

Summer Hotspot: Baltimore, Maryland

by [Libby Zay](#) ([RSS feed](#)) on Apr 13th 2012 at 2:00PM



If scenes from "The Wire" are the only images that come to mind when you think of [Baltimore](#), it's time to reevaluate. The city is a hodgepodge of distinct neighborhoods, including [historic Fells Point](#), where you can take your pick from more than [120 pubs](#), and quirky Hampden, where you still might be able to spot a beehive hairdo straight out of a John Waters film. Although Baltimore is only a stone's throw away from [Washington, D.C.](#), and a short drive from [Philadelphia](#) and [New York](#), it's a charming, comfortable city with its own culture and a lively arts scene. Plus, the city has several events happening this summer that are worth a trip.

This summer, Baltimore will ring in a three-year celebration commemorating the bicentennial of the War of 1812 with the [Star-Spangled Sailabration](#), a maritime festival that will bring dozens of tall ships and warships to the city's bustling Inner Harbor from June 13-19. The Inner Harbor is a pretty public space filled with shops, museums, ships and restaurants. It is overlooked by Federal Hill, a park that sits on a prominent hill that was a lookout during the Civil War and the War of 1812. Don't miss the [American Visionary Art Museum](#), just to the west of Federal Hill, which is filled with [oddball outsider art](#). On Thursday nights during the summer, the museum plays movies on the side of the building facing Federal Hill, which turns into a makeshift amphitheater.

From August 31 to September 3, IndyCars will race around a 2.04-mile temporary circuit set up around the Inner Harbor for the [Baltimore Grand Prix](#). The circuit passes many Baltimore landmarks – including [Oriole Park at Camden Yards](#) – and contains 12 turns, one of which is an adrenaline-pumping hairpin turn. Race fans from around the world are expected to descend on the city and the crowds are expected to surpass 150,000 people.

Also in the Inner Harbor, [Phillips Seafood](#) – known for creating the first ever crab shack in [Ocean City](#) – recently moved to a new space in a restored power plant along the water. When doing so, Phillips opened up a huge new crab deck that juts out in the water. Visitors shouldn't miss the true Chesapeake Bay experience of ordering up a bucket of clams and cracking them open in the sunshine. Wash the crabs down with Baltimore's most famous beer, [National Bohemian](#) (better known as "Natty Boh" to Baltimoreans – just look for the can or bottle with the mustachioed man), and you have a true Baltimore experience.

Don't forget that [there is a lot to do in Baltimore beyond the Inner Harbor](#), including [Artscape](#), the largest free arts festival in the country that features [funky art cars](#), musical performances and plenty of neat art to peruse.

[flickr image via [sneakerdog](#)]

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