

Orlando Sentinel

10 places to book now

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(WA & Home Valley Station – Ranked #6)

With high demand and rising airfares, don't delay making summer plans for these destinations



1. London

Even if your invitation to April's royal nuptials never arrived, the wedding no doubt will hyper-focus interest on London and environs. Through walking tours, you still can follow in Kate and Will's footsteps. And if hotel rooms get tight, consider a flat.

"Thanks to the royal wedding, some unique London properties are booking up quickly for summer," said Anthony Lipschitz, CEO of iStopover, a vacation rental company (istopover.com). "When you rent a flat, your experience is more local, authentic and guided by individualism, not what's 'in the brochure,' and flats can be more advantageous to the wallet than hotel rooms."

Consider tracing royal footsteps in London Walks' Royal Wedding Walk. The company charges \$12.85, about half of what competitors are asking. (walks.com, 011-44-020-7624-3978) See also: visitbritain.com, 800-462-2748; visitlondon.com, 011-44-087-0156-6366; and londonforfree.net.

2. Tallinn, Estonia

"A few happenings make Estonia stand out as a unique summer destination this year," said Anne Banas of SmarterTravel.com. "The country is celebrating its 20th anniversary of regaining independence from the Soviet Union, and its currency has recently switched over to the euro, making things easier for visitors traveling throughout Europe this summer. Also, the capital city of Tallin has been designated as a European Capital of Culture for 2011, which means mounds of special arts events." Information: tourism.tallinn.ee and visitestonia.com, or the Estonian Consulate at 212-883-0636.

3. Germany

Germany hosts the FIFA Women's World Cup from June 26-July 17. Berlin, Dresden and Frankfurt are among the nine host cities. The German National Tourist Office and Proactive Travel, a U.S. company, are offering a tour to help Americans and Canadians follow and support their teams from Berlin to Frankfurt.

Dresden, where the U.S. plays Korea on June 28, also is celebrating the 200th birthday of classical music's first pop star, composer Franz Liszt.

Car fans can enjoy Germany's nationwide celebration of the car's 125th birthday. Karl Benz created the first gas automobile in 1886. Stuttgart, the capital of Baden-Wuerttemberg state, has a Porsche museum and a Mercedes-Benz museum. Information: cometogermany.com, 212-661-7200; stuttgart-tourist.de; proactivesoccertours.com; fifa.com/womensworldcup.

4. Ecuador

South America is a great alternative to Europe because you find rich cultural experiences in a place where the dollar has a lot more muscle. "Book in advance to get more discounts for trips below the equator," said Angela Lyda of Travel-Ticker.com. "Look for discounted packages that bundle your accommodations, meals and possibly excursions, such as tours and rafting." Information: ecuadortouristboard.com, 800-328-2367; ecuador.us/tourism; and barefootexpeditions.com.

5. Saba

Author Patricia Schultz listed Saba in "1,000 Places to See before you Die," praising the 5-square-mile Caribbean island for trekking, snorkeling and diving, especially in the Saba Marine Park. Most people fly into St. Maarten and catch a ferry or a flight to Saba, 28 miles away.

But Saba must be booked early due to the limited number of hotel rooms on the tiny island, said Lynn Costenaro of Sea Saba, a dive shop that offers dive training. "For a family, we offer fantastic options beyond just learning to dive. You can explore a real sulphur mine, climb into the tide pools, summit Mount Scenery or take a safe walk after dark to stargaze. Information: sabatourism.com, 011-599-416-2231; and seasaba.com, 011-599-416-2246. Also, check "Are Your Kids Ready to Dive" (tinyurl.com/4eyla24). For instruction via Sea Saba, kids must be at least 10.

6. Western Australia

Australia has had a recent run of tough luck from nature, between fires and floods, but it also enjoys a yearly blessing when Western Australia explodes in color. "Western Australia is home to a floral extravaganza for the last five months of every year — from July to

November, mainly," said Gabe Saglie of [Travelzoo](#). "Hundreds of species of native wildflowers bloom across the state, and the landscape explodes into color. National parks, such as Kings Park in Perth and Avon Valley, become perfect destinations for travelers hoping to witness the wonder of thousands of buds coming into flower."

For those craving more action, Home Valley Station is offering its inaugural Kimberley Heritage Cattle Drive from June 10 to July 12. It's your chance to spend six days doing something Oprah missed. Information: [westernaustralia.com](#); [hvstation.com.au](#), 011-61-8-9161-4322; and [australia.com](#), 800-333-0262.

7. San Diego

With some of the most consistently moderate year-round weather in the nation, San Diego boasts broad beaches for sand and surf fans, the Gas Lamp District for night owls and the San Diego Zoo and its Safari Park for critter lovers. In summer, the zoo stays open late, and the San Diego Zoo Safari Park offers its African Summer Festival. Plenty of deals are there for the plucking if you book early. This from Travel-Ticker.com: "San Diego was one of the most overbuilt cities during the economic downturn, so you can find some amazing deals at top properties — some up to 45 percent off. It's best to book now with the best deal you find, because prices will go up as we near the busy summer season." Information: [sandiego.org](#), 619-236-1212; and [sandiegozoo.org](#), 619-231-1515.

8. Washington, D.C.

From the [White House](#) to the Smithsonian and the National Zoo, the city offers tons of inexpensive fun, including [Monuments by Moonlight](#), a 45-minute Potomac River cruise (\$14 for adults, \$7 for children). Plan on visiting the Jefferson Memorial to glimpse the [Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial](#), nearing completion. Its dedication is set for Aug. 28. Information: [washington.org](#), 800-422-8644; [mlkmemorial.org](#), 888-484-3373; [dc-cruises.com](#) and [si.edu](#), 202-633-1000.

9. Jackson Hole, Wyo.

Jackson Hole positions you to explore two great national parks, both wildly popular: Yellowstone (90 miles north) and Grand Teton (home to the Jackson Hole airport). The resort town of Jackson Hole also offers whitewater rafting, hot-air ballooning and more. Information: [jacksonholechamber.com](#), 307-733-3316; [nps.gov/yell](#), 307-344-7381; [nps.gov/grte](#), 307-739-3300; [jhww.com](#), 800-700-7238; and [wyomingballoon.com](#), 307-739-0900.

10. Gettysburg, Pa.

Although the Battle of Gettysburg was fought in July 1863, 2011 is the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the Civil War. Battle re-enactments July 1-3 will begin the buildup to the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg in 2013. The re-enactment website offers a list of lodging for Gettysburg, scene of the most pivotal battle of a war that sculpted a nation. Information: [gettysburgreenactment.com](#), 717-338-1525; [nps.gov/gett](#), 717-334-1124; [gettysburg.travel](#), 800-337-5015.

Editors from [SmarterTravel.com](#), [Travelzoo.com](#) and [Travel-Ticker.com](#) helped with this lineup.