

## Travel Destinations



Fun in the sun: Children swing by rope into Sand Creek near the Cedar Street Bridge in Sandpoint, Idaho.

By Bob Riha, Jr., USA TODAY

### Summer vacations: 15 unforgettable trips

*Ask a travel writer "What's your favorite place?" and the standard response is likely to be: "Any place I haven't been." But as summer vacation season shifts into high gear, USA TODAY's travel staffers pick three favorite warm-weather U.S. destinations they'd love to revisit on their own time and dime.*

#### Sandpoint, Idaho

I was smitten with this lakefront town from the moment I saw it, tucked between the Cabinet and Selkirk mountains in Idaho's Panhandle like some Northwoods Brigadoon.

I loved hearing the thwack of an old, spring-loaded wooden door at the Beyond Hope Resort on an August afternoon and a young boy's hollers as he plunged from a rope swing into sun-dappled Sand Creek. I relished my sunset tour of Lake Pend Oreille, the state's largest, followed by a solo, late-night foray to a meadow where a dazzling meteor storm punctuated the enveloping darkness. I can still taste Sandpoint's salute to summer, a frosty huckleberry daiquiri spiked with the wild (and, I'd argue, superior) cousins to Eastern blueberries.

What I remember most, though, was a fierce communal desire to keep an increasingly bright spotlight of fame from turning Sandpoint into another Telluride or Jackson Hole.

Three years after my visit, property values are soaring, and high-end, gated communities have appeared for the first time.

Downtown traffic is more tangled than ever, thanks to a stalemate on a long-proposed highway bypass.

But some things haven't changed: The first two weeks of August, the Festival at Sandpoint celebrates its 25th anniversary with musical performers that, once again, will compete with an unpaid interloper: A resident osprey who makes regular victory laps above the lakeside picnic grounds with a hard-won fish in its grasp.

Details: [sandpointchamber.com](http://sandpointchamber.com) — **Laura Bly**