

TOP 5 GIRLFRIEND GETAWAYS

WRITTEN BY JAMES SHILLINGLAW

What's one of the most popular forms of group travel today? The answer is the girlfriend getaway—a trip where women who are former high school classmates, college roommates, good friends or family members can take that long-overdue vacation together. Here are five great getaway destinations for that long-delayed girlfriend escape as recommended by our top travel advisors.

5 LONDON

What's a better foreign destination for a long weekend girlfriend getaway than one ruled by the Queen herself? After checking into your hotel, it's off to visit the sites — maybe the classic changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace or a scenic trip on the London Eye. Spend the next morning together seeing costumes at the Victoria & Albert Museum, then have lunch at the food halls and go shopping at Harrods nearby. Then it's off for dinner and the theater in London's West End or Covent Garden. The next day enjoy breakfast at Fortnum & Mason before taking in the crown jewels at the Tower of London and end up having tea at one of London's posh hotels or teahouses.

4 MONTREAL

Old world French charm combined with modern French-Canadian chic makes this city a wonderful place for a girlfriend getaway. Stay in boutique hotels or bed and breakfasts in Old Montreal with its classic 19th century French architecture. Spend time on bustling Crescent Street, lined with boutiques, art galleries, restaurants and nightclubs, or shop on fashionable Rue Saint-Paul or, if it's raining, shop at the Underground City, a subterranean shopping mall that runs through a series of interconnected buildings. Have a baguette sandwich at lunch

and visit La Biosphere, the Buckminster Fuller-designed geodesic dome that served as the American Pavilion for Expo '67.

3 NAPA VALLEY

Start off your Napa Valley girlfriend getaway with a wine tour by limo along the Silverado trail passing rolling hills and long rows of grape vines before enjoying a private tasting at the Beaulieu Vineyard Reserve, Robert Mondavi Winery, Franciscan Estate, Sterling Vineyards, Francis Ford Coppola Winery or Domaine Carneros Winery. Then move on to discover the food for lunch at Oxbow Public Market followed by a shopping expedition at the Napa Premium Outlets. Or you can stroll downtown Napa for lunch by the river. The day ends with dinner at a celebrity chef restaurant in downtown Napa and a stay at one of several luxury resort and spas in the Napa Valley.

2 ASPEN

You can always book a girlfriend getaway ski weekend, including skiing, ice skating and even a sleigh ride, but summer is also a great time to visit the destination. If you time it right you can attend the Aspen Food & Wine Classic, which features top chefs from around

the country. You can stay in a bed and breakfast or one of Aspen's many luxury hotels — the Hotel Jerome, the St. Regis or the Viceroy (in nearby Snowmass) to name a few. Aspen also has fantastic shopping with more than 250 boutiques and stores from high-end designers, as well as great restaurants (more than 80 eateries), bars and nightlife. Great summer girlfriend activities can include hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding, as well as cultural venues like the Aspen Art Museum and Aspen Santa Fe Ballet.

1 MIAMI

With boutique hotels, restaurants, nightclubs and white sand beaches, South Beach just might be the quintessential girlfriend getaway. Start your break by booking one of the destination's many small art deco hotels on Collins Avenue or maybe one of the larger resorts just to the north. Many of these hotels are located directly on or just a short walk from one of the sexiest and most fashionable beaches in the world. And when it finally gets too hot to be in the sun, try the shopping on Lincoln Road, or take a short ride to Miami's Design District near to downtown, which has high-end stores and more. Then it's back to South Beach for dining at a trendy restaurant capped off by an even trendier nightclub.



LEFT & BELOW

(L) Whether you're in search of entertainment, history, dining, or all of the above, London has something for everyone. (B) Old world French charm and modern French-Canadian chic combine in Montreal.



ABOVE & RIGHT

(A) Napa is a veritable paradise for foodies and wine connoisseurs alike. (R) Aspen is best known for its winter offerings but summer is also a great time to visit.



ABOVE

With its abundance of boutique hotels, restaurants, nightclubs and white sand beaches, Miami reigns supreme as the top destination for girlfriend getaways.