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20 Best Places to Go

in 2020

20 PHOTOS

by CNT EDITORS

December 2, 2019



These are the destinations we're most excited about in the new decade.



It's always an exciting time when we put together our list of destinations for the new year. We start our list of the best places to go in 2020 by surveying our well-traveled staff, and then our hyper-connected network of writers based all over the world. We look for the big reasons to visit destinations: The Olympics in Japan and the World Expo in Dubai are two major ones in 2020, but there are also smaller, surprising ones, such as the 800th birthday of a stunning Gothic cathedral or a new museum dedicated to African American music.

We aim to compile a list that is geographically diverse but also has points of interest for every traveler, whether you'll fly for unparalleled stargazing, gorilla spotting in the wild, or shopping in Tangier. We know that you're using this list throughout the year to plan your trips (frankly, we are too), so we vary the types of destinations on here, from summer

escapes like western Michigan to far-flung locales like southeastern Australia. If your 2020 goal is to only travel to sunny islands, we've got you covered with [this list](#).

Need more inspiration on a month-by-month basis? Check out our recommendations for [where to go in January](#).

After all, the best part of starting a new year might just be the endless possibilities for travel—where you'll go, whom you'll go with, and how those trips will change the way you see the world.



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Armenia

Armenia is on its way to being one of next year's most talked-about destinations, and there's more to the tiny Caucasus nation than what makes the nightly news (or Kim Kardashian's semi-regular visits). Ryanair will begin flying to Armenia in 2020, marking the first time a low-cost airline has serviced the country and ringing in a new era for travel there. The routes will debut with **Rome** to Yerevan and Milan to Yerevan in January, followed by Memmingen to Gyumri and **Berlin** to Yerevan the following summer. One-way tickets start at \$33, making Armenia a budget-friendly—and blissfully offbeat—add-on to your next trip to Europe.

First-time visitors should linger in Yerevan, Armenia's "pink city" of grand Soviet buildings hewn from salmon-tinged stone. After checking in to your hotel (we're suckers for the cushy furniture and high-thread-count linens at **The Alexander, a Luxury Collection Hotel**, opened in 2018), hit the main sights, such as Republic Square, the Cascade (a colossal Soviet modernist stairway), and the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial Complex, dedicated to the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Then snag a table at any outdoor café on Amiryan Street or Mashtots Avenue, where people-watching—a favorite local pastime—perks up after sunset.

Beyond the capital, much of Armenia's tourism revolves around the churches that dot the

countryside. (Insider tip: Monastery fatigue is a thing, so don't overbook yourself.) Khor Virap, Noravank, Geghard, and the Ancient Roman temple of Garni are so history-packed and picturesque they'll leave even the staunchest nonbeliever breathless. But Armenia's foremost architectural jewel is Etchmiadzin, the oldest cathedral in the world, consecrated in 303 A.D. and the Armenian equivalent of the Vatican.

The country's natural wonders are perhaps even more arresting than its man-made ones. Lake Sevan, which engulfs 16 percent of the country, is a magnificent sight against the rugged foothills of the Caucasus Mountains and makes for refreshing dips during the scorching summer months. Off its northern tip is Dilijan National Park, a lush wooded reserve home to lynx, bears, and wolves, where a 50-mile section of the **Transcaucasian Trail** was bushwhacked into existence last spring to the glee of adventurous hikers.

—*Benjamin Kemper*



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Bahia, Brazil

Brazil has had a momentous year when it comes to travel. The country has **dropped its visa requirements** for U.S. citizens. New flight routes have added better connections to **Brazilian cities** like **São Paulo** and Salvador from hubs throughout North and South America.

Salvador is the main gateway into the northeast state of Bahia—a region with a rich Afro-Brazilian heritage and a coastline that rivals Rio's. The capital city has recently seen a slew of notable hotel openings. **Hotel Fasano Salvador** sits in the headquarters of a former newspaper and overlooks the Bay of All Saints, and the nearby Art Deco **Fera Palace**, prior to reopening last year, once hosted the likes of Carmen Miranda and Pablo Neruda. The downtown Pelourinho district, where the Fera is, was the site of the first slave market

in the Americas in 1558; today it is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and has just emerged from a restoration of its cobblestone streets and colonial façades. And some things never change: West African dishes, beating music, candomblé religion, and rich history make the state as magnetic as ever.

Bahia's momentum will only continue in 2020. United Airlines is **pursuing a partnership** with Brazil's Azul airlines, and American Airlines is adding new direct flights from Miami to **São** Paulo, amid talks of a partnership with **Brazilian airline Gol**. The Museum of Music in Salvador, which catalogs the diverse landscape of Brazilian music, will undergo a renovation and reopen in a historic bayside building before the end of 2020. For those who were stirred by images of Brazil's Amazon rain forest fires, daily flights via Fortaleza and Brasilia make it possible to tack on a trip to the jungle as well. Tap a specialist like **Matuete** to organize fishing with a local tribe or visits to wildlife sanctuaries for a trip that will convert any traveler into a conservationist. —*Megan Spurrell*

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Botswana's Salt Pans

Littered with fossils and Stone Age artifacts, **Botswana's** Makgadikgadi salt pans are the remains of an ancient super-lake—a salt-encrusted expanse covering more than 6,200 square miles of the Kalahari Desert. Fifth-generation safari operator and naturalist Ralph Bousfield put the harsh yet hypnotically beautiful pans on the **safari map** 25 years ago when he opened **Jack's Camp**, named for his father, who first set up camp here in the 1960s. Marooned on a grassy island on the edge of the pans, it's still the only safari operation for almost 100 miles. Over the years, royalty and rock stars have been humbled by the landscape and enchanted by the 1940s campaign-style furniture, Bousfield family heirlooms, and Persian-carpeted Rajasthani tents. In May 2020, Jack's will celebrate its 25th anniversary with the reopening of a smarter, greener version of the original camp, run exclusively on Tesla solar power.

(During the seven-month renovation, a temporary camp was set up nearby for guests.) The new Jack's will still have only 10 tents, but they'll be double the size at 1,400 square feet. While the romantic interiors will remain, each tent now has Wi-Fi, a plunge pool, a wood-burning stove, an indoor-outdoor shower, and solar-powered lighting and air-conditioning. Updates to the Moroccan tea tent, safari shop, and tented pool pavilion will be complemented by a new spa tent.

Despite the souped-up amenities, it's the twice-daily guided excursions that will continue to thrill guests the most. In the dry winter season, zoom across the pans on quad bikes or camp under the stars near boulder-covered Kubu Island. In the rainy summer months, lush grasses are a magnet for migrating zebras and flamingos. Instead of the Big Five, meerkat interactions and brown hyena sightings are prized here. The guides are experts in zoology, botany, and paleontology, and you can learn about the bushmen's ancient survival skills by walking through the veld with the resident clan.

Elsewhere, the opening of the luxe Xigera Safari Lodge (Red Carnation's safari flagship) in the **Okavango Delta** and the upgrade of **DumaTau** in the Linyanti region by Wilderness Safaris will **further boost Botswana's reputation** for having the most sustainable, sophisticated camps in southern Africa. —*Jane Broughton*



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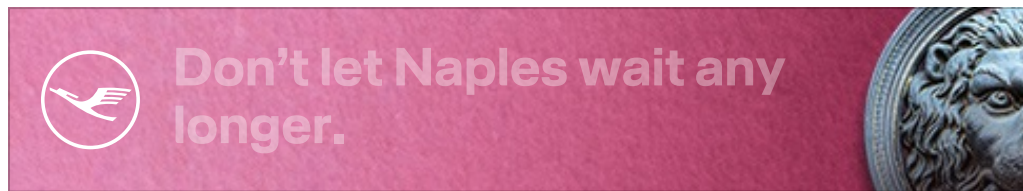
Canadian Arctic

The Canadian Arctic is “the world’s last and most pristine wilderness, with places man has not walked upon for over 500 years,” says Tessum Weber, a member of the esteemed family of explorers that runs **Weber Arctic**. It’s the ultimate destination for travelers, with a certain starkness that only polar regions can provide—though it’s rapidly losing its battle with the ever-rising tides.

“Climate change is affecting the **Canadian Arctic** at more than twice the rate of anywhere else on Earth,” Weber says. “Simply put: The North is melting.” Ironically, the dramatic ice melt has made it easier for cruisers to transit the entirety of the Northwest Passage. Last year, **Eyos Expeditions** had three small ships complete the journey. “Twenty or 30 years ago, it would have been a rarity for several vessels to

make it through in a season—a new record,” says captain Ben Lyons, Eyos’s CEO, who plans to run more routes in 2020 and encourages his guests to notice the changes to the landscape as they sail through. The cracking of the ice has also provided travelers on **Adventure Canada’s** ships the opportunity to glimpse the wreckage of the HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror* from Sir John Franklin’s ill-fated expedition through the Northwest Passage.

The Canadian Arctic also delivers on culture in ways that few far-flung destinations can. Small businesses based out of Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories and Iqaluit in Nunavut offer indigenous experiences as readily as their trademark wildlife- and aurora-watching. And both Adventure Canada and **Arctic Kingdom** have bridged fair-trade relationships with a variety of local communities, offering unscripted insight into Inuit life during their group excursions. —
Brandon Presser





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Canary Islands, Spain

This **archipelago of islands** off Africa's Atlantic coast has attracted sun-seeking European travelers for decades, thanks to its black, white, and buttery-golden beaches. But it's the mountainous interiors of the seven main islands that are grabbing the global spotlight in 2020. International airports on Tenerife, Gran Canaria, and Lanzarote are the archipelago's main access points, with a network of car ferries that makes it easy to hopscotch between ports.

The volcanic **island chain**, colonized by Spain in the 15th century, has remarkably varied landscapes. The laurel forest on **La Gomera is covered in perpetual mists**, while Lanzarote's sunblasted rocks are so otherworldly they draw **astronauts training for Martian exploration**. Hidden among Gran Canaria's arid summits is an archaeological site called Risco

Caído. It comprises prehistoric dwellings and sanctuaries, and was added to the **UNESCO World Heritage list** in 2019. Risco Caído's most spectacular treasure is **Cave 6**, a domed temple where sun and moonlight cast shadows marking the equinoxes and summer solstice. Ongoing excavation at Risco Caído means the fragile site is closed to the public, but visitors will get a first glimpse of the natural calendar when a **full-scale replica** made using 3D laser mapping opens in January 2020 in the nearby village of **Artenara**.

There are plenty of places to worship the heavens in the Canary Islands, whose **clear skies and lack of light pollution** combine for some of the best **stargazing** on Earth. Tenerife has some of the finest views, from an astronomical observatory above the clouds on Mount Teide, a volcano that's the highest peak in Spain. Star-watching tours from **Teide by Night** include a mid-mountain feast of Canarian cuisine (influenced by Spanish, African, and Latin American flavors) and a cava toast at 7,000 feet, with the chance to train high-powered telescopes on the planets and constellations. Time your trip to a new moon for prime Milky Way viewing.

One of the year's biggest natural shows will be the **Geminid meteor shower**, which reaches a spectacular peak on the nearly moonless night of December 13, 2020. Stay up to watch asteroid dust particles paint **white, yellow, green, and blue** streaks through the atmosphere at the dazzling rate of 120 shooting stars per hour. —*Jen Rose Smith*



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Copenhagen

Copenhagen doesn't need to sell itself as a worthy travel destination, what with its long summer days, *hygge*-filled winters, and unparalleled food scene. Yet the city keeps finding ways to become more travel-friendly, most recently with the extension of the **City Ring Line subway line**. Areas like the leafy Frederiksberg neighborhood and industrial Nordhavn waterfront are now much more accessible by rail—major for those scared of tackling Copenhagen's busy bike highways. (Skilled pedalers, however, can breeze down the new Lille Langbro, a pedestrian-and-cyclist swing bridge, which now links both sides of the inner harbor.) Last August the city unveiled Kongens Nytorv, a plaza that for years was hidden under scaffolding. Located in the heart of Copenhagen, the roundabout is a one-stop shop for historically significant buildings like the Royal Danish Theatre, as

well as Christmas and flea markets.

Copenhagen continues to prove it's a sustainability pioneer. In Refshaleøen, on the outskirts of town, the long-awaited Bjarke Ingels-designed CopenHill, a power plant that turns waste into energy, has finally opened. It has a rooftop ski slope made with Neveplast, a synthetic snow that makes it possible to ski year-round. This neighborhood has also become one of **Copenhagen's most exciting food destinations**, thanks to the Alchemist, a Nordic molecular-gastronomy restaurant from pioneering young chef **Rasmus Munk**. It has the same investor as the three-Michelin-starred Geranium, and is just as hard to get into. Nearby, chef Kamilla Seidler has opened Restaurant Lola, a culturally inclusive restaurant where staff from around the world prepare globally inspired cuisine.

There's development in the hotel scene too. Scandic will open a property in the creative Nørrebro neighborhood in October. Across town, opposite the Central Station, Villa Copenhagen will debut in a building from 1912, and strive to be the greenest hotel in the city. It will adhere to the U.N.'s sustainable development goals, which is a rarity among five-star hotels. As a whole, the Danish capital aims to be carbon neutral by 2025. And at this rate, it seems possible. —*Mary Holland*

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Courtesy Discover Dominica Authority

Dominica

Although **Hurricane Maria** made landfall in 2017, its impact is still felt throughout the Caribbean. The **tiny, lush island of Dominica**—located between Guadeloupe and Martinique in the Eastern Caribbean—sustained intense damage and remains one of the world’s most vulnerable places in the face of **climate change**. To help protect the island from future storms, Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit appeared at the United Nations four days after Hurricane Maria and declared that Dominica would become the first climate-resilient country in the world. To achieve this

goal by 2030, the island is banning single-use plastics and Styrofoam; harnessing the renewable energy of the country's geothermal, hydro, and solar resources; developing sustainable fisheries; and realigning and improving roads to resist flooding and other damage.

This is all in the name of rebranding Dominica as the destination of choice for adventure and nature lovers. More than just sand and surf, the island's natural highlights include the world's second-largest boiling lake, natural hot springs, **volcanoes**, secluded pools at the bottom of towering waterfalls, more than 300 miles of trails in pristine rain forest, and clear waters ideal for **snorkeling and diving** that are home to the world's only year-round resident sperm whale population.

The island has also upgraded amenities to encourage more travelers to visit. The five-star **Cabrits Resort & Spa Kempinski Dominica** (one of Dominica's few true beach hotels) opened in October 2019, and the **Anichi Resort & Spa**, part of Marriott's Autograph Collection, will open in 2020. Romantic ecolodges **Secret Bay** and **Jungle Bay** both reopened this year following major rebuilding, and two new developments were recently announced: **Sanctuary Rainforest Eco Resort & Spa** will be nestled in the jungle of the Roseau Valley, making it Dominica's first luxury inland resort; and **Tranquility Beach, a Curio Collection by Hilton**, will be a 73-room resort with access to two beaches. Flight options are also improving. Air Antilles added more seasonal winter flights from Martinique and Guadalupe, and

Silver Airways has started daily flights to Dominica from San Juan, Puerto Rico. —*Devorah Lev-Tov*



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Dubai

What does a city that manufactured an archipelago of 300 islands on a whim create for a landmark event? As **Dubai** prepares to make history as the host of the first **World Expo** to be held in the Middle East, the answer is emerging from the sand: an entire new city. To welcome the 25 million visitors expected to attend the six-month-long event that kicks off in October, the City of Gold has spent billions building up a sprawling site that's double the size of Hong Kong island. If ever there was a **metropolis of the future**, this is it: There will be 130 buildings connected by smart technology that can do everything from

monitoring the charging of electric vehicles to making sure the buildings' temperatures are just right for visitors. At the site's core is Al Wasl Plaza, an engineering feat crowned with a steel dome that can be turned into a 360-degree projection surface.

Meanwhile, developers outside the Expo site are constructing their own fantastical draws in the desert. There's the upcoming Aladdin City, a trio of commercial and residential towers in the Dubai Creek area that will each resemble a magic lamp when completed, while near the city central's Emirates Towers, the **Museum of the Future** is taking shape—designed not by a famous name, but by a computer algorithm. When it opens in October, the museum will focus on sustainability and serve alternative proteins (and also rely on 8.7 miles of LED lighting to stay illuminated at night). But the most anticipated launch of the year is probably that of **ME by Meliá Dubai**, the only hotel the late Zaha Hadid designed inside and out. After several delays, the cube-shaped building is finally slated to open with 93 rooms and 15 food and beverage outlets, including **London** hot spot Roka's first overseas outpost. For the most over-the-top accommodations in this over-the-top city, check into the new Royal Suite at the **Mandarin Oriental Jumeira**, a palatial 6,500-square-foot space with a private hammam, elevator, and rooftop terrace with knee-weakening views of the Arabian Gulf—and the city's ever-evolving skyline. —*Audrey Phoon*



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El Chaltén, Argentina

On the Patagonian travel circuit, **Argentina's** off-grid **El Chaltén** is often overshadowed by its more sought-after Chilean neighbor, **Torres del Paine**. The pocket-size Argentine village was founded in 1985 and quickly became a popular base camp for intrepid alpinists on a mission to summit the fabled granite spires of Mount Fitz Roy and Cerro Torre in the UNESCO-listed **Los Glaciares National Park**. However, you don't have to be a die-hard hiker to enjoy the area's scenic trails. Beginner to moderate

routes offer access to Patagonia's unmarred beauty: primeval forests packed with southern beech trees, snowmelt lagoons, rushing rivers, and jagged zeniths topped with outsized glaciers and floating condors. The upside to El Chaltén's lower profile is that climbers enjoy less-congested trails. Yet for decades the remote frontier town has remained largely a backpacker outpost due to its lack of top-tier accommodations with high-end amenities like a spa and in-house guides.

This will change when **adventure outfitter Explora** opens a new 20-room lodge next fall on a windswept ridge within the private 14,000-acre Los Huemules Reserve. The luxe two-story property has views of rocky peaks, the jade-hued Electric River, the massive Marconi Glacier to the west, and a seemingly boundless steppe to the east. Inside, guests escape the harsh elements in 645-square-foot corner suites and serene, pine-wrapped guest rooms fitted with picture windows and soaking tubs. There will be cozy communal spaces, including a restaurant serving regional fare and local wines, a central bar warmed by wood-burning fireplaces, and a spa and outdoor hot tubs. But it's with Explora's in-depth excursions that the brand truly shines. Seasoned guides lead guests on leisurely treks to picturesque spots like Laguna del Diablo and on highly technical hikes to Cerro Madsen. They've carved out six new tracks for beginner to advanced rock climbers and offer multiday camping expeditions across the Southern Patagonian Ice Field. The new lodge is a more polished alternative to a stay in the touristy city of El Calafate, and Explora will

also arrange excursions to visit the national park's star attraction: the Perito Moreno Glacier. Traveling before the hotel opens? Book yourself into the quaint **Senderos** inn in town and give yourself four nights to explore the region before everyone else catches on. —

Nora Walsh



Getty

Guyana

Though it has plenty of reasons to stand out—as **South America's** only English-speaking country, and with a strikingly diverse population of Indian, African, Chinese, European, and Amerindian descent —**Guyana** has long hovered under the radar. But this relative quietness isn't going to last long. The 2015 discovery of oil offshore has led to surging interest in the country. What that means for Guyana is still

playing out, but so far, its abundance of natural beauty has remained shielded from the masses.

Hotel options are decidedly rustic. Intrepid travelers should base themselves in the colorful capital of Georgetown, at **Cara Lodge**, a charmingly preserved heritage hotel dating from the 1840s; From there, venture out to Kaieteur Falls, the world's largest single-drop waterfall. At community-owned and -operated rain forest ecolodges in the interior, you might go days before encountering another tourist (or any cell signal). When you're ready to surround yourself with humans again, learn about Guyana's massive East Indian community on a curry tour in Georgetown, or taste your way through distilleries as you learn more about the country's centuries-old rum-making history. With new direct flights from **New York** to Georgetown on American Airlines and JetBlue, the country is getting more accessible just as it steps into the spotlight. You don't need a crystal ball to predict big changes in Guyana's near future. Our advice: Get there before a rumored Starbucks does. — *Sarah Khan*

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Metz, France

It's a mystery why **France**'s historic region of Lorraine is still largely overlooked, especially since there was an international tug-of-war over this northeastern province that started in the Middle Ages and lasted for centuries. The region is poised for global attention in 2020, when **Metz**, the province's elegant capital, fetes the 800th anniversary of its St.-Étienne Cathedral, a masterpiece of gothic architecture. After a fire threatened to topple Notre-Dame de Paris this past spring, and as the Parisian icon undergoes restoration, consider a visit to the Metz monument, built from local golden limestone. With a 138-foot-tall nave, it's one of Europe's tallest gothic buildings. But what really sets it apart are its stained glass windows, which are the world's largest by surface area, at 70,000 square feet. A highlight is the Old Testament depictions by artist Marc Chagall, whose stained glass will be the focus of an exhibition in October 2020 at the Centre Pompidou-Metz—which is celebrating its 10th anniversary that year.

Tourists can get to Metz from Paris in 1 hour 24 minutes, thanks to France's excellent high-speed rail system. Spend a day exploring the lively, walkable city, home to around 118,000 people. Lorraine may be the birthplace of the ultimate comfort food—quiche Lorraine—but a new generation of chefs are showcasing contemporary, creative food with seasonal produce. At the locals-approved bistro **2'Moiselles**, the menu might feature a mushroom-and-parsnip

velouté followed by duck breast served with figs and a purée crécy. Or head to **Hesperius**, just a quick walk from the cathedral in the historic district, for regional dishes with a twist. At **La Table**, the city's only Michelin-starred restaurant, try chef Christophe Dufossé's homage to standout local ingredients, like the delicate mirabelle plum.

With new hotels on the way, the city is set to be more than just a day trip. In 2020, designer Philippe Starck will show off his very first hotel construction with **Maison Heler**, part of Hilton's Curio Collection. The project is striking and original—the 14-story tower will be topped with an 18th-century-style Alsatian house and rooftop garden. Meanwhile, the former residence of an Air Force commander—Metz has long had a military presence at France's eastern frontier—is being converted into a spa hotel called Le Domaine de la Résidence, where the rooms will be clustered in bungalows overlooking the estate's ponds. —*Mary Winston Nicklin*

Courtesy Mokpo City

Mokpo, South Korea

There's much more to South Korea than the popular tourism destinations of **Seoul**, **Busan**, and **Jeju Island**. Located in the Jeolla region at the southern tip of the peninsula, Mokpo is a big port city that attracts the world's most in-the-know food lovers, thanks to its fertile lands and easy access to the sea.

A visit to the colorful and electric Mokpo Specialty Seafood Market, an arcade-style covered market, is an absolute must. The best time to visit is in the early hours of the morning, when the market is full of shoppers crowding over the catches of the day.

For adventurous eaters, a local delicacy is hongeo, a naturally fermented, extremely pungent skate-fish dish. In a tradition that's unique to Mokpo, many restaurants will serve slices of the fermented fish with aged kimchi and sliced steamed pork. Locals eat this dish by wrapping the kimchi around the pork and fish and washing it down with housemade makgeolli, a Korean rice wine served in bowls. For those who can't stomach the smell, there is always hweh, Korean-style raw fish served with a side of sweet, tangy, and spicy chili paste for dipping.

Chefs from all over Korea are inspired by the coastal cuisine and ingredients of Mokpo. Decorated chefs from Seoul—including Park Kyung-Jae, of two-Michelin-starred Kojima, who was raised here—often make their way down to conduct research trips.

To walk off the food, take a stroll to see the city's eclectic mix of old Japanese colonial architecture and Korean modern design. The best way to take in the views is to head for the hills, as Mokpo recently opened the nation's longest cable car. The transparent floors offer jaw-dropping views of both the sea and mountains, for a glimpse of why South Korea has long been known as the Land of Morning Calm. —*Eileen W. Cho*



Courtesy Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp

Nashville

Nashville may be nearly synonymous with country music, but it's no one-note town. The long-awaited **National Museum of African American Music** will open this summer on Broadway, home of Honky Tonk Row, and will showcase the history and impact of black music from the slave era to the present. Inside the museum—the first of its kind—five interactive galleries are dedicated to 50 genres of African American tunes, including blues, jazz, hip-hop, and rap. Don a choir robe and virtually sing “Oh Happy Day” along with Grammy winner Bobby Jones and his 30-member Nashville Super Choir. A recording of your performance will be sent to the smart bracelet you receive at admission. You can also step into the role of a record producer and arrange vocals and rhythms to create a personalized soul track that can be sent to your bracelet as well. Be sure to check out the 1963 poster for civil rights activist Sam Cooke’s legendary soul performance with Otis Redding at New York’s Paramount Theater, and don’t miss seeing Ella Fitzgerald’s leopard-print coat and a kimono from

Alicia Keys's personal wardrobe.

Nashville's food scene is also breaking out of its stereotypes: Of its 2019 James Beard semifinalist chefs, none serves the city's traditional hot chicken on their menu. Nowhere is the energy more palpable than in **East Nashville**, a diverse neighborhood where **17 buzzy restaurants** (among them **Folk** and **Lou**) have opened in the past two years. Another big opening is on the way: James Beard winner **Sean Brock's** two-story temple to Appalachian cuisine will arrive in early 2020. With an Appalachian restaurant called Audrey, a cocktail bar, folk-art displays, an heirloom-seed bank, and even a mental-wellness center for the staff, the project is Brock's grandiose love letter to the oft-forgotten culture of his youth—and a beacon for the new American South. —*Allison Weiss Entrekin*

Getty

Okinawa, Japan

When a catastrophic blaze gutted the 500-year-old UNESCO World Heritage Site Shuri Castle last year, **Okinawa's** tourism sector fretted that one of the top reasons for visiting Japan's southernmost prefecture had been wiped out. But as the castle's restoration fund grows (thanks largely to a crowdfunding campaign), so do fresh reasons to visit these ancient islands in the Pacific Ocean. Across a mile of sugar-soft sand in Okinawa Kaigan Quasi-National Park, the

iconic Hawaiian hotel **Halekulani** has opened its first overseas outpost, bringing with it 360 plush rooms and a taste of Michelin-starred glamour in the form of Shiroux restaurant, where chef Hiroyasu Kawate—of two-starred **Florilège** in **Tokyo**—consults. Come April, seek out the remote Yaeyama Islands, where Hoshino Resorts' revamped **Risonare Kohamajima** is relaunching along a bougainvillea-laced beach. At this most far-flung part of Japan—it's actually geographically much closer to Taiwan—there's little to do but cycle through sugarcane fields and swim in the ridiculously blue Sekisei Lagoon, with one of the largest coral reefs in the northern hemisphere beneath your feet and manta rays by your side.

Of course, 2020 also marks the year the **Summer Olympics head to Japan** for the second time. Our tip: Swap the fever-pitch festivities in the capital for a more low-key but no less enjoyable experience in the birthplace of the country's most famous martial arts export, karate, which has just been added to the Games roster. The Olympic torch relay passes through Okinawa prefecture, from Naha to Nago, on May 2 and 3, bringing with it a host of celebratory activities. Whether you arrive by air or sea, note that Naha Airport is due to open a second runway and an upgraded terminal in March, while **Royal Caribbean's** sparkling new ***Spectrum of the Seas*** and Costa Cruises' just-launched ***Costa Venezia*** will drop anchor here throughout the year. Next up: an all-suite cruise kitted out by the industrial designer behind Japan's renowned *Seven Stars* sleeper train that's

scheduled to start plying the waters between Kyushu and Okinawa by 2023. —*Audrey Phoon*



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Rwanda

A country forever marked by its genocide 25 years ago, Rwanda has made exceptional strides in building itself into a place that celebrates and protects its natural resources. A closer look at the East African nation reveals its focus on the future, with the development of its fourth national park, Gishwati Mukura, set to open next year. As the forest develops, it will eventually connect Volcanoes National Park and Nyungwe National Park, creating a wildlife corridor that enables local species like chimpanzees and mountain gorillas to flourish.

Next year it will also be easier to witness wildlife in Akagera National Park, which is home to lions, elephants, and the **endangered black rhino**, among others, thanks to the opening of the luxury wilderness lodge **Magashi Camp**. It's one of many new luxury resorts and hotels springing up in Rwanda: **Singita**

Kwitonda Lodge opened in August 2019, followed by **One&Only Gorilla's Nest** in November, both near Volcanoes National Park, home to the mountain gorillas. And in the capital city of **Kigali**—worth a visit in its own right—the **luxury Marasa Umubano hotel** will open in 2020. It's reasonable to plan a **weeklong trip to Rwanda** that includes a few days in Kigali, gorilla trekking, and even a trip to see the beautiful Lake Kivu, where Italian developer Sextantio will open its Capanne resort on Nkombo Island in February, featuring a grouping of mud huts built in an architectural style similar to that of the local tribe.

Direct flights to Kigali from New York's JFK are slated to begin in 2020 on the country's flagship carrier, RwandAir, making Rwanda and the rest of Eastern Africa more accessible than ever to American travelers. Connectivity with Rwanda is growing outside the U.S. too, with direct flights from Guangzhou, China, and Tel Aviv. —*Ali Wunderman*

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Slovenia

The fact that Slovenia, a postcard-perfect Eden of Alpine meadows, red-roofed villages, and shimmering Adriatic coastline, remains a low-key hideaway might be one of the great miracles of modern European travel. Let's face it: If the country didn't have such show-offs for neighbors—Croatia with its ***Game of***

Thrones filming locations; northeastern Italy with, well, **Venice**—it would have been overrun eons ago.

But for now, Slovenia ticks all the boxes for crowd-averse travelers. Nature lovers, for starters, are buzzing over the 186-mile Julian Alps Hiking Trail that opened last spring and snakes through the pine forests and turquoise lakes of Triglav National Park, a UNESCO-protected biosphere. Oenophiles are waking up to the potential of Slovenia's 52 grape varieties (a serious tally for a country smaller than Vermont), many of which excel as natural and amber wines. Swirl and sip them along the Lendava wine route in the east, or if you're crunched for time, settle in for an impromptu tasting at Strelec, the sleek wine bar on the top floor of the 12th-century **Ljubljana Castle** that opened earlier this year.

Any self-proclaimed foodie will have **Hiša Franko** on their must-visit list. The brainchild of Ana Ros (of *Chef's Table* fame), this pink farmhouse in the whisper-quiet Soča Valley serves Alpine dishes from the future—think roebuck sashimi with juniper and chestnut, or goat's-milk croissants stuffed with rosehip and roasted apple ice cream. It's a sure bet for Slovenia's first Michelin guide, which will be published in 2020.

Even city breaks in Slovenia are rejuvenating. Ljubljana, in addition to being achingly charming with its steeped skyline and tree-shaded esplanade, happens to be one of the **greenest cities** on earth. It's also home to cozy hotels, including the newly expanded **Lev**, whose sunny rooms offer some of the

best views in town. Slovenia is easier to tack onto a Euro trip than you'd think: Hop on a train or catch a flight to Ljubljana (there are several **new routes** via Lufthansa, LOT, Swiss International, and Brussels Airlines), or drive from Zagreb (1 hour 40 minutes), Venice (2 hours 40 minutes), or Vienna (3 hours 50 minutes). —*Benjamin Kemper*



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Sri Lanka's Southern Coast

It's only been a decade since Sri Lanka emerged from a brutal 26-year civil war that devastated its residents and decimated its tourism industry. But since 2009, global travelers have flocked to the country, drawn to its **alluring beaches and misty tea estates**. Sri Lanka regularly found itself topping lists like this one —until this past April, when tragedy struck again, this time in the form of an Easter terrorist attack at Colombo hotels and churches that left about 250 dead. Overnight, the beaches and tea estates were empty of tourists once again. While thousands of citizens were impacted by the slowdown, **resilience is part of Sri Lanka's ethos**. Despite a decline of more than 20

percent in tourist numbers since 2018, a clutch of new hotels along the country's southern coast have been readying themselves for guests, and travelers are trickling back.

Last February, Mumbai's quirky Abode Bombay unveiled its sister property, the four-bedroom **Abode Ahangama**, in a terra-cotta-roofed bungalow set in a verdant jungle just a short *tuk-tuk* ride from the beach; that nearby beach is where they'll be unveiling a café, a restaurant, and a coworking space in the spring.

Also in Ahangama, the new **Harding Boutique Hotel** will debut in February with six suites and a buzzy rooftop bar, Mr. M, in a sleek building that's a tribute to Sri Lanka's signature tropical modernist architecture movement. At the end of November, the Postcard Galle marks the first opening from the Postcard collection hotels outside India. Set on a lagoon on Sri Lanka's southwestern coast, its 10 rooms all have balconies with views, and it's close to the cafés and boutiques of the Galle Fort neighborhood. Opening in December, **Haritha Villas** in Hikkaduwa is a seamless blend of past and present: Two colonial-style cottages and seven contemporary villas are spread out across a palm-shaded estate. And if you like to fill your breaks from surfing with a little game viewing, head to Sri Lanka's Yala National Park, where **Wild Coast Tented Lodge**, a seaside property with 28 cocoon-like tents done up in a safari-meets-steampunk aesthetic, will be opening a leopard-conservation center this spring. Researchers will be keeping a close eye on the endangered leopard population and sharing their findings with guests. —

Sarah Khan

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Southeastern Australia

The **southeastern Australia** coast is ideal for a **road trip**—unless you're short on time. Now there is a faster, more luxurious, and infinitely more relaxing way to explore it. **Journey Beyond Rail Expeditions**, the company behind the premium **Ghan** (Adelaide to Darwin) and **Indian Pacific** (Sydney to Perth) train routes, is adding a new adventure: **Great Southern**. Launching in December 2019, the 28-carriage twin-locomotive **train** will carry up to 214 guests between Adelaide, South Australia, and Brisbane, Queensland, traversing Victoria and New South Wales en route.

Book the first-class Platinum Service for a spacious en suite room with panoramic windows that transforms into a bedroom with double or twin beds during turndown service. Guests in this class have access to the Platinum Club, a lounge done up with leather banquettes and quartzite tables. Meals—full breakfasts, two-course lunches, four-course dinners, served with regional meat, Bollinger Champagne, and cheese—are included in the ticket price. The popular Gold Service is also pretty swish, with all-inclusive meals and a private three-seater lounge converting into bunk beds come evening.

The biggest draw of the Great Southern is its choose-

your-own-adventure off-train experiences. In Canberra, guests may tour the National War Memorial or the National Gallery of Australia, or spend the afternoon wining and dining in the bucolic Murrumbateman region. In Grampians National Park in Victoria, they can join a guided bush walk up to Venus Baths, a collection of naturally formed **rock pools**, or sit down to an elegant meal that showcases the Grampians' finest Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon. At Port Stephens in New South Wales, they can watch for dolphins in Nelson Bay, then hop in a four-wheel-drive van to explore Stockton Bight Sand Dunes, the largest mobile **sand dunes** in the Southern Hemisphere. There's even an option to book a flight over Victoria's Twelve Apostles, those dramatic limestone stacks off the coast of Port Campbell National Park.

The Great Southern's northbound Adelaide-to-Brisbane route takes two nights and three days; the southbound Brisbane-to-Adelaide lasts three nights and four days. Between December 2019 and January 2020, 16 departures are scheduled, with fares starting at \$1,779 per person and more departures to come in December 2020. —*Ashlea Halpern*



Courtesy Virtue Cider

Southwest Michigan

Ocean-like coastlines and a laid-back vibe have always been southwest Michigan's biggest draws. But recently the lakefront region has embraced a grown-up take on agritourism and reemphasized its focus on family farms—after all, **Michigan** is the country's second most agriculturally diverse state, behind California. In South Haven, a two-hour drive from **Chicago**, **The Fields** has opened the Midwest's first glamping experience, with 10 tents set on 30 acres of blueberry farm. Guests are escorted to their porches in a vintage Ford pickup, wash down fresh fruit pies with locally roasted coffee by the fire, and snuggle up in the stylish, 320-square-foot tents. In 2020 it's adding five additional tents and an on-site food truck.

About 20 miles inland in Fennville, innovative beer-, cider-, and winemakers are also capitalizing on their prime location within Michigan's Fruit Belt, where berries, grapes, and apples flourish in the lake-effect climate. **Virtue Cider**'s idyllic 48-acre farm attracts guests with sheep, live music on breezy summer nights, a barn-style tasting room, and a new cider house with 40,000 gallons of cider. It's helmed by cider maker Gregory Hall, an award-winning Goose Island beer brewer lulled to southwest Michigan's ideal cider-making conditions. Just next door are new 25-acre **Modales Wines**, where small-batch, estate-grown grapes are elevating Michigan wine, and farmhouse-inspired **Waypost Brewing Co.**, where head brewer Hannah Lee crafts a delicate saison.

Up the coast in nearby Saugatuck, chef Melissa Corey's new **Pennyroyal Cafe & Provision** is a celebration of the bounty of Michigan. Corey trained with three James Beard Award-winning chefs (including Paul Kahan at **Publican**) before opening the modern, diner-like café with her partner, Ryan Beck. The harvest-driven menu features anything from asparagus in spring to cherries in July to all types of squash and apple in the fall. The standout dish is the whitefish melt, made with Mackinac Straits-caught whitefish smoked over maple wood and served with pickled peppers and swiss cheese. In 2020, Pennyroyal will start dinner service and debut a Michigan-only booze menu featuring beers, ciders, and wines made just down the road. —*Nina Kokotas Hahn*

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Tangier, Morocco

We've been talking up Morocco as a long weekend destination for a while now, especially with the 2019 launch of two flights on Royal Air Maroc's Dreamliners, from Boston and Miami to Casablanca. That momentum isn't slowing down: In June, American Airlines will start a new flight from **Philadelphia** to Casablanca's shiny new airport, which recently doubled its capacity to 14 million a year. In the same month, Royal Air Maroc joins **Oneworld Alliance**, making it much easier for those same travelers to connect to other destinations around

Morocco.

Though we swear three days in the country is doable, Morocco can easily demand more of your time, from the new wave arts scene in **Marrakech** (also home to an opulent new Oberoi) to the wind-slapped surf town of **Essaouira**. But this year we suggest heading farther north, to the port city of **Tangier**. It's been a secret favorite among the boho traveler set for years. William S. Burroughs and Paul Bowles both washed up here, as did Mick Jagger, who was known to frequent the **Hafa café**, where young couples still gather at sunset to sip tea and look out over the ancient Phoenician cemetery. Reserve one of the five antiques-filled suites at **Nord-Pinus**, itself fashioned from an old palace at the top of the Casbah, with a rooftop overlooking the city. From there you'll be within walking distance of the small medina, where you can haggle for deals on Berber rugs. Petite as that medina is, its tight alleys and bends can feel like a labyrinth, but no matter where you tumble out, there will be something to explore. At the southeast end, do not miss **Fondouk Chejra**, the weavers market that preserves the city's centuries-old tradition on wooden looms. Then walk to the Art Deco **Cinémathèque de Tanger**, a restored theater with a cool café and framed vintage movie posters all over the walls.

Take an afternoon to drive about 30 minutes along the coast to Cape Malabata, where an old lighthouse still blinks out over the Mediterranean to Spain, just 12 miles across the way. The raw and rugged landscape, combined with the powdery sands, is why major

players like Anantara, Ritz-Carlton Reserve, and St. Regis are opening hotels here in 2020. Come to think of it, you'll definitely want to stay longer than the weekend. —*Erin Florio*



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