

50 States Bucket List Checklist

Checklist · 60 items · 13 sections

Visiting all 50 states is a lifetime project. To make it satisfying rather than performative, this list pairs each state with one experience worth crossing the country for: a city, a national park, a road, or a stretch of coast. Pick what fits your travel style; mark the visit only when you actually slept a night and saw something specific, not when you connected through the airport.

Open the editable version online:

<https://genechecklist.com/checklist/50-states-bucket-list-checklist>

SOUTHEAST

- Alabama: drive the Civil Rights Trail through Selma, Montgomery, and Birmingham
HIGH
- Florida: Everglades National Park airboat plus a day in Key West
HIGH
- Georgia: Savannah historic district walking tour
HIGH
- South Carolina: Charleston historic walking tour and Magnolia Plantation
HIGH

WEST

- Alaska: Denali National Park (six-million acre, drive the park road)
HIGH
- California: Yosemite Valley in spring waterfall season
HIGH
- Colorado: Rocky Mountain National Park, Trail Ridge Road end to end
HIGH
- Idaho: Sawtooth National Recreation Area and Redfish Lake
- Montana: Glacier National Park, Going-to-the-Sun Road
HIGH
- Oregon: Crater Lake rim drive and Multnomah Falls
HIGH
- Washington: Olympic National Park (Hoh Rainforest, Hurricane Ridge) and Pike Place Market
HIGH
- Wyoming: Yellowstone Old Faithful, Lamar Valley wildlife, and Grand Teton
HIGH

HIGH

SOUTHWEST

- Arizona: Grand Canyon South Rim plus a Bright Angel Trail hike
HIGH
- Nevada: Red Rock Canyon and the Vegas Strip after dark
HIGH
- New Mexico: Carlsbad Caverns big-room tour and Santa Fe Plaza
HIGH
- Utah: Zion's Angels Landing or The Narrows, and Arches Delicate Arch hike
HIGH

SOUTH

- Arkansas: Hot Springs National Park bathhouse row
- Kentucky: Bourbon Trail (Buffalo Trace, Maker's Mark, Woodford Reserve)
HIGH
- Louisiana: New Orleans French Quarter, beignet at Cafe du Monde
HIGH
- Mississippi: Vicksburg National Military Park and a slow Delta blues drive
- North Carolina: Blue Ridge Parkway from Asheville to Boone
HIGH
- Tennessee: Great Smoky Mountains National Park (Cades Cove loop) and Beale Street, Memphis
HIGH
- Texas: Big Bend National Park or San Antonio Riverwalk and Alamo
HIGH
- West Virginia: New River Gorge bridge and a whitewater run

NORTHEAST

- Connecticut: walk the Mark Twain House and Mystic Seaport
- Maine: Acadia National Park sunrise on Cadillac Mountain
HIGH
- Massachusetts: Freedom Trail in Boston and a Cape Cod day
HIGH
- New Hampshire: drive the Kancamagus Highway in October foliage
HIGH
- New York: Statue of Liberty ferry, then a Catskills weekend
HIGH

Rhode Island: Cliff Walk in Newport, Breakers mansion tour

Vermont: cover the Long Trail in fall and Ben & Jerry's tour

MID-ATLANTIC

Delaware: stroll old New Castle and the Brandywine Valley DuPont gardens

Maryland: crab feast in Annapolis

New Jersey: walk the Atlantic City boardwalk and Cape May Victorian district

Pennsylvania: Independence Hall in Philadelphia and a Pittsburgh inclines ride

HIGH

Virginia: Monticello, Shenandoah National Park Skyline Drive

HIGH

PACIFIC

Hawaii: snorkel Hanauma Bay (O'ahu) and drive Hana Highway (Maui)

HIGH

MIDWEST

Illinois: Chicago architecture river cruise and the Art Institute

HIGH

Indiana: Indianapolis Motor Speedway lap and Indianapolis Museum of Art

Iowa: Field of Dreams site and the State Fair in August

Kansas: Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, Flint Hills sunset

Michigan: Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore by boat

HIGH

Minnesota: Boundary Waters canoe overnight

Missouri: Gateway Arch tram ride and Kansas City BBQ flight

HIGH

Ohio: Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Cleveland

Wisconsin: Apostle Islands sea caves and a Door County weekend

PLAINS

Nebraska: Chimney Rock and Carhenge

North Dakota: Theodore Roosevelt National Park badlands sunrise

Oklahoma: Oklahoma City Memorial and Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

South Dakota: Badlands National Park loop plus Mount Rushmore

HIGH

BONUS

- DC counts unofficially: National Mall museums plus the Tidal Basin in April
- Puerto Rico: El Yunque rainforest and Old San Juan if chasing US territories

RULES

- Rule: counts only if you spent the night and saw at least one specific thing

HIGH

- Rule: layovers and connecting airports do not count

HIGH

TRACKING

- Track in a map app (Visited Countries / Been app) or paper pin map
- Aim for one new state per year on average to finish in a working life

STRATEGY

- Cluster trips by region to cover three or four states per long weekend
- Save the hardest-to-reach states (Alaska, Hawaii, North Dakota) for dedicated trips
- Get the National Park annual pass once you cross five park states (\$80, free for seniors and military)
- Take one local photo and eat one local food in each state for memory anchors