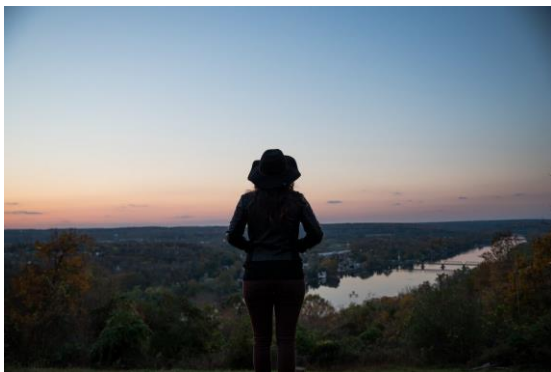

5 New Jersey Towns Perfect for Your Next Weekend Trip



A Garden State native shares why New Jersey is a convenient yet underrated destination for your next road trip or weekend getaway.

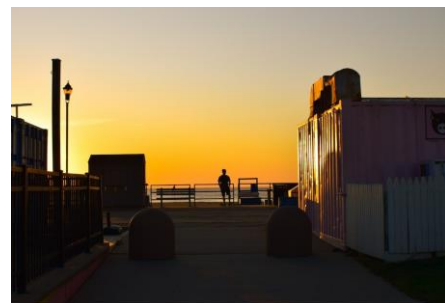
If all you know about the great state of New Jersey is informed by scenes and memes from reality TV, you're in for an educational treat. As a travel writer and proud New Jerseyan, I feel obligated to rectify my home state's reputation as a viable tourist destination, especially for anyone who lives in, resides near, or visits the northeastern Tri-State Area.

While the masses have long been hip to the spoils of Upstate New York for a quick weekend getaway that is equally nature-filled and culturally enriching, allow me to introduce you to some New Jersey locales that range from the unexpectedly scenic to charmingly historic and uniquely culinary. You'll be ditching your next group cabin in Hudson for a retreat to Cape May in no time.

Here, enjoy these five Garden State destinations worth adding to your fall travel list.

1. Asbury Park

This Victorian-era shore town has been buzzing for decades: In the 1960s, its live music venues were frequented by big-name acts, including Bruce Springsteen, who started his career in the area. And as far back as at least the 1950s, Asbury Park (AP) gained popularity among gay travelers thanks to the founding of a number of gay-friendly hotels and resorts. You can still find remnants of all that history throughout town, but a spate of new projects—from restaurants to hotels—has made AP one of the state's most sought-after vacation destinations.



Its boardwalk remains loaded with local business: Lose yourself in vintage pinball machines at [The Silverball Museum Arcade](#) before grabbing a drink with ocean views at the [Asbury Park Yacht Club](#). There's plenty to see off the water, too. Tuck into [Brickwall Tavern](#) for a Jersey-classic pork roll sandwich, pick up custom jeans at VLAD, and then peruse photography at the Danny Clinch Transparent Gallery. Due to COVID-19, a lot of the live music spots are temporarily closed, but when they reopen, the [Stone Pony](#), [Wonder Bar](#), and [Asbury Lanes](#) usually pull in excellent acts.

Where to Stay in Asbury Park

When [The Asbury Hotel](#) opened in 2015, it was heralded with reigniting tourism interest in the destination. The bright, beachy 110-key property offers a variety of room categories—from sprawling suites with panoramic views of AP to hostel-style eight-bed private dorms to be shared with your quarantine bubble.

[*COVID-19 travel safety tips and resources*](#)→

2. Montclair

This affluent suburb offers the best medley of fancy public infrastructure and cool hotspots that make for a fun weekend of exploration. For as long as weather will allow it, yoga is hosted on the pristine lawns of the [Van Vleck House & Gardens](#), a 12-acre estate that dates back to the 1860s. The [Montclair Art Museum's](#) permanent collection is notable for its George Inness paintings and Native American pieces—there are 4,000 in total which include historic jewelry and baskets, plus contemporary works. Not far in West Orange, there's also the [Thomas Edison National Historical Park](#), which includes the famous inventor's home and lab.

Montclair dining is consistently considered among the best in the state. Splurge on upscale Mediterranean fare at [Faubourg](#), founded by Boulud-trained chef Olivier Muller; tackle the heat of Ethiopian cuisine at [Mesob](#); or get your hands dirty with street food-inspired rotisserie chicken at [Kai Yang](#). Then wash everything down with one of the craft beers on tap at [Montclair Brewery](#), the first and only one in town.



Where to Stay in Montclair

In 2018, celebrity makeup artist Bobbi Brown opened [The George](#)—a charming 32-room hotel that’s so cozy, you’ll feel like you’re staying at a friend’s home. [The MC Hotel](#), which opened in 2019, is more arts-minded and boasts a rooftop hangout made pretty with pastel furniture and stunning views of the Manhattan skyline.



3. Jersey City

Located directly across the Hudson River from Lower Manhattan, this diverse city of 250,000 residents has grown dynamically in the last few years thanks mostly to an influx of newcomers who have been priced out of the Big Apple. Much of the attention has been on the very walkable downtown area as well as the city’s global dining scene: [Razza](#) for the best pizza in the Tri-State Area, Argentine pastries at Dulce de Leche bakery, homemade Portuguese small plates at [Broa](#), and brats, cider, and poutine at [Würstbar](#). You also won’t want to miss the Antiguan cuisine at [Freetown Road Project](#) from *Chopped* winner Claude Lewis.

Other parts of the city are a quick Uber away. In Bergen-Lafayette, a mile west of downtown, check out [Deep Space Gallery](#) for works by up-and-coming artists before indulging in a matcha latte pick-me-up at [Grind Coffee](#), which also sells creatively composed donuts by another local outfit, [The LoDG](#) (don’t kips the cheesecake that’s stuffed and then drizzled with fig and bacon). Take your haul to nearby Liberty State Park for an autumnal picnic; then for happy hour, settle on the patio at [Corgi Spirits](#), the city’s first distillery where you can pick up a bottle of bergamot-spiked Earl Grey Gin.

Where to Stay in Jersey City

[Canopy by Hilton Jersey City Arts District](#) and its design-forward guestrooms began receiving guests in August. Nods to the destination include on-property art curated by Panepinto Galleries and beer from Departed Soles, a brewery located around the corner from the hotel.

4. Cape May

The wholesome vibe of the state's southernmost tip is the perfect foil to whatever reality TV stereotypes you've harbored about the Jersey Shore. Some of the US's best-preserved Victorian homes are in Cape May's historic district. All of them are worth chronicling on Instagram Stories, but the most famous is the [Emlen Physick Estate](#), a visit into which is like stepping back in time (peep the beautifully intricate wallpaper).

Two miles away, [Beach Plum Farm](#)'s 62 lush acres feature a kitchen that serves homemade farm-to-table breakfast and lunch, a repurposed Amish barn that is now a restaurant, and bike paths along which you can meet the farm's chickens and pigs.

Cape May also has a surprisingly robust brewery and distiller scene: Our top pick is [Nauti Spirits](#). Its 60-acre coastal farm gives its vodka, bourbon, and gin their distinct flavors. Outdoors enthusiasts should take advantage of nearby hiking trails—the Cape May Point Trail included easy waterside strolls—and beaches. Higbee's has a locals-only vibe and is the perfect setting to watch the sunset.

Where to Stay in Cape May

You'll love the intimate atmosphere at [Lokal Hotel—Cape May](#), outfitted with eight modernly decorated apartments. From the bocce court and outdoor fire pits to the heated saltwater pool, there are plenty of quaint on-site amenities, but the beach is also just steps away.



5. Lambertville

On the banks of the Delaware River (an old bridge connects to New Hope, Pennsylvania, on the other side), Lambertville is a sleepy Victorian hamlet that charms with small-town experiences, like floating down the river admiring the bucolic surrounds from the comfort of a raft, kayak, or inner tube. On dry land, Lambertville is known for its antiques scene. Spend a whole day scouring all four floors of the [People's Store Antiques & Design Center](#), which is tucked inside a landmark 19th century building. The [Golden Nugget Antique Flea](#), held three times a week, has been touted as one of the East Coast's finest markets.

This pocket of Jersey is also home to a few quality wineries. A 15 minute drive brings you to the picturesque hilltop operations of [Unionville Vineyards](#). The six-flight tastings there could be made up of any Unionville wines, including the Petnat Riesling, Pinot Noir, and single-vineyard Chardonnays. Pick your fave then bring it to the outdoor dining room at [D'flore](#) back in town. Chef Dennis Foy's Modern American restaurant is BYOB.



Where to Stay in Lambertville

There are a few old-school inns and hotels in Lambertville itself, but for a more secluded stay, try [Fiddlehead Farm](#). This stylish, light-bathed, 400-square-foot studio attached to a farmhouse includes floor-to-ceiling windows that look out to nearby fields on which you may spot the neighbors: deer, groundhogs, and the farm's goats. Bonus: A breakfast basket loaded with fruits, milk, and homemade muffins are delivered every morning of your stay.