BRAND USA

NEWS RELEASE

What's New in the USA for 2026: Spring Update

March 16, 2026

RIO DE JANERIO, BRAZIL (March 16, 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 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.

"Across the United States, destinations are unveiling what's next—from transformative new products and live events to reimagined visitor experiences—creating fresh energy and reasons to visit. When combined with mega events on deck like the FIFA World Cup, America's 250th, and the Route 66 centennial, new offerings heighten demand. For international travelers
looking to enjoy what's hot and trending, the moment to start planning a trip to the USA is now," said Fred Dixon, president and CEO of Brand USA.

MAJOR EVENTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Across the U.S. this year, major milestones including the FIFA World Cup 2026, America's 250th anniversary, the Route 66 Centennial, are expected to generate increased global interest in visiting the country

FIFA World Cup 2026 will bring matches to 11 U.S. host cities including Atlanta, Boston, Dallas, Houston, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Miami, New York/New Jersey, Philadelphia, San Francisco Bay Area, and Seattle. In addition, each team will also set up standalone base camps and training facilities, with final locations to be announced closer to the start of the tournament.

America250 is kicking off celebrations for the USA's 250th birthday in 2026. There's no better time to reconnect with the icons of this vast country – rugged red rocks, multifaceted cities, peaceful shorelines, friendly small towns, world-famous attractions and the people who bring each magical place to life. Sail250 celebrates America's 250th in classic maritime fashion, bringing together tall ships from around the world for a series of events across five U.S. destinations. Between May and July, 2026, each spot will rotate offering an array of family friendly events. Visit the individual websites for New Orleans, Louisiana, Norfolk, Virginia, Baltimore, Maryland, the Port of New York & New Jersey, and Boston, Massachusetts to see the lineup of activities.

The centennial celebration of Route 66 will culminate on November 11, 2026. Travelers are encouraged to rediscover the plethora of museums and roadside attractions that line the historic Mother Road — from nostalgic diners and retro soda fountains to a cutting-edge food hall, the Route offers something to satisfy every curiosity and appetite.

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

To the Skies:

- ITA Airways will fly Houston to Rome via Airbus A330-900neo aircraft beginning in May, and increasing to five times per week between June 1 - October. 24.
- 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.
- Travelers will have a new option to reach South Florida as Porter Airlines launches nonstop service between Ottawa and Miami beginning in May.
- Beginning in May, Air Canada will launch new nonstop service from Toronto to San Antonio

Dolly Parton's SongTeller Hotel will open in June 2026 in Nashville, as Dolly's own personal love letter to Music City. The property will feature 245 uniquely designed rooms, and will also host Dolly's Life of Many Colors Museum — the most comprehensive exhibition dedicated to the life and career of Dolly Parton. Music City becomes easier to reach from Canada with new Porter Airlines nonstop service between Toronto and Nashville launching in May.

The Austin, Texas skyline has reached historic new "heights" with the opening of Waterline, a 74-story mixed-use tower, the new tallest building in Texas inclusive of 1 Hotel Austin, a luxury lifestyle property blending sustainable design with a modern aesthetic. It's located at the intersection of the historic Rainey Street District and Lady Bird Lake featuring 251 guest rooms and a rooftop pool deck with stunning views of the Texas Hill Country.

In late-2026, visitors can explore the brand-new Memphis Art Museum overlooking the riverfront in Downtown Memphis. It's one of the largest art museums in the region with 29 galleries; this transformation will relocate the museum's existing 9,000-piece collection to a newly constructed space and add new offerings on-property.

The new Kentucky African American Heritage Trail celebrates over 50 sites highlighting the profound contributions of African Americans to the state's history, culture, and future. Additional stops will join the trail in the Spring of 2026. In Louisville in October 2026, Kentucky is also unveiling The Dot Experience — an innovative, hands-on museum exploring what it's like to navigate life, without sight. Visitors can engage with exhibits on Helen Keller, see how Braille books are made, and experience learning through using a sense of touch.

The Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas is undergoing a major 114,000-square-foot expansion that will increase the museum's total size by 50 percent. The project will introduce new galleries, learning spaces, and outdoor experiences and is scheduled to open to the public in June 2026.

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.

Universal Destinations & Experiences will debut Universal Kids Resort in Frisco, Texas—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.

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.

Amtrak recently debuted its Mardi Gras Service, connecting New Orleans, Louisiana, and Mobile, Alabama with four stops along Mississippi's Gulf Coast (Bay St. Louis, Gulfport, Biloxi, and Pascagoula).

The Biltmore Estate in Asheville debuts "Luminere," an immersive evening experience featuring light, imagery, and sound across the historic estate, running select nights from March 26 to October 18, 2026.

Savannah, Georgia welcomes Recess Hotel & Club in fall 2026, a new lifestyle property set within the historic Manger Building, designed as a social hub for locals and visitors alike.

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

To the Skies:

- Qantas launches its first non-stop Sydney to Las Vegas flights, beginning in late December 2026 — a seasonal route operating through March of 2027, flying three times per week (Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday) aboard Qantas' B787 aircraft.
- 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.
- Porter Airlines continues expanding its U.S. network with new nonstop flights connecting Ottawa and Phoenix starting in May.
- Starlux Airlines recently launched nonstop service, further expanding access between Asia and the American Southwest.

Santa Monica, the western terminus of Route 66, America's Mother Road, celebrates this storied route's 100th anniversary. Don't miss experiencing iconic landmarks of this route, like the "End of the Trail" sign on the Santa Monica Pier, or an iconic dining outpost, Mel's Drive-In — with its nostalgic decor and classic American food menu offerings.

Pasadena, California also commemorates the 100th anniversary of Route 66 along Colorado Boulevard, which honors the centennial with classic car parades, live music, and community festivals throughout 2026.

New Mexico pays homage to its 465 miles of pavement along the "Mother Road" (more than any other state!) with events like the Route 66 Summerfest in Albuquerque — just in time to have also partnered with the MICHELIN Guide to launch its first Southwest edition, alongside Santa Fe's new Heritage Market food hall (debuting in 2026).

West Hollywood's buzzy, upscale hospitality scene heats up again with the addition of PUBLIC West Hollywood, opening soon in a quintessential location for exploring the Sunset Strip. The property will include stylish rooms, immersive social spaces, and curated cultural programming designed for world travelers to enjoy multiple dining spaces, and a lush, 16,000 square-foot open-air rooftop terrace.

Highway 1 near Big Sur is finally fully reopened after more than three years of closures caused by landslides — meaning one of America's most stunning, scenic drives has become a through-drive road trip route once again.

The Sphere in Las Vegas has announced a robust lineup of limited-run residencies in 2026, featuring major artists throughout the year. Screenings of The Wizard of Oz have also been extended through December 2026.

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.

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) marks 60 years with the forthcoming David Geffen Galleries, opening April 2026, alongside a new plaza and outdoor installations.

Deer Valley's Expanded Excellence initiative sets out to more than double the size of this resort's skiable terrain, unveiling nearly 100 new ski runs, 10 new chairlifts, and the 10-passenger East Village Express Gondola while also introducing spaces such as the newly constructed Deer Valley East Village in addition to upgrading existing infrastructure and reimagining the Snow Park base area.

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.

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 set for September 22, 2026 and the David Geffen Galleries at Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA).

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 will open "Fast & Furious: Hollywood Drift," its first-ever, high-speed outdoor roller coaster this summer. Featuring groundbreaking 360-degree rotation of the individual ride vehicles along 4,100 feet of elaborate track, meticulously constructed with sound reduction technology for a breathtaking experience, the ride debuts as the fastest roller coaster in the Universal Destinations & Experiences portfolio at a staggering 72 MPH.

Arches National Park in Utah and Yosemite National Park in California will no longer require timed-entry reservations for visitors in 2026. Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado will continue to operate a timed-entry reservation system from May 22 through mid-October during peak hours.

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

To the Skies:

- British Airways will launch its non-stop flight from Heathrow to St. Louis in April 2026 as the first non-stop route to the city from London in 22 years.
- Beginning on May 1, 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.

Grand Rapids, Michigan debuts a major new riverfront attraction in May — Acrisure Amphitheater — a 12,000-seat open air venue set along the Grand River in the heart of downtown that's designed to host national touring acts and community events alike. Seating options include a relaxed lawn space, terrace seating, premium suites, and a dedicated VIP pavilion.

As the U.S. celebrates its 250th anniversary, the National WWI Museum and Memorial in Kansas City also celebrates its centennial this year, as host to the most comprehensive collection of WWI objects in the world and the second-oldest public WWI museum. The museum has recently updated all of its galleries and exhibits, and will unveil new exhibits and events to commemorate its 100 years of sharing history. The museum will also play host to a free FIFA Fan Festival when the FIFA World Cup 26 comes to Kansas City this summer.

The Obama Presidential Center, slated to open in Summer 2026 in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago, will be known as one of the city's most significant new civic and cultural destinations. The Center will feature a museum, auditorium, branch of the Chicago Public Library, community and athletic programming spaces, landscaped gardens, and year-round initiatives designed to inspire reflection, dialogue, and civic engagement.

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, Virginia, Washington, D.C., Pennsylvania, Massachusetts)

To the Skies:

- EVA Air Launches Nonstop Service Between Taipei and Washington, D.C. beginning on June 26, offering four flights each week aboard a Boeing 787-9.
- Aer Lingus will launch its first-ever nonstop service between Dublin, Ireland and Pittsburgh International Airport (PIT) beginning on May 25, 2026
- Boston will see expanded Canadian connectivity as Porter Airlines introduces new nonstop flights from both Toronto and Montreal beginning in May.
- 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.
- GOL Airlines will launch new nonstop service between Rio de Janeiro (GIG) and New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) beginning July 8, 2026, operating three flights per week.

On The Mountain Side of Maryland in historic downtown Cumberland, an adaptive reuse project breathes new life into a long-vacant Victorian-era building. The Wills Hotel, set to welcome its first guests to its modern, 20-room three story property in June, will be the destination's first boutique hotel, and a great fit for those with two-wheeled adventures planned in the region.

The National September 11 Memorial & Museum commemorates the 25th anniversary of 9/11 on September 11, 2026, with a lineup of impactful digital and in-person programming. This includes a 30-minute film (available on-demand) beginning Friday, September 11, 2026, sharing accounts from those who experienced the attacks and their aftermath firsthand, and a live chat with Museum staff throughout the day. There will also be an official ceremony, a nationwide tour of a WTC steel beam, an FDNY Commemoration on September 9 at the FerryHawks Stadium, and a series of hosted conversations throughout 2026 called the "Reflections Series," to discuss the long-term impacts of the attacks with well-respected industry experts.

The National Constitution Center in Philadelphia opened a new gallery showcasing the stories of America's founding in February 2026, and looks forward to unveiling another new gallery on the separation of powers in May 2026. These galleries are part of the first major renovation since 2003 — and include the display of a real copy of one of just 14 known original, official printed copies of the U.S. Constitution in addition to a collection of other rare documents to commemorate the nation's 250th anniversary.

The Super Girl Festival, the world's largest women's sports, music and lifestyle festival, is celebrating its 20th year with a stop in Virginia Beach, from Sept 5–7, 2026. The free event will showcase the talent of over 1,000 inspiring female athletes across 10 sports, in addition to live entertainment like a lineup of live music, complimentary fitness classes, and celebrity speaking engagements.

The New Museum in New York City unveils a major 60,000-square-foot expansion in March, doubling its gallery space and bringing its total footprint to 120,000 square feet. The museum's inaugural exhibition, New Humans: Memories of the Future, will span the entire museum, featuring more than 200 artists and cultural figures exploring evolving ideas of humanity.

Celebrate the World Cup at the Whitney! The Whitney Museum of American Art will host World Cup-themed Free Friday Nights and Free Second Sundays throughout the tournament. Visitors can enjoy DJ sets inspired by global music traditions, art-making activities, tours and refreshments, all culminating in a special West Side Fest celebration (July 10–12) ahead of the Final match weekend. These activities will take place during the Whitney Biennial 2026, featuring artists from tournament host cities and countries around the world, shown alongside iconic American works by Hopper, Warhol and Basquiat. Admission is also free every day for visitors 25 and under.

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.

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.

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 July 1, 2026, focusing on subjects like understanding our universe, exploring how people could live in space and a new Flight and Arts Center.

Acadia National Park in Maine will continue to require vehicle reservations for Cadillac Summit Road between May 20 and October 25.

Pacific Northwest (Washington, Oregon, Idaho)

To the Skies:

- 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.

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.

Mount Rainier National Park in Washington and Glacier National Park in Montana will not require timed-entry reservations for visitors in 2026.

Off the Mainland (Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Alaska)

2026 is a fantastic year to embark on an unforgettable adventure to the Last Frontier, with major itinerary expansions across multiple cruise lines. The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection debuts its first ever Alaska voyages journey. Ultra luxe Crystal Cruises returns to Alaska for the first time in seven years, and Virgin Voyages launches to Alaska with their new ship, Brilliant Lady. Princess Cruises unveils Alaska travel aboard its newest Sphere-class ship, the Star Princess. Windstar's Star Seeker takes on its first Alaska season, as well as Seabourn's all-suite, all-veranda ship, the Seabourn Encore. MSC makes its first ever debut to the region abord Poesia, and Disney Cruise Line doubles their sailings adding Disney Magic to their roster of Alaskan adventurers, alongside sister ship, Disney Wonder.

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

Note to the Editor
Accompanying high resolution imagery can be found here. To view the previous What's New in the USA release, click 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.

Media Contacts

Chris Heywood
Senior Vice President, Public Relations & Chief Communications Officer

Jennifer Tong
Senior Director, International Public Relations

Andrew Felts
Senior Manager, Media Relations & Communications