

The 8 Best Destinations for Memorial Day Weekend

(Courtesy of Peter Thornton, SMARTERTRAVEL)

Looking for the perfect Memorial Day weekend vacation? From special commemorative events to large-scale music festivals, here are eight of the best destinations for Memorial Day weekend 2022.

With gas prices on the rise, you may want to consider flying to your Memorial Day weekend destination this year—and you'll want to book your flight soon. Airfares are already on the high side and prices will likely increase the closer it gets to the holiday as reduced flight schedules and increasing demand means seats are filling up. We've got all the details on how to find deals to these Memorial Day weekend hotspots.

Waterloo, New York

In 1966, 100 years after the first Memorial Day ceremonies, President Lyndon Johnson signed a proclamation recognizing Waterloo, NY, as the birthplace of Memorial Day.

In 2022, Memorial Day falls on May 30th, which is the original date it was observed regardless of the day of week until 1971, when Congress standardized the holiday to always fall on the last Monday in May. What better way to celebrate than visiting the birthplace of the holiday in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York?

Waterloo will hold its annual [Celebrate Commemorate](#) event over the holiday weekend, complete with a 5K run/walk, live entertainment, and a Freedom Parade. You can also pay a visit to the American Civil War Memorial and there's even a National Memorial Day Museum in town.

How to Get There

The closest airports to Waterloo are [Rochester \(ROC\)](#) and [Syracuse \(SYR\)](#). After landing at either airport, you'll be about a one-hour drive from Waterloo. All major airlines fly into both airports including Southwest and JetBlue. There is also limited competition from ultra-low-cost carriers Allegiant, Frontier, and Spirit. You'll find the most flight options flying into Rochester but it's always best to check both to find the best deal.

Napa, California

If sipping fermented grapes in wine country is your idea of a fun Memorial Day Weekend, a visit to Napa Valley, California is the perfect trip to take. You can even opt for a [hot-air balloon ride](#) to get a bird's-eye view of the expansive vineyards below.

Music lovers, book your ticket for [BottleRock](#), a three-day music festival over Memorial Day Weekend featuring headliners Metallica, Twenty One Pilots, Pink, and several other artists. The festival also has a culinary stage, spa, and, of course, many wines to sample from the surrounding region.

How to Get There

The airport of choice for value and number of flights is [Oakland \(OAK\)](#). Make sure to check fares on Southwest separately as well since it is the largest carrier in Oakland and only sells its fares on [Southwest.com](#). A slightly closer option with less traffic would be to fly into [Santa Rosa \(STS\)](#) but

you'll likely find sky high prices over the holiday weekend. For even more options, be sure to check flights into [San Francisco \(SFO\)](#) and [San Jose \(SJC\)](#), but be prepared for a longer drive to Napa.

Arlington, Virginia

A visit to the National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia is a great way to pay tribute and remember those who have served. There will be several [remembrance ceremonies](#) at the Memorial Amphitheater where thousands of visitors are in attendance each year. One of the most moving memorials in the cemetery is the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, which overlooks Washington D.C., providing a final resting place for one of America's unidentified service members from World War I.

Directly across the Potomac River, you can also explore our nation's capital by visiting several famous landmarks such as the Lincoln Memorial, Washington Monument, or one of the Smithsonian Museums.

How to Get There

The Washington D.C. area has three major airports. For the most convenient option, you'll want to look for flights into [Reagan National Airport \(DCA\)](#), which is the closest to downtown D.C. (and has its own METRO station). United has a hub at [Washington-Dulles Airport \(IAD\)](#) and if you're looking to fly Southwest, you'll find the most options into [Baltimore \(BWI\)](#).

Savannah, Georgia

Head down to Savannah this Memorial Day Weekend and enjoy relatively moderate temperatures before the heat picks up during the peak summer months. A walk around the historic district will bring you back in time with its cobblestone streets, elaborate architecture, and over 20 squares and parks full of ancient oak trees.

If you're looking for a beach day, head over to Tybee Island where you'll find expansive, sandy beaches in a family-friendly environment. It's just 20 minutes east of downtown Savannah.

How to Get There

Flights to [Savannah/Hilton Head Airport \(SAV\)](#) have increased in recent years. Delta still carries the most passengers—primarily via its hub in Atlanta—however, budget carrier Allegiant has been a major factor in lowering fares to this regional airport with year-round and seasonal service from up to 18 different cities. Avelo Airlines will also start flying to Savannah in May with cheap flights out of New Haven. As always, be sure to check Southwest when comparing prices and be flexible with travel dates as many budget airlines only fly on certain days of the week.

Chicago, Illinois

From kayaking along the Chicago River to enjoying fireworks at the Navy Pier, there's plenty to do in Chicago over Memorial Day Weekend. You can dine at waterfront restaurants or hit the beach along Lake Michigan with the city skyline providing a magnificent backdrop. Chicago will also host a Memorial Day wreath laying ceremony and parade on Saturday, May 28.

Around two and a half hours west of Chicago, [Summer Camp](#) music festival will take place in the small town of Chillicothe, Illinois, from May 27-29. The 3-day festival features Chicago's own Smashing

Pumpkins as headliners along with several other musical acts including Umphrey's McGee and Moe. There will also be a live art gallery with artists creating paintings during the musical performances.

How to Get There

Flights to Chicago are plentiful with all major airlines flying into [Chicago's O'Hare Airport \(ORD\)](#). United, which is headquartered in Chicago, has the most market share, but American is close behind with a hub of its own at O'Hare. Spirit Airlines also flies to Chicago from over 20 cities across the U.S., making all airlines compete with its ultra-low fares. [Chicago's Midway Airport \(MDW\)](#) is where you'll find flights on Southwest and, starting in late April, Frontier will begin flying low-cost flights into Midway.

New Orleans, Louisiana

Well-known for Mardi Gras and Jazz Fest, New Orleans is also a great place to spend Memorial Day Weekend. The [National World War II Museum](#) is often rated the top attraction in New Orleans and it can be a great way to learn about the American experience in the war that changed the world.

Of course, you'll also get to enjoy the vibrant nightlife of the French Quarter and the many tastes and sounds that make New Orleans one of the most cultured cities in America. If you're a fan of festivals, The New Orleans Greek Fest will take place over Memorial Day Weekend with over 20 traditional homemade Greek pastries to try.

How to Get There

When looking for flights into Louis Armstrong [New Orleans Airport \(MSY\)](#) make sure to check what's available on Southwest Airlines as it is by far the largest carrier flying to/from New Orleans. Spirit Airlines helps to keep fares as low as possible with flights from up to 20 different cities and one of the newest airlines to hit the U.S. skies, Breeze Airways, offers low-cost flights from up to 9 cities across the nation.

Indianapolis, Indiana

Race car fans flock to Indianapolis over Memorial Day Weekend to experience the famous [Indy 500](#) at Indianapolis Motor Speedway. The main event takes place on Sunday, May 29, and is preceded by a kick off Miller Lite Carb Day concert on Friday, May 27.

If you're bringing the kids, you can visit the expansive [Children's Museum](#), which is opening a revamped *Dinosphere* exhibit in 2022 where you can learn all about the largest animals to ever roam the earth and be immersed in their prehistoric environment.

How to Get There

As with many airports in this list, Southwest is the largest carrier in [Indianapolis \(IND\)](#) so you'll want to be sure to check its website to compare prices. Other than Southwest, you'll find regular service on all three legacy carriers, American, Delta, and United, with Spirit Airlines and Allegiant providing the most service in the ultra-low-cost category.

Seattle, Washington

Travel to the Pacific Northwest this Memorial Day Weekend and experience the [Northwest Folklife](#) festival in Seattle. The community-powered festival celebrates diversity and cultural expression

and there is no admission charge—it runs purely on donations. The theme for 2022 is *Metamorphosis: In with the Old, In with the New*, celebrating people's natural tendency for change.

While in Seattle, you can also visit some of the city's top attractions including The Museum of Pop Culture, a hike in Mt. Rainier National Park, or, one of my personal favorites, [The Museum of Flight](#), where you can have a look inside a Concorde jet and a former Air Force One.

How to Get There

There's no question which airline dominates in [Seattle \(SEA\)](#). As Alaska Airlines' largest hub, you'll find the most flight options on the new Oneworld alliance member. However, Delta has been making a push in Seattle over the past several years and has brought competitive pricing with its ability to connect travelers from all over the country. You can also find Alaska Airlines flights into nearby Paine Field Airport (PAE) in Everett.