

The Ultimate Adventure Bucket List

1. Hike the Haiku Stairs
Location: Kaneohe, Hawaii

Although currently closed to the public, the Haiku Stairs, otherwise known as the Stairway to Heaven, provide a beautiful panoramic view of the Kaneohe Bay and the surrounding mountains. With a peak 2,800 ft. high, these stairs were first built to aid in the construction of the Haiku Radio Station, a top-secret communication facility for the Navy. Nothing more than a wooden ladder at the time, the steps have made a transformation into the nearly 4,000 stairs that exist today, with further renovations in 2003. For safety reasons, because of the damage done to the stairs over the years due to weather, it is illegal to climb the Haiku Stairs without special permission. However, volunteering your time to help the Friends of the Haiku Stairs, a group dedicated to protecting the stairs and environment, is one way to gain this exclusive access. The group also offers a petition for the reopening of the stairs for the use of the general public, which they hope will be in the near future. If you'd like to add this beautiful place to your bucket list, signing the petition might be your first step into making that a reality!
<http://haikustairs.org/sign-the-petition/>).

2. Hike over or kayak through Horeshoe Bend
Location: Colorado River- Page, Arizona

From whichever vantage point you prefer, the Colorado River offers plenty of opportunity for exercise and adventure. Kayakers can obtain a permit from Grand Canyon National Park. Fellow travelers have described the ride as a "relaxing river trip" - definitely not your white knuckle thrill ride, but the Midwest offers backdrops that you cannot get anywhere else in the world.

If hiking is more your thing, the view over Horeshoe bend is breathtaking, so make sure to bring your camera. Pack the widest lens you have or plan to make full use of your iPhone's panorama feature. The Horeshoe Bend Trail is accessible right off of Highway 89, and is only about a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile hike from the parking area. But don't be fooled by the short distance, you're guaranteed to be sweating by the time you reach the top (hikers can expect to wade through deep sand and temperatures often range anywhere from 90-100° F.) Once you've reached the peak you'll be greeted with a beautiful view about 1,000 ft. up of the bright blue Colorado River, making the work worth it.

Quick history lesson: When the Colorado Plateau uplifted about 5 million years ago, the river was trapped and needed to find a new way to reach lower ground. This is when it began to cut through layers of sandstone to create the beautiful 270 ° curve through Antelope Canyon that we see today. Nature can be pretty cool sometimes.

3. Go skiing in Aspen
Location: Aspen, Colorado

Need an adventure that takes you out of the heat? Look no further. Aspen is known for being one of the largest winter activity hubs in the U.S. and offers four main ski areas: Aspen Mountain, Aspen Highlands, Snowmass and Buttermilk. Combined, these resorts offer over 335 trails, so whether you're a snow bunny just out looking to show off your new winter coat and boots or you're one of the pros, Aspen offers something for you. Looking for a thrill? Head to Aspen Highlands where you will reach peak altitudes of over 12,000 ft. Looking to show off your moves on the half pipe? Buttermilk is the place for you. In fact, Buttermilk is the official host of the X Games!

One note of caution is that season's passes bought early enough in advance can still cost upwards of \$2,000, so this is a trip you will want to plan for well ahead of time (although a pass does grant you access to all four mountains). Planning a weekend trip is more affordable, with an adult 3-day pass costing around \$350. The culture of Aspen itself is worth the trip, with dozens of luxury resorts in the area, along with great restaurants, nightlife, museums and theaters to occupy your time when you're not hitting the slopes.

4. Sandboard
Location: Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve- Mosca, Colorado

Find massive expanse of desert only four hours south of Denver, where the Sahara meets the Rockies. There are very few other places in the world where you can find this combination of completely contrasting environments. If you love the thrill of flying down a steep mountain on an apparatus of your choosing, then sand-boarding is a must for you. With average temperatures in June and July ranging around 80°, it's all of the fun minus the cold of skiing. If you're physically uncoordinated like me, hop on a sled and slide your clumsy heart away. No matter what, the Oasis Store, located only minutes from the park, and offers all of your equipment rental needs.

What else does the middle of the desert have to offer? Well, Great Sand Dunes National Park offers the tallest sand dunes in North America, with some as high as 750 ft. Add that to your bucket list and then cross it off. The park also boasts its Medano Creek, where visitors frequently cool off on a hot day. You would think a lack of vegetation would go hand in hand with a lack of water, but that is not the case here (at least half of the year). While the creek dries up toward the end of the summer, it is a huge attraction for those visiting during late May and early June when its at its peak water levels. Plan accordingly if this is something you'd like to see. The state park rangers suggest planning your trip during the week if possible during these months due to large crowd sizes.

5. Cliff-Jump Havasupai Falls

Location: Supai, Arizona

Your adventure here begins with a pretty daunting, lengthy hike, but from friends who have done it themselves, I've been told that reaching your final destination is comparable to walking in to Nirvana. Located within the Havasupai Indian Reservation, the initial hike in to the campgrounds is about 10 miles, so definitely plan on scheduling out several days. It is recommended that travelers plan at least three days for their excursion. From the campsite, the falls are only about another half mile in. If hiking is not your cup of tea, mule, horse, and helicopter rides are all available for purchase at the entrance. But if hiking is not your cup of tea, you may want to skip Havasupai altogether.

Once into the campgrounds, find yourself amidst three gorgeous, bright blue waterfalls. The first and closest is Havasu Falls. A bit farther along is Mooney Falls, the tallest of the three, and also the most difficult to reach. To get to the top, be prepared to climb various rope ladders, crawl through tunnels and leap across ledges. Beaver Falls is the farthest, about three miles away from the campsite, but undoubtedly the most photographed and famous. The hike is well worth the trip, as Beaver Falls offers a chance to cool off in one of its many swimming pools.

A few things to keep in mind if planning to visit Havasupai:

- The Havasupai Tribe owns and operates the land. The water that runs down the falls is sacred to them, so it is important to remember that you are entering their home when hiking in. Don't leave behind anything that you take in with you, and act with an overall manner of respect.
- There is no water for eight miles on your hike in. Water is available at the campsite and there is a café located in the lodge that provides breakfast, lunch and dinner, but do some research ahead of time on what to pack and be well prepared. Great packing lists can be found online!
- The Havasu Canyon is subject to flash floods.
- There is a \$35 advance fee to cross into any portion of the Havasupai Reservation, as well as a \$5 environmental care fee. Carry your receipt and paperwork in with you, as you could be asked at any time to show proof of payment.

6. Zipline the Redwoods

Location: Occidental, California

For a thrill on the west coast, try an adventure a little out of the ordinary! There are many companies to choose from that offer canopy tours and ziplining across the country, but none can compare to ziplining through the Redwood Forest between trees almost 400 ft. high. Two companies to look into are Sonoma Canopy Tours and Mount Hermon Adventures. Both companies offer daytime and sunset tours, and Mount Hermon even offers special "Twinkle Tours," during the weeks leading up to Christmas. Imagine flying past hundreds of trees all lit up

in thousands of beautiful lights. Sign me up! Most ziplining companies also offer GoPro helmet rentals so you can document your adventure and take it back home with you!

Note: To zipline, you typically must be 10 years or older and weight at least 75 pounds, but check each company's website for specifications!

7. Snorkle/ Scuba

Location: Big Island, Hawaii

From Kealahou Bay to Kaiwi Point, choose from dozens of scuba charter companies. The Big Island is the perfect place to check out the underwater world, with coves and reefs almost everywhere you turn. Visions of swimming with manta rays, turtles and dolphins, really any kind of sea creature you can imagine, come to life here. Not scuba-certified? No worries. Many of the same charter companies offer classes before you head out on the open sea. Twilight tours are especially great for witnessing the ocean come to life as some creatures scurry home for the night and others are just beginning their day. So grab your underwater camera or your rented GoPro and dive in! You'll want those pictures to brag about your adventure for years to come. Who knows, you may even catch a glimpse of the legendary Kaiwi Point mermaid.

8. Whitewater raft the Chattooga River

Location: South Carolina/ Georgia

Known as the Southeast's premiere spot for whitewater rafting, the Chattooga River is the number one thing every southerner ought to do, according to "Southern Living." Protected by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, it remains one of the few rivers in the U.S. still undammed and uncommercialized, full of beautiful, non-polluted scenery. Split into two sections, the Chattooga River offers rafting adventures upstream with class II and III rapids for those looking for a more mild and scenic route. But head downstream and the rapids start to pick up the pace, ending with the infamous Five Falls, which will have you white-knuckled and sweating for sure. Think sitting in an inflatable tube drifting downstream is a cinch? Say that to a few massive, fast approaching rapids and rock walls that all threaten to make you a little wetter and much more apprehensive than you were five minutes ago.

9. Hike a glacier

Location: St. Elias National Park- Wrangell, Alaska

A park that is open year-round with no entrance fee is definitely a park that everyone should visit. Located in Alaska, the park's peak visiting season is June-mid September, but can be accessed at any time, and one of the biggest attractions

is its glaciers. Hikers are advised not to set out for any hike within the park without the proper equipment, and it is recommended to consult a park ranger or request a guide before heading out.

The park is home to Nabesha Glacier, the world's longest interior valley glacier, stretching over 75 miles long. The Bagley Icefield also finds its home here, encompassing multiple glaciers and sitting at 3,000 ft. thick. Global warming is no match for this guy! While these glaciers can be found within the park, others such as Root Glacier and the Hubbard are found in the Yakutat District, which can only be accessed by plane or boat, an adventure within itself. Alaska Airlines and other companies offer regular flights to the district, and there are ferry rides as well, a particularly good option if you plan to drive around once you make it across. Many reasonably priced tours, around \$100-\$150, can be purchased and include an experienced guide to help you along the way. From the park, catch beautiful views of the Stairway Icefall and Mt. Blackburn as well.

10. Hike Mesa Verde

Location: Montezuma County, Colorado

The small, abandoned, cliff-side village of Mesa Verde is filled with some of the most well-preserved Puebloan archeological sites in the U.S. From someone who has been there myself, I tell you the structures are still standing perfectly upright and do not look like they were last lived in over a thousand years ago. The site encompasses over 600 cliff dwellings and is open to the public to tour, an adrenaline-pumping experience not for the faint of heart. At times, you are walking perilously close to the edge of the cliff, which drops down hundreds of feet. At others, you are climbing up a suspension ladder to get to the next level. An experience that is as much historical education as it is adventure, guided Mesa Verde tours are available to explore each of the main "houses" at a cost of only \$4 per person. For the avid travel photographer, special photography tours can also be scheduled.