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Holiday like a hippie

40-years on, the Summer of Love can still teach us a thing or two about how to vacation

By: Diane Selkirk



"Drop out. Leave society as you have known it. Leave it utterly. Blow the mind of every straight person you can reach. Turn them on to beauty, love, honesty, fun." — TIME magazine, 1967

When I imagine the summer of '69, I tend to think of a bunch of idealistic travellers roaming aimlessly across the country with no money, no plans and no responsibilities — a concept that can seem kind of appealing after a bad day on the stock market. While heading off to San Francisco in a VW van probably isn't the solution to 2009 stress, the Summer of Love did expand our minds and teach us new ways to approach our time off. Travel was about being curious and carefree — and experiencing world music, ancient spiritual practices and cultural differences were all part of the deal.

While hippies dropped out for weeks, months or even years, it's possible to 'turn on and tune in' for a long weekend (or a leisurely afternoon). Here are some great ways to find spiritual harmony and discover your inner hippie:

Feel the beat

1969 was the summer of Woodstock — a peaceful gathering of 500,000 concert-goers who converged on a farmer's field to hear the likes of Joe Cocker, Joan Baez and Jimmy Hendrix. While Woodstock has long past, you can still throw on your best tie-dyed t-shirt and groove to the hip tunes at one of [Canada's Folk Music Festivals](http://www.northernjourney.com/cdnfolk/canfest.html) (<http://www.northernjourney.com/cdnfolk/canfest.html>) . Often set in beautiful locations, like the mountains of [Canmore, A.B.](http://www.canmorefolkfestival.com/CFMF/Home.html) (<http://www.canmorefolkfestival.com/CFMF/Home.html>) or [Vancouver's Jericho Beach](http://thefestival.bc.ca/) (<http://thefestival.bc.ca/>), folk festivals are relaxed, family friendly, multi-day concerts that feature music from across Canada and around the globe.

Retreat

While seeking illumination at an ashram might not fit your lifestyle, places like [Hollyhock](http://www.hollyhock.ca/cms/) (<http://www.hollyhock.ca/cms/>) on B.C.'s Cortez Island take what was best from the hippie era and add a modern twist by offering upscale restorative retreats. A day at the seaside resort begins with a walk along a forest trail to the Sanctuary for meditation, followed by yoga in the Raven building. As you stretch and move through the ancient posses (beginners are welcome), you'll find your worries receding and your stomach preparing for the gourmet organic breakfast that follows. Regulars to Hollyhock say it takes only a few hours to get into what they call, "the Hollyhock Zone," a state of calm that gets you humming Beatles' songs. Continue your visit to with a trip to the bodywork centre for a treatment (the sea-stone massage is incredible) — then end the day with a sunset kayak paddle where bioluminescence lights up the water and stars light up the sky.

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Soothe your spirit

A spa might seem like the last place to look for ghosts of hippies past, but Surinder Bains, owner of [Miraj Hammam](http://www.mirajhammam.com/) (<http://www.mirajhammam.com/>), a Turkish-style bath in Vancouver, points out it was backpackers making their way through the Middle East who discovered how rejuvenating the Hammam experience is. You begin with a soothing steam, then when your limbs are relaxed and heavy you move to a marble bench for the Gommage — an invigorating scrub with black Moroccan soap. Miraj offers a unique twist on the traditional single-sex Hammam: Sunday is couples' day. And while visiting a Hammam on your own or with your girlfriends is lovely, sharing the private steam room with your partner then relaxing in the pillowed lounge after your massages leaves you feeling more than groovy. Bains says she sees couples transform during their visits: "They come out looking peaceful and more in love than ever."

Head back to the land

Many of the young people who became hippies forty years ago had something in common — as kids of suburbia, they missed out on the opportunity to dig in a garden or grow their own food. In response to their yearning, organizations like [Working Weekends on Organic Farms \(Wwoof\)](http://www.wwoof.ca/) (<http://www.wwoof.ca/>) were established. Wwoof is still going strong, with farms in Canada and 42 other countries offering opportunities. Not looking to work for your keep? Field-to-table cooking classes are offered at farms across the country. Foodies stay at onsite guest rooms or nearby B&Bs, then learn how to turn garden-fresh goodies into gourmet cuisine. Check out [Limbert Mountain Farm](http://www.limbertmountainfarm.com/) (<http://www.limbertmountainfarm.com/>) in Agassiz, B.C., [Trout Point Lodge](http://www.troutpoint.com/) (<http://www.troutpoint.com/>) in Nova Scotia and [Fairburn Farm](http://www.fairburnfarm.bc.ca/) (<http://www.fairburnfarm.bc.ca/>) on Vancouver Island for a variety of cooking classes.

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