Headline: Sights comes to life while livin’ on ledge

Deckhead: Observation decks bring urban, rural settings to life

Sightseeing is a promising way to spend a vacation. Epic skylines and landscapes can stimulate our senses.

Whether it’s a bevy of skyscrapers, mountains, valleys, sunrises or sunsets, these views paint portraits in our minds and leave warmth in our hearts. Breathtaking settings overwhelm us and keep us traveling the country to find the perfect location.

While searching for these destinations, it’s best to have a platform on which to stand or sit to absorb the atmosphere. Observation decks fill that role.

They come in different shapes and sizes. They can be found in urban and rural surroundings. They share a commonality: providing jaw-dropping settings.

Many of the tallest skyscrapers in the U.S. feature observatories. A myriad of natural landmarks incorporate them to enhance the viewing experience.

Skydeck Chicago sits on the 103rd floor of the Willis Tower in the Windy City. Ascend to the top of the edifice by elevator in 60 seconds, where you can enjoy 360-degree views of downtown, as well as Michigan, Indiana and Wisconsin. Test your fear of heights by walking into a glass-windowed room that juts out from the building. Just don’t look down.

One of the most iconic cities in the world, New York is teeming with urban scenery. The Top of the Rock Observation Deck magnifies the Big Apple. Located atop the Comcast Building in Rockefeller Center Plaza – aka 30 Rock – the deck extends beyond its 66 stories, offering views of landmark buildings like the Empire State Building, One World Tower and Central Park.

Few places light up brighter than the Las Vegas Strip. The town sparkles under a dark sky in the desert. SkyPod at The Strat stands more than 1,100 feet high and boasts a pair of observation decks. Stand or have a seat. It’s the tallest freestanding observation tower in the U.S., offering clear views of the Strip and the Las Vegas Valley.

One World Observatory sits near the top of One World Trade Center – the tallest building in the U.S. – and is a reflection on the historical events of 9/11. Located on the 102nd floor, it has multiple levels of sweeping views of the Manhattan skyline.

Not all decks are found in the city. Clingmans Dome Observation Tower is a mountain peak within the Great Smokey Mountain range in Gatlinburg. The highest point in Tennessee, the deck provides 360-degree views of majestic rural landscape.

Seattle’s skyline is considered one of the most beautiful in the U.S. Skyscrapers share real estate with the Space Needle – an iconic structure built in 1962. It’s sci-fi appearance is complemented by a deck that sits more than 500 feet high. See the downtown skyline, Mount Rainier, the Cascade Mountains and the islands of the Puget Sound.

Absorb breathtaking views of the Grand Canyon from Eagle Point Skywalk – a pedestrian walkway shaped like a horseshoe to extend over the canyon’s ledge. Visitors walk over a glass floor and peer down into the depths of the gorge.

One Liberty Observation Deck – aka Philly From The Top – is on the 57th floor of One Liberty Building. See sights from as far as 40 miles away as you navigate the deck.

U.S. Bank Tower is the tallest building in Los Angeles and its OUE Skyspace LA observation deck stands more than 1,000 feet above the city. There are indoor and outdoor regions that provide stunning views of the city, Hollywood Hills and beyond.

It’s impossible to say no to an observation deck. No matter where you look, the eyes have it.

Cutline: EAGLE’S LANDING – Sightseers take in the breathtaking views of the Grand Canyon from Eagle Point Skywalk. Image: Bruce Grubbs. Adobe Stock.