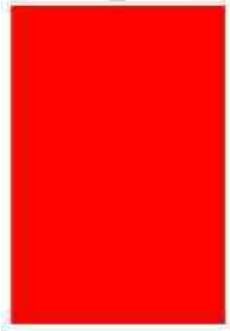


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TRAVEL



Planning a winter escape? Here are 4 enticing destinations that await you

SHARYN JACKSON AND JOY SUMMERS | (M) (M) (M) (M) Star Tribune
 If you live in a state with a propensity for chilly temps and snow, your time outdoors may soon be limited. But these warm-weather destinations will help thoughts of snow melt away.

1 Lisbon, Portugal
Why: Anyone thinking the Atlantic coast is only good for summer breezes can think again. Portugal's capital enjoys the sunny, mild winters the Mediterranean region is known for. Europe's westernmost capital has a long and rich history, incredible vistas, a sophisticated food and wine scene, and a penchant for hard-partying nightlife.
Food scene: Your first order of business is tasting a fresh, warm pastel de nata. A flaky tart filled with egg custard and sprinkled lightly with cinnamon sugar, it's a creamy, comforting national treasure. Castro is one jewel box of a bakery where you can easily knock back two pastries with a glass of port or ginjinha (cherry liqueur), then take a six-pack to go. For a grand overview of Portuguese food, and the Lisbon restaurant scene in particular, try Time Out Market Lisboa, an enormous food hall with 26 food stands and eight bars (plus a dozen shops) that represent what's current in local cuisine. Chefs from some of the city's hottest restaurants have a presence here, so sample and decide where to go the next night for dinner. For a fancier night out, try Plano, with its two tasting menus of five or nine courses. Get a wise primer at the Wines of Portugal Tasting Room, located on Praça do Comércio, one of Lisbon's most famous squares.
Tidbits: Lisbon is compact and walkable. If you don't mind a steep climb, the tricky hills rival San Francisco's, and even when two places look close together on a map, there might be a surprise flight of stairs in between. When you don't feel like a workout — or are wearing shoes that make a stroll outright dangerous — ride shares are incredibly fast and inexpensive. (Traditional trolleys, more cute than they are practical, are another option.)
 — Sharyn Jackson



2 Beaufort, South Carolina
Why: This small southern town in the heart of South Carolina's lowcountry is set in scenery so breathtaking that movies, including "Forrest Gump" and "The Big Chill," have been filmed here. Its downtown main street is dotted with art galleries, shops and restaurants just feet from the shoreline, and shushing sweet-grass graces the area with an alluring aroma. History buffs will appreciate the stately, and possibly haunted, antebellum mansions and rich Gullah culture.
Food scene: Dining in Beaufort means barbecue, fresh seafood and comforting lowcountry fare that originated here. Start the day at Lowcountry Produce market and cafe, where brunch is served every day. The menu offers everything from fresh doughnuts to a fried chicken sandwich with blue cheese and peach chutney. Don't forget to order a stack of pickled green tomatoes and pimento cheese for the table. If you prefer lighter morning fare, head to Herban Market & Cafe. Grab a seat on the sheltered patio and peruse the specials for bites like a smoky beef foieban or bagel sandwich with veggie sausage. If a taste of real Carolina barbecue is on your bucket list, stop by the Island Bistro & Bar. The melt-in-your-mouth ribs are unlike any other, and the banana pudding is heaven on a spoon. Cap off your trip by booking an intimate dining experience at Blacksheep. This build-your-own-menus is intentionally small and reservations go quickly.
Tidbits: The pace of life is intentionally slow, so don't expect to get anywhere or do anything quickly. Amble along or take a horse-drawn tour to soak it all in.
 — Joy Summers



3 Palm Springs, California
Why: This outdoor living town is filled with mid-century architecture, golden-era Hollywood glamour and leisure living. The city has been getting younger, but visiting still feels like trying on retirement just for fun. If you harbor a love for Frank Sinatra, a glass of the Golden Girls, there is plenty to love in this desert oasis.
Food scene: Start the day in the garden at Farm for a leisurely al fresco breakfast. Order the buttery croissant with over easy eggs served with a bright and crisp salad before wandering through nearby shops. Another option Wilma & Frieda's has a modern diner brunch. No trip to Palm Springs is complete without a date shake, and the Ace Hotel's comes with proximity to their espresso bar. For dinner, join the lines at Rooster and the Pig. Tucked into the side of a strip mall, the inside feels like an intimate, rustic cabin, while the menu is an exercise in vibrancy with fresh herbs and bright and spicy sauces, courtesy of a modern Vietnamese menu. You could stay all day at The Rowan hotel, sampling cocktails (great non-alcoholic options, too) by the rooftop pool. Its 4 Sains restaurant sports not only an impressive modern steakhouse menu, but also some of the most attentive service in town. For late-night drinks, tuck into the Spanish Colonial setting of Del Rey for tapas and a pitcher of sangria. Or head over to the Jonathan Adler-designed Parker Palm Springs and check out the candlelit red back bar for exceptional wine flights.
Tidbits: Palm Springs' first heyday came when it was a playground for old Hollywood stars like Lucy and Desi Arnaz and Bob Hope. The incredible mid-century architecture and kitsch lingers, but it's undergone a renaissance. Block out a day to meander main street with its galleries and antique shops. You might find a pop-art portrait of Bea Arthur or a sequin-festooned catfish.
 — Joy Summers



4 Phoenix, Arizona
Why: Greater Phoenix has long been a lure for snowbirds. Nonstop sunshine and loads of recreation await visitors to an urbane center where resorts are plentiful, the hiking is exceptional, and the food is as diverse as the many communities that call this valley home.
Food scene: It's always patio season in the desert. Take your pick of twinkle-lit courtyard under shady trees, and canal-side decks lined with cactuses and do what patios do best: brunch. Early mornings are a glorious time to visit the Desert Botanical Gardens, and its in-house restaurant Gertrude's is great for bread pudding French toast and Hain's chile tostadas. Taking you from morning to night is Sip Coffee & Beer Garage, a stylish neighborhood cafe in a former oil change station with great coffee, cocktails and wespacked sandwiches — and an underground speakeasy-style bar called So Below. A stop at Barrio Café is off the beaten tourist path, and a meal there feels like home. Pizzeria Bianco is widely considered to be Phoenix's (and the country's) best wood-fired pizzeria. No matter which location you visit, order the Rosa. For a fun desert, luxuriate in the kitschy-cool mid-century modern aesthetic at the Hotel Valley Ho in Scottsdale, where its restaurant Zuzu does a monthly "Show Stopper" shake overflowing with spinach, kale crumbles and more.
Tidbits: This is date palm territory: the sticky-sweet fruits so ubiquitous you'll find them scattered on front lawns, the sidewalk and the playground. Rather than forage, head to Palm Partry, the Scottsdale-based gift shop from Sphixix Date Ranch. While browsing gift tins and other Arizona-made food and drink, order an ice-cold shake blended with their Medjool dates.
 — Sharyn Jackson

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