



## **Let Your Heart Be Your Travel Guide**

Are you thinking you'd like to travel and see more of the country, but find yourself staring at a U.S. map, lost in the possibilities of where to go, or perhaps still negotiating with your spouse over how many times you'll visit your grandkids? If you're retired with virtually unlimited free time, it might be an easier decision. But if you're still working, vacation time is still at a premium and you want to spend it wisely.

Here's a suggestion: ask yourself, what are my interests? What am I curious about? What topics do I like to read about? Then think about these things in the context of travel, and plan a theme trip to places and locations that represent the interests that are near and dear to your heart. Theme travel can take you to out-of-the-way places you might never have thought to visit – and a special advantage is that you're bound to no particular schedule!

For example, say you're a history buff. Do you know how many Presidential Libraries there are across the country, and where they are located? There are 12 Presidential Libraries and Museums, from Herbert Hoover to the new Clinton Library (just opened last November) in Iowa, New York, Missouri, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Georgia, and Arkansas, plus two in California and two in Texas. They are fascinating collections of historical papers, personal memorabilia, audiovisual materials and artifacts relating to each President and his times. Some even offer access to historical homes. Most are open almost every day of the year, and charge very reasonable admission fees ranging from no charge to \$10 for adults (visit [www.archives.gov/presidential\\_libraries](http://www.archives.gov/presidential_libraries)).

Or if you are a passionate gardener, go to the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta at [www.aabga.org](http://www.aabga.org) for an amazingly helpful site that allows you to search for information by state, region and categories such as arboretum, art museum, botanical garden, historical

house/site, nature center, zoo, and horticultural features, including xeriscape, bulb, Japanese, perennial and herb. You'll also find a schedule of special events and programs there. You could plan a fabulous trip in the spring or summer as blooms occur. Or, if a fall trip is your plan, you can find up-to-the-minute information on the turning colors of autumn leaves at [www.roadtripamerica.com](http://www.roadtripamerica.com) so you can catch them in their full glory.

Any collectors in the family? You might be surprised to learn there are some fabulous flea markets that people come from miles away to explore. Go on a treasure-hunting trip and you just might find that last piece to complete your collection. You can find out all about flea markets by state if you go to [www.fleamarketguide.com](http://www.fleamarketguide.com). This site lists the towns that have flea markets, with details such as hours and dates of operation, size (number of vendors or booths), facilities and concessions available, and types of merchandise. A quick trip to the website revealed flea markets in 11 towns in Kansas, 40 towns in North Carolina, and 23 towns in Oregon.

Remember, you don't need reservations to visit attractions like these, nor are you bound to arrive at a particular hour. Just take your time and enjoy the sights!

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