

Ten of the best cultural escapes to get inspired by



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Discover a world of awe-inspiring cultural getaways guaranteed to satisfy that wanderlust.

In this wonderfully wide world, it's hard to choose one destination that delivers the ultimate travel experience. Should you unwrap the mysteries of lost civilizations in South America? Explore spiritual meccas in Asia? Or wander around architectural masterpieces in Europe?

We've scoured the planet to bring you 10 of the most incredible culture-rich destinations. So dive into our treasure trove of travel gems and pick out your favorite.



01 Rome, Italy



02 Cusco, Peru



05 Beijing, China



07 Jerusalem, Israel



06 Istanbul, Turkey



10 Luxor, Egypt



09 Kyoto, Japan

Rome, Italy

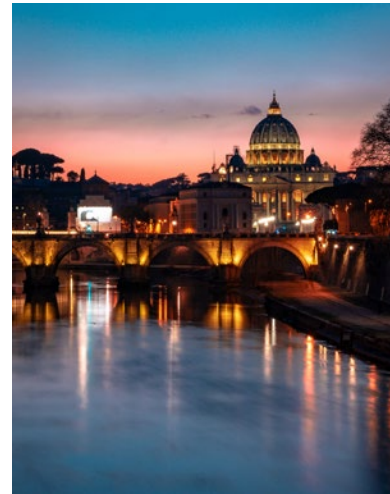


01



Get seduced by a city of swoon-worthy sites—from the Sistine Chapel and Colosseum to centuries-old palaces and villas¹. You can channel your inner Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck with a romantic Roman Holiday or curate your own masterpiece framed by sun-dappled streets and enchanting fountains.

Head to Trastevere for a vibrant neighborhood of independent boutiques and outdoor terraces². Prati is ideal if you're visiting the Vatican City³. Or pick the Pantheon area for luxury hotels and beauty on your doorstep⁴. You can stay in historic hotels with frescos on the wall⁵ or have breakfast on your private balcony in a Roman villa. Peel back layers of history in this bewitching city that'll leave you wanting more.



Cusco, Peru

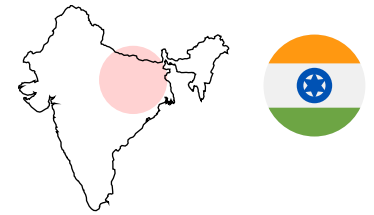


Cusco is a UNESCO World Heritage Site⁶ 3400 meters above sea-level^{7,8}, and while many see it as just the gateway to Machu Picchu, it has a whole lot more to explore.⁹ Sip a purple corn drink in the Plaza de Armas^{10,11}, and try Andean cheese from the bustling San Pedro market for a taste of Cusco's cultural delights. Many consider Cusco Cathedral the most beautiful in Peru with "The Last Supper" showing dining on local guinea pig¹².

Take your pick from many historic boutique hotels with garden terraces, spas, pools, and balconies. Stay in San Blas—a hilly bohemian area brimming with cute coffee shops and restaurants tucked down narrow alleyways¹³. If you're heading to Machu Picchu from Cusco, you can stay in a luxury dome hotel offering sigh-inducing views of the Sacred Valley¹⁴.



Varanasi, India

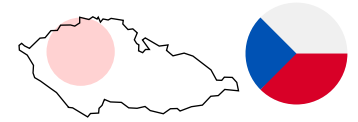


Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh¹⁵ is the holiest of Hindu's 7 sacred cities and draws pilgrims who believe those cremated here can achieve "moksha" and go straight to heaven¹⁶. The city appears to spill into the Ganges; it's both chaotic and a spiritual wonder, unlike anywhere else on Earth.

Hire a boat at sunrise as the morning sun casts an orange glow over the ghats where people bathe, swim, and wash laundry. Then return to the water at sunset to add your lit lotus candle to thousands of others floating in the water. Away from the water, a bicycle rickshaw is a terrific way to get around. You might see kids playing cricket along the ghats¹⁷ and encounter sacred cows¹⁸ down narrow alleyways. Stay in palaces or guest houses overlooking the Ganges for views never less than incredible.



Prague, Czechia

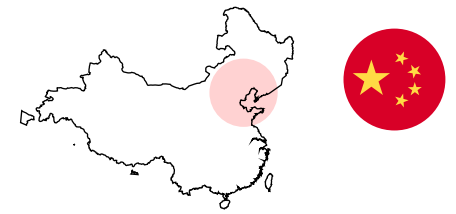


The City of a Hundred Spires is a small European capital nestled on a bend in the River Vltava with an abundance of classic architecture, cobbled alleyways, and pretty squares. The city's skyline of red-tiled roofs, patina-green domes, and gold-tipped towers glow in the evening sun. But Prague is not all ancient sites—it has plenty of surprises, too.

Visit the Nuclear Bunker Museum for a fascinating insight into Prague's Cold War past¹⁹. Or step into the spiraling tower of books in Prague's Municipal Library²⁰. You can also swap that world-famous beer for an absinthe ice cream²¹. Boat hotels²² offer a delightful night's rest where you can float off to sleep after a busy day.



Beijing, China

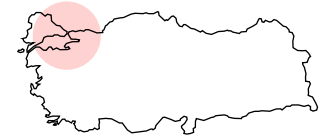


China's promised land is a contrast of ancient culture and rapid development with mouth-watering cuisine and dazzling sites. Explore labyrinthine hutongs (historic neighborhoods), visit antique markets²³, and try Tai Chi at the Temple of Heaven²⁴.

A visit to the Forbidden City²⁵ is worth a day, and no first trip is complete without standing on the Badaling section of the Great Wall of China²⁶. Step into 798 Art Zone for a mix of community history, Bauhaus industry, and contemporary art²⁷. A boutique hotel in Wangfujing, Qianmen, or Houhai captures the spirit of old Beijing.

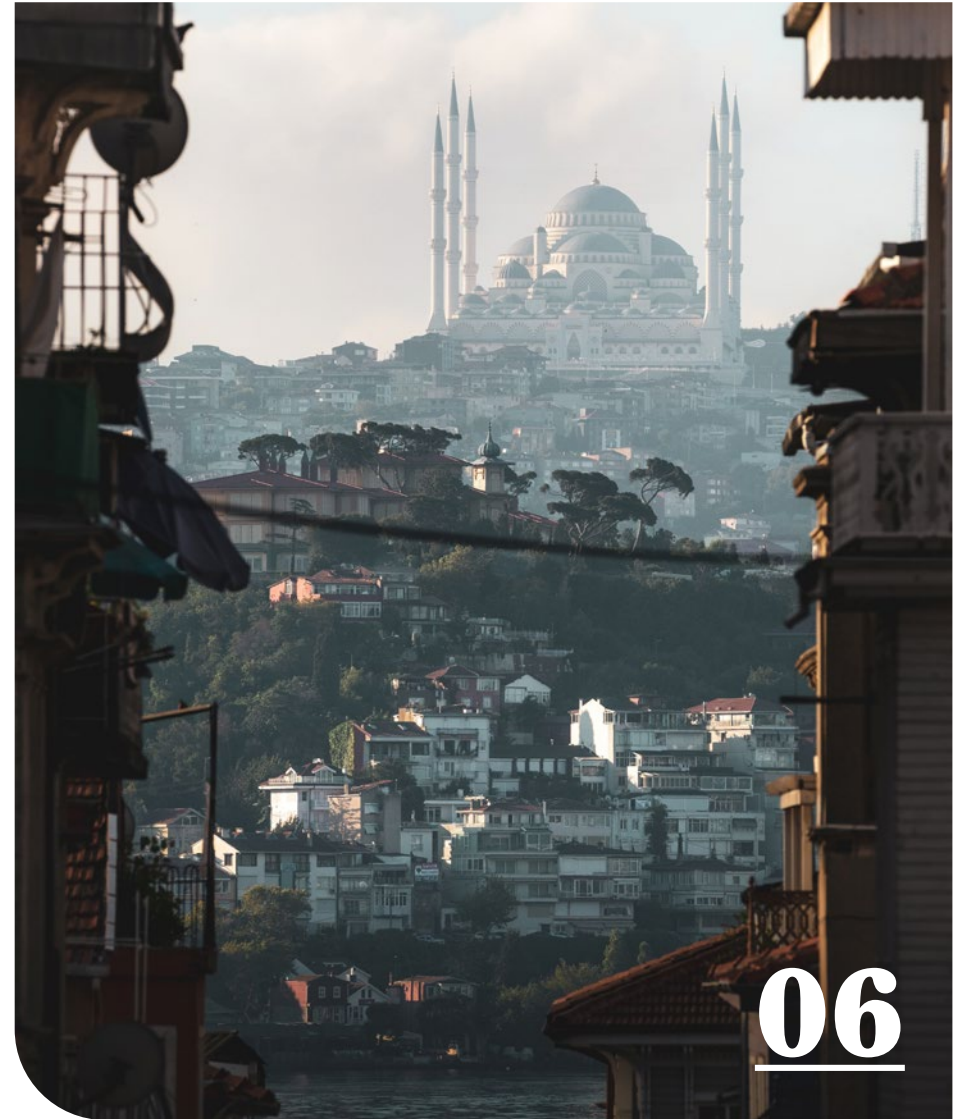


Istanbul, Turkey



Istanbul is a multifaceted and alluring meeting point between Europe and Asia²⁸, full of youthful energy and rich in both Western and Eastern influences. Locals will generously welcome you to incredible sites like Hagia Sophia Mosque²⁹, Topkapı Palace³⁰, and the Grand Bazaar³¹.

The district of Sultanahmet is in the heart of Istanbul and the perfect place to base yourself³². The atmospheric underground Basilica Cistern³³ is both unusual and mesmerizing, and cultural festivals of art and music fill the summer calendar. Stay in an Ottoman mansion³⁴ for a beautiful historic hotel experience.



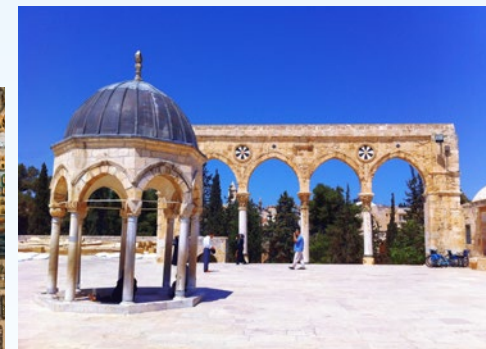
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Jerusalem, Israel



A holy city linked to the foundation of faith for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam³⁵, Jerusalem is a place of pilgrimage shimmering with intense beauty and mystery. It's a city that's been conquered, destroyed, and rebuilt many times over³⁶, and remains an archeological marvel, with new discoveries unearthed daily³⁷.

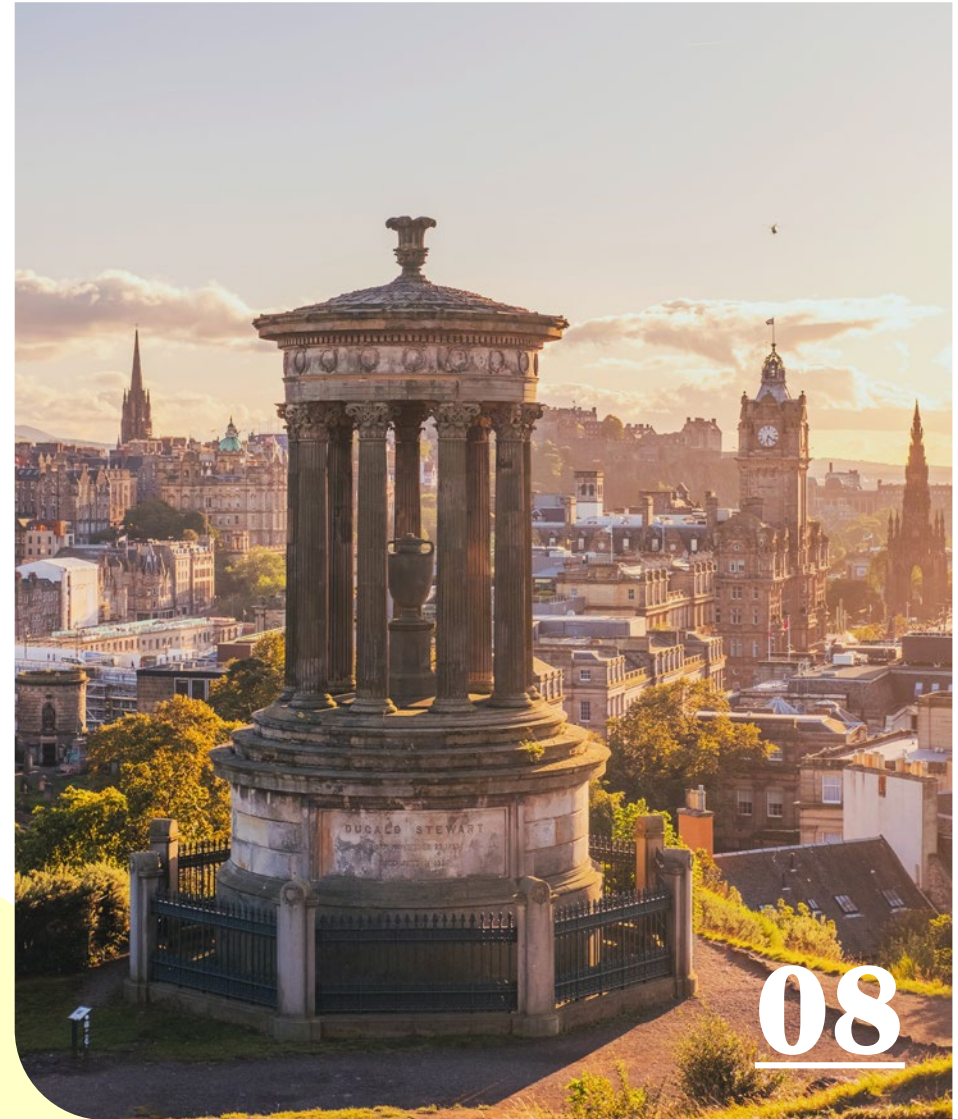
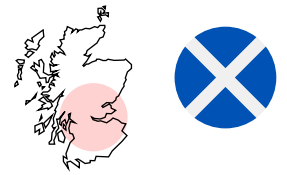
There's a dizzying number of religious sites, from the Western Wall³⁸ to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher³⁹, but it's wise to plan ahead and visit popular sites early in the morning. Take a food tour of Mahane Yehuda Market⁴⁰ downtown and turn your purchases into a picnic to enjoy in Bloomfield Garden overlooking Old City⁴¹. There are some wonderful bed and breakfasts in traditional stone houses worth checking out.



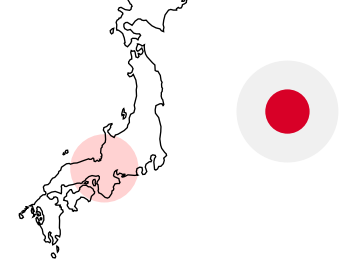
Edinburgh, Scotland

It's the hilltop castle, Royal Mile⁴², and cozy pubs along cobbled streets you can duck into that make Edinburgh so thoroughly charming and impossible to resist. Whether it's raining, sunny, or all weathers all at once, this is a city full of warmth and character—with a rich literary heritage⁴³ to boot.

Visit Gladstone's Land tenement house museum on the Royal Mile to explore 500 years of Edinburgh life and see if you can spot a monkey in the ceiling painted in 1620⁴⁴. The Surgeon's Hall Museum⁴⁵ is fascinating, but not for the squeamish. Stay in a Georgian townhouse boutique hotel or apartment near the city center for sleep with added splendor.

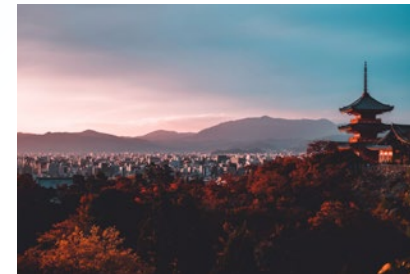
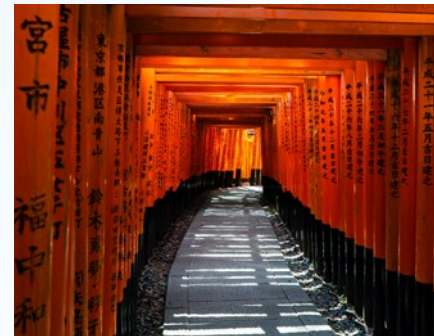


Kyoto, Japan

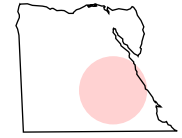


Kyoto melts the toughest of hearts. Picture trees laden with cherry blossom⁴⁶ in stunning Zen gardens, lavishly decorated palaces, shrines, and temples, and geishas in brightly colored silks walking down the streets of Gion⁴⁷. On the streets of Kyoto, you can explore a mix of modern and ancient cultures—and the noodles are simply delicious.

The public transport is excellent, but as Kyoto is flat and safe, it's ideal to see on two wheels, so rent a bike to explore the city with ease⁴⁸. A day trip to Arashiyama Bamboo Forest at the foot of Storm Mountains⁴⁹ is well worth it. Come the end of the day, remove your shoes and rest in a traditional ryokan⁵⁰ for a peaceful stay that feels worlds away from modern life.

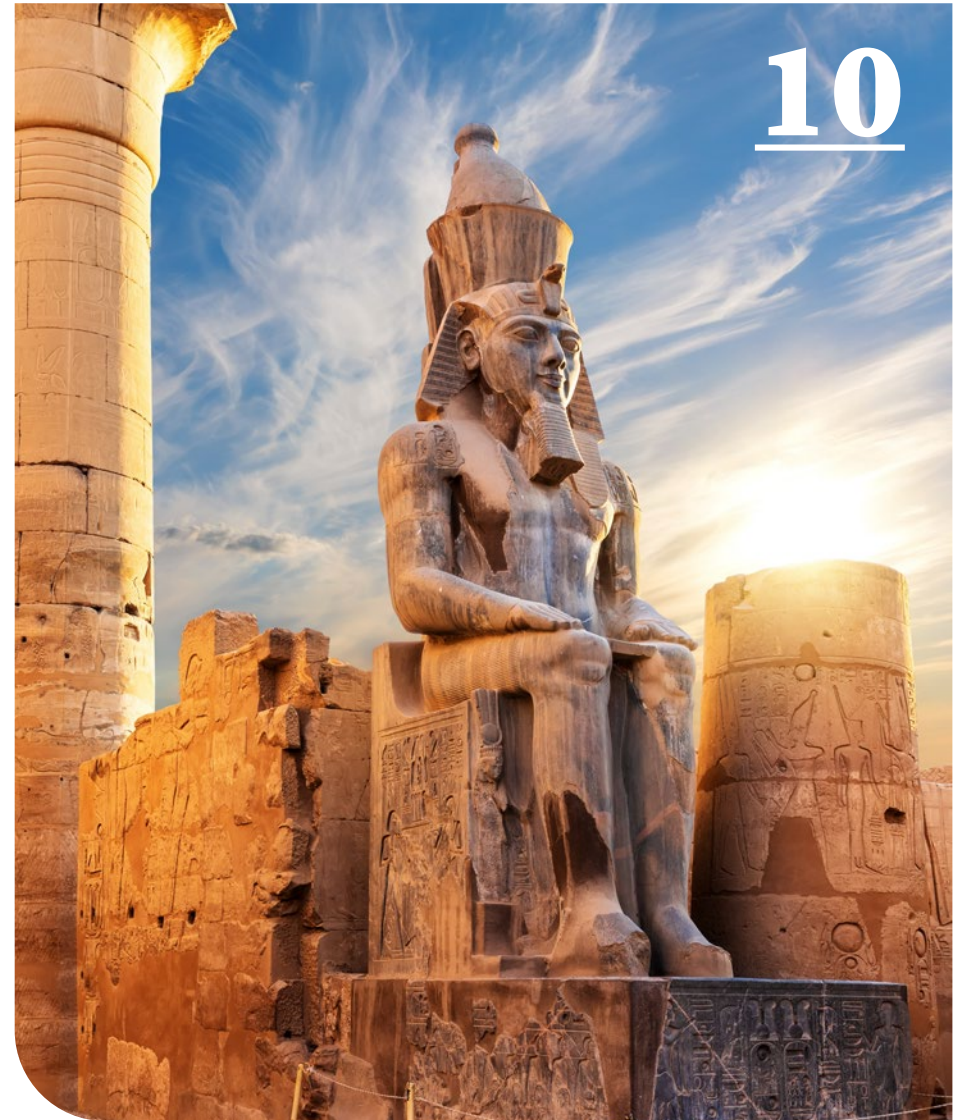


Luxor, Egypt



Luxor is one of the most amazing archaeological sites on the planet, dating back to 3200 BCE. The stone temples of ancient Thebes offer once-in-a-lifetime sites, such as Karnak Temple⁵¹, the Valley of the Kings⁵², and the Tomb of Nefertari. Split in two by the River Nile, the East Bank is the city, and the West Bank (where the sun sets) is the necropolis⁵³.

A hot-air balloon ride at sunrise is a spectacular way to see the incredible tombs and temples while flying over the Nile.⁵⁴ Visit Howard Carter House, home of the British archaeologist who discovered the Tomb of Tutankhamun a century ago⁵⁵. When you're looking for a place to stay, we recommend you go for a hotel or guesthouse with views of the Nile.



Want more? We're ready and waiting.

We love soaking up culture, so let us help you plan your next adventure—whether you've got 7 days, 2 weeks, or many months to do it in.

Get our expert travel advice, discover epic destinations, and get the cultural fix you're looking for. Now is the time to plan your ultimate trip so contact us today and start your journey.



Footnotes

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