

# QUICK ESCAPES

Adventure is never far away

**F**all is the best time to travel just about anywhere on planet Earth. The crowds of summer have melted away, the weather is often ideal, and whether it's the northern forest or the tropical rainforest there's something special about the colors at that time of year. Read on for the lowdown on five autumn getaways anywhere between one hour by road to five hours by air.

**One Hour (by road):  
Huntington Beach**

After Labor Day, the summer crowds fade away and the ever-mellow locals start to cruise up and down the strand again. Catch a meal at the end of the pier or one of the outdoor cafes along Main Street. Hop onto a boat for whale or dolphin watching or explore Huntington Harbor's calm waters via paddleboard or gondola. Catch the sunset — Catalina Island silhouetted in the distance — with a tropical cocktail at the groovy open-air bar at the [Pasea Hotel & Spa](#).

**Two Hours (by road):  
Solana Beach**

Surfers flock to Encinitas,

pony players to the seaside racetrack in Del Mar, but wedged right between is the undiscovered gem of the San Diego coast — Solana Beach. Fletcher Cove offers great surf and sand. Along Cedros Avenue — heart of the city's hip Design District — more than 80 one-off shops flaunt art, antiques, fashion and housewares. A dozen golf courses lie within a 15-minute drive including legendary links like Torrey Pines and La Costa.

**Three Hours (by air):  
Vancouver**

Canada's cosmopolitan west coast metropolis boasts an awesome shorefront setting, the city's high-rise skyline set against snowcapped peaks and surrounded on three sides by water. While away the days exploring cool neighborhoods like Gastown, Yaletown and Granville Island. Ogle the autumn colors along 16 miles of trail in Stanley Park. Depending on your musical taste, catch a symphony concert at the restored Orpheum Theatre or pay homage to the psychedelic Sixties at the Jimi Hendrix Shrine.

**Four Hours (by air):  
Chicago**

American's bicoastal battle neglects the fact there's actually a freshwater coast — the Great Lakes — with Chicago as the region's largest and most exciting gateway. Have a blast in the Windy City by attending autumn events like Venetian Night at Navy Pier (Sept 10), the Chicago Gourmet festi-



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val (Sept 23-25), Rocktober Beerfest (Oct 7-9) and Open House Chicago (Oct 15-16) during which 200 Chicago architecture landmarks normally closed to the public are open for tours. Two hundred is also the number of golf courses in the Greater Chicago area, from PGA icons like Medinah Country Club to public links like the shoreline Marovitz Golf Course.

#### **Five Hours (by air):**

##### **Belize**

Central America segues into the Caribbean in this eclectic nation tucked right beneath Mexico. Offshore floats the world's second biggest barrier reef and dozens of sandy cays that harbor romantic resorts that expedite scuba, snorkel, fishing and other watery pursuits. Inland Belize is like something out of an Indiana Jones movie — rainforest reserves where jaguars still roam, jungle-covered Mayan ruins, sunken limestone caverns and underground rivers explored via snorkeling or tubing. American Airlines now offers direct, nonstop flights from LAX to Belize City.

—JOE YOGERST  
*Custom Publishing Writer*

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# Los Angeles Times

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Exploring a rainforest by zipline in Belize

Photo courtesy of Belize Tourism Board