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A vibrant beach scene under a clear blue sky with light clouds. In the foreground, a large white sign is propped up on the sand. The sign has the text "Your Best Summer Ever" written in a large, black, handwritten-style font. At the base of the sign, there are several beach items: two coconuts, a pair of bright pink flip-flops, a starfish wearing black sunglasses, and a striped beach hat. The background shows the turquoise ocean meeting a white sandy beach.

**Your Best
Summer
Ever**

Summer always has been a time for adventurous vacations, magical entertainment, and magnificent celebrations. These days, we have a wide array of online tools designed to help us plan our lives and connect with loved ones. We show you how to use these tools to have the best summer of your life.



Vacations

The first step in any vacation is getting to your location. Many travelers have fallen in love with online travel agents such as [Travelocity](#), [Orbitz](#), and [Expedia](#). These sites have certain advantages over other methods; they make it easy to shop fares between different airlines and are easy to use. Generally speaking, however, airlines offer the best deals on airline tickets. In fact, airlines usually have contracts with online travel sites to ensure that they are not undersold. Savvy travelers generally use sites such as Travelocity, Orbitz, and Expedia to outline their trip, then buy tickets directly from the airline.

[TravelZoo](#) is the web's most popular travel deal website. Over 15 million people receive its [weekly newsletter](#), which lists the week's best deals. As you might imagine, hotels and cruise lines are anxious to gain access to a user base that large, and routinely offer unbelievable deals just to make the list. Signing up for the newsletter is easy, and you can [view a sample](#) before you sign up for anything.

To home in on cruises, use [CruiseDeals](#), which organizes deals by location, ship, duration, etc. Our favorite feature is the [Best of the Best](#), which lists the week's best cruise deals (usually \$150-\$300 per passenger).

Finally, take a little time to improve your photographic skills and you will be able to relive your vacation over and over again. Here are some [tips to help you take better pictures](#). Once you've selected your favorite pictures, share them with loved ones by uploading them to [Flickr](#).

Entertainment



[Eventful](#) is a great tool for monitoring upcoming concerts and sporting events in your area. Eventful is a free web service designed to help users find such events in their areas. There are several ways to use Eventful. You can use the web service as a search engine by entering the names of your favorite artists and teams to find upcoming dates in your area; or you can sign up for an account to take advantage of advanced options. For instance, you can have Eventful search your iTunes library for any artists that have upcoming performances in your area. Eventful even has an [iPhone application](#), which can be great for finding shows on-the-go (e.g., on vacation).

[StubHub](#) is an online ticket broker that specializes in sporting events, though it also sells tickets for a wide variety of concerts and theater events. StubHub allows just about anyone to sell tickets online for whatever price he thinks is fair. As a result, it is often possible to find tickets below face value, or to find tickets to a sold-out event. Of course, for amazing deals, it's hard to beat [Craigslist](#). For many events, Craigslist offers tickets at prices far below StubHub's comparable tickets. Don't forget to search surrounding areas; you might find a seller willing to mail the tickets to you.

[CitySearch](#) is a website dedicated to organizing and rating nightlife, restaurants, and hotspots in major cities throughout the US. Here you'll find a dazzling array of restaurant reviews and insider tips to finding great food and fun in your area.

Finally, check [BeachCalifornia](#) to find a calendar of local events throughout California.



Holidays

The major holiday in summer is Independence Day. Find more information than you would ever need about July fourth at our federal [government's official website](#). No Independence Day celebration is complete without a good fireworks show. For safety reasons, many fireworks are illegal in California; however, [California state law still permits the use of these fireworks](#). You can [purchase legal fireworks](#) here, or you can observe one of the many city-sponsored fireworks shows. To locate these shows, visit your local newspaper's website a few days before Independence Day; a detailed firework schedule is usually available.

Unfortunately, summer is sparsely populated with official US holidays. If you're looking for a few to celebrate, check out the [Earth Calendar](#), which lists every holiday celebrated in any part of the world (e.g., World Sea Turtle Day).

There's no need to wait for the party to come to you when you can throw a party yourself. [Evite](#) can help you organize your party; use this simple web service to send out a digital invitation and monitor RSVPs. Then, use the site's vast resources to find great tips for planning any type of party. [PartyCity](#) is the web's largest party supplies store. You'll find supplies organized by themes and events, making shopping a breeze. Finally, use [LocalCatering](#) to find qualified caterers in your area. Check up on potential caterers by browsing reviews at [Yelp](#).