

Condé Nast Traveller

WORD OF MOUTH



GLORY DAYS

Forget Montauk: Asbury Park is NYC's newest weekend crush

Just 90 minutes south of Manhattan, Asbury Park has been a gay holiday hotspot since the 1950s, later attracting a musician crowd – Bruce Springsteen was born in neighbouring Long Branch. The shanties started to come down in the 1990s, however, a slide that culminated in Hurricane Sandy's trail of destruction in 2012. But since then, the New Jersey beach town has rebuilt itself with a contemporary energy, sprouting surf shops, edgy cocktail bars and buzzy restaurants. And this month sees the first hotel opening here in more than 50 years. The Asbury (theasburyhotel.com, doubles from about £105) is a collaboration between a local company and Salt Hotels, a group redefining the American inn with funky style at the likes of Shelter Island's Chequit. The 110-room property's one-stop-shop allure – there are food trucks, a beer garden and a rooftop for film screenings – will surely win Asbury Park even more fans. Jersey man Chadner Nazario has the inside track on what else to do in town.



EAT

Start the day at hipster-approved Café Volo for espresso from small-batch producers such as Seattle's Kuma Coffee. Launched last year, Tabula's specialises in organic sourdough pizzas, perfectly charred in under three minutes. Try the Beekeeper's Lament, a delicious pairing of spicy Calabrian appetizante salami and local honey. For seafood, brand-new The Bonney Road tucks out an elevated take on classic dishes like the linguine and clams, for example, tossed together farm-raised cured meat, housemade clam broth and artisanal butter from grass-fed cows.



Clockwise from this picture: Mavis Studio in the Market at Fifth Avenue; Asbury Festhalle & Biergarten; staff eating at Tabula's; the Biergarten; crazy gift on the boardwalk; Wonder Bar; tarts at Tabula's

SHOP

Christina Gal's sun-bathed house of curiosities Red Moon stocks anything from sculptural terracotta planters to all-natural moisturisers. In addition to breezy, beachy fashion, Gild Surf Company is the go-to for custom-made surfboards. At the store's Heavens workshop, master shapers from all over the world will build the board of your dreams, whether it has tein panels or a vintage-fabric inlay. At Sweet Joey's splurge on made-to-measure jeans from its own VJAD label, which uses top-notch denim from the USA and Japan.



SEE

The boardwalk is home to a mix of old-school attractions (vintage pinball machines at Silverball Museum) and modern-day pleasures, including the Market at Fifth Avenue, a 2,500-sq-ft multi-stall hub with fashion, grab-and-go restaurants and rotating exhibitions. An initiative Wooden Walls is adding more creative vibrancy to the promenade; following last year's music, this summer there will be sculptures and performances.

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DRINK

Asbury Festhalle & Biergarten, which opened last year in a former warehouse, lines up 100-plus craft beers, including Populus from nearby Dark City. Brewers, a robust porter that uses coffee grinds from a local roastery. Head to bistro-inspired Pascal & Sabine for potent cocktails, whether it's a sharp Manhattan or the perfect summer nightcap, the Bee's Knees, a refreshing mix of gin, honey and lemon.



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