NEWS RELEASE

WHAT'S NEW IN THE USA: Brand USA Invites Travelers to Celebrate 250 Years of America The Beautiful with New Experiences and Reasons to Visit in 2026 and Beyond

October 16, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (October 15, 2025) — As the United States approaches its 250th anniversary, 2026 is shaping up to be a landmark year across the country. As the nation's official destination marketing organization, Brand USA invites global travelers to discover what's new—from major new attractions and luxury hotels to milestone cultural events and expanded international air service. With so much on the horizon, travelers will find new reasons to explore every corner of the U.S.

"With America250, the Route 66 Centennial, and the FIFA World Cup all converging in 2026, the United States is entering a once-in-a-generation moment. From major openings to historic milestones, destinations across the country are giving travelers more reasons than ever to explore what makes this nation unique. We welcome visitors from around the world to discover the stories, places, and experiences that define the USA," said **Fred Dixon, president and CEO of Brand USA.**

South (Texas, Florida, Louisiana, North Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi)

In spring 2026, Dolly Parton's award-winning theme park Dollywood in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, will introduce NightFlight Expedition, the world's first indoor family hybrid coaster and whitewater river raft ride. The custom-designed amphibious ride will take guests soaring on a nighttime flight over the scenic Smokies to enjoy a thrilling whitewater rafting excursion through more than 500,000 gallons of surging water, while traversing a mountain ridge on a roller coaster, and navigating a mysterious shimmering lake by boat.

In 2026, Aer Lingus will offer nonstop flights from Dublin Airport to North Carolina's Raleigh-Durham International Airport beginning in April, opening the first direct flight to Raleigh-Durham from Ireland. American Airlines will also debut several new international routes with nonstop service from Milan, Italy to Miami; Zurich, Switzerland and Athens, Greece to Dallas Fort Worth.

Tampa Bay, Florida, is experiencing an incredible hotel boom, and Pendry Tampa will soon offer visitors a new five-star modern luxury experience, debuting in 2026 in the heart of Tampa's renowned downtown Riverwalk. Pendry Tampa will showcase 220 design-forward hotel guestrooms, 200 private Pendry Residences, three signature food & beverage offerings, a world-class spa and fitness center, a rooftop pool, and a myriad of Riverwalk-fronting retail and restaurant outlets, alongside more than 11,000 square feet of private event space.

The Mardi Gras Museum of Imperial Calcasieu in Lake Charles, Louisiana, is revealing a re-envisioned 6,000-square-foot location within the Nellie Lutcher Cultural District. The museum will reopen in January 2026, aiming to showcase Southwest Louisiana's Mardi Gras traditions year-round, provide versatile exhibit space and interactive programming, and serve as a central cultural hub for the region.

Fort Myers' Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods are celebrating a milestone moment in regeneration following Hurricane Ian with the announcement that Sanibel and Captiva are officially "back." After a few years of restoration, the islands are once again welcoming international visitors with refreshed experiences, revitalized infrastructure, and renewed accommodations. More than 70% of restaurants and retail have reopened, all attractions are welcoming visitors, and restored beaches and parks make the islands fully visitor-ready.

In Austin, Texas, Austin City Limits Turns 50 in 2026 — a milestone that's a testament to Austin's enduring legacy as the Live Music Capital of the World. There will be a lineup of special events and concerts to mark this historic occasion, including live music and

Universal Destinations & Experiences will debut Universal Kids Resort in Frisco—an all-new, first-of-its-kind theme park designed specifically for families with young children. Featuring seven imaginative lands, kid-friendly rides, character meet and greets, interactive shows, and sensory gardens, the resort will bring Universal's beloved characters and stories to life for the whole family.

Beginning in May, Air Canada will launch new nonstop service from Toronto to San Antonio, just in time for travelers to experience the city's renewed heartbeat. As part of the $550 million Alamo Plan, the Alamo Promenade will celebrate the reopening of Paseo del Alamo , which has been the over 40-year-old link between the Alamo and the San Antonio River Walk. This pathway will once again bridge Texas' two most visited destinations, with updated, fully ADA-compliant paths and a rainwater-harvesting cistern to reduce reliance on local water utilities, while honoring the original historic design's focus on water as a life-giving resource.

114 miles of the Blue Ridge Parkway are now open from Mount Mitchell to Cherokee through Asheville and Buncombe County, now including access to Craggy Gardens, Mount Mitchell and many scenic overlooks (with perfect timing for the fall foliage season).

Amtrak's Mardi Gras Service returns, running between New Orleans, Louisiana, and Mobile, Alabama including four stops in Mississippi (Bay St. Louis, Gulfport, Biloxi, and Pascagoula). Riders can admire scenic views including the Gulf Coast and marshlands along the journey while making stops in a range of new local communities.

Out West (Arizona, California, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah)

KLM expands its Salt Lake City, Utah, routes to Amsterdam, offering six flights weekly. In Salt Lake City, the Rocky Mountaineer's new Canyon Spirit rail journey also begins in April 2026.

Beginning December 2025, China Airlines will launch the first nonstop flights from Taipei to Phoenix, linking Asia directly to Arizona's capital to explore breathtaking desert landscapes, world-class golf and wellness resorts, and the gateway to the Grand Canyon. Starlux Airlines will follow in January 2026 with its own nonstop service, further expanding access between Asia and the American Southwest.

Gaylord Pacific Resort & Convention Center in Chula Vista, California, near San Diego, recently opened as the Gaylord Hotels' first West Coast location. The property boasts 1,600 rooms, over 477,000 square feet of meeting and event space, multiple restaurants, pools, a spa, and a water park. The first-ever NASCAR San Diego Weekend will be held in June 2026 at Naval Base Coronado in California, celebrating the 250th anniversary of the U.S. Navy. In addition to being San Diego's first NASCAR event, it will also be the first race to take place on a military base.

Santa Cruz's first luxury beachfront property, La Bahia Hotel + Spa, opens embracing the concept of joyspan [joi-spahn], which means, "how much time within a lifetime that you truly experience joy." The first of its kind in the city, La Bahia features 155 rooms including 16 suites with unobstructed ocean views of the Monterey Bay, rocking a Spanish-Mediterranean aesthetic with an elevated Art Deco interior design flair, encompassing an entire city block (225,000 square feet total) and housing 13,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor event space, a 4,000 square foot Bahia Ballroom and 5,200 square feet of rooftop deck.

Santa Monica, California celebrates its 150th anniversary since its founding in 1875 and highlights its cultural significance as the western end of Route 66 during the legendary road's centennial year. Visit one of Santa Monica Travel & Tourism's three Visitor Information Centers to shop for the perfect Route 66-themed souvenir and receive a free Certificate of Completion commemorating the end of your journey.

In Albuquerque, New Mexico, the new Route 66 Remixed project transforms Central Avenue into an "art-fueled road trip" with large-scale installations and digital experiences created in partnership with Meow Wolf, Refract Studio, and local artists. Hakim Bellamy, Albuquerque's inaugural Poet Laureate, will serve as narrator and storyteller for the road trip experience.

Los Angeles, California unveils exciting new experiences with the openings of the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art and the David Geffen Galleries at Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). Enhanced by the first phase of Metro D Line extension and the LAX Automated People Mover, exploring LA's world-class culture and innovation will be more accessible than ever.

The first phase of OCVIBE, a transformative $4 billion entertainment district, is set to open in Anaheim, California, in 2026, anchored by Honda Center and offering new amphitheaters, restaurants, marketplaces, and public plazas. The full district is set to be completed by 2028 (just in time for the LA28 Olympic & Paralympic Games).

Set on the back side of Lone Mountain in Big Sky Montana, One&Only Moonlight Basin Resort opens for the winter 2025-2026 ski season, offering unparalleled access to the mountain. The resort itself comprises multiple lodges, including 73 guest rooms and suites and 19 guest cabins. There are six restaurants and bars on property, as well as a state-of-the-art spa.

Universal Studios Hollywood in California announces "Fast & Furious: Hollywood Drift," its first-ever, high-speed outdoor roller coaster. Featuring groundbreaking 360-degree rotation of the individual ride vehicles along 4,100 feet of elaborate track, meticulously constructed

& Experiences portfolio at a staggering 72 MPH.

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The San Francisco Bay Area of California hosts Super Bowl LX at Levi's Stadium. The event will be preceded by a lineup of fan-focused events across the Bay Area, including at San Francisco's Moscone Center. Levi's Stadium is also set to host six FIFA World Cup matches in June and July.

In 2026, Las Vegas dazzles with the debut of the glamorous Vanderpump Hotel at The Cromwell and an electrifying lineup of world-class residencies, including Gwen Stefani's No Doubt reunion at the Sphere and Dolly Parton's iconic return to the Strip.

Midwest (Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Ohio, Wisconsin)

St. Louis, Missouri and British Airways have confirmed a non-stop flight from Heathrow to St. Louis will begin in April 2026 as the first non-stop route to the city from London in 22 years.

Beginning in 2026, Air Canada will launch new daily nonstop flights from Montréal to Cleveland and Columbus, inviting travelers to discover Ohio's cultural renaissance - including the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame which is undergoing a 50,000 square-foot expansion.

Amtrak is expanding its Missouri River Runner service in 2026 to support increased demand during the FIFA World Cup. Beginning in April and continuing through June, a third daily train will run between St. Louis and Kansas City, making it easier for soccer fans to explore more of the Midwest.

Indianapolis, Indiana, celebrates $150 million in trail expansions timed with America's 250th anniversary celebration, rolling out a new, expansive trail network called The Trailways, complete with digital mapping assets and new city wayfinding. There's even a new glow trail for night riders.

The new state-of-the-art Byway Discovery Center, perched on the Meeting of the Great Rivers National Scenic Byway along the Great River Road in Southwest Illinois, is a new, interactive center that will serve as a place of exploration and discovery of the Great Rivers & Routes region. The center will focus on the nature, history, and regional nature-based tourism amenities that exist along the highway between Hartford and Pere Marquette State Park. It will include a state-of-the-art video immersion experience, a gift shop, and more, all open seven days a week.

The Oneida Nation's new $15 million museum west of Green Bay, Wisconsin, is already under construction and is expected to open in the spring of 2026. This expanded facility will provide more space for historical artifacts, documents, cultural demonstrations, and community gatherings.

Northeast (New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C.)

Newark Liberty International Airport will welcome several new nonstop international routes in 2026. United Airlines will begin service from Glasgow, Scotland on May 8, followed by a new route from Seoul, South Korea on September 4. Service from Bilbao, Spain will also launch later in the year.

NextGen Acela has launched a new, premium ride experience via Amtrak — running through major city centers between Washington, DC, New York, and Boston with a myriad of destinations in between.

The Harlem Globetrotters mark their 100th anniversary with a legendary tour celebrating a century of jaw-dropping dunks, dazzling tricks, and family fun. This once-in-a-lifetime event invites travelers to experience an iconic piece of American sports and entertainment history.

In Bucks County, Pennsylvania, Sesame Place® Philadelphia has received its recertification to the Certified Autism Center™. It is expanding by being the first U.S. theme park to join the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower program and offering complimentary Sunflower-branded identifiers for guests with non-visible disabilities.

In Washington, DC, the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum celebrates its 50th Anniversary following extensive renovations, with most galleries reopening and showcasing historic milestones in air and space exploration. Seven new exhibits are set to unveil on

Center. And the recently opened American Dream Experience at the MILKEN CENTER offers an immersive look into American stories and how the American Dream has been defined across time through holograms, OLED images and interactive technology.

Washington, DC, also leads the nation's yearlong celebration of America's 250th Anniversary with a diverse lineup of dynamic events, citywide. Museums, theaters, restaurants and iconic landmarks across the city will host special exhibitions, performances, culinary experiences and public art installations reflecting America's rich cultural tapestry and historical evolution from 1776 to the present. New attractions and exhibits include the National Archives in Washington, DC, the only place to see historic charter documents, such as the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, Bill of Rights, and more.

Pacific Northwest (Washington, Oregon, Idaho)

International air connectivity to the Pacific Northwest continues to grow in 2026, with several new nonstop routes launching from Europe. Alaska Airlines will introduce service from both Rome and London Heathrow to Seattle, while Delta adds new flights from Barcelona and Rome.

Seattle, Washington, recently completed a massive waterfront revitalization effort that offers pedestrians access to unobstructed water and mountain views, along with a futuristic jellyfish playground, outdoor concerts, art installations by local Indigenous artists, and a 1.2-mile bike path.

Oregon becomes the first U.S. state to earn 'Accessibility Verified' Status from Wheel the World, pioneering a new standard for inclusive travel and promoting inclusivity in travel experiences for people with visible and non-visible disabilities. This milestone follows a coordinated statewide effort to evaluate and improve the accessibility of tourism businesses across Oregon, including hotels and outdoor adventure experiences, as well as cultural attractions and culinary experiences.

The Observatory Sun Valley, A Viceroy Resort is slated to open in June 2026 in Sun Valley, Idaho. This new luxury resort opens at the gateway to downtown Ketchum with 73 guestrooms, a full?service spa, thermal pool/cold plunge, and a rooftop observatory aimed at the Central Idaho Dark Sky Reserve.

Off the Mainland (Hawaii, Puerto Rico)

The first 360° immersive projection dome in Puerto Rico debuts at Parque de Las Ciencias in Bayamón, featuring cutting-edge fiber-optic and 5G technology.

In Hawaii, Experience Kilohana, is launching the "Aloha Pass" — a fixed-price pass featuring only locally owned businesses. Aloha Pass guests can participate in more than a dozen tours and activities, along with products unavailable elsewhere, all developed with support and guidance from Experience Kilohana. From surf lessons and museums to luaus and tours, visitors can get an authentic sense of the Aloha spirit while supporting the local economy.

Start planning your next trip to the USA by visiting AmericaTheBeautiful.com.

Note to the Editor
Accompanying high-resolution imagery can be found here.

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About Brand USA
Brand USA is the nation's destination marketing organization, dedicated to attracting legitimate international inbound travel to strengthen the U.S. economy, increase exports, create quality jobs, and promote community prosperity. By running data-driven campaigns and unifying messaging across industry and government, Brand USA positions the United States as a top global destination while providing current visa and entry information.

Over the past 13 years Brand USA has driven 11.3 million additional international visitors who spent $38.1 billion in the United States, leading to $82.9 billion in total economic impact and sustaining an average of more than 40,000 jobs each year. These efforts have generated nearly $11 billion in attributable tax receipts at the federal, state, and local levels.

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