

# 6 Perfect Picnic Spots in the U.S.

(Courtesy of Cynthia Barnes, The Discoverer)

Nothing says “Hello, spring!” better than the first picnic of the season. Celebrate the warmer temperatures by packing up goodies and a blanket, ditching the dining room, and heading outdoors for an al fresco feast. While your backyard or local park will do just fine, some places are so scenic they’re practically begging for a basket. You bring the rosé, we’ll supply the recommendations: Here are six of our favorite spots for enjoying a perfect picnic.

## Central Park - New York City, New York



Credit: [dibrova](#)/ Shutterstock

Residents of America’s largest (and most densely populated) city love this verdant oasis in the heart of Manhattan and you will, too. At 800-plus acres, it’s larger than the European country of Monaco ... but is still only the Big Apple’s third-largest greenspace. The first public park in the country, [Central Park](#) has lavishly landscaped formal gardens, rocky woodlands, and tranquil lawns. While you can’t go wrong with throwing down a blanket on the sprawling, 55-acre Great Lawn or on the slopes of Cherry Hill overlooking the picturesque Bow Bridge, the shores of Turtle Pond provide stunning views of Belvedere Castle, one of the park’s most iconic structures.

## Walden Pond - Massachusetts



Credit: [Jay Yuan](#)/ Shutterstock

For a less urban experience, nature- and literature-lovers can spend a day on the wooded shores of [Walden Pond](#), where naturalist, philosopher and writer Henry David Thoreau lived and wrote for more than two years. (In spite of Thoreau's "off in the wilderness" writings, he was only 20 minutes away from his mom — who often provided him with food and laundry.) Poetic license aside, Walden Pond State Reservation remains an exceptional picnic spot. In addition to enjoying a peaceful meal while communing with nature, visitors can swim, boat, or fish at the eponymous pond, visit a replica of Thoreau's humble cabin, or hike one of the reservation's many trails.



## Yellowstone National Park - Wyoming



Credit: [JurgaR](#)/ iStock

You'll need to be smarter than your average bear at [Yellowstone Park](#) — don't feed the wildlife! — but picnic spots abound at the 2.2 million-acre park that was tongue-in-cheek inspiration for Hanna-Barbera's "Jellystone," the animated home to Yogi, a hungry [bear](#) ever in search of a "pic-a-nic" basket. While the sprawling park has 52 dedicated picnic areas — some with grills and restrooms — you can't really go wrong anywhere in this magical place. Just keep well away from wildlife (bison can be particularly boisterous), pack out everything you brought in, and above all (sorry, Yogi) ... don't feed the bears.

## Peace Park - Columbia, Missouri



Credit: [APN Photography](#)/ Shutterstock

Travel back to carefree college days with a picnic on the campus of the [University of Missouri](#), the oldest land-grant university west of the Mississippi. Peace Park (aka McAlester Park) picnickers can relax in the shade of 200-year-old oaks and listen to the burbling waters of the small creek that cuts through the four-acre arboretum, which features more than 100 trees of 43 varieties. The park abuts the campus's historic Francis Quadrangle, which features six stately columns, the remains of the portico that supported Academic Hall, which burned in 1892. Forgot to pack a picnic? No worries: Both the [Sub Shop](#) and [Shakespeare's Pizza](#) are just steps away, and have been feeding hungry students for close to 50 years.



## Picnic Beach - Laguna, California



Credit: [Jon Bilous](#)/ Shutterstock

The northernmost stretch of sand in [Laguna Beach's Heisler Park](#) is pure California dreamin' — easily accessible and perfect for picnics (it's literally in the name) along the Pacific's scenic shores. Picnickers will find paved paths, grassy blanket-friendly expanses, and plenty of tables. Watch the scuba divers (Diver's Cove is hugely popular), tidepoolers (look but don't touch) and in the winter months you can even catch a glimpse of the whales that migrate from their Alaskan feeding grounds to sheltered breeding lagoons in Mexico's Baja peninsula.

## Promontory Park - Chicago, Illinois



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*Urbs in Horto* (City in a Garden) is Chicago's motto, and the Windy City has no shortage of friendly spots to plop down and a blanket and a basket. There's the Great Lawn (and the Bean!) at the Loop's Millennium Park, the hidden oasis of the Alfred Caldwell Lily Pond in Lincoln Park, and the Chinese-inspired Ping Tom Memorial Park, where picnickers can admire the pavilion and paddle a kayak on the river. But for jaw-dropping views of Lake Michigan and the city skyline, head south to [Promontory Point](#) at Burnham Park. Named for one of Chicago's most iconic architect, the green oasis draws all fresco diners from across the metropolis.