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NANTUCKET, MASS.

*What's better than an island in the summer?
The same island after Labor Day.*

Come September, the crowds fade and Nantucket becomes a blissful respite from fast-paced living. Just steps away from the beach on the bay, The Wauwinet Hotel offers serenity (children under 12 are not permitted) and off-season activities such as cooking classes and lobster cruises. With the water still warm enough for swimming, beach and water activities abound. Pick up specialty sandwiches from Cowboy's Meat Market & Deli, then charter a Hinckley Picnic Boat from Barton & Gray Mariners Club to see the island from the water. Back on land, the historic downtown is ideal for boutique-perusing along cobblestone streets, and the Boarding House restaurant highlights the best of Nantucket's produce. For golfers, starting in October, the private Sankaty Head Golf Club—arguably New England's most exclusive golf club—is open to the public.

Make the Most of It:

Nantucket offers autumn harvest festivals from September through November, starting with Fall Restaurant Week (Sept. 26 to Oct. 2) and the Nantucket Historical Association Harvest Fair (Oct. 1) and finishing with the Cranberry Harvest Festival (Oct. 8) and the annual Clam Chowder Fest (Oct. 15).

Contacts: The Wauwinet, 800.426.8718, wauwinet.com; Cowboy's Meat Market & Deli, 508.228.8766, cowboysmeatmarket.com; Barton & Gray Mariners Club, 617.728.3555, bartonandgray.com; Boarding House, 508.228.9622, boardinghousenantucket.com; Sankaty Head Golf Club, 508.257.6655, sankatyheadgc.com; Nantucket Chamber of Commerce, 508.228.1700, nantucketchamber.org

AUSTIN, TEXAS

Texas hospitality, international culture.

Metropolitan diversity meets Texan warmth in this urban oasis. Travaasa Austin, the first lodge from Travaasa Destinations, offers guests numerous ways to unwind, including horseback riding, an outdoor challenge course and massages choreographed to the music of Texas musicians. "We give people the opportunity to try something outside of their comfort zone," says general manager Tim Thuell. That informality doesn't translate to lack of sophistication, however. Head to downtown Austin for Japanese flavors at Uchi by chef Tyson Cole, just recognized as "Best Chef, Southwest" by the James Beard Foundation. Bess, a southern-style bistro owned by Sandra Bullcock, is also a good bet. For music and nightlife, walk along Second Street in the warehouse district.

Make the Most of It: Plan your visit during the Austin City Limits Music Festival, September 16-18, which this year celebrates its 10th anniversary and features more than 120 bands including Arcade Fire, Stevie Wonder and Coldplay.

Contacts: Travaasa Austin, 512.258.7243, travaasa.com/Austin; Uchi, 512.916.4808, uchiaustin.com; ACL Music Festival, 888.512.7469, aclfestival.com; Bess, 512.477.2377, bessbistro.com

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07

MONTEREY, CALIF.

Gorgeous views, literary history and the soul of a legendary fishing town.

The reclaimed canning district of Cannery Row in Monterey embraces its fishing past with touches of the bygone industry. Home to a lively boardwalk, shops, restaurants and the renowned Monterey Bay Aquarium, Cannery Row rewards fall visitors with fewer crowds, cool weather and laid-back seaside charm. Stay at the InterContinental/The Clement Monterey for a comfortable, contemporary ambience that complements its surroundings. See more of the picturesque coastline along the 17-mile drive to Pebble Beach, home to world-class golf, and nearby Carmel. Stop for lunch at the upper garden of The Forge in the Forest, once a hangout for writer John Steinbeck. Return to The Clement for spectacular bay views and an aperitif at sunset before local abalone bisque and Pacific Coast sand dabs at the nearby Sardine Factory.

Make the Most of It:

Time your visit for the annual Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, August 21, to see new car debuts and rare vintage autos on display. For tickets, call United Way of Monterey County at 877.693.0009.

Contacts: Monterey Bay Aquarium, 831.648.4800, montereybayaquarium.org; Sardine Factory, 831.373.3775, sardinefactory.com; The Clement Monterey, 831.375.4500, ichtelsgroup.com; The Forge in the Forest, 831.624.2233, forgeintheforest.com; Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, pebblebeachconcours.net