Coast Guard House's four designer Snowglobe Igloos.

Frankie & Louie's in Sunrise Beach, Missouri

Facebook

Located at the lake of the Ozarks, Frankie & Louie's Beach Bar — also known locally as the "Key West of the Midwest" — in Sunrise Beach, Missouri is a seriously happening spot. You can rent a boat with the squad, enjoy some live entertainment, kick back at a colorful picnic table to enjoy a refreshing rum bucket, and even lavish in some sweetness at their ice cream shop, which is truly the cherry topping to this visit. Their pizzas make great appetizers and come on a menu full of both traditional and quirky bar favorites, such as fried pickles, beer cheese dip, buffalo chicken Rangoon, and wings that could understandably be award-winning.

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Of course, your time at Frankie & Louie's would be incomplete without gulping down some beachy refreshments like a Pain in the Ass, a half-and-half mix of rum runner and piña colada. Or, cleanse your pallet with a Frozen Pink Lemonade. Multiple five-star reviews from TripAdvisor will completely convince you this is a spot for your bucket list, citing all the things people look for in a beach bar environment — exciting entertainment, filling food, and a busy, positive atmosphere. Keep an eye out for the daytime contests, and you'll see that the recreation runs from noon to night.

The Beachcomber in Wellfleet, Massachusetts

Beachcomber

The Beachcomber was dubbed one of the "Top Beach Bars on Cape Cod" by Culture Trip, and it's easy to see why. The list goes on, too. Throughout the years, Boston Magazine had voted Beachcomber "Best Bar, Cape Cod," while Esquire listed them as one of the "Best Bars in America" before the Beachcomber then took a slot in Travel Channel's "21 Sexiest Beach Bars in the World."

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Water slides, games and plenty of adventure!

That's a mouthful of bragging on our part, but Beachcomber's earned it. After all, they're right on the sand, they offer up music each night, they're serving the region's best seafood, and they're one of the coolest beach bar visits you could expect on vacation. Their specialty drinks include refreshing, classic hits like the Ruby Red Sunset with Deep Eddy Ruby Red Vodka, lime, and club soda. Then there is the Comber Libre, a tropic sensation of spiced rum, lime, and Coca-Cola. Round out your sips with clam strips, crab cakes, steamers, or giant loaded nachos — the bounty of the sea is so fresh here, you can taste the sand. Beachcomber has all the goodies you'd hope for from a beach bar in a town that knows all about the vacay vibes.

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Pool Central Inflatable Gold Shell Shaped Swimming Pool Float 63-Inch $74.99
Pool Central Inflatable White and Red Pirate Jumbo Skull Pool Float 59-... $49.99
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The fun doesn't stop there, either. You can turn your bar visit into a whole beach-filled getaway. Beachcomber has cottages available to rent, complete with big, ocean-facing decks and situated next to Cahoon Hollow Beach. If you're unfamiliar, that's on the Cape Cod National Seashore Park.

Galley Beach in Nantucket, Massachusetts

Facebook

The gem that is Galley Beach, located on the quaint island of Nantucket, is known to be especially picturesque, offering sherbet-colored sunsets to swoon over — the kind that dreams are made of. Dip your toes in the smooth sand while sipping a Lily Pad cocktail of goji berry-infused Absolute Elyx, crème de violette, dry Curaçao, and lemon. If you're feeling smooth, perhaps fit a Smoke On The Water tropical cocktail in your hand (guava syrup, Los Vecinos mezcal, Averna, and lemon). Be sure to order up some food to accompany your sips, starting with light fares, like Galley Beach's tahini hummus and crudité vegetable, then carry on to a seasonal, no-stress, pre-fixe dinner menu.

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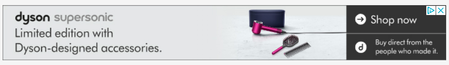
One five-star reviewer on TripAdvisor absolutely gushes about Galley, writing that the beach bar's setting is nearly unmatched. Sunset on the beach will fill your sights with Nantucket red. Eater Boston selected this sweet (though pricey) spot to top their list of best places to grab a drink on the island, though they do mention you might reservations are only available up to 14 days out. So, if you're heading to the beach, plan it right and avoid the FOMO. Book a table at Galley Beach, as you'll soon see it's a one-of-a-kind dining experience that fits your summer needs.

Fajitaville in Corpus Christi, Texas

Facebook

We Americans love using other places to describe the feeling of the one we're at, and this next bar is no different. Dubbed the "Coney Island of the Gulf Coast," you can find Fajitaville right on the beaches of Corpus Christi, Texas. Nestled at the foot of a Ferris Wheel and directly on the sand, this is definitely more of a hangout spot than others on this list. However, if you're looking for more than just sipping your day away with a cool cocktail, there's a lot on offer close by. You're not far from the U.S.S. Lexington Museum or the Texas State Aquarium, so you can make an entire day of beach-related activities (also, there's A.C.).



The food and drink at Fajitaville are exactly what you'd expect: Yes, there are burgers, but you're likely heading there to start your order off with bottomless chips and Tres Tapas: homemade guac, queso, and endless salsa! If you dare, order up the Diablos (an order of half a dozen fire-roasted jalapeño peppers, halved, stuffed with chipotle cream cheese, wrapped in bacon, fried ... the served with ranch dressing on the side). They take the summer's heat and put it right onto your tastebuds. There are sweet desserts to cook it all down, like cheesecake chimichanga or a piña colada tres leches cake. Still, you can't make a pitstop at Fajitaville without getting the Gulf shrimp fajitas.

Okay, we said it would be fun; we didn't say it was going to be an easy decision to order beverages once you're there. Fortunately, the signature tropical drinks are relaxing. Still craving spice? Taste the Pepino Caliente, which is made with Tabasco and a chili powder rim that really brings the heat alongside Svedka Cucumber, sweet and sour, melon liqueur, and Sprite. Of course, the flavors are bigger in Texas!

Moonshadows in Malibu, California

Facebook

Moonshadows is located on an ocean cliff in dreamy Malibu, California. This destination is serving up a fashionable and nonchalant vibe you'll undoubtedly be obsessed with. There's a fabulous beach patio within Moonshadows called The Blue Lounge that was named one of the six best bars in Malibu by Culture Trip. According to the Los Angeles crowd, this club is not your traditional flip-flop and sandy shorts sort of place, but rather a swankier vibe. Clearly, the Blue Lounge knows how to throw a party, and we are so here for it. Hey ... when in Malibu!

Expect to enjoy an absolutely beautiful view of the Pacific Ocean at Moonshadows. You can order delicious bites with your cocktails, including octopus carpaccio, spicy ahi tuna tartare, or Dungeness crab cakes. Or, make it a full meal with lobster and crab linguini or Thai curried tiger shrimp. There is even more to see than the ocean critters; A full vegetarian menu is available for those on an animal-light or those looking for the benefits of a plant-based diet. Let's get real, though, and talk about the cocktails. How does a Pear Martini sound? Or a Kentucky Mule? Perhaps a Jalapeño Margarita will float your boat. There are so many drinks to try, like white sangria and Italian spritzes, that you'll likely want to come back again for more. The refreshment possibilities are truly endless.

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