

TRAVEL

These U.S. College Towns Are the Perfect Spots for a Fall Getaway—Without Midterms



Dark Vader

by **Brittany Anas**

As a tourist, there's no better time of year to visit college towns than fall. Game day cheer spills over from stadiums, reverberating throughout town. **Fall foliage** appears all the more regal on campuses with historic academic buildings in the backdrop. Plus, you have plenty of free time to enjoy beer specials, stroll through free museums, and hit the surrounding trails and waterways without the looming distraction of midterms.

Ready to go back to school (but, this time around, just for fun)? These six college towns make the grade year-round, but especially stand out in the fall.



EQRoy

1. Boulder, Colorado

Free spirited and outdoorsy, Boulder is home to the University of Colorado Buffs. Catch a matchup at Folsom Field. As a pre-game tradition, student-athletes toss on cowboy hats and run Ralphie the Buffalo out onto the field. It's a performance that requires intense sprint training to keep pace with the agile mascot. As for your own athletic feats in Boulder, rock climbers will find craggy terrain to scale in Eldorado Canyon. Mountain bikers can test their stamina on steep, punishing climbs along the Super-Walker route.

When it's time to unwind, stroll the Pearl Street pedestrian mall. Here you'll find locally-owned restaurants and shops. There are also street performers who can perform superhuman stunts. For example, juggling fire while peddling a unicycle or appearing joint-less by folding into a small Plexiglass box.

To get a front-row view of the famous earthy red flatirons that spike the blue skies, make a reservation at **Corrida**, a Spanish-style restaurant that has the best rooftop in town, plus charcuterie boards loaded with manchego and serrano ham, and a roving gin and tonic cart. Then, tuck yourself into bed at the **St. Julien Hotel & Spa**, a downtown Boulder hotel where cocktails and seasonal dishes incorporate honey harvested from a rooftop hive and massages come with CBD add-ons.



Daniel J. Macy

2. Ann Arbor, Michigan

No visit to Ann Arbor is complete without witnessing a game in the “Big House,” which can hold 107,601 fans. Unsurprisingly, it’s college football’s biggest stadium. But the University of Michigan campus has more surprises in store like the **Kelsey Museum of Archaeology**, which will school you in the classics with ancient artifacts including palm-leaf sandals from the Roman period and an excavated marble head of Augustus, the first emperor of Rome.

For A+ eats, find vegan remakes of banh mi and burritos at the **Detroit Filling Station**, warm up on a chilly fall evening with duck fat fried chicken ramen at

Slurping Turtle, and grab a reuben from the iconic Zingerman's Deli.

Close to campus, The Graduate Ann Arbor offers a tting stay. The college-themed hotel nails the whole academic aesthetic with preppy plaid furniture and library-style seating in the lobby. There's also a chalkboard scrawled with equations that looks like it was ripped from the set of "Good Will Hunting." Beyond the hotel, the brand chose Ann Arbor for its foray into the short-term rental market. There are bookings available this fall.



Martina Birnbaum

3. Charleston, South Carolina

Trade the pigskin for sailboats in Charleston. The College of Charleston's sailing squad is among the best. If you're in town, you can take private lessons with skilled team members on the Charleston Harbor. After you've learned the basics of jibing and tacking, retreat to [The Beach Club at Charleston Harbor Resort and Marina](#) where coastal-themed rooms are outfitted with framed sailing knots and preppy seersucker robes and harbor-facing porches are great for dolphin spotting. When you want to head into downtown Charleston, skip the Uber and take a more scenic water taxi.

Or, stay in Charleston proper at the [HarbourView Inn](#), an indigo cotton warehouse-turned-luxury hotel that's set on the harbor and has exposed brick walls, a breezy vibe, and a solid wine and cheese hour.

In Charleston, a fall ghost tour is an entertaining way to learn the history of the storied port city. But first, start with the friendly spirits at The Bar in [The Spectator Hotel](#), a sleek 1920s-style bar serving inventive cocktails (think: bacon fat washed-mezcal cocktails) alongside the classics.

LOGIN



Jorge Salcedo

4. Cambridge, Massachusetts

A college town classic, Cambridge is home to Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Consider Harvard Square to be your intro to Cambridge 101. Here's where you'll find an eclectic mix of coffee shops, book stores, and music venues. At **Alden & Harlow**, get your hands on a "secret burger," which is layered with a sharp and crunchy Cabot cheese crisp and other fixings. Or pop into **Whitneys**, where, for generations, students have been coming for hot dogs, beer, and rounds of darts.

During the fall, New England's famous fall foliage blazes along the Charles River. Long-standing autumn traditions in this venerable college town include Oktoberfest and the world's largest multi-day regatta Head of the Charles. To get around town and take in all the scenery on the river, guests at the **Kimpton Marlowe Hotel** can borrow custom Public bikes, LL Bean kayaks, paddleboards, and Micro Kickboard scooters.

While visiting Cambridge, take advantage of the number of college museums that are free and open to the public, including some obscure ones like **Harvard's Collection of Scientific Instruments**, which has collected more than 20,000 objects dating from 1400 to present.



S.Borisov

5. Santa Barbara, California

Lengthen your summer in coastal California, where you'll find surf breaks, red tile roofs and architecture reminiscent of Spain. There's also a noteworthy collection of craft breweries.

In Goleta, the area that surrounds the University of California Santa Barbara, book a tee time at [Sandpiper Golf Club](#), a seaside championship course, and find a range of beers, from sours to IPAs, on tap at [Captain Fatty's](#). Visitors can also get schooled on the region's habitats at [UCSB North Campus Open Space](#), a 136-acre coastal wetlands area with grasslands and ocean bluffs and the new Mesa Trail that's open to hikers.

If your favorite elective was etymology, go for one of the [Tarantula Trails](#) hikes and get a peek at the California Ebony tarantulas in their natural habitat. Looking to mate, the normally nocturnal males make cameos in the late afternoons this time of year. If music is more your thing, you'll enjoy Pianos on State Street. It's an October tradition in which talented artists paint pianos. In turn, those pianos are set up downtown, inviting locals and visitors to tickle the ivories.

Order literary-themed cocktails at [The Manor Bar](#), which recently relaunched at Rosewood Miramar Beach, or imbibe with drinks and seafood dishes at [The Anchor Rose](#) with views overlooking the harbor. An oldie, but a goodie, California's oldest working wooden wharf [Stearns Wharf](#) celebrates its 150th birthday this year.



Kip C Anderson

6. Eugene, Oregon

Pack your running shoes when you visit TrackTown USA. The birthplace of Nike and hometown of the U.S. Olympic Track Trials, there's lots of places to run in Eugene. There are even Euro-inspired bark chip trails to give your stride a little more spring.

For a post-run beer, head to the Whiteaker neighborhood, which is where you'll find breweries alongside distilleries and urban wineries. One to put on your list is homegrown **Ninkasi Brewing Co.** (a nod to the ancient Sumerian Goddess of Fermentation) which is one of the region's most successful breweries.

A notable newcomer to the hotel scene, let your creativity fly at **The Gordon**, which has an art bar where you can pick up a paintbrush, write a poem, or snap photos. Afterwards, suss out a password for the speakeasy-style bar called **86'ed** that's accessed through a janitor's closet.