

# 10BEST: Collect these postal sites

In an era of instant communication, the old-fashioned stamp still has a huge following. More than 50,000 people are expected to attend the World Stamp Show in New York May 28-June 4 ([ny2016.org](http://ny2016.org)). The once-a-decade event includes rare stamp displays such as the One-Cent Magenta from British Guiana, which sold in 2014 for a record \$9.5 million. “Before the Internet, stamp collecting was a way to learn about the world,” says **Ken Martin** of the American Philatelic Society. He shares some favorite stamp sites with **Larry Bleiberg** for USA TODAY.

## SMALLEST POST OFFICE OCHOPEE, FLA.

The tiny shed near this Everglades community once held irrigation equipment for a tomato farm. But after the town's post office burned down in 1953, it was repurposed to handle mail. The seven-by-eight-foot post office attracts visitors eager to send postcards. “You're not going to get more than five people in there at the same time,” Martin says. 800-688-3600; [paradisecoast.com](http://paradisecoast.com)

## AMERICAN PHILATELIC CENTER BELLEFONTE, PA.

The leading stamp collecting society brings the hobby alive at this restored 19th century match factory that was once a stop on the New York-to-Chicago airmail route. Highlights include an 1860 post office and general store on loan from the Smithsonian, along with postal rarities. “There's a lot of interest, even from people who aren't stamp collectors,” Martin says. 814-933-3803; [stamps.org](http://stamps.org)

## PONY EXPRESS NATIONAL MUSEUM ST. JOSEPH, MO.

Long before overnight mail, galloping horses were the quickest way to deliver a package, and the Pony Express could get mail to California in under two weeks. “It saved a huge amount of time,” Martin says. At the museum, kids can sort mail, try on Western clothes and see the original stables. 800-530-5930; [ponyexpress.org](http://ponyexpress.org)

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## POSTAL HISTORY FOUNDATION TUCSON

See a 19th century frontier post office made from a mail-order kit at this museum with historic postal memorabilia and exhibits. You'll also find Mexican stamps and a working post office, which receives more new U.S. postal issues than any in the state. 520-623-6652; [postalhistoryfoundation.org](http://postalhistoryfoundation.org)

## SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL POSTAL MUSEUM WASHINGTON

From the world's rarest stamps to the surprisingly daring accomplishments of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, visitors are amazed by the topics covered at this museum next to Washington's Union Station, which attracted more than 350,000 people last year. “It's the Smithsonian in all its glory,” Martin says. Current exhibits include PostSecret, a global Internet-based art project that collects anonymous confessions submitted on postcards. [postalmuseum.si.edu](http://postalmuseum.si.edu)

## MUSEUM OF STAMPS AND COINS MONACO

While mostly remembered for marrying Hollywood star Grace Kelly, the late Prince Rainier also was an avid stamp collector who personally approved the stamp designs released by his tiny principality. He founded this expansive museum, which tracks the country's history through its stamps from its royal family to Grand Prix racing. 212-286-3330; [visitmonaco.com](http://visitmonaco.com)



The nation's smallest post office, in Ochopee, Fla., used to be a storage shed for a tomato farm.

PHOTOS BY USPS



At the post office in Hoolehua, Hawaii, visitors can decorate and mail a coconut — no box required.

## POST-A-NUT HOOLEHUA, HAWAII

Why bother with a postcard? This Molokai post office provides visitors free coconuts to address, stamp and mail — no packaging required. The fruits are piled up in a plastic postal bin for the picking and the postmaster even supplies Sharpies for addressing and decorating. Depending on the size of the fruit, postage may run about \$20, Martin says. 808-567-6144; [usps.com](http://usps.com)

## NATIONAL POSTMARK MUSEUM BELLEVUE, OHIO

For some collectors, stamps are just the start. This museum strives to preserve an example of every unique stamp cancellation, about 2 million and counting. “There's not a right way or a wrong way to collect. Each person decides what's best for them,” Martin says. Highlights include first-day covers, an envelope postmarked on a stamp's first day of issue. [postmarks.org](http://postmarks.org)

## SPELLMAN MUSEUM OF STAMPS AND POSTAL HISTORY WESTON, MASS.

This gallery on the Regis College campus claims to be the nation's first devoted to stamp collecting. “It has lots of aspects of a bigger museum, but on a smaller scale,” Martin says. It was founded by a former New York archbishop, whose career spanned the golden age of stamp collecting in the 1930s, and has more than 2 million artifacts, including Dwight Eisenhower's stamp collection. Visiting children receive a free packet of stamps. 781-768-8367; [spellmanmuseum.org](http://spellmanmuseum.org)

## B. FREE FRANKLIN POST OFFICE AND MUSEUM PHILADELPHIA

Don't look for a ballpoint pen or an American flag at this post office. The clerks dress in colonial garb and work exclusively with quill and inkwell. And since the flag hadn't been created when Benjamin Franklin served as the first Postmaster General, you won't find it flying outside. Collectors come for the unique “B. Free Franklin” hand-stamped postmark, which is believed to be Franklin's protest against British rule. 215-599-0776; [uwishunu.com](http://uwishunu.com)

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## Warm up to these rooftop restaurants and bars

**Ashley Day**  
USA TODAY

Celebrate rising temperatures and changing seasons with brunch, happy hour, a dinner date or a nightcap under the stars at these rooftop restaurants and bars. Some seasonal spots are reopening after winter, while others, such as AIRE Rooftop Bar in Chicago and Rock & Reilly's in New York, make their debuts. From east to west, explore where you can dine or sip al fresco with aerial views this spring and summer.



### EAST COAST

In New York, Rock & Reilly's (pictured) opened on top of the Renaissance New York Midtown Hotel this year offering Irish pub fare with terrace views of the skyline. In Washington, the POV rooftop terrace at the W Hotel offers views of landmarks and monuments over brunch or cocktails. In Pittsburgh, The Commoner restaurant at the Hotel Monaco hosts a Biergarten on its ninth-floor rooftop with German food and beer. And way down south, Juvia offers sweeping views over Miami Beach with fresh seafood and a globally inspired menu from executive chef Sunny Oh.



OLEG MARCH



ISAAC MAISELMAN, THE PHOTOGRAPHERS GALLERY

### MIDWEST

In Chicago, Raised opened on May 12 on the third floor at One West Wacker (pictured). Find shared plates of American fare from chef Daniel Perez and cocktails from William Nykaza. AIRE rooftop bar opened on May 11 with small plates, cocktails, wine and beer on the 24th floor of Hyatt Centric The Loop Chicago. The Madison Blind features food and beverages sourced locally on the seventh floor of the Graduate Madison hotel in Madison, Wis. And the rooftop bar at Cielo in the Four Seasons Hotel St. Louis offers an incredible view of the St. Louis Arch, as well as delicious modern Italian fare.



AARON LEITZ

### WEST COAST

Catania offers Italian lunch and dinner overlooking the beach in San Diego. Pearl's Rooftop offers American fare for dinner daily and weekend brunch in West Hollywood. El Techo pairs Latin American street food with cocktails and rooftop views from the Mission, above Lolinda restaurant in San Francisco. And up in Seattle, Frolik Kitchen + Cocktails (pictured) serves American fare for breakfast, lunch, dinner and late-night dining downtown. The restaurant hosts a free summer concert series with local musicians.