

LUXURY AND LIFESTYLE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

# travel SPAN

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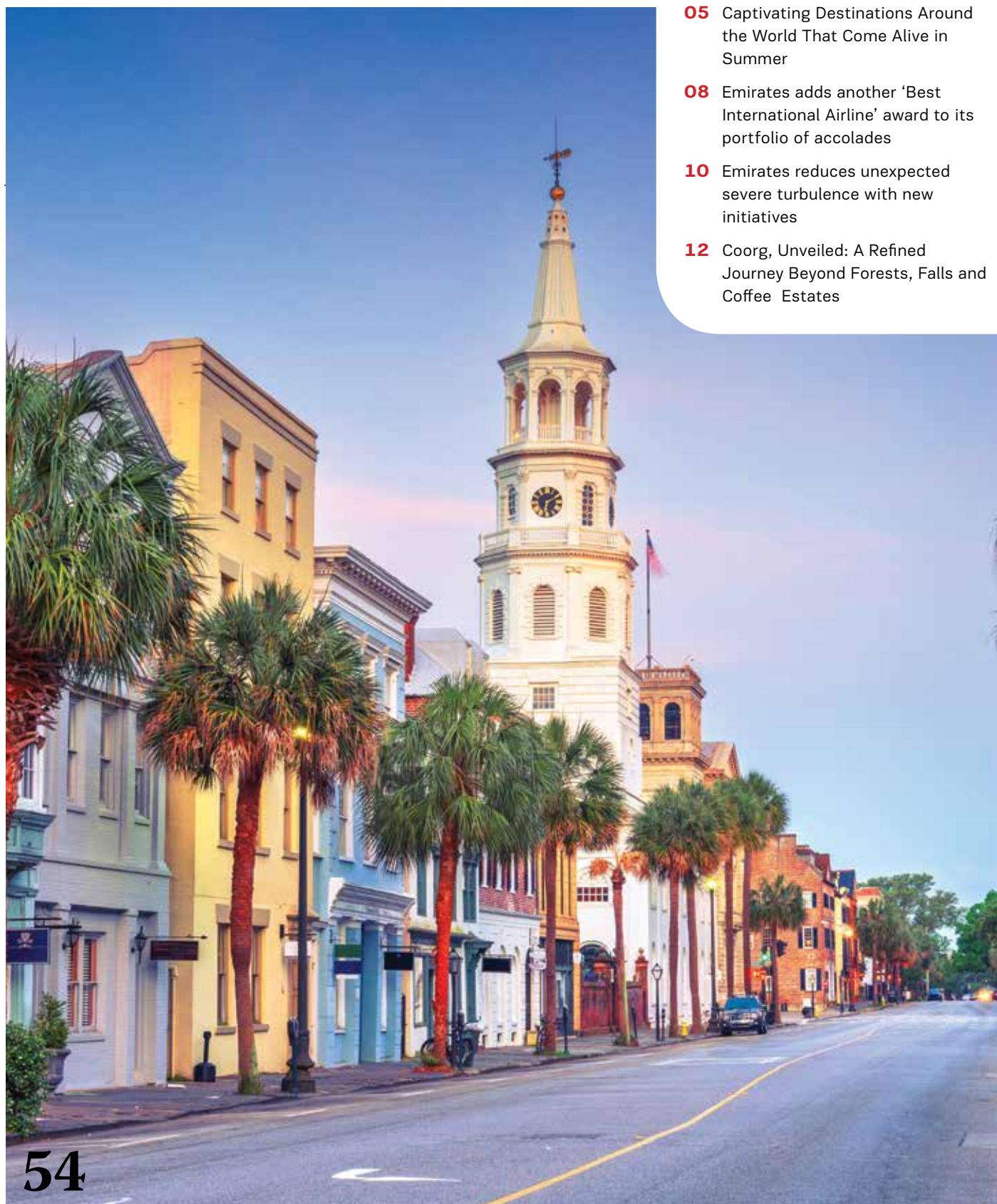
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# EDITOR'S LETTER

## Captivating Destinations Around the World That Come Alive in Summer

**S**ummer is not an equal-opportunity season. It lavishes its affection selectively, transforming certain destinations into their most seductive, sun-drenched selves while others merely endure the heat. For the discerning luxury and lifestyle traveller, these are the places where summer is not something to escape—but something to savour. When days stretch languorously into golden evenings and landscapes glow at their most generous, these destinations reveal a vitality and romance found nowhere else.

From lavender-soaked hillsides to cliff-hugging coastal towns, here are some of the world's most captivating summer destinations—places that



don't just bloom in summer, but truly belong to it.

### Provence, France

In summer, Provence becomes a

living canvas. From mid-June through late August—peaking in early to mid-July—the region's famed lavender fields unfurl in undulating ribbons of violet beneath a sky brushed with cobalt blue.

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The air hums with bees, cicadas, and the unmistakable perfume of warm lavender carried on the breeze.

Yet Provence's allure extends far beyond its fields. Summer here is a state of mind—unhurried, sensual, and deeply rooted in the land. Vineyards ripple across pastel-hued villages, rosé flows freely and unapologetically from late morning onward, and the sun casts a honeyed glow over stone farmhouses and ochre earth. It's no surprise the

region has long inspired artists from Cézanne to Van Gogh.

Luxury in Provence is found in the everyday rituals: a quiet café breakfast in a garden courtyard, goat cheese wrapped in chestnut leaves paired with local bread, an evening picnic beneath plane trees as the sun dips low. This is a destination that rewards those who slow down, lean into the rhythm of Provençal life, and quite literally stop to smell the lavender.

### Iceland

Summer unlocks a gentler, greener side of Iceland—without diminishing its raw drama. Under the ethereal glow of the Midnight Sun, days blur seamlessly into nights, with barely a pause between sunset and sunrise. The result is a surreal sense of freedom: long evenings spent wandering volcanic beaches, hiking emerald valleys, or soaking in geothermal waters long past midnight.

The season also marks the return of puffins, which gather in vast colonies along the southern coast. Near Vík and the black sands of Reynisfjara, millions of these vivid seabirds flit between cliff and sea, a quietly enchanting spectacle. Elsewhere, Iceland's waterfalls thunder at full force, moss-covered lava fields glow impossibly green, and iconic landmarks—from the Blue Lagoon to the solitary Buðakirkja Black Church—feel especially cinematic beneath endless daylight.

For luxury travellers, summer in Iceland offers space, stillness, and the rare indulgence of time—time to explore, to photograph, and to marvel at landscapes that feel almost otherworldly.

### The Amalfi Coast, Italy

Few places embody summer indulgence quite like the Amalfi Coast. Steep cliffs draped in lemon groves cascade into the Tyrrhenian Sea, where cerulean waters sparkle like cut sapphires. Medieval villages cling improbably to the rock face, appearing unchanged by centuries—and blissfully unbothered by the modern world.

Summer days unfold slowly here. Mornings are bright and languid, afternoons best spent on the water, and evenings softened by aperitivi and sea air. Limoncello—made from the region's fragrant Sorrento lemons—is sipped ice-cold beneath striped umbrellas or at cliffside bars with sweeping coastal views.

While Positano and Capri draw the spotlight, Ravello remains the coast's quiet triumph. Elevated above the sea, this medieval town offers hushed elegance: 12th-century palazzi



converted into refined hotels, rose-filled gardens, and terraces with cinematic views stretching endlessly toward the horizon. Ravello is the Amalfi Coast for those who value restraint over spectacle—and beauty without crowds.

#### New York City, USA

Summer in New York City is intense, unapologetic, and irresistibly alive. Yes, the humidity can be relentless and the streets pulse with crowds—but it's precisely this energy that gives the city its summer magic. Every borough hums with activity: open-air concerts, rooftop bars, pop-up markets, outdoor film screenings, and impromptu performances that turn sidewalks into stages.

Central Park becomes the city's summer living room, hosting picnics, free concerts, and lazy afternoons beneath ancient trees. Across the city, art spills beyond gallery walls—murals, sculptures, and installations animate streets and alleyways, turning everyday walks into cultural encounters.

There is something electric about New York in summer: a shared sense that anything could happen, and often does. It's chaotic, demanding, and endlessly rewarding—especially for travellers who thrive on cultural immersion and urban rhythm.

#### Kyoto, Japan

While spring's cherry blossoms capture global attention, Kyoto in summer offers a quieter, more contemplative beauty. The city turns

lush and emerald, its temples and gardens enveloped in greenery. The Arashiyama Bamboo Forest becomes a cool, shaded sanctuary, where filtered light dances through towering stalks and cicadas provide a hypnotic soundtrack.

July brings the Gion Matsuri, one of Japan's oldest and most revered festivals. Lantern-lit floats glide through the streets, accompanied by rhythmic drums, dancers, and centuries-old traditions centered around Yasaka Shrine. It is a deeply atmospheric experience—festive, yet profoundly rooted in ritual.

Summer also heralds Kyoto's cherished riverside dining traditions. Along the Kamogawa and in the mountain village of Kibune, noryo yuka and kawadoko terraces open for the season. At Kibune Nakayoshi, diners sit mere centimeters above the flowing river, feet dangling in cool water while enjoying seasonal dishes crafted from local mountain and river ingredients. It is understated luxury at its finest—immersive, tranquil, and deeply sensory.

#### Smart Summer Travel Notes

Even the most beautiful destinations demand a considered approach in peak season. Hydration is non-negotiable—carry a refillable water bottle wherever you go. Choose breathable fabrics, light colours, and comfortable footwear, and pack sunscreen with the same seriousness as your passport.

Explore early mornings and golden hours, when crowds thin and light

softens. In Europe, be mindful of long restaurant waits and cover charges—sometimes a takeaway gelato enjoyed while strolling is the most elegant choice. A charged phone, local currency, facial mist, and travel-size essentials like dry shampoo or perfume can make the transition from sightseeing to dinner seamless.

Above all, resist the temptation to over-schedule. Summer travel rewards those who leave space for rest, spontaneity, and unhurried moments. Sometimes the most luxurious indulgence is an afternoon nap—no reservations required.

In these destinations, summer is not merely a season. It is an atmosphere, a rhythm, and an invitation to slow down and live beautifully.



DEVENDER GROVER

We are on



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## Emirates adds another 'Best International Airline' award to its portfolio of accolades

Emirates has garnered another slew of awards this month, including 'Best International Airline', 'Best International First Class', and 'Best International Airline Lounge'.

For the second year running, Emirates has been voted as the Best International Airline by 9,000 frequent fliers in the hospitality industry, including luxury travel advisors and Forbes Travel Guides inspectors, with results validated using a star ratings system. Forbes detailed why Emirates

was selected as the 'Best International Airline.'

*'The secret to the Dubai-based airline's success is that it continually refines every aspect of the passenger experience. For example, Emirates recently debuted an opulent lounge-like check-in area for its First-Class and Skyrwards Platinum members, and it's the first autism-certified airline, with more than 30,000 cabin crew and ground staff trained to support travellers with autism.'*

Echoing the same sentiment, Emirates was revealed as the 'Best Long-Haul Airline' at The Times and The Sunday Times Travel Awards 2025 – cast from 900,000 reader votes. This award was credited to Emirates for its 'cabin crew service, First Class suites (including showers) and fleet of roomy Airbus A380s.' The Times also mentioned that Emirates continues to expand its footprint and has 'connected the Middle East to five new destinations this year, including Shenzhen in southern

*China' and 'Siem Reap, the entry point to the Angkor Wat complex in Cambodia.'*

Emirates also recently scored 87.86 in the Conde Nast Readers' Choice Awards Best Airline Category, as well as winning the title of *Middle East's leading airline brand* at the regional finals of the World Travel Awards 2025.

#### **Emirates takes first place for its First Class, across multiple awards**

Emirates is the world's largest operator of international First Class travel - offering 26,800 seats a week and the largest inventory of international First Class seats in the industry, entirely comprised of private suites. At the recent Forbes awards, Emirates also claimed '*Best International First Class -Emirates First Class on the Boeing 777-300ER*' for

itssuites that '*deliver sky-high luxury: floor-to-ceiling doors, zero-gravity seats, Bulgari fragrances and food—ranging from movie snacks to caviar', as well as 'extras like chauffeured transfers, a service that helps passengers quickly navigate connections in Dubai and airport lounge access'.*

Emirates was bestowed the title of Forbes' '*Best International Airline Lounge*' for its First Class Lounge in Dubai which offers '*everything a traveller could need and more: delicious dishes ranging from baked John Dory to 72-hour braised beef short ribs, a cigar bar, bar, shower spas, a complimentary 15-minute spa treatment and plentiful areas to rest or work. Though arguably the best perk is the convenient direct boarding from the lounge.*'

Emirates also won several more

honours for its First Class offering at the World Travel Awards 2025 regional final - *Middle East's leading airline – First Class and Middle East's leading airline lounge – First Class.*

Earlier in 2025, Emirates was honoured with several awards including *Best Long-Haul Airline, 2025's Most Recommended Global Brand* by YouGov, and multiple categories at the Business Traveller Middle East Awards, such as *Best Airline Worldwide* for the 12th consecutive year, *Best First Class, Best Premium Economy Class, and Best Airport Lounge* in the Middle East. Additionally, Emirates Skywards was named as the *Best Global Airline Loyalty Program* at the International Loyalty Awards 2025 and the *World Travel Awards Middle East's leading airline rewards programme.*



# Emirates reduces unexpected severe turbulence with new initiatives

- Airline goes beyond conventional methods, with a commitment to investing in multiple data sources that ensure global coverage and improved turbulence prediction accuracy
- Optimal turbulence forecasting available using complementary technologies like IATA Turbulence Aware, Lido mPilot from Lufthansa Systems and SkyPath ensures more customer comfort and safety



**A**s turbulence becomes an increasingly serious challenge for airlines due to its rising frequency and severity, Emirates has taken a proactive, data-driven approach to address the occasional inconvenience it may cause by planning smoother flights.

The airline has proactively adopted a diverse, multi-layered strategy leveraging multiple information sources to deliver real-time, accurate turbulence data. This approach has helped reduce unexpected severe turbulence encounters on flights across its network with new initiatives launched last year that have helped enhance the onboard experience for passengers and crew.

**Captain Hassan Alhammadi, Divisional Senior Vice President Flight Operations at Emirates said:** "We recognise that turbulence remains an ongoing challenge that cannot be completely eliminated, but we're committed to doing everything possible to minimise unexpected severe turbulence encounters through working with partners who share our vision of using advanced technologies and adopting AI to enhance operations. While we are still in the early stages, we are already seeing validation of the potential benefits these systems can deliver.

While we cannot promise turbulence-free flights, these initiatives have contributed to a significant reduction in unexpected severe turbulence incidents over the past year, helping make journeys safer and more comfortable for our customers.

Our multi-layer approach with weather prediction and technology partners and active participation in the IATA Turbulence Aware programme also enables us to contribute valuable data and insights to the broader aviation industry as we collectively work to address this growing meteorological challenge."

Emirates' current weather detection setup brings together **SkyPath**, **Lido mPilot from Lufthansa Systems** and **IATA Turbulence Aware** as a complementary configuration—delivering breakthrough innovation through AI, machine learning, real-time crowd-sourced turbulence data, as well as pilot reports:

**SkyPath:** Emirates partnered with SkyPath last year to develop and improve AI and machine learning-based weather predictions that identify turbulence areas conventional methods miss. SkyPath's platform integrates real-time turbulence reports from thousands of aircraft with cutting-edge analytics, using advanced AI and machine learning to generate accurate

predictions, even for areas with no current flight activity or challenging 'clear air' turbulence.

SkyPath gathers information from various data sources: Eddy Dissipation Rate (EDR) data for universal turbulence measurements, Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B) transponder data, and SkyPath's patented iPad accelerometer technology that translates device movement into precise turbulence measurements that provide pilots with actionable information. This multi-source, AI-driven approach ensures global coverage and industry-leading prediction accuracy.

#### **Lido mPilot Weather**

**Predictions:** Emirates' long-standing partnership with Lufthansa Systems delivers a customised mobile navigational charting application tailored to the airline's operational requirements. Through partnerships with sources like the German Weather Service, Lido mPilot provides high-accuracy weather reporting, live cloud and convection data, plus turbulence

and icing predictions for enhanced pilot situational awareness. Emirates continuously collaborates with the Lido team to improve weather data quality and global coverage.

**IATA Turbulence Aware:** Since joining IATA's Turbulence Aware Programme last year, Emirates has been actively contributing and consuming real-time turbulence data from its extensive network across the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Australia. This data feeds into IATA's global turbulence platform, which aggregates inputs from participating airlines worldwide to provide a comprehensive, real-time view of atmospheric conditions.

By integrating these insights into its electronic flight bag charting application, Emirates equips its pilots with live, in-situ turbulence visualisations. This enables more informed decision-making in the cockpit, allowing crews to anticipate and avoid turbulent areas, ultimately enhancing passenger comfort, operational safety, and fuel efficiency.

## EMIRATES REDUCES UNEXPECTED SEVERE TURBULENCE WITH NEW INITIATIVES



Airline's data-driven detection technology minimises impact of unexpected turbulence for smoother, safer flights across its network.

Emirates' current weather detection setup brings together SkyPath, Lido and IATA Turbulence Aware as a complementary configuration—with AI, machine learning, and real-time crowd-sourced turbulence data.



### **IATA TURBULENCE AWARE**

Emirates feeds real-time turbulence data from its network into IATA's platform. The aggregated data from all contributing airlines is used for precise turbulence and weather management.



### **LIDO MPilot WEATHER PREDICTIONS**

Delivers a customised mobile navigational charting application including weather services for Emirates' operational requirements.



### **SKYPATH**

- AI and machine learning-based weather predictions, collecting real-time turbulence reports from thousands of aircraft.
- Accelerometer technology translates movement of pilot handheld devices into turbulence measurements.



Coorg, Unveiled:

A Refined  
Journey Beyond  
Forests, Falls  
and Coffee Estates





From the moment your aircraft descends toward southern India, the landscape begins to soften—lush, undulating, and impossibly green. Tucked deep within Karnataka's Western Ghats lies **Coorg**, officially known as Kodagu, a destination long celebrated for its mist-laced hills, cascading waterfalls, and coffee-scented air. Yet to define Coorg purely by its scenery is to miss its deeper allure.



This is a region where **heritage and landscape are inseparable**, where centuries-old Kodava traditions shape daily life, and where travel unfolds at an unhurried, contemplative pace. Beyond the familiar imagery of plantations and rainforests, Coorg offers a layered experience—one that rewards curiosity, stillness, and cultural engagement.

### Arriving in the Highlands

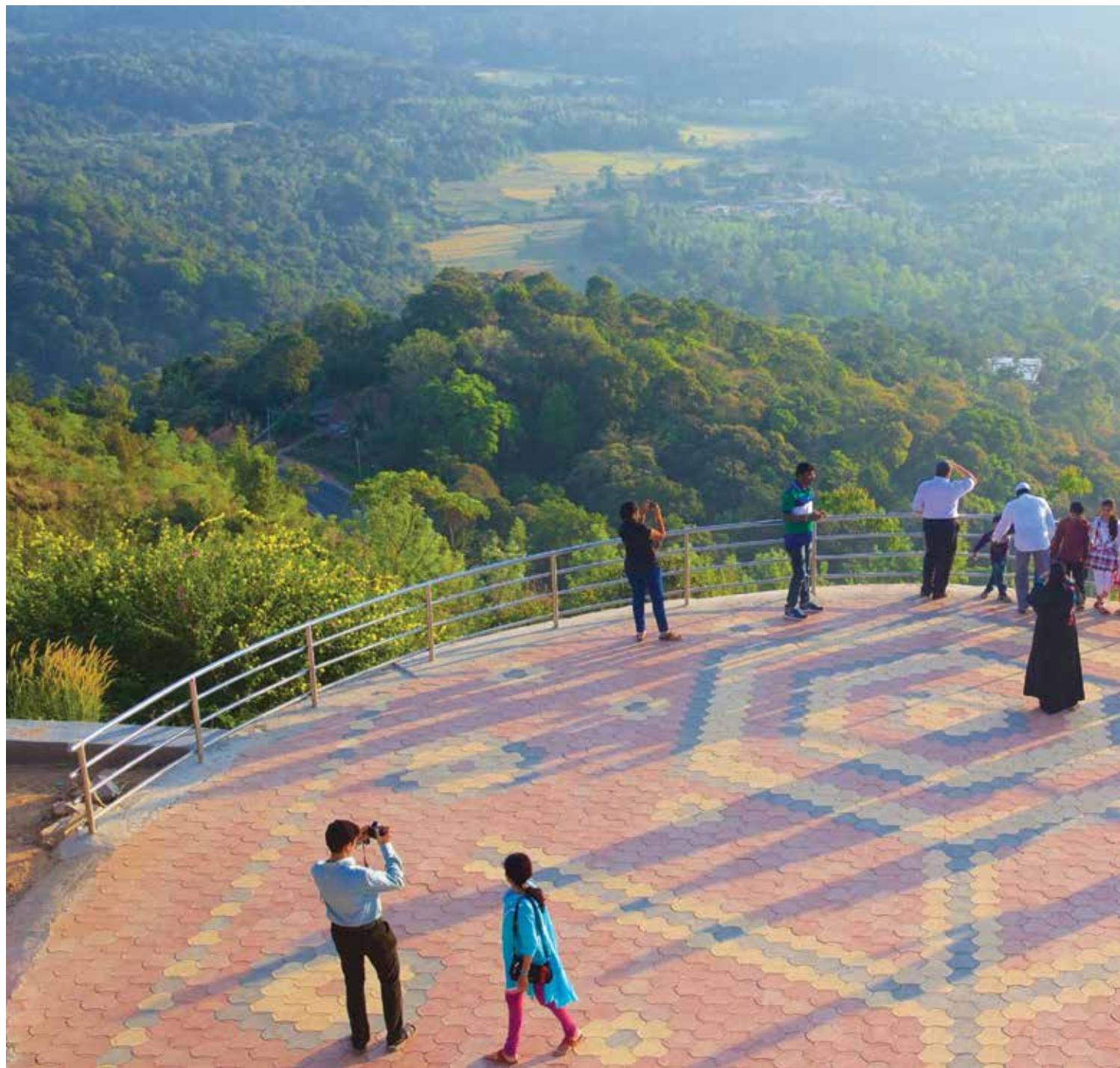
Coorg is best approached gradually. The nearest international gateway is **Bengaluru International Airport**, approximately 250 kilometres away, while **Mangaluru** and **Kannur** airports offer closer regional access. From there, a scenic drive through forested curves and plantation roads provides a gentle

transition from city to countryside—and arrival that feels intentionally slow and entirely fitting.

### Experiences That Define Coorg

#### The Poetry of Water

Among Coorg's most evocative sights is **Abbey Falls**, where the River Kaveri plunges over rock ledges amid





dense greenery. Located near Madikeri, the falls are easily reached, yet remain dramatic, particularly after the rains. A nearby suspension bridge offers elevated views of the cascade in full voice.

#### Coffee, From Soil to Cup

Coorg's global reputation rests on its coffee—and rightly so. Guided plantation walks invite travellers into shaded estates of Arabica and Robusta, where generations of growers explain harvesting methods and flavour profiles. Tastings reveal why Coorg coffee is prized for its depth, balance, and low acidity.

#### Adventure on the Barapole

For those inclined toward adventure, the **Barapole River** offers white-water rafting through forested gorges and rugged terrain. The experience blends exhilaration with immersion, placing travellers at the heart of Coorg's untamed landscape.

#### Madikeri Fort: A Window into the Past

Standing at the centre of Madikeri town, the 17th-century **Madikeri Fort** traces the political history of the region. Its stone walls, inner courtyards, and museum galleries offer insight into Coorg's rulers, while elevated viewpoints reveal sweeping vistas of the surrounding hills.

#### Into the Rainforest

Guided rainforest walks with local naturalists uncover Coorg's remarkable biodiversity. Sacred groves, medicinal plants, and rare species tell a story of ecological preservation shaped by tradition and belief reminder that nature here is both protected and revered.

#### Bylakuppe: A Cultural Pause

Established by Tibetan refugees in the 1960s, **Bylakuppe** presents a striking cultural counterpoint. Monasteries, prayer halls, and colourful markets create a tranquil interlude, offering visitors moments of reflection amid chanting monks and fluttering prayer flags.



### Raja's Seat: Views Once Reserved for Royalty

Once a favourite lookout of Coorg's kings, **Raja's Seat** remains one of the region's most atmospheric vantage points. Sunrise and sunset bring drifting mist and softened light, transforming the hills into layered silhouettes.

### Trekking the Brahmagiri Range

The trail from **Iruppu Falls to Brahmagiri Peak** passes through evergreen forests and high-altitude grasslands, offering panoramic views

of the Western Ghats. Best undertaken between October and May, the trek appeals to travellers seeking both challenge and solitude.

### Encounters at Dubare Elephant Camp

Set along the Kaveri River, **Dubare Elephant Camp** offers respectful interaction with elephants and insight into conservation practices, blending education with quiet wonder.

### The Flavours of Kodagu

Coorg's cuisine is bold, earthy, and

deeply regional. Signature dishes such as **pandi curry**—slow-cooked pork flavoured with Indigenous kachampuli vinegar—alongside **akki roti** and festive sweets like **kajaya**, reflect a culinary tradition shaped by climate and culture. Homestays and heritage dining spaces offer the most authentic introductions, where meals unfold alongside stories of lineage and land.

### Beyond the Obvious

Those willing to venture further will discover **Devarakadus**, sacred forest groves preserved for centuries,





and hidden **kadangas**, ancient war trenches concealed beneath dense foliage. Staying in a traditional **ainmane**—a Kodava ancestral home—offers rare access to rituals, hospitality, and everyday life. Aligning travel dates with festivals such as **Puttari** or **Kailpodh** adds depth, revealing the cultural rhythms that continue to shape the region.

#### Where to Stay

Coorg's accommodation mirrors its diversity. Refined retreats such as

**Evolve Back, Ayatana Coorg, and Coorg Wilderness Resort & Spa** blend discreet luxury with immersive natural settings. **Coorg Marriott Resort & Spa** offers contemporary comfort with expansive valley views, while **The Tamara Coorg** champions eco-conscious design and elevated seclusion.

#### A Destination Best Savoured Slowly

Coorg is not a destination to rush. Early mornings are reserved

for plantation walks and mist-filled viewpoints; afternoons unfold gently over long lunches and unhurried exploration. Local drivers are invaluable on winding hill roads, and carrying cash remains practical in more remote pockets.

Beyond its forests and waterfalls, Coorg offers something increasingly rare: **a sense of quiet continuity**. Here, landscape, culture, and tradition exist in careful balance, inviting travellers to slow down, look closer, and leave with more than photographs—a lasting impression of a place that reveals itself gradually, and generously.

#### When to Experience Coorg at Its Finest

Coorg remains verdant throughout the year, but its most enchanting season arrives **post-monsoon, from October to March**, when the hills gleam in renewed green and the air turns crisp. The warmer months of April and May are softened by altitude and cool evening breezes. Coffee connoisseurs may choose to visit during the **harvest months from November to March**, when estates come alive with quiet industry and tradition.

# Spain Perfected: A Connoisseur's Passage Through Culture, Craft and Quiet Grandeur





**S**pain reveals itself most generously to those who travel without haste. Beyond its celebrated monuments and sunlit coastlines lies a country defined by refinement—where centuries of artistry, ritual and hospitality are woven seamlessly into modern life. For the ultra-luxury traveller, Spain is not a destination to be consumed, but one to be absorbed: slowly, sensorially and with discernment.

From the Moorish palaces of Andalucía to discreet island retreats

in the Mediterranean, Spain offers a rare balance of grandeur and intimacy, spectacle, and stillness.

#### **When to Travel: The Luxury of Perfect Timing**

Seasonality in Spain is best approached with nuance. Late spring and early autumn deliver the country at its most elegant—warm days softened by coastal breezes, uncrowded cultural landmarks, and ideal conditions for private vineyard visits and architectural exploration.

Winter reveals another Spain entirely: hushed museums, golden southern light in Seville and Málaga, and indulgent island escapes in the Canaries. Summer, when chosen selectively, is reserved for Mallorca's quieter coves or private villas overlooking the Balearic Sea.

#### **Architecture, History, and the Art of Privilege**

Spain's historic landmarks are best experienced beyond peak hours and behind closed doors. The Alhambra in Granada, explored through a private dawn tour, unveils its geometric poetry in silence. Córdoba's Mezquita, layered with centuries of faith and power, rewards thoughtful observation rather than hurried admiration.

In Barcelona, Gaudí's Parc Güell becomes less whimsical and more profound when viewed through the lens of architectural mastery. Elsewhere, Roman Tarragona and medieval Ávila offer a contemplative journey into Europe's formative centuries.

#### **Flamenco, Reimagined**

In Andalucía, flamenco is not entertainment—it is inheritance. Away from commercial stages, intimate performances in historic palaces or private tablaos reveal the art in its purest form. The stamping of heels, the echo of guitar strings and the raw emotion of cante jondo form an experience that feels both ancient and deeply personal.

#### **Gastronomy and the Pursuit of Perfection**

Spain's culinary landscape has evolved into one of the world's most sophisticated. Private chef-led tastings in San Sebastián reinterpret Basque classics with Michelin-level precision. In Valencia, paella becomes a ceremony, prepared firesides on rural estates. Rioja and Penedès invite travellers into centuries-old cellars for vertical tastings guided by expert vintners.

In Andalucía's Sherry Triangle, aged finos and amontillados are best enjoyed within bodegas where time itself seems to pause.







#### **Art, Design and Cultural Patronage**

Madrid's Golden Triangle of Art—Prado, Reina Sofía and Thyssen—takes on new meaning when visited after hours, guided by curators who reveal the stories behind the canvases. Bilbao's Guggenheim, both a museum and architectural sculpture, underscores Spain's commitment to cultural innovation.

For patrons of sport, Spanish football offers access beyond the stands—private stadium tours, heritage lounges and insight into institutions that transcend the game itself.



### Islands of Discretion and Distinction

Spain's islands are defined not by excess, but by contrast. Ibiza's quieter northern villages offer barefoot luxury amid pine forests and secluded beaches. Mallorca's stone-built towns, cliff-hugging roads, and discreet marinas attract a cosmopolitan yet understated clientele.

Tenerife's dramatic volcanic terrain pairs striking nature with refined resorts designed for privacy, wellness, and immersion in the landscape.



### Spain After Dark: Subtle, Social, Sophisticated

Evenings in Spain unfold unhurriedly. Candle-lit tapas bars, private flamenco salons, and rooftop terraces overlooking illuminated cathedrals replace loud nightlife with cultivated conviviality. In Barcelona, the Magic Fountain of Montjuïc becomes an elegant spectacle when viewed from a private terrace or chauffeured vantage point.

### Airports as Extensions of Luxury

Spain's primary gateways reflect the country's polished hospitality. Premium terminals and private lounges in Madrid and Barcelona offer fine dining, spa treatments and curated retail experiences featuring Spanish luxury brands alongside global maisons. For private aviation travellers, seamless transfers and discreet services ensure continuity from air to ground.

### Spain for Two: Romance, Elevated

Spain has long inspired poets and lovers. Seville's Royal Alcázar, experienced in the quiet hours, offers romance framed by Moorish arches and gardens scented with orange blossom. Barcelona invites couples to soar above the city by balloon or share private art and culinary experiences.

Granada's Alhambra, glowing at dusk against the Sierra Nevada, remains one of Europe's most evocative settings. Mallorca and Málaga provide refined coastal intimacy—sunset yacht charters, Arab baths and candle-lit dinners overlooking the sea.

### The Quiet Luxury of Simplicity

True luxury in Spain often reveals itself in the unadorned: morning walks through historic gardens, market visits guided by local chefs, or long lunches beneath plane trees. Street art, public parks, and architectural landmarks offer profound beauty without spectacle or cost.

### Shopping: Heritage Over Haste

Spain's most compelling purchases tell a story. Gourmet markets yield rare olive oils, aged cheeses and hand-sliced jamón. Gran Vía and Diagonal Avenue house international fashion, while ateliers in Barcelona and Madrid offer bespoke craftsmanship. For collectors, vintage boutiques and artisan workshops provide objects imbued with place and history.

Spain, at its most luxurious, is not loud. It is measured, cultured and quietly confident—a destination where time slows, senses sharpen and every experience feels considered.



Temples, Trails, and Towers:

# Discover the Enduring Allure of Taiwan



**A** rising star on Asia's travel map, Taiwan is a destination where ancient tradition and cutting-edge modernity coexist in remarkable harmony. First named *Ilha Formosa*—“beautiful island”—by 16th-century Portuguese explorers, Taiwan continues to live up to that poetic description. From mist-draped mountains and cherry blossom valleys to tropical beaches caressed by the Pacific and cities defined by both century-old temples and futuristic skylines, the

island is a study in contrasts—and a deeply rewarding one.

Often overlooked in favour of its larger neighbours, Taiwan offers travellers a richly layered experience. Its culinary landscape ranges from humble bowls of beef noodle soup enjoyed at night markets to refined Michelin-starred interpretations of traditional flavours. Historic towns reveal stories shaped by Indigenous cultures, Dutch colonisation, and Chinese dynasties, while modern Taiwan pulses with innovation, creativity, and effortless efficiency.

Step beyond the urban sprawl and you will find pristine lakes, rugged hiking trails, lush forests, and expansive coastlines. Whether you are wandering lantern-lit alleys, scaling mountain peaks, cycling scenic routes or soaking in natural hot springs, Taiwan

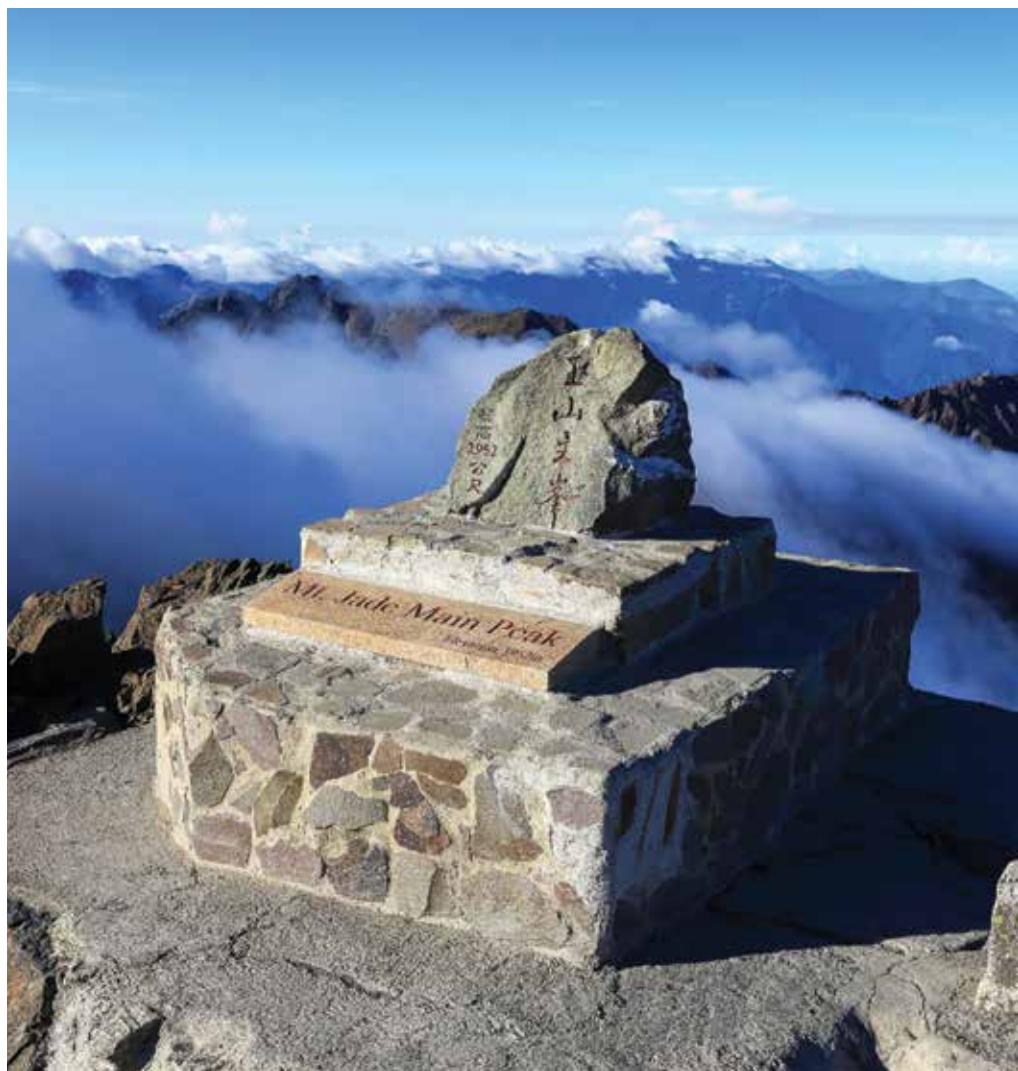
promises discovery at every turn. Here is a comprehensive guide to the most beautiful places to visit in Taiwan—and why the island deserves a place on every traveller's list in 2025.

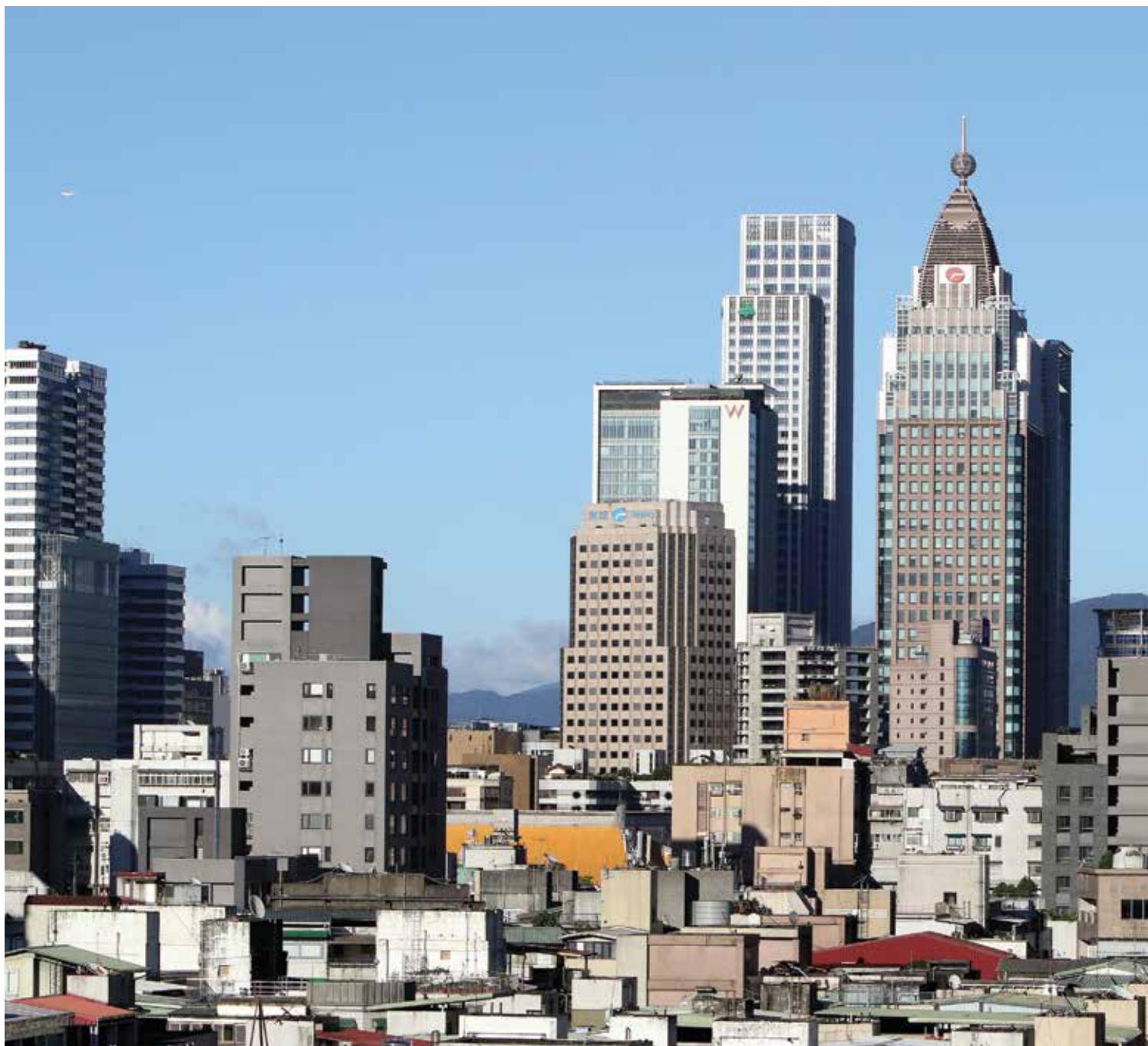
## The Most Beautiful Places to Visit in Taiwan

### Taipei: A Capital of Contrasts

Every journey through Taiwan begins in Taipei, a dynamic capital of three million people framed by subtropical mountains. The city's skyline is crowned by the iconic Taipei 101, once the world's tallest building, while historic temples and traditional neighbourhoods thrive quietly below.

Creative energy flows through spaces like Songshan Cultural and Creative Park, a former tobacco warehouse transformed into a hub for





art, design, and exhibitions. Colourful murals along America Street and the revitalised streets of Ximending showcase Taipei's youthful spirit. Meanwhile, Dihua Street, the city's oldest commercial thoroughfare, offers a glimpse into the past with its traditional shopfronts, teahouses, and apothecaries.

Cultural landmarks abound. The National Palace Museum houses one of the world's most important collections

of Chinese artefacts, while the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall provides insight into Taiwan's modern political history. For panoramic views, a short hike up Elephant Mountain rewards visitors with sweeping cityscapes, particularly magical at sunset.

After dark, Taipei comes alive. Districts such as Zhongshan and Yongkang buzz with cocktail bars, late-night eateries, and street life. For a wellness escape, the hot spring town

of Beitou—just 30 minutes by train—offers mineral-rich baths set amid serene, leafy surroundings.

#### **Tainan: Taiwan's Cultural and Spiritual Soul**

Once Taiwan's capital, Tainan remains the island's historical and spiritual heart. Easily reached in just under two hours from Taipei by high-speed rail, the city is home to more than 2,000 temples, lending it



a contemplative and deeply cultural atmosphere.

A walk along Fuzhong Street leads to the revered Tainan Confucius Temple, Taiwan's oldest, while the strikingly modern Tainan Art Museum Building 2 introduces a contemporary counterpoint. Shennong Street, one of the best-preserved lanes from the Qing Dynasty, is ideal for wandering, lined with traditional houses, cafés, and artisan stores.

Colonial history comes alive at Anping Fort and the Eternal Golden Castle, both remnants of Dutch rule. Tainan is also celebrated as the birthplace of bubble tea, and visitors can stop by Hanlin Tea Room, one of the establishments credited with its invention in 1986.

### Kenting and Taiwan's Southern Coast

At Taiwan's southernmost tip lies Kenting, a relaxed coastal region famed for its crystal-clear waters, coral reefs, and abundant marine life, including green sea turtles. Snorkelling, diving, and beachside relaxation define the experience here.

For travellers seeking something more remote, Green Island off the southeast coast offers dramatic volcanic landscapes and saltwater hot springs, while the Penghu archipelago in the Taiwan Strait delivers white-sand beaches, basalt formations, and vibrant coral ecosystems.

### Yushan (Jade Mountain) and the Central Highlands

Taiwan's mountainous interior is a paradise for outdoor enthusiasts. The island boasts 268 peaks over 3,000 metres, including Yushan (Jade Mountain), East Asia's highest summit. Climbing Yushan is a demanding multi-day trek requiring permits, but the views from the top are among the most spectacular in the region.

For gentler exploration, Alishan National Park offers misty forests, ancient cypress trees, and cherry blossom-lined trails. Visitors can sample locally grown oolong tea or ride the historic Alishan Forest Railway, recently reopened to showcase the region's natural beauty.

Nearby Sun Moon Lake, one of Taiwan's most iconic landscapes, is particularly popular with cyclists and photographers, while the Ci'en Pagoda offers elevated views over its tranquil waters. Further east, Taroko Gorge National Park stuns with sheer marble cliffs, winding rivers, and dramatic hiking routes—easily accessible by train from Taipei.

### Shopping in Taiwan

Shopping in Taiwan ranges from luxury to local charm. Taipei 101's mall caters to high-end tastes, while Ximending's energetic streets are a hub for youth fashion and pop culture. Night markets such as Raohe in Taipei and Fengjia in Taichung are ideal for picking up souvenirs, street snacks, and handmade goods.

For traditional crafts, Yingge—renowned for its ceramics—is a worthwhile detour, offering everything from contemporary pottery to classic designs.

### Taiwan After Dark

Taiwan's nightlife is diverse and deeply social. Night markets form the heart of evening life, where locals gather over dishes like oyster omelettes, stinky tofu, and bubble tea. For a more refined experience, rooftop bars in Taipei's Xinyi District offer cocktails with skyline views.

In Kaohsiung, riverside cafés along the Love River provide a relaxed setting with live music, while Jiufen's lantern-lit streets deliver a nostalgic, cinematic atmosphere that feels frozen in time.

### Cafés and Cuisine: A Culinary Journey

Taiwan's food scene is one of its greatest draws. In Jiufen, traditional teahouses provide a serene setting to sip fragrant oolong tea while overlooking misty hills and the coastline. Taipei is a true food capital, offering everything from street-side scallion pancakes and guava with plum powder to immersive hotpot experiences.

For fine dining, Michelin-starred restaurants such as Taiirroir reinterpret Taiwanese classics with contemporary flair. Signature dishes—xiao long bao, beef noodle soup, oyster omelettes, and bubble tea—are essential tastings for anyone wishing to understand the island's culinary soul.

### Where to Stay

Accommodation in Taiwan caters to every style of traveller. Wyndham Hotels & Resorts offers a strong portfolio,

including TRYP by Wyndham New Taipei Linkou, Wyndham Sun Moon Lake, and Ramada Encore by Wyndham Hualien, combining comfort with strategic locations. Other standout properties include the Mandarin Oriental in Taipei, TAI Urban Resort in Kaohsiung and Gloria Manor's private beachfront villas in Kenting.

#### Tips for Visiting Taiwan

Getting around Taiwan is effortless thanks to its modern infrastructure. The High-Speed Rail connects major cities quickly, while MRT systems in urban centres are affordable, efficient, and English-friendly. While credit cards are widely accepted, carrying cash is advisable for night markets and rural areas.

Plan your visit around major festivals such as the Lantern Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, or the Mazu Pilgrimage for an authentic cultural experience. Although English is commonly spoken, learning a few Mandarin phrases will enhance interactions and enrich your journey.

**From sacred temples and soaring peaks to neon-lit cities and tranquil coastlines, Taiwan offers an extraordinary range of experiences in a compact, welcoming destination. For travellers seeking culture, nature, cuisine, and modern comfort in equal measure, the “beautiful island” is no longer a secret—it is a must-visit.**

#### How to Reach Taiwan

Taiwan is exceptionally well connected to the rest of the world. Taoyuan International Airport, located just outside Taipei, serves as the island's primary gateway, with direct connections to major cities across Asia, Europe, and North America. Regional travellers can also fly into Kaohsiung or Taichung, making access to southern and central Taiwan seamless.

Most long-haul visitors transit through major Asian hubs such as Hong Kong, Tokyo, or Seoul. For those seeking a slower, more

scenic approach, ferry services from neighbouring islands and parts of mainland China offer an alternative way to arrive.

#### Best Time to Visit Taiwan

Taiwan's subtropical climate makes it a year-round destination, with each season offering a distinct character. Spring (March to May) is especially enchanting, as cherry blossoms blanket mountain trails and mild temperatures create ideal conditions for outdoor exploration.

Summer brings warmer weather and is best suited to coastal escapes and island hopping, particularly in Kenting and the Penghu archipelago. Autumn (September to November) is widely regarded as the most pleasant season, with crisp air, clear skies, and vibrant foliage—perfect for hiking in Alishan or cycling around Sun Moon Lake. Winter, meanwhile, invites travellers to enjoy hot springs, quieter attractions and, at higher altitudes, occasional snow-capped peaks.





# Planning a Trip to Edinburgh?

## Here Are the Experiences You Should not Miss

**S**teeped in royal history, shaped by dramatic landscapes, and animated by a fiercely creative spirit, Edinburgh is a city that reveals itself slowly—and rewards those who

linger. Scotland's capital is equal parts Gothic romance and contemporary cultural powerhouse, where medieval alleyways lead to lively pubs, extinct volcanoes double as urban viewpoints,



and centuries-old traditions coexist with world-class festivals.

Few European cities feel as atmospheric as Edinburgh. The Old Town unfolds like a dark fairytale, its towering stone tenements, narrow closes and cobbled streets watched over by the imposing Edinburgh Castle, perched high on its volcanic rock since the 12th century. Stories of rebellion, political intrigue and literary genius echo through its courtyards and taverns—unsurprising that the city inspired J.K. Rowling as she imagined the world of Harry Potter.

Yet Edinburgh is far more than its dramatic past. Spend enough time here and the city's quieter rhythms take hold—wandering the riverside paths of Leith, climbing Arthur's Seat at dawn, or settling into a neighbourhood pub where conversation flows as freely

as whisky. This is a city that invites exploration at your own pace. Here is a curated guide to the best experiences Edinburgh has to offer.

## Best Things to Do in Edinburgh

### Walk Through History

No visit is complete without exploring Edinburgh Castle, where ramparts, royal chambers and dungeons tell stories of Scotland's turbulent past. Below the castle, the Old Town is best discovered on foot. Join a guided walking tour to uncover hidden closes, historic courtyards and tales that bring the medieval city vividly to life.

History continues at the Palace of Holyroodhouse, the official Scottish residence of the British monarch, and at The Writers' Museum, which

celebrates literary greats such as Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson.

### Take to the Hills

Edinburgh's dramatic setting is shaped by extinct volcanoes, the most prominent being Arthur's Seat. The hike to the summit is brisk but rewarding, offering panoramic views across the city and out to the surrounding countryside. Calton Hill, another iconic viewpoint, is less demanding and ideal for sunset photography, though it has become increasingly popular.

### Discover Edinburgh's Neighbourhoods

Follow the Water of Leith, a tranquil 20-kilometre walkway lined with historic mills and leafy paths. Pause at Dean Village, a former milling





community whose 19th-century architecture feels worlds away from the city centre.

Head north to Leith, Edinburgh's creative dockside district, now known for its street art, independent cafés, and waterfront dining. The area also houses The Royal Yacht Britannia, a fascinating ship museum offering insight into royal life at sea.

#### Culture, Festivals, and the Arts

Art lovers should make time for the Scottish National Gallery, home to masterpieces spanning the Renaissance to the modern era. In August, the Edinburgh Fringe Festival takes over the city with an explosion of comedy, theatre, music, and street performances, an experience unlike any other.

Equally iconic is the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, where precision drills, music and pageantry unfold against the illuminated backdrop of Edinburgh Castle.

#### Pub Culture and Whisky

Edinburgh's pub scene is woven into the city's social fabric. From historic taverns in Grassmarket to cosy neighbourhood locals, pubs here are places to connect. Whisky enthusiasts can deepen their appreciation with a guided tasting at The Scotch Whisky Experience, where tradition and storytelling are part of the ritual.

#### Offbeat Experiences

For those drawn to Edinburgh's darker legends, a guided tour of the underground Edinburgh Vaults offers a chilling glimpse into the city's hidden past. Greyfriars Kirkyard, famed for its atmospheric gravestones and ghostly lore, is another evocative stop.

For something lighter, Princes Street Gardens provide a green escape below the castle, while poetry readings at the Scottish Storytelling Centre celebrate the nation's enduring oral and literary traditions.

#### Cafés and Restaurants

Edinburgh's food scene balances tradition and innovation. Classic Scottish dishes such as haggis, neeps and tatties remain staples, often best enjoyed in traditional pubs alongside Scotch pies or hearty stews. Fish and chips near the waterfront in Leith make for a memorable meal with a view.

For refined dining, the city offers several iconic venues, including The Dome, where elegant interiors elevate the dining experience without losing a sense of place.

#### Where to Stay

Edinburgh's hotels reflect their architectural grandeur and modern sophistication. The Balmoral, a landmark Victorian railway hotel, offers timeless luxury and an exceptional afternoon tea. Gleneagles Townhouse and Hilton Edinburgh Carlton provide refined stays rooted in classic style.

For contemporary comfort in a





central location, InterContinental Edinburgh the George by IHG and The Edinburgh Grand offer sleek design paired with thoughtful service.

### Shopping in Edinburgh

From heritage crafts to luxury labels, shopping in Edinburgh is richly varied. Grassmarket and Victoria Street are ideal for tartans, whisky, and handmade souvenirs, while Princes Street offers a wide range of high-street brands. For upscale shopping, Multrees Walk is home to designer boutiques and premium labels.

### Insider Tips for Visiting Edinburgh

Edinburgh's weather can change quickly, so layers and comfortable walking shoes are essential, especially on cobbled streets. Winds can be strong, even in warmer months, making a jacket advisable year-round. Carrying some cash is useful for small shops and markets.

For quieter moments, hike Arthur's Seat or Calton Hill early in the morning to avoid crowds and enjoy the city at its most serene.

Brooding yet welcoming, historic yet alive with creativity, Edinburgh is a city that lingers long after you leave. Whether you come for its castles, landscapes, festivals or pubs, Scotland's capital delivers an experience that feels timeless—and unmistakably unforgettable.

### Best Time to Visit Edinburgh

Edinburgh's character shifts with the seasons, each offering a distinct appeal. Spring brings longer days and blooming gardens, while summer is the city's most energetic period, thanks to the Edinburgh International Festival and the world-famous Fringe Festival, which transform streets, theatres, and pubs into stages for global talent.

Winter has its own magic, with Hogmanay celebrations, festive Christmas markets and a crisp chill that suits the city's dramatic skyline. Autumn, however, is often considered the sweet spot—cool but comfortable weather, fewer crowds and parks painted in rich shades of gold and amber.

### How to Reach Edinburgh

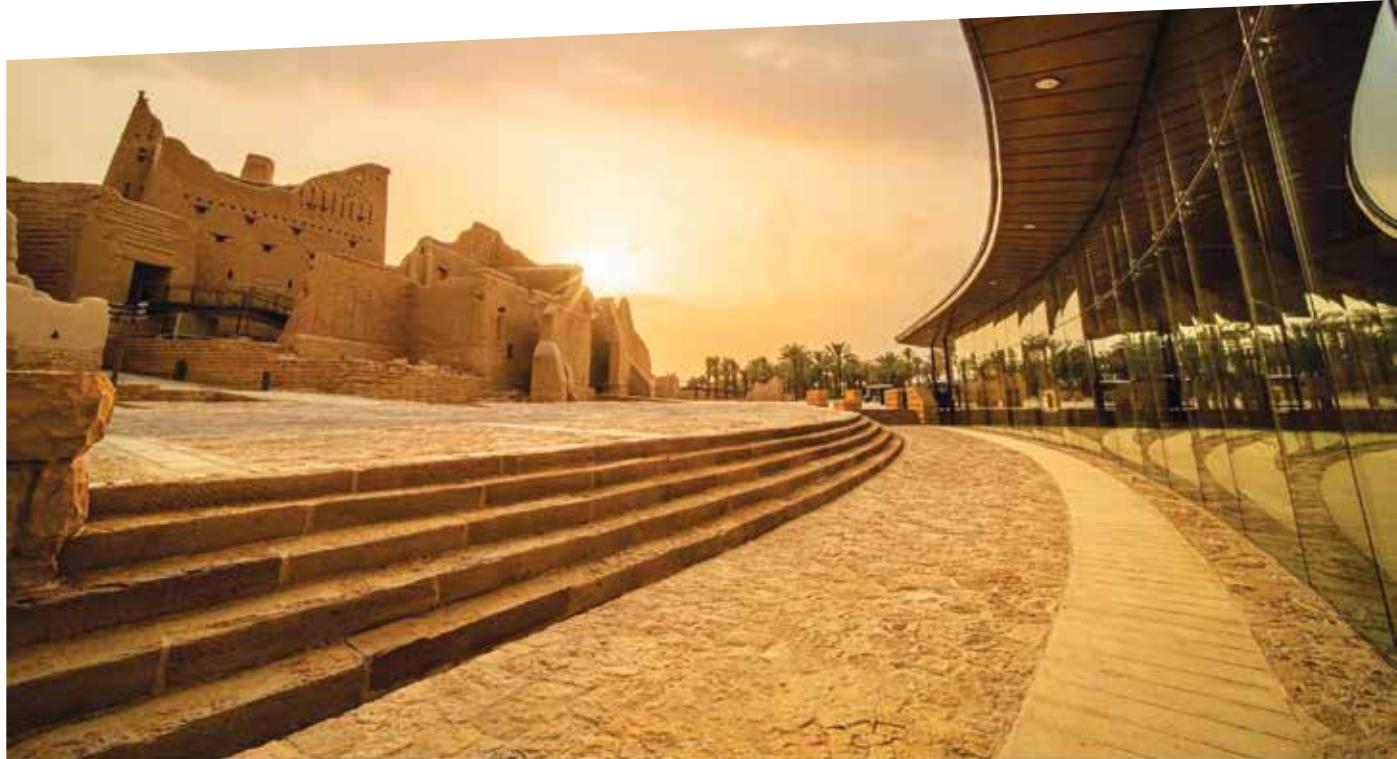
Edinburgh is well connected by air, rail, and road. Edinburgh Airport, located just twelve kilometres from the city centre, offers direct flights from across the UK, Europe and beyond, with taxis and trams providing quick transfers into town.

For train travellers, Edinburgh Waverley Station sits at the heart of the city, linking the capital to London, Glasgow and major UK destinations via scenic rail routes that are journeys in themselves.

# Explore Riyadh

## Essential Experiences in Saudi Arabia's Evolving Capital

*From ancient mudbrick citadels to futuristic towers and desert horizons, Riyadh offers an immersive journey into the past, present, and future of Saudi Arabia.*



Once closed to the world, Saudi Arabia has stepped confidently onto the global travel stage, and at its centre stands Riyadh—a capital redefining itself with striking ambition. This is a city where centuries-old traditions coexist with bold contemporary vision, where UNESCO-listed heritage sites sit just minutes from architectural icons and world-class cultural festivals.

For travellers seeking a deeper understanding of the Kingdom, Riyadh delivers an experience that is both grounding and forward-looking. Whether you are visiting on a short stopover or planning a longer stay, these curated experiences offer a refined introduction to the heart of Saudi Arabia.

#### Above the City: Kingdom Tower and the Skybridge

Begin your exploration by ascending **Kingdom Centre Tower**, Saudi Arabia's first supertall skyscraper and

one of Riyadh's most recognisable landmarks. Rising more than three hundred metres above the city, the tower's crowning feature, the **Skybridge**—offers uninterrupted 360-degree views across the capital's vast urban landscape.

Suspended between the tower's twin spires, the 65-metre-long steel bridge provides a striking perspective, particularly at sunset, when Riyadh's skyline glows beneath the desert sky. Afterward, linger within the tower's luxury precinct, home to an upscale shopping mall, fine dining venues, a cinema complex, and the Four Seasons Hotel Riyadh.

#### Riyadh's Origins: Masmak Fort and Deera Square

To understand the city's foundations, step inside **Masmak Fort**, a formidable mudbrick fortress built in 1865. Its thick walls and wooden gates bear silent witness to the dramatic events that shaped modern

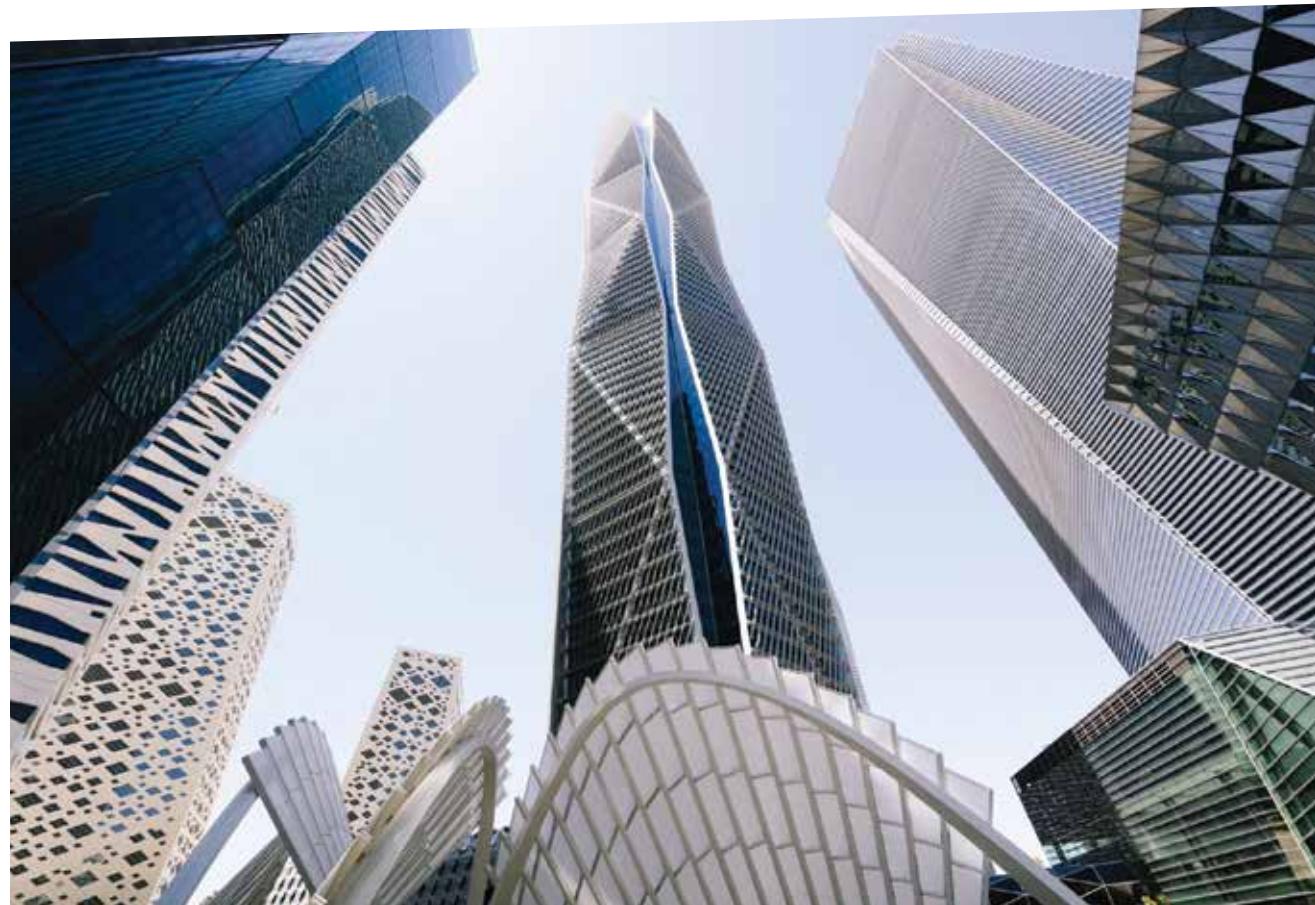
Saudi Arabia. The fort famously served as the site of the 1902 battle that led to the recapture of Riyadh, a pivotal moment in the Kingdom's unification. Today, it houses a museum chronicling the nation's formation through artefacts, photographs, and immersive exhibits.

Nearby lies **Deera Square**, historically known as Justice Square. While no longer used for public punishments, the site remains symbolically significant. Visitors are encouraged to explore with cultural sensitivity, acknowledging its place in the city's social history.

#### Diriyah: Where the Kingdom Began

Just 30 minutes from central Riyadh, **Diriyah** offers one of the Kingdom's most evocative cultural experiences. Recognised as the birthplace of Saudi Arabia, the historic settlement is home to the UNESCO-listed **At-Turaif District**, an extraordinary example of Najdi





architecture.

Wander through restored palaces, courtyards, and museums that trace more than six hundred years of history or enjoy refined dining overlooking the palm-lined **Wadi Hanifah** at Bujairi Terrace. Diriyah also hosts **Diriyah Season**, an annual cultural festival that blends heritage, art, gastronomy, and live performances, making it one of the most rewarding times to visit.

#### Inside Saudi Arabia's Story: The National Museum

For a deeper cultural immersion, the **National Museum of Saudi Arabia** offers a comprehensive narrative of the Kingdom's evolution—from prehistoric Arabia to the modern state. Through carefully curated galleries, the museum explores early civilisations, Islamic history, and the life of the Prophet Muhammad, alongside artefacts linked to the nation's founders.

Elegant and accessible, it provides essential context for travellers wishing to understand Saudi Arabia beyond the surface.

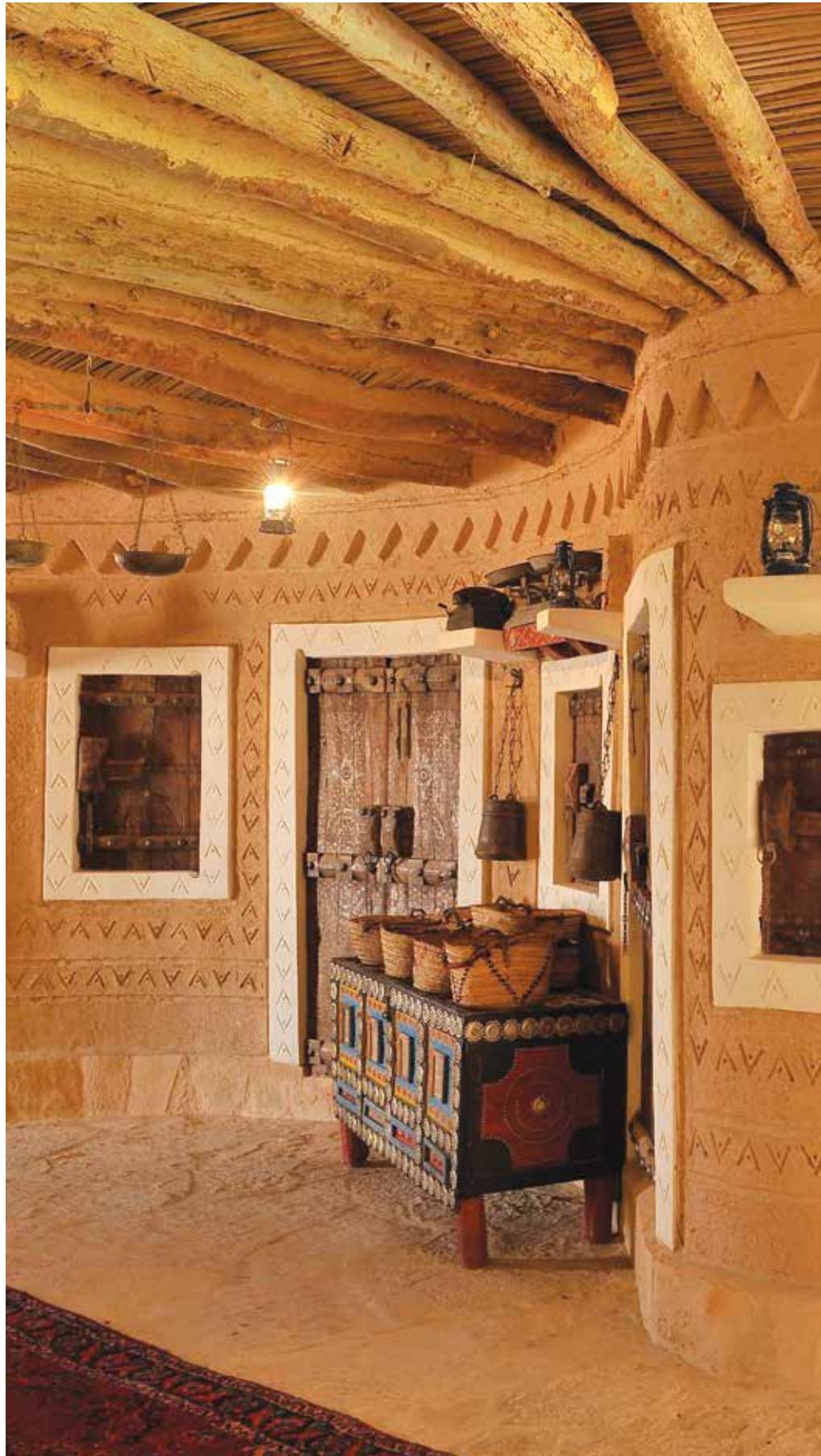
#### The Edge of the World: A Desert Spectacle

Approximately one hundred kilometres northwest of Riyadh lies one of Saudi Arabia's most dramatic natural landmarks—the **Edge of the World**, or **Jebel Fihrayn**. Part of the Tuwaik escarpment, this sheer cliff plunges nearly 300 metres into an ancient seabed, creating a sense of infinite scale and silence.

Sunrise and sunset here are unforgettable, as the desert stretches endlessly toward the horizon. While adventurous travellers can drive independently, most visitors opt for guided excursions that include off-road transport, light trekking, bat cave visits, traditional dinners, and camel encounters—ensuring both comfort and safety.

#### Into the Sands: Red Dunes and Camel Trails

No visit to Riyadh is complete without experiencing the Arabian desert. The **Red Sand Dunes**, located







just outside the city, offer a striking contrast to the urban skyline. Guided desert safaris include dune bashing, sandboarding, campfire dining, and stargazing beneath open skies.

For a slower-paced encounter, follow one of the historic **Camel Trails**, where traders once traversed the sands. These routes allow visitors to walk through quiet desert landscapes, absorbing the rhythm and stillness that define Arabia's natural beauty.

#### A Taste of Tradition: Najdi Cuisine

For an authentic culinary experience, reserve a table at **Najd Village**, one

of Riyadh's most beloved traditional restaurants. Designed to evoke a historic Najdi home, the restaurant serves classic dishes such as **kabsa**, **jareesh**, **margoog**, and **gursan**, prepared using time-honoured recipes.

Dining here is as much about atmosphere as flavour—an intimate introduction to Saudi hospitality and regional cuisine.

#### Football Fever: A Global Icon in Riyadh

Riyadh has also emerged as a global sporting destination. Football fans may wish to catch **Al Nassr FC** in action, following the arrival of international star **Cristiano Ronaldo**. Matches held at venues such as **Kingdom Arena** and **King Fahd Stadium** attract an electric

atmosphere, offering a unique blend of local passion and global spectacle.

#### Riyadh Season: Winter Comes Alive

During the cooler winter months, the city transforms with **Riyadh Season**, a flagship entertainment festival featuring international concerts, art installations, pop-up dining concepts, cultural showcases, and sporting events. Each edition introduces a new theme, ensuring fresh experiences year after year.

The season has become a highlight of the Saudi cultural calendar, drawing visitors from across the region and beyond.

#### Travel Notes for Visitors

Travellers should note that

**daily prayer times**, observed five times a day, may temporarily pause operations at shops and restaurants for approximately 20 minutes. Planning activities around these intervals ensures a smooth and respectful experience.

#### Why Riyadh Now?

Riyadh is no longer just a gateway to Saudi Arabia—it is a destination in its own right. With its blend of heritage, contemporary culture, desert adventure, and refined hospitality, the capital offers luxury travellers a rare opportunity to witness a nation in transformation.

For those flying through the region, Riyadh invites not just a stopover—but a story worth experiencing.



Castles, Cocktails and Quirks:

# The Top Things to Do in Prague



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With its storybook skyline of Gothic spires, Baroque domes and Renaissance façades, Prague looks as though it has stepped straight out of a fairy tale. Yet beneath the romantic veneer lies a city shaped by centuries of upheaval and reinvention—from the Kingdom of Bohemia to the defining moments of the Velvet Revolution. Today, the Czech capital balances its storied past with a lively contemporary pulse, making it one of Europe's most captivating destinations.

Wander beyond the cobbled lanes of the Old Town and you will encounter a city buzzing with creativity. Avant-garde sculptures interrupt historic streetscapes, concert halls echo with classical and experimental sounds, and cafés brim with conversation over expertly brewed coffee. Prague's culinary scene mirrors its cultural



diversity, pairing hearty Czech classics with a flourishing vegan movement and a beer culture that borders on legendary. From black light theatre performances and bone churches to forest foraging just beyond the city limits, Prague offers experiences as eclectic as they are unforgettable.

Here is a guide to the best things to do in Prague.

## Essential Experiences in Prague

### Step Into History

Begin with Prague Castle, the world's largest ancient castle complex, where centuries of Czech history unfold across palaces, courtyards, and cathedrals. Nearby, explore the Jewish Quarter, a deeply moving area that preserves



synagogues, a historic cemetery, and stories of resilience.

Literary enthusiasts can trace the footsteps of Franz Kafka, whose life and works are woven into the city's identity, while the National Museum offers a comprehensive look at Czech history, art, and natural sciences.

### Iconic Sights and Scenic Views

Cross Charles Bridge at sunrise, when the crowds thin and the statues glow softly in the morning light. For panoramic city views, hike up Petrin Hill or take a leisurely cruise along the Vltava River to admire Prague's skyline from the water.

Modern architecture has its place too. The Dancing House, with its fluid, twisting form, stands as a symbol of Prague's contemporary creativity and makes for a striking photo stop.

### Art, Theatre and Quirks

Prague thrives on the unexpected. Experience black light theatre, a uniquely Czech art form blending visual illusion with storytelling. Follow the trail of provocative sculptures by artist



David Černý scattered across the city, challenging convention at every turn.

Art lovers should also explore the legacy of Alphonse Mucha, whose Art Nouveau works helped define an era, and seek out hidden surprises such as Pasáž Lucerna, a quirky arcade tucked away from the main streets.

#### Food, Beer, and Local Flavours

Embark on a food tour to uncover Prague's culinary heart, from comforting Czech dishes like goulash and svíčková to modern interpretations in stylish bistros. Beer lovers can sip their way through traditional pilsners and innovative local craft brews, discovering why Czech beer culture is renowned worldwide.

Do not forget to take home a piece of Prague—handcrafted Bohemian crystal and garnet jewellery make timeless souvenirs.

#### Prague After Dark

As evening falls, Prague reveals a different side of its personality. Classical music lovers can enjoy world-class performances at historic venues

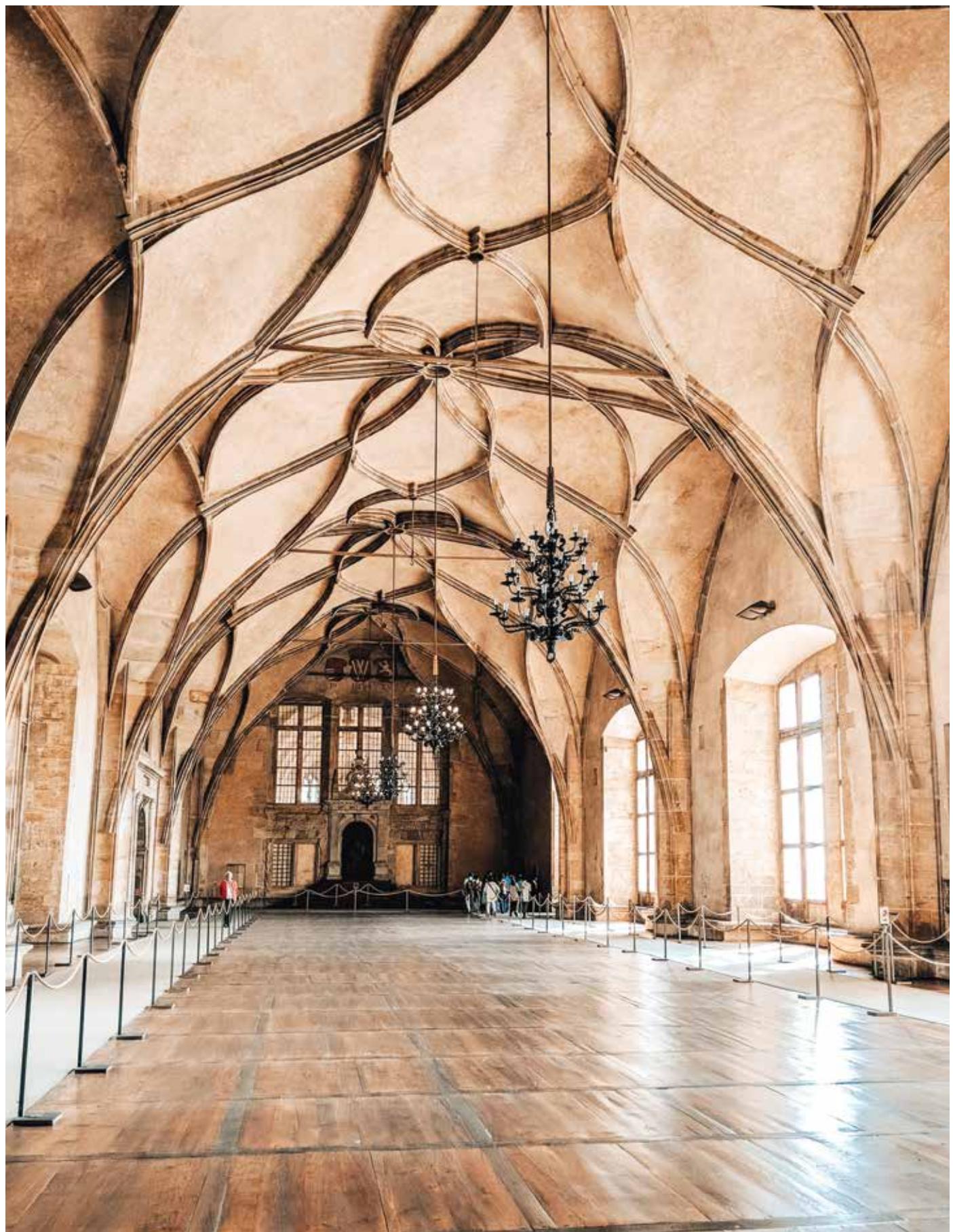
such as the Rudolfinum or Municipal House. For a livelier scene, head to Žižkov, where edgy bars, cosy pubs and late-night venues buzz with energy.

Those seeking sophistication will find it in the cocktail lounges of Vinohrady, where expertly mixed drinks are served in chic, intimate settings. For a memorable finale, take a moonlit cruise along the Vltava, where the city's illuminated landmarks reflect beautifully on the water.

#### Adventure Beyond the City

Prague also caters to thrill-seekers. Tandem skydiving offers a bird's-eye view of the countryside, while white-water rafting on the Vltava provides a rush closer to the ground. Nature lovers can escape the city on a day trip to Bohemian Switzerland National Park, where sandstone cliffs, deep gorges and forested trails create a dramatic contrast to urban life.





## Cafés and Restaurants

Prague's dining scene blends tradition with innovation. Historic cafés such as Café Savoy serve strong coffee and classic pastries in elegant surroundings, while neighbourhoods like Karlín have become hubs for contemporary cuisine. Eska reimagines Czech classics with seasonal, locally sourced ingredients, while Old Town favourite V Zátiší pairs fresh seafood with refined Czech dishes.

Vegetarian and vegan travellers are equally well catered for, with cafés like Můj šálek kávy offering creative, plant-based menus. For a special occasion, Terasa U Zlaté studně in Malá Strana delivers fine dining with unforgettable views.

## Where to Stay

Accommodation in Prague ranges from grand luxury to boutique charm. The Four Seasons and Marriott offer five-star comfort in prime locations, while Hotel Paris Prague impresses with its Art Nouveau interiors and views over the historic centre. Wherever you stay, the city's compact layout makes exploration easy.

## Shopping in Prague

Prague's shopping scene is as varied as the city itself. Parízská Street caters to luxury shoppers with international designer labels, while Havelská Market is ideal for authentic Czech goods. The Bohemian Garnet Gallery showcases exquisite jewellery rooted in local tradition, and Golden Lane and Malá Strana offer charming boutiques, antiques, and independent bookstores.

## Insider Tips for Visiting Prague

To experience Prague at its best, visit major attractions like Charles Bridge and Prague Castle early in the morning or late in the evening to avoid crowds. The city's tram network is efficient, affordable and one of the best ways to get around while soaking up local life.

Sample traditional dishes at family-run restaurants for an authentic taste of Czech cuisine, and book tickets in advance for popular attractions to skip



queues and save time.

Romantic yet rebellious, historic yet inventive, Prague is a city that rewards curiosity. Whether you come for its castles, cocktails, culture or quirks, the Czech capital promises an experience that lingers long after you leave.

## Best Time to Visit Prague

Prague casts its spell year-round, each season lending the city a distinct mood. Spring (April to June) is especially inviting, with blooming gardens, mild temperatures, and long

daylight hours ideal for exploring parks and historic neighbourhoods. Summer brings festivals, outdoor concerts, and vibrant street life, though it also marks the peak tourist season.

Autumn transforms Prague into a canvas of warm gold and rust, making it a favourite time for photographers and leisurely strolls. Winter, meanwhile, cloaks the city in festive charm, as Christmas markets fill the squares with the scent of mulled wine and roasted chestnuts, and snow-dusted rooftops add to the magic.

# Diriyah 2026: Saudi Arabia's Contemporary Art Moment Takes Flight

*Opening January 30, 2026, the Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale invites global travellers to experience Saudi Arabia through art, movement, and cultural exchange.*

**S**et against the storied landscape of Diriyah—where the foundations of the first Saudi state were laid—the Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale has swiftly become one of the Middle East's most

compelling cultural fixtures. Since its launch in 2021, the Biennale has transformed this historic town on the outskirts of Riyadh into a destination for discerning travellers, collectors, and art enthusiasts seeking something

beyond the expected.

The third edition of the Biennale opens on **January 30, 2026**, unfolding across the **JAX District**, Diriyah's creative quarter and one of the region's most ambitious cultural developments.





### Art in Motion: 'In Interludes and Transitions'

Titled *In Interludes and Transitions*, the 2026 Biennale draws on a colloquial Arabic phrase that reflects the rhythms of life across the Arabian Peninsula—movement shaped by trade, migration, pilgrimage, and exchange.

Here, movement becomes both subject and metaphor. More than seventy international artists explore how ideas travel across borders, how cultures intersect, and how creative expression evolves in moments of arrival and departure. Visitors can expect a carefully curated blend of visual art, sound installations, performance, and spatial interventions that unfold across indoor and open-air settings.

The Biennale will also debut **twenty newly commissioned works**, reinforcing its commitment to original artistic production and contemporary relevance. Artistic direction is led by **Nora Razian and Sabih Ahmed**, with exhibition design by the acclaimed studio **Formafantasma**, ensuring an

immersive and elegantly choreographed experience.

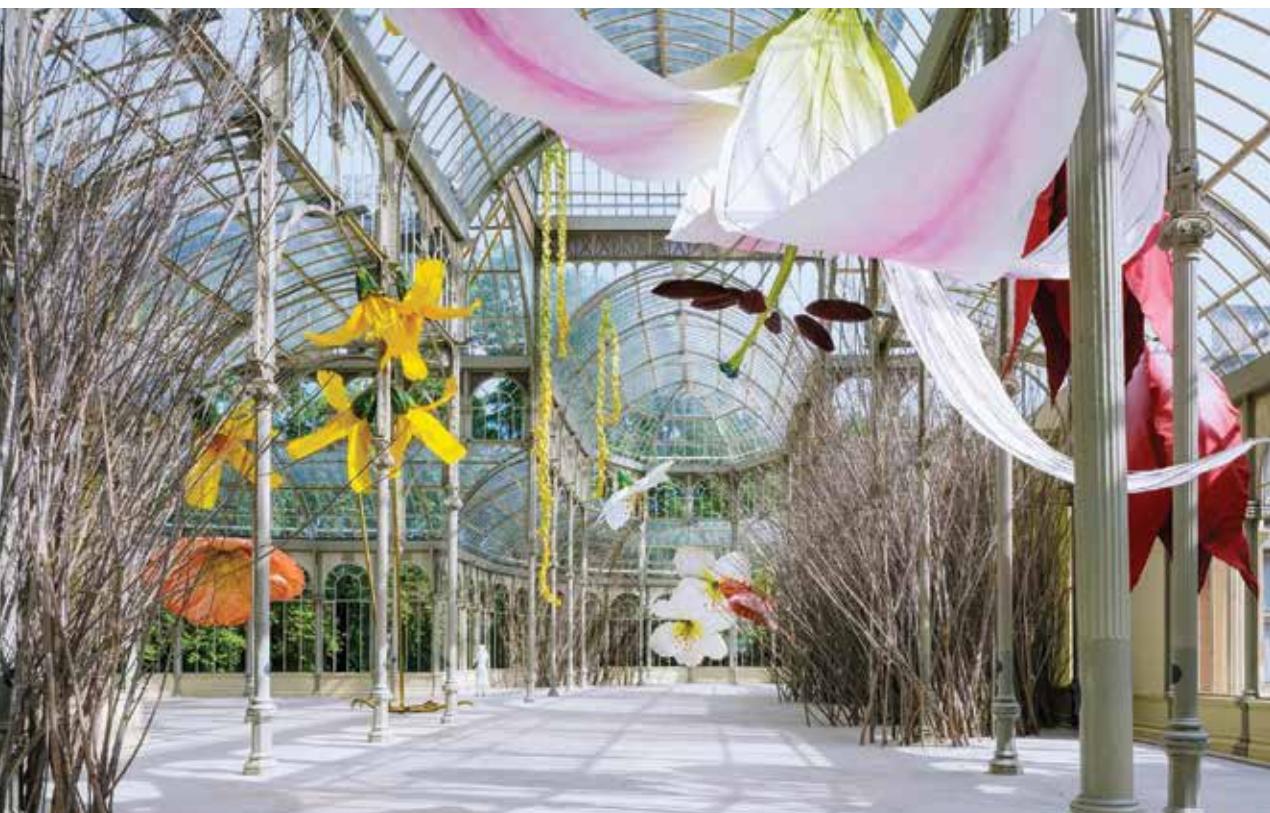
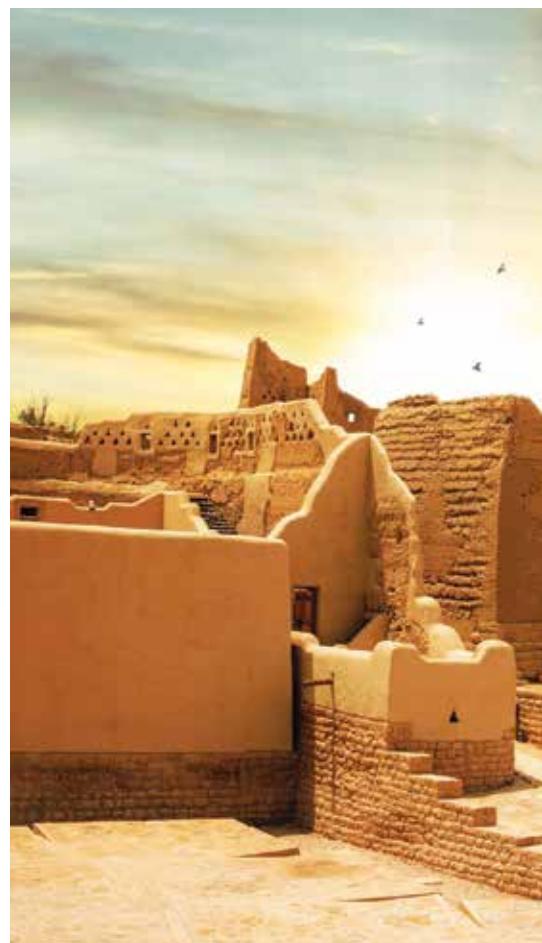
### Where History Becomes the Canvas

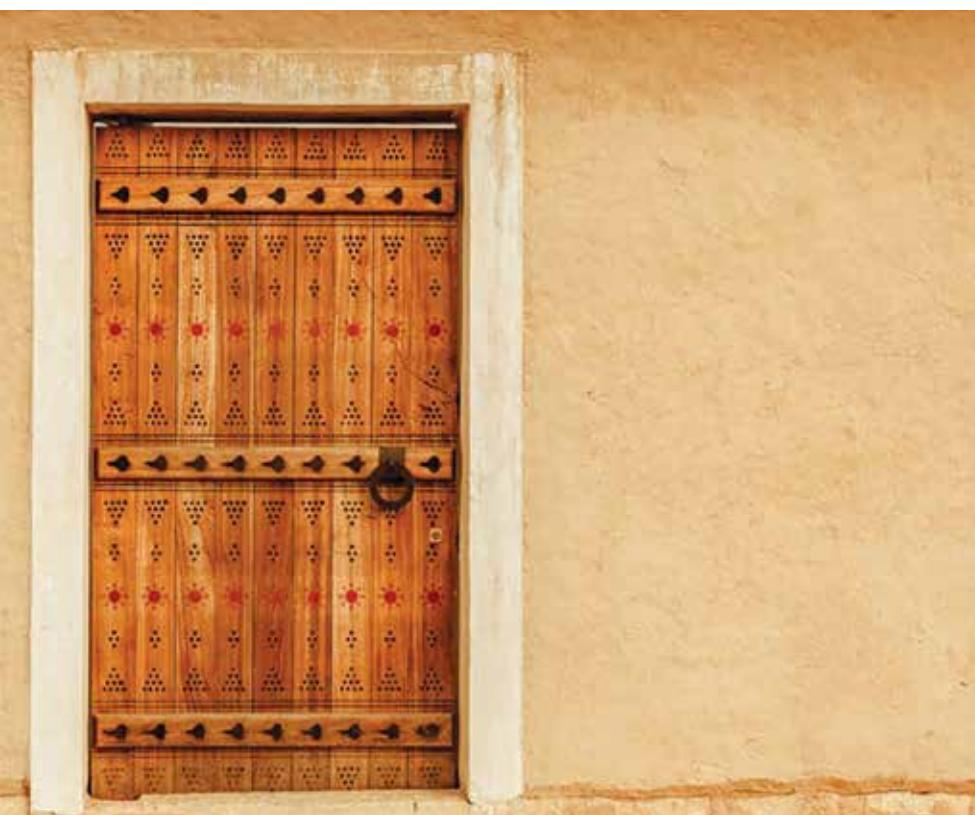
Diriyah is not merely a host—it is an integral part of the Biennale's narrative. Once the capital of the first Saudi state, the town's mudbrick architecture, palm-lined pathways, and UNESCO-listed **At-Turaif** district create a striking counterpoint to the contemporary works on display.

As the curators observe, the region's long history of movement—of winds, caravans, traders, and storytellers shaped its cultural language. The Biennale builds on this legacy, using art to explore how circulation and exchange continue to shape identity today.

### Global Voices, Singular Perspectives

The preliminary artist list includes **Pio Abad, Rand Abdul Jabbar, Raven Chacon, Rohini Devasher, Petrit Halilaj, Raqs Media Collective, and Agustina Woodgate**, among others. Their works span continents and disciplines, offering





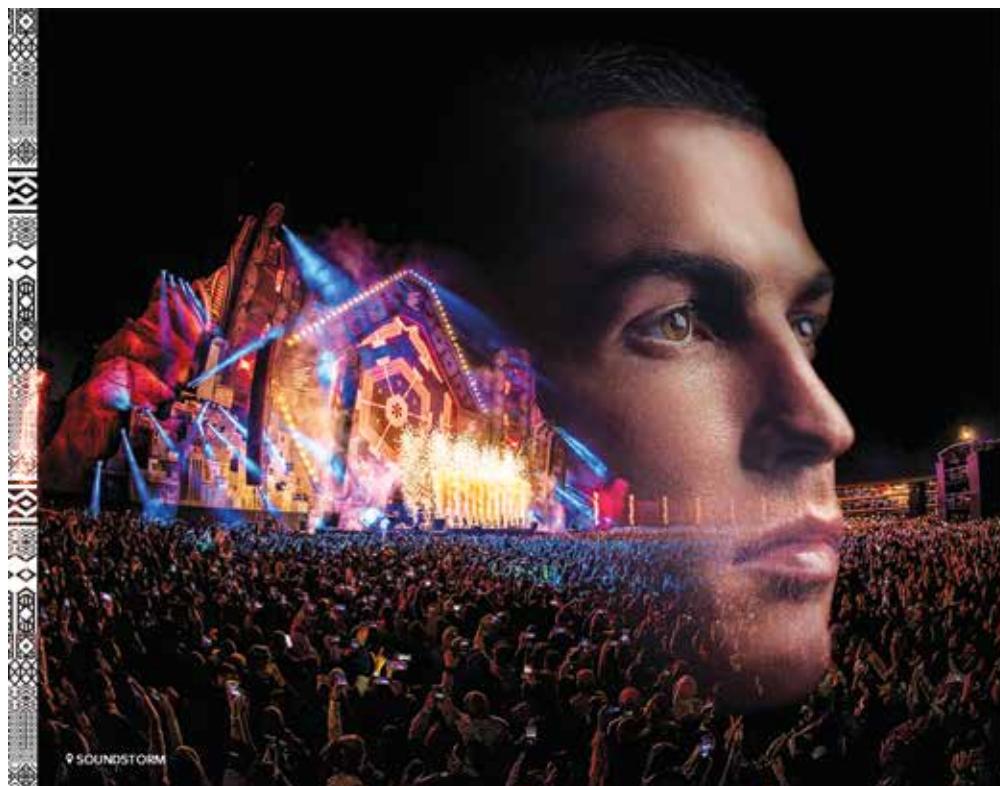
perspectives that are at once personal and political, reflective, and forward-looking.

From soundscapes that trace migratory routes to installations that fold memory into architectural form, the Biennale invites viewers to slow down, reflect, and engage—luxuries in their own right.

#### A Cultural Stopover Worth Planning For

At the heart of this initiative is the **Diriyah Biennale Foundation**, chaired by **HH Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan Al Saud**, which continues to position Saudi Arabia as a rising force in global culture. Through its biennales, exhibitions, and educational programmes, the foundation bridges heritage with contemporary creativity, offering visitors a rare window into a society in dynamic transformation.

For travellers passing through Riyadh—or planning a dedicated cultural escape—the Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale offers a compelling reason to linger. Framed by history, shaped by movement, and driven by bold artistic vision, it is an experience designed to resonate long after the journey continues.



**“I came  
for football,  
I stayed  
for more.”**

— CRISTIANO RONALDO



# Saudi Arabia's Events Calendar Is So Compelling, Even Ronaldo Stayed

*Cristiano Ronaldo fronts “I Came for Football, I Stayed for More,” as the Kingdom unveils a year-round programme where sport, culture, and spectacle converge.*

## A New Rhythm of Travel

*With I Came for Football, I Stayed for More, Saudi Arabia presents itself not as a destination to be visited once, but as one to be returned to. Ronaldo's presence serves as a familiar point of entry, but the story ultimately belongs to the Kingdom itself, a place defined by momentum, ambition, and an ever-evolving cultural landscape.*

Think you have mastered the art of travel planning? Saudi Arabia is now offering something far more ambitious: an entire calendar designed to keep visitors coming back. And if proof were

needed, look no further than Cristiano Ronaldo. Officially in the Kingdom for football, the global icon has found himself staying for something bigger—a relentless rhythm of events that extends far beyond the pitch.

In Saudi Arabia's newest global campaign, *I Came for Football, I Stayed for More*, Ronaldo steps away from centre stage and into the stands. The opening scene is deliberate and telling: the world's most recognisable athlete watching, absorbing, and then being swept up by the energy around him. The visuals shift from stark black and

white to vivid colour, from empty seats to roaring crowds, as the narrative widens. Football, it suggests, is only the beginning.

## A Calendar Without an Off-Season

Saudi Arabia's “Unreal Calendar” is unapologetically ambitious. Formula 1 races cut through desert landscapes. Fashion weeks unfold against historic backdrops. eSports tournaments fill vast arenas. Independent cinema premieres on the Red Sea coast. And between it all, global concerts, cultural festivals, and international sporting championships ensure there is no such thing as a quiet month.

“We have hosted more than 100 major international events since 2018,” says **Fahd Hamidaddin**, Chief Executive Officer of the Saudi Tourism Authority. “Our calendar continues to grow—and with it, the country's global appeal.”

The pace is deliberate. One week, couture glides through Riyadh Fashion Week; the next, filmmakers gather in Jeddah for the Red Sea International Film Festival. Add the Asian Winter Games, the eSports World Cup, and

Formula 1 circuits etched into the sand, and the concept of a traditional high season quickly dissolves.

### Where the Future of Sport Takes Shape

For Ronaldo, the message is clear. "This is where the future of sport is being written," he says in the campaign—a statement that reflects the scale of Saudi Arabia's ambitions. Behind the scenes, the Kingdom is investing heavily in world-class infrastructure, with long-term commitments reportedly exceeding hundreds of billions of dollars, and a national vision that targets 150 million annual visitors by 2030.

Stadiums, circuits, performance venues, and cultural districts are rising across the country, each designed not only to host global events but to connect travellers with Saudi Arabia's

evolving identity—one rooted in heritage, yet firmly oriented toward the future.

As **His Excellency Ahmed Al Khateeb**, Saudi Arabia's Minister of Tourism, explains: "Saudi is establishing itself as a global destination that brings together cultural authenticity, warm hospitality, and the excitement of world-class events."

### Beyond the Headline Acts

What sets Saudi Arabia's events strategy apart is its breadth. From the neon-lit intensity of eSports arenas to the sun-washed grandeur of AlUla's ancient landscapes, the calendar spans both spectacle and substance. Visitors might arrive for a Formula 1 Grand Prix, stay for a fashion showcase or film premiere, and leave having explored centuries-old heritage sites in between.

Every weekend offers a new narrative, yet each experience is anchored in the Kingdom's cultural depth—ensuring the excitement lingers long after the final whistle, closing credits, or chequered flag.

### A Destination in Motion

With *I Came for Football, I Stayed for More*, Cristiano Ronaldo becomes more than a campaign ambassador; he becomes a lens through which Saudi Arabia is seen in motion. It is a destination no longer defined by a single attraction or season, but by momentum—where sport, culture, and ambition collide on a global stage.

For travellers accustomed to choosing between experiences, Saudi Arabia is making a bold promise: you no longer have to. The calendar is ready. The invitation is open.





# Top 26 Places to Visit in the **USA**

— 2026 Edition —

*A First-Class Traveller's Guide to America's Most Coveted Destinations*



From historic milestones and global sporting spectacles to epic landscapes and iconic road trips, **2026 presents a singular moment to experience the United States at its most dynamic.** With celebrations marking America's 250th anniversary, alongside the *FIFA World Cup 2026* and *Super Bowl LX*, the year promises a rare convergence of culture, sport, heritage, and travel.

Whether your journey leads you to the architectural drama of Chicago, the cinematic coastlines of California, the jazz-soaked streets of New Orleans, or the untamed wilderness of Yellowstone, the United States offers an extraordinary diversity of experiences. Here is a **curated selection of**

**twenty-six destinations**—each distinct, each unforgettable—that defines the country's appeal in 2026.

### Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

#### Where the American story begins

Few cities capture the spirit of the nation, quite like Philadelphia. Home to **Independence Hall** and the **Liberty Bell**, the city's Revolutionary roots take centre stage in 2026, complemented by *FIFA World Cup* matches at Lincoln Financial Field. Between museum visits and historic walks, indulge in the city's culinary icons—from classic cheesesteaks to refined modern dining. A stay at the newly restored **Bellevue Hotel** adds a touch of Gilded Age elegance.

### Washington, D.C.

#### Power, symbolism, and celebration

As the nation marks 250 years, the capital becomes a focal point of commemoration. Monument-lined avenues, world-class museums, and neighbourhoods rich in culture make Washington, D.C. essential viewing. Timed visits during the **National Cherry Blossom Festival** in spring or Independence celebrations later in the year elevate the experience.

### Boston, Massachusetts

#### Walking through revolution

Boston's cobbled streets and colonial landmarks come alive in 2026 with immersive historical reenactments. Walking the **Freedom**





**Trail** offers a chronological journey through America's founding moments, while its museums and waterfront dining ensure contemporary pleasures remain close at hand.

### New York City, New York

#### The world's capital of culture

In 2026, New York is a city in celebration mode. From Broadway premieres and landmark exhibitions to World Cup excitement nearby, the city pulses with energy. Elevated viewpoints—from **Summit One Vanderbilt** to **Top of the Rock**—offer fresh perspectives on a skyline that never fails to inspire.



### Chicago, Illinois

#### Architecture, art, and urban rhythm

The birthplace of the skyscraper continues to set benchmarks in design and culture. Architectural river cruises, jazz clubs, and iconic institutions such as the **Art Institute of Chicago** anchor a city that balances Midwestern warmth with global sophistication.

### Route 66

#### The ultimate American road trip

Stretching from Chicago to Santa Monica, **Route 66** remains the quintessential expression of freedom on four wheels. Neon-lit diners,





desert landscapes, and small-town Americana make this legendary highway as meaningful as the destination.

### Santa Monica & Beverly Hills, California

#### Coastal glamour and cinematic allure

Santa Monica's sunlit pier and Pacific-facing promenades pair effortlessly with the polished luxury of Beverly Hills. Designer shopping on **Rodeo Drive**, cultural landmarks, and beachside leisure create a refined Southern California escape.



### Big Sur, California

#### Where wilderness meets the Pacific

Cliffs plunging into the ocean, redwood forests, and winding coastal roads define Big Sur. Stops at **McWay Falls**, **Point Lobos**, and remote beaches transform a drive into a deeply sensory experience.

### Santa Barbara, California

#### The American Riviera

Spanish colonial architecture, vineyard-draped hills, and a relaxed coastal elegance define Santa Barbara. Whale watching, wine tasting in the Santa Ynez Valley, and sunset harbour cruises make this a refined retreat.

### Yosemite National Park, California

#### Nature on a monumental scale

Granite cliffs, ancient sequoias, and cascading waterfalls make Yosemite one of America's most awe-inspiring landscapes. Whether hiking, stargazing, or simply absorbing the silence, the park delivers a powerful sense of perspective.

### New Orleans, Louisiana

#### Music, history, and soul

A city shaped by French, African, and American influences, New Orleans comes alive during **Mardi Gras 2026**. Jazz-filled streets, Creole

cuisine, and storied architecture ensure every visit resonates long after departure.

### Charleston, South Carolina

#### **Southern grace and history**

Pastel-hued streets, antebellum architecture, and coastal charm define Charleston. From historic plantations to vibrant markets and waterfront strolls, the city blends heritage with refined leisure.

### Miami to Key West Road Trip, Florida

#### **Island-hopping by highway**

The Overseas Highway offers one of the world's most scenic drives, linking coral islands with sweeping ocean views. End in Key West, where Caribbean influences and laid-back sophistication prevail.

### Cape Cod, Massachusetts

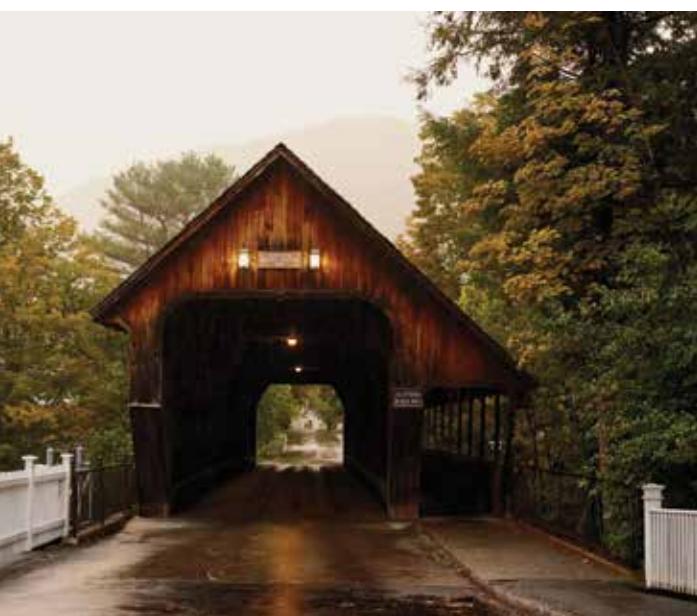
#### **Timeless seaside escape**

Lighthouses, dunes, and charming towns define Cape Cod's enduring appeal. Summer brings whale watching, vineyard visits, and relaxed coastal dining—best enjoyed at an unhurried pace.

### Anchorage, Alaska

#### **Gateway to the great north**

From glacier views and wildlife encounters to Northern Lights





sightings, Anchorage offers access to Alaska's raw beauty while retaining cultural depth through Indigenous heritage and museums.

### **Yellowstone National Park** **Earth's living laboratory**

Home to geysers, canyons, and roaming bison, Yellowstone delivers one of the most dramatic natural experiences in the world. Each season

reveals a distinctive character, from snowbound serenity to summer abundance.

### **Oahu, Hawaii** **Culture, coastlines, and heritage**

Oahu blends iconic beaches with Polynesian history. Pearl Harbor, Diamond Head, and world-class surfing sit alongside vibrant food scenes and lush hiking trails.

### **Salt Lake City, Utah**

#### **Urban gateway to the wild**

A dynamic city framed by mountains, Salt Lake City offers cultural diversity, outdoor adventure, and access to Utah's famed national parks.

### **Williamsburg, Virginia**

#### **Living history**

Colonial Williamsburg and nearby Jamestown provide immersive insight



into early American life, complemented by world-class theme parks and refined dining.

### Woodstock, Vermont

#### Quintessential New England

Covered bridges, pastoral landscapes, and artisanal traditions make Woodstock a serene retreat, particularly during autumn foliage season.

### Bentonville, Arkansas

#### Art, design, and outdoor innovation

A surprising cultural hub, Bentonville combines world-class art institutions with cutting-edge cycling infrastructure and modern hospitality.

### Indianapolis, Indiana

#### Family-friendly sophistication

From the world's largest children's

museum to historic monuments and a lively arts district, Indianapolis offers accessible culture with Midwestern charm.

### Great Basin National Park, Nevada

#### America's quiet wilderness

Ancient bristlecone pines, alpine trails, and pristine night skies make this lesser-known park ideal for travellers seeking solitude and authenticity.

### Hannibal, Missouri

#### Literary Americana

Mark Twain's boyhood home anchors this Mississippi River town, where classic American literature meets small-town nostalgia.

### New Jersey

#### Beyond the skyline

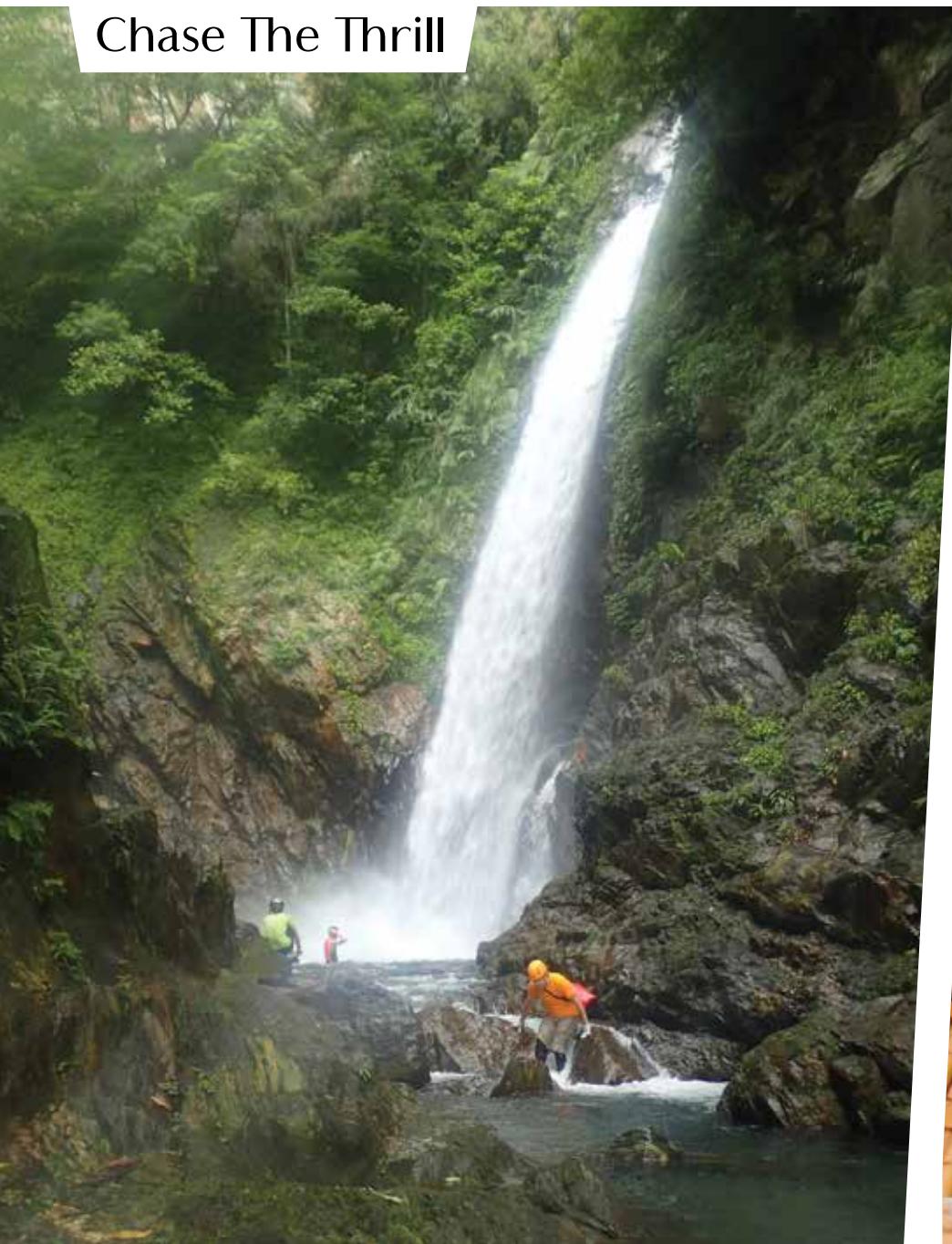
Often overlooked, New Jersey offers historic towns, coastal escapes, and World Cup excitement at MetLife Stadium—alongside sweeping views of Manhattan.

### A Nation Worth Rediscovering

In 2026, the United States stands at a crossroads of celebration and reinvention. From storied cities and coastal retreats to legendary highways and untamed wilderness, this is a year that invites travellers not just to visit—but to **experience America in full colour, depth, and dimension.**



Chase The Thrill



# Taiwan's Most Spectacular Adventure Trails & Water Escapes



Taiwan is an island where wilderness is never out of reach. While its vibrant night markets and shimmering skylines often take centre stage, beyond the cityscape lies a landscape sculpted by volcanoes, rivers, and shifting tectonic plates. Here, towering alpine peaks, marble gorges, emerald rivers and dramatic coastlines converge — creating one of Asia's most compact adventure destinations.

For thrill-seekers, Taiwan offers adrenaline with accessibility: well-marked trails, expert guides and robust safety infrastructure ensure the freedom to explore with confidence. Add in a deep Indigenous heritage and centuries-old pathways, and each journey becomes an immersion into nature and culture that is intertwined.

From cloud-high ridges to refreshing canyon descents, these are the outdoor experiences that define Taiwan's wild side.

#### HIGH-ALTITUDE HIGHLIGHTS

Where the air is crisp and the scenery astonishing

**Hehuanshan (Mount Hehuan) — Nantou & Hualien**

A favourite for its accessibility, Hehuanshan offers alpine adventure without technical climbing. Peaks including the **Main Peak (3,417 m)**, **East Peak**, **North Peak** and **Shimen Mountain** rise above a rolling sea of clouds. Clear



mornings deliver panoramic sunrises and seasonal rhododendron blooms across endless ridgelines.



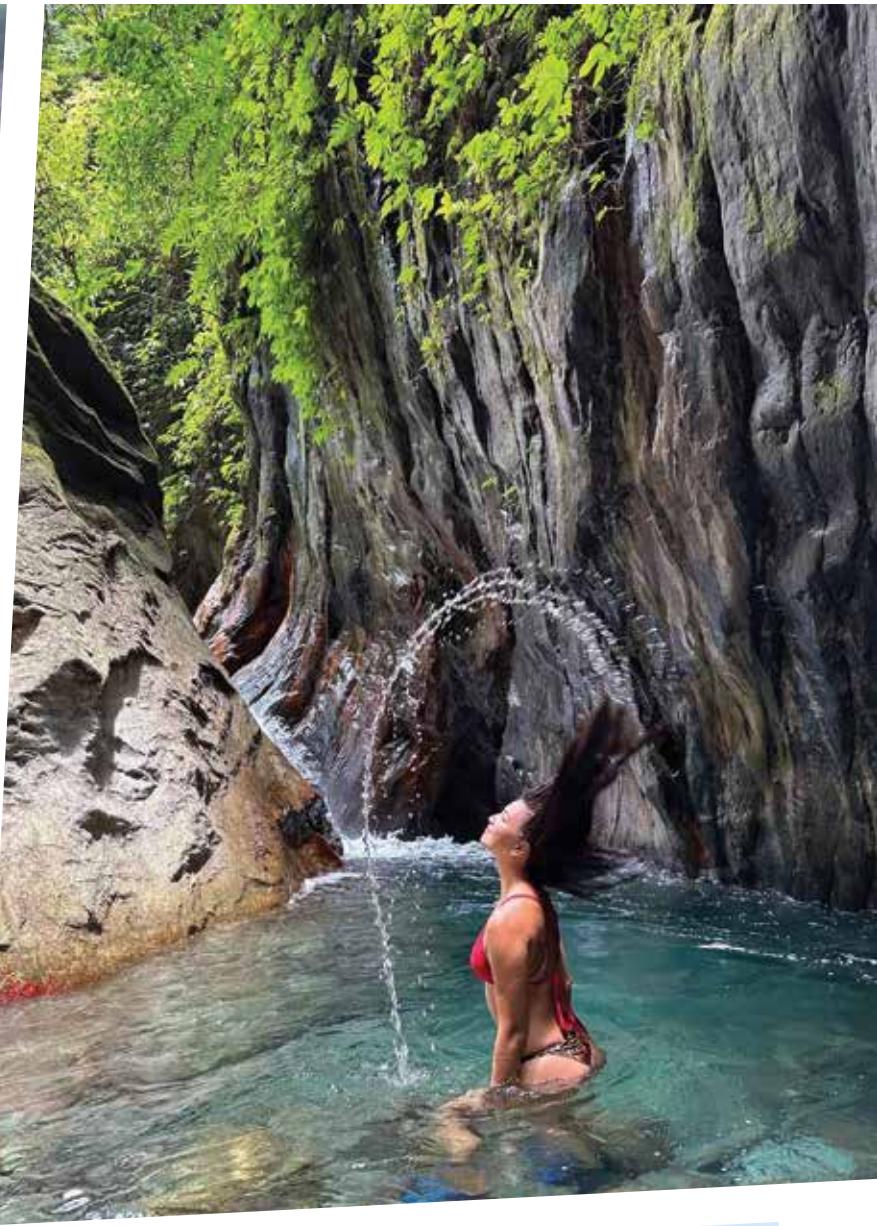
#### Taroko Gorge National Park

Taiwan's most celebrated natural icon. Here, sheer marble walls, cliff-hugging trails and rushing rivers create a cinematic hiking experience. The **Shakadang Trail** traces sapphire blue waters beneath jungle slopes — manageable yet rewarding. For those craving vertigo-inducing drama, **Zhuiyu Old Trail** and **Baiyang Trail** offer heightened thrills along narrow ledges and tunnel routes carved through rock.

#### COASTAL & LOWLAND ADVENTURES

**Trails where the ocean and mountains intertwine**  
**Sandiaoling Waterfall Trail — New Taipei**

A gentle **3-km** route that rewards hikers with a trio of waterfalls and scenic bridges. Close to Pingxi's famous sky lantern sights, it is ideal for families and casual explorers.



### Caoling Historic Trail — Northeast Coast

This restored Qing-era trail combines coastal panoramas, meadows and windswept cliffs for one of the region's finest day hikes — a seamless blend of history and scenic splendour.

### WATER ESCAPES & CANYONING THRILLS

**Cool, clear, and designed for pure exhilaration**

### Jinyue Waterfall — Yilan

A perfect introduction to river trekking: natural slides, gorge





swimming and optional cliff jumps — including a daring **three-storey plunge** for the bold.

#### YiHsin Canyoning — with Shawa Canyoning

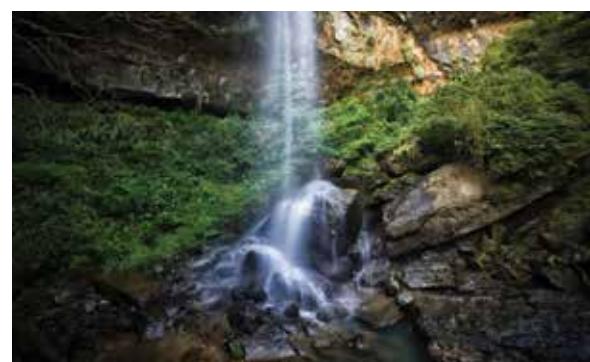
A technical and adrenaline-charged aquatic expedition. Expect **rappels down cascading falls**, leaps into deep pools and exploration behind sheets of water — best for those with strong fitness and a taste for the wild.

#### Eternal Spring Shrine — Taroko Gorge

A serene counterpoint to the high energy of canyoning. A picturesque shrine built into a cliff where waterfalls spill beneath its foundations — one of the park's most photographed sanctuaries.

#### THE CALL OF THE WILD

Whether you are scrambling along Taroko's cliff edges, traversing cloud-topped summits, or diving into waterfall-filled canyons, Taiwan promises a spectrum of adventures that elevate the heart and ignite the spirit. This island invites you to explore nature at full volume — unforgettable, untamed and refreshingly close.



#### PLANNING YOUR ADVENTURE

Consideration	Key Information
Trail Conditions	Trails may close due to typhoons or landslides — always check official advisories.
Permits	Required for some routes, including <b>Zhuliu Old Trail</b> and select alpine peaks.
Gear	Hiking shoes, rain protection, a headlamp, water shoes for canyoning, and warm layers for high elevations.
Best Seasons	<b>Spring &amp; Autumn</b> for hiking; <b>Summer</b> for river adventures; <b>Winter</b> for snowy peaks.
Getting Around	Public transport and guided services reach most adventure hubs; local expertise is recommended for canyon routes.

# EXPERIENCE

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