

via  
ADVENTURES

# 100 Best TRAVEL IDEAS in the WEST

To celebrate *Via's* centennial, here's an all-season list of wild places, cool rides, modern art, microbrews, and more.



1

Yosemite National Park



4

Muir Woods National Monument

## Classics + bucket listers

1. Marvel at the granite splendor of California's **Yosemite National Park** and at climbers who scale its audacious peaks. Eichorn Pinnacle (left) tops the nearly 11,000-foot Cathedral Peak in Tuolumne Meadows.

2. Discover Arizona's **Grand Canyon** from Powell Point, a South Rim lookout named for John Wesley Powell, who in 1869 and 1871 led two daring expeditions through the area on the Colorado River.

3. Test your luck with Steamboat Geyser in the Back Basin area of **Yellowstone National Park** in Wyoming. No one knows when the world's tallest active geyser will erupt next.

4. Ponder the ethereal beauty of the 260-foot, 500-plus-year-old redwoods in Cathedral Grove at **Muir Woods National Monument** outside Mill Valley, Calif.



6

Saguardo National Park

5. Explore the tropical grandeur of **Waimea Canyon** on the Hawaiian island of Kauai. The 14-mile-long chasm of burnt sienna rock and green vegetation is nicknamed "the Grand Canyon of the Pacific."

6. Size up the enduring symbol of the American Southwest: the cactus. **Saguardo National Park** in Arizona protects the country's largest variety, the eponymous saguardo, which can grow as tall as 45 feet in its 200-year life span and sprout dozens of "arms"—or none at all.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: NICHOLAS GIBLIN/TANDEM STOCK; DAVID HYUN, JAN SHIVE/TANDEM STOCK



Scout new adventures around **Mount Shasta**. Northern California's tallest peak—composed of four volcanic cones—presides over a wonderland of recreational possibilities, from exploring lava caves to gliding across Lake Siskiyou on a stand-up paddleboard.



To see more of Mount Shasta's beauty, visit [AAA.com/via](http://AAA.com/via) and click on Videos.

DAVID H. COLLIER



Multnomah Falls in Oregon's Columbia River Gorge

9



12

Arches National Park

### Activities + adrenaline

**8.** Buy a funnel cake or a funny T-shirt, marvel at jugglers and mimes, and check out the biceps of Muscle Beach as you stroll **Ocean Front Walk** (aka Venice Beach Boardwalk) in Southern California.

**9.** Immerse yourself in the **Columbia River Gorge**, the natural border between Washington and Oregon. Catch a view at Crown Point's Vista House or hike to the top of Multnomah Falls, Oregon's tallest.

**10.** Ski near Sin City. An hour from Las Vegas, Lee Canyon in the **Spring Mountains** delivers 445 skiable acres each winter.

**11.** Zip around **Lake Chelan**, Washington's largest natural lake, past apple orchards and wineries. Chelan Electric Bikes rents your ride by the hour and also gives tours of the lake at twilight.

**12.** Join the crowd hiking to iconic Delicate Arch in **Arches National Park** outside Moab, Utah. Emblazoned on the state's license plates, the arch has also appeared on postage stamps, such as the one for Utah's 1996 centennial.

**13.** Swoon over the panorama of **Lake Mead**, on the Arizona-Nevada border, from the Historic Railroad Trail. The gravel road, which runs from the lake to Hoover Dam, also passes through five old train tunnels.

**14.** Dust your shoes with color on the Calico Tanks Trail at **Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area**. The 2.5-mile round-trip trek through vibrant Aztec sandstone includes an incredible view of Las Vegas.



Skunk Train in California

17

### Transportation + trips

**15.** Choose your own adventure by hopping off a shuttle bus for ranger-led hikes along the 92-mile road in Alaska's **Denali National Park**.

**16.** Traverse two national parks—Banff and Jasper—in the heart of the **Canadian Rockies** with a 144-mile drive along the Icefields Parkway.

**17.** Ride California's 132-year-old **Skunk Train** along a former logging track that winds through redwoods, follows an estuary teeming with wildlife, and climbs into the coastal range near Mendocino.

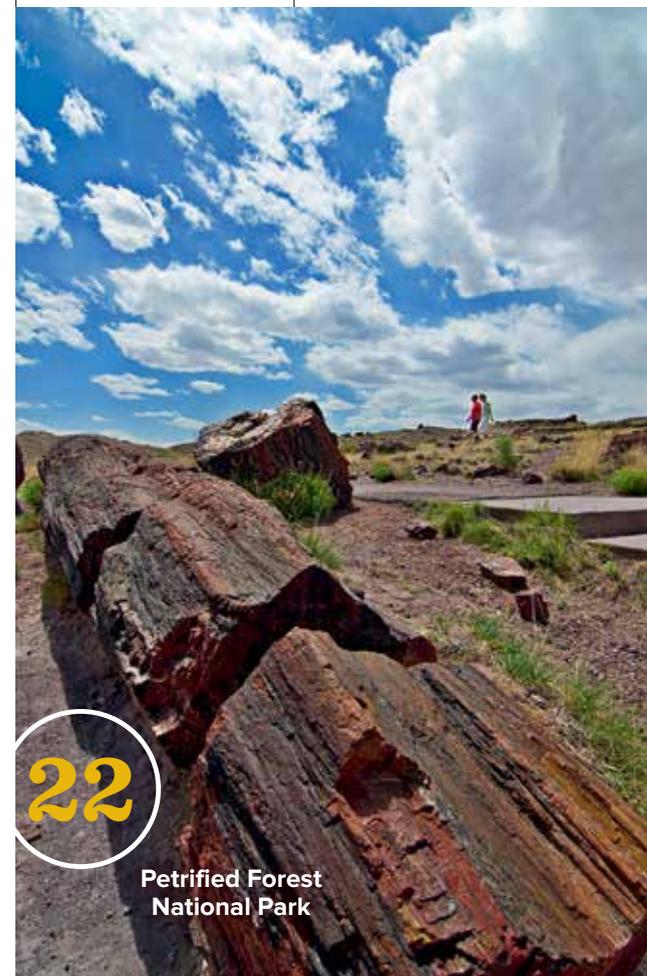
**18.** Let the wind ruffle your hair on a guided powerboat tour of **Lake Tahoe**, which spills over the border of California and Nevada, or kick back on a dinner cruise aboard a paddle wheeler.

**19.** Brave the curves for breathtaking Pacific views on a cliff-hugging drive along **Highway 1** from Bodega Bay to Fort Bragg, Calif. Stop at not-to-be-missed Point Arena Lighthouse and Glass Beach along the way.

**20.** Pilot a virtual high-speed train, walk through a classic dining car, and see a historic 40-ton wood-burning steam locomotive on display at Sacramento's **California State Railroad Museum**.

**21.** Pay your respects to Spider Woman, the Navajo spirit who taught ancient tribes how to weave, when you tour South Rim Drive at **Canyon de Chelly National Monument** in north-eastern Arizona.

**22.** Get your kicks on Route 66 inside Arizona's **Petrified Forest National Park**. It's the only national park that's home to a stretch of the Mother Road, which sits among striped badlands and fossilized logs.



22

Petrified Forest National Park

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: ALAN MALCHROWICZ; JULIE QUARRY; DAVID H. COLLIER; OPPOSITE: MARK SYKES/AURORA PHOTOS



Prickly-pear margarita in Tucson, Ariz.

27

**30.** Pour a garlicky sauce of fermented soybeans over poached chicken and jasmine rice from Nong's Khao Man Gai, a long-standing local favorite of **Portland's food cart scene**.

**31.** Sample reserve vintages in an ornate 133-year-old Victorian home at Beringer, a classic stop on any **winetasting tour** of California's Napa Valley.

**32.** Sip some suds in Santa Rosa, Calif., recently named the **Microbrew Capital of the United States**. Russian River Brewing Company makes Pliny the Younger, a rare triple IPA that draws crowds for its release each February.

**33.** Steep yourself in **Pacific Northwest flavors** such as local salmon and goat milk feta at the Teahouse, an elegant bayside dining spot in Vancouver, B.C.

### Food + drink

**27.** Search out surprising regional eats, from cholla-bud salads to **prickly-pear margaritas in Tucson, Ariz.**, Unesco's first City of Gastronomy in the United States.

**28.** Reserve a table at Bacchanal Buffet, the quintessential **Las Vegas buffet** inside Caesars Palace. More than 500 pint-size dishes include crab croquettes, chicken and waffles in miniature fry baskets, and baked-to-order soufflés.

**29.** Taste the briny deep at the Walrus and the Carpenter, at the center of **Seattle's seafood renaissance**. The joint ushered in a flood of fancy new fish huts in Ballard's historic fishing district and was named best oyster bar in the country by *Bon Appétit*.



29

Oysters in Seattle

**34.** Bite into **fresh pastry**—such as a sweet schnecken bun or a pain d'amande—at Gayle's Bakery & Rosticceria, a popular coastal detour in Capitola, Calif.

**35.** Rest your herd and strap on the feedbag at the **Chuckwagon Cookoff** during the rip-roaring Cheyenne Frontier Days event in Wyoming each July.

**36.** Eat a **classic Chinese egg tart**—a treat with a flaky crust and creamy custard—at Golden Gate Bakery in San Francisco's Chinatown.

### Heights + depths

**37.** Hover 4,000 feet above the **Grand Canyon** floor on the Grand Canyon Skywalk, a horseshoe-shaped glass bridge on the West Rim, a two-hour drive into Arizona from Las Vegas.

**38.** Browse the de Young Museum in San Francisco's **Golden Gate Park**, where a free elevator runs to the top of the 144-foot Hamon Observation Tower for a 360-degree view of the city.

**39.** Venture underground into a few of the 800 caves—including some you can walk right into, and some requiring a crawl—at **Lava Beds National Monument** in California near the Oregon border.

**40.** Salute Pluto, the one-time ninth planet, now downsized to a dwarf planet, in **Flagstaff, Ariz.** Percival Lowell plotted Pluto's discovery at the Lowell Observatory here in 1930. The town was named the world's first International Dark Sky City in 2001 for discouraging artificial night lighting that prevents quality stargazing.

**41.** Trek to the peak of **Mount Diablo State Park** near Walnut Creek, Calif., and take in vistas that stretch from San Francisco to the Sierra Nevada.

**42.** Tread on the salt flats of Badwater Basin, the lowest point in North America, at **Death Valley National Park** in Southern California.

**43.** Absorb fresh air and panoramic views at the West Summit Overlook (elevation 10,947 feet) on the **Beartooth Highway**. The highest road in Montana and Wyoming is open from late May to October, weather permitting.



41

California's Mount Diablo State Park

**44.** Scream your head off on the **Big Shot**, the thrill ride atop Stratosphere Tower in Las Vegas that shoots you to a point 1,000 feet above the city.

**45.** Soar over treetops and slopes on a 2.7-mile ride in the glass-bottomed Peak 2 Peak gondola connecting Whistler and Blackcomb Mountains outside **Whistler, B.C.**

**46.** Bask in the electromagnetic glow of the northern lights that shimmer above **Fairbanks, Alaska**, on most clear nights from September to April, with March considered the best.

44

Big Shot in Las Vegas



Egg tarts in San Francisco

36

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SUSAN SEUBERT; GEOFFREY SMITH; RITA LEE

TOP: GARY CRABBE; BOTTOM: ERIK THAWALAMY



**47.** Be blown away by the vistas of Mount Olympus at Hurricane Ridge in Washington's **Olympic National Park**. You'll be nearly a mile high at the end of a breathtaking 17-mile drive to the top.

**48.** Stare into the blue abyss of Crater Lake, the deepest lake in the United States, in Oregon. On September 9 and 16 this year, the eastern part of **Crater Lake National Park's** Rim Drive will be closed to cars and open to cyclists and hikers for 24 miles.

**49.** Photograph the bulbous beauty and brilliant colors of **Cathedral Gorge State Park** in Nevada near the Utah border. Erosion formed the clay spires and cavelike fissures as an ancient lake drained away.

**50.** Yodel atop Bald Mountain at **Sun Valley**, Idaho. Its 14 lifts are said to have more capacity per skier than any other resort in the nation, which means no lines. Lifts also run in summer for hikers, bikers, and anyone who loves a spectacular view.

**51.** Plunge into a ranger-led tour of Lehman Caves at **Great Basin National Park** in eastern Nevada. The 2.5 miles of passageways reveal a superlative diversity of speleothems—the fancy word for cave formations.



Nevada's Cathedral Gorge State Park

Flora + fauna

**52.** Angle for a prize 50-pound chinook in Oregon's **Tillamook Bay**, which is fed by five tributaries. The king salmon run strong here from September through November.

**53.** Wonder at wildflowers and ancient bristlecone pines along the Alpine Pond Nature Trail at **Cedar Breaks National Monument** near Cedar City, Utah.

**54.** Hang out with giraffes at **Safari West**, a 400-acre African wildlife preserve near Santa Rosa, Calif. Safari riders have been known to get friendly licks on the face from the 20-foot-tall beasts.

**55.** Cuddle up next to cuttlefish during a sleepover at **Monterey Bay Aquarium** in California. Enjoy after-hours activities such as watching nature movies, then spend the night in an exhibit hall.

**56.** Eavesdrop on the rutting calls of elk in Washington's **Mount Rainier National Park** during mating season in the fall. These large members of the deer family—typically weighing 440 to 640 pounds—can be seen in the meadows at dawn and dusk.



Mount Rainier National Park

JUSTIN BAILE



Kenai Fjords National Park

**57.** Count your puffins on a summer cruise through the island-dotted bays and inlets of Alaska's **Kenai Fjords National Park**, a refuge of glaciers, humpback whales, and seabirds.

**58.** Fall for autumn foliage along **Lamoille Canyon Scenic Byway** near Elko, Nev. The 12-mile drive offers multiple lookout points to admire aspens as they change color.

**59.** Spot gray whales as they migrate from December to March, when you visit the Point Cabrillo Light Station north of **Mendocino**, Calif., a scenic town also popular for its art galleries and bed-and-breakfasts.

Geology + scenery

**60.** Stand under General Sherman Tree in **Sequoia National Park** east of Fresno, Calif. By volume it's the largest single-stem tree on earth—275 feet tall and 103 feet around at its base. Gazing up at its limbs is an instant perspective adjustment.

**61.** Trip out over undulating striped sandstone on the Fire Wave Trail at **Valley of Fire State Park**, just 60 miles outside Las Vegas.

**62.** Watch mud bubble and vents steam in Bumpass Hell, part of **Lassen Volcanic National Park** near Redding, Calif.

63

Wrap your mind around **Horseshoe Bend**, a dramatic 270-degree curve of the Colorado River at Glen Canyon National Recreation Area near Lake Powell and the city of Page, Ariz. To reach the most-photographed portion of the river, take the half-mile trail off U.S. Route 89 to a lookout perched 1,000 feet above the water.



ADAM SCHALLAU

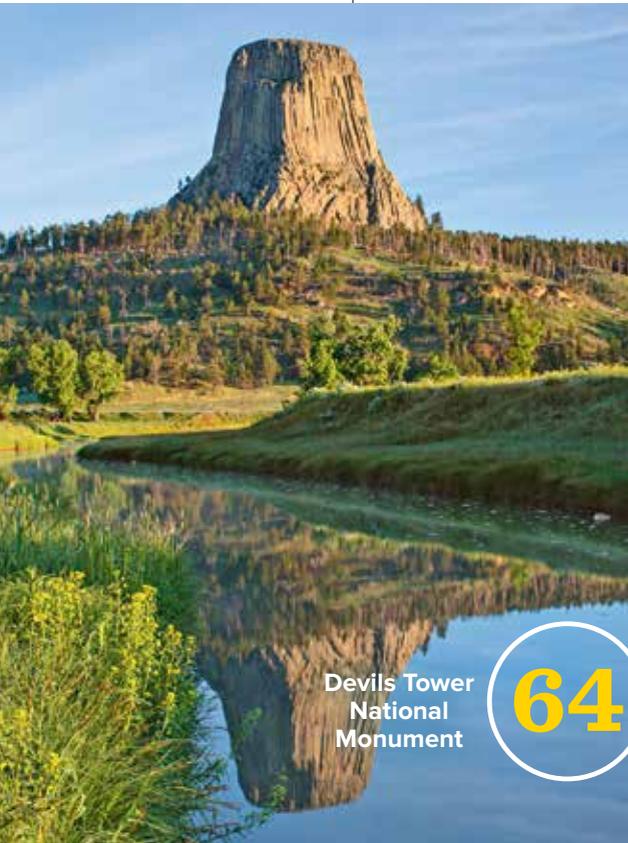


Arizona's Meteor Crater

66

64.

Experience a close encounter with a geologic wonder by taking the 1.3-mile trail around **Devils Tower National Monument**, a 900-foot-tall pillar of cooled magma in Wyoming.



Devils Tower National Monument

64

65.

Feel the heat at **Hawaii Volcanoes National Park**, home to massive Mauna Loa, the largest volcano on earth, and fiery Kilauea, known for its steam explosions and molten lava lake.

66.

Peer into the 4,000-foot-wide, 700-foot-deep moonlike scar of **Meteor Crater** near Winslow, Ariz., which scientists claim was formed by a space rock traveling 15 times faster than a rifle bullet.

67.

Blow off steam at Idaho's **Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve**, where trails lead to ancient lava beds with miniature volcano spatter cones. Fearless visitors should bring flashlights to explore cold, deep caves left by the molten flow.

68.

Gaze at red and orange hoodoos along the Queens Garden Trail in Utah's **Bryce Canyon National Park**, and don't miss the one that people say resembles Queen Victoria.

## Water + weather

69.

Chase bands of color in **Honolulu**, often called the Rainbow Capital of the World. Late fall ushers in the rainy season, when you can see many more vibrant arcs, which early Hawaiians considered celestial paths to the heavens.

70.

Meander amid 400 steel poles in **The Lightning Field** in western New Mexico. Bolts only occasionally strike the art installation, but its remote setting provokes existential thought.

71.

Straddle two watery worlds near Juneau, Alaska, as you stand between **Mendenhall Glacier** and crashing Nugget Falls, just a half mile apart.

72.

Weather a winter storm on **Vancouver Island**, B.C., where Long Beach's 10-mile strip of white sand flanks pounding surf and old-growth rain forest.

73.

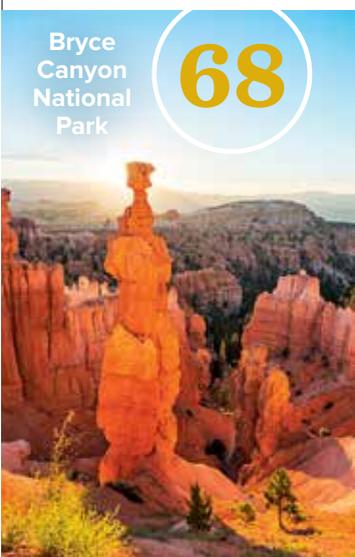
Reflect on the beauty of Lake McDonald in Montana's **Glacier National Park**, where crystal clear water ripples against beaches of red, green, and purple pebbles.

74.

Follow in the footsteps of Ansel Adams—and re-create one of his famous images—by snapping a photograph at the Snake River Overlook in **Grand Teton National Park** in Wyoming.

75.

Sit on the craggy cliffs of **Bodega Head** near Bodega Bay, Calif., and watch waves hit the rocks as whales travel north, March to June.



Bryce Canyon National Park

68

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: TOM TILL; RACHID DAHNOUN; LARRY DITTO; OPPOSITE: RACHID DAHNOUN



Grand Teton National Park

74

76

Idaho's  
Salmon River

76.

Paddle through 1.5-billion-year-old gneiss formations, in one of the deepest gorges on the continent, on Idaho's **Salmon River**. Book a raft or jet boat early, as permits into the designated wild area are limited.

77.

Consider Terrible Tilly, the decommissioned lighthouse battered by waves off the cliffs of **Ecola State Park** in Oregon. The park's trails overlook a sweep of beach dotted with haystack rocks—including *the* Haystack Rock, off Cannon Beach to the south.

77

Oregon's Ecola  
State Park

## History + architecture

78.

Go inside previously off-limits rooms in San Jose's storied **Winchester Mystery House**, such as the south turret (aka the Witch's Cap), on the Explore More Tour. Hard hats are provided for tiptoeing through the basement with your guide.

79.

Seek forgiveness at the Big Island's **Pu'uhonua o Honaunau National Historical Park**, near Kona, Hawaii. In ancient times, any condemned rule breaker who reached this oceanfront sanctuary was pardoned.

80.

Ogle the opulence of **Hearst Castle** in San Simeon, Calif., where media mogul William Randolph Hearst once splashed with starlets in the massive marble-tiled Neptune Pool, recently renovated and reopening by the end of the year.

81.

Touch a 150-million-year-old fossil and examine petroglyphs of desert animals and trapezoidal human figures at **Dinosaur National Monument** in northeast Utah.

Golden  
Gate  
Bridge

82



82.

Bike or walk across the **Golden Gate Bridge** from San Francisco to Sausalito—and back.

83.

Remember the fallen at **Pearl Harbor** near Honolulu, where the USS *Arizona* sank in 1941. The battleship remains visible beneath the water from the floating memorial.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JUSTIN BAILE, DAVID H. COLLIER, ALAN WAJCHROWICZ



88

Montana's Museum of the Rockies



86

Hoover Dam in Nevada

84.

Learn about Ice Age mammoths, modern-day bald eagles, and other wildlife on the largest river flowing into the Pacific Ocean from North America at **Columbia Gorge Discovery Center and Museum** in The Dalles, Ore. Don't miss the collection of tools and goods hauled in by the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery.

85.

Listen to former inmates and guards tell stories about "the Rock" during an audio tour of the prison at **Alcatraz Island**. On the ferry ride over, catch stellar views of San Francisco.

86.

Look over the edge of **Hoover Dam** near Boulder City, Nev., from the walkway across the top. The dam is 726 feet high and creates the largest reservoir in the United States.

87.

Travel back in time at **Columbia State Historic Park** in California's Sierra Nevada foothills, home to the largest collection of Gold Rush-era brick buildings in the state. Watch shopkeepers playing their parts in 19th-century garb, take a ride in a stagecoach, pan for gold, or nurse a sarsaparilla at the local saloon.

87



88.

Take the measure of both the largest and the smallest *Tyrannosaurus rex* skulls ever discovered, just two of the 12 *T. rex* specimens on display at the **Museum of the Rockies** in Bozeman, Mont.

89.

Critique Frank Lloyd Wright's genius in **Phoenix**. The country's most famous architect designed or influenced multiple structures here, including the Arizona Biltmore, a hotel built in 1928 with desert sand blocks made on-site. Architecture and history tours run three times a week.

90.

Honor the bravery of Little Whirlwind, Limber Bones, and other fallen warriors at the Indian Memorial, a recent addition to the **Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument** near the community of Crow Agency, Mont.

## Arts + entertainment

91.

Enjoy the return of *Fantasmic!* at **Disneyland** in Southern California. The after-dark show on the Rivers of America attraction features new video projections on walls made of mist.

92.

Hear the famous Mormon Tabernacle Choir rehearse in the dome-shaped Tabernacle, part of Salt Lake City's **Temple Square**.

93.

Wander through the monumental steel curves of Richard Serra's 235-ton S-shaped public sculpture *Sequence* at the **San Francisco Museum of Modern Art**.

94.

Expect the unexpected with novel interpretations of Shakespeare's plays at the **Oregon Shakespeare Festival** in Ashland, Ore. This year's lineup includes *Off the Rails* (on stage through October 28), an adaptation of *Measure for Measure* set in Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. It's the festival's first play by an American Indian writer.

95.

Contemplate emptiness in a sand and stone landscape, part of Oregon's nine-acre **Portland Japanese Garden**. Thanks to a major renovation and expansion, the garden's new Cultural Village offers traditional Japanese arts and performances.

96.

Appreciate modern masterpieces at the **Seattle Art Museum**. On the first Thursday of the month, the museum offers free admission to its permanent collections as part of the Art Walk in Pioneer Square. Started in 1981, the event was the first art walk in the country.



Arizona's Heard Museum

98

97.

Treat yourself to books by Portland hometown authors Beverly Cleary and Ursula Le Guin (or any one of 2 million other volumes from all genres) at the city's **Powell's Books** store.

98.

Admire the wall of kachina dolls at Phoenix's **Heard Museum**, home to an outstanding collection of American Indian artwork. Many of the 1,700 dolls were donated by the late senator Barry Goldwater, others by the Fred Harvey Company.

99.

Bow before a monarch at the **C.M. Russell Museum** in Great Falls, Mont. In *Exalted Ruler*, Russell's massive 1912 painting, a bull elk stands in regal dominion over its kingdom.

100.

Sway to the sounds of the Los Angeles Philharmonic in the city's landmark outdoor amphitheater, the **Hollywood Bowl**. The perfect place to savor stellar performers under a twinkling sky is itself a star, having appeared in myriad motion pictures. ●

TOP: CRAIG SMITH/HEARD MUSEUM; BOTTOM: TYLER QUINN/PORTLAND JAPANESE GARDEN

95

Portland Japanese Garden

TOP TO BOTTOM: MUSEUM OF THE ROCKIES; MARIA JANICKI/ALAMY; RUSS BISHOP

