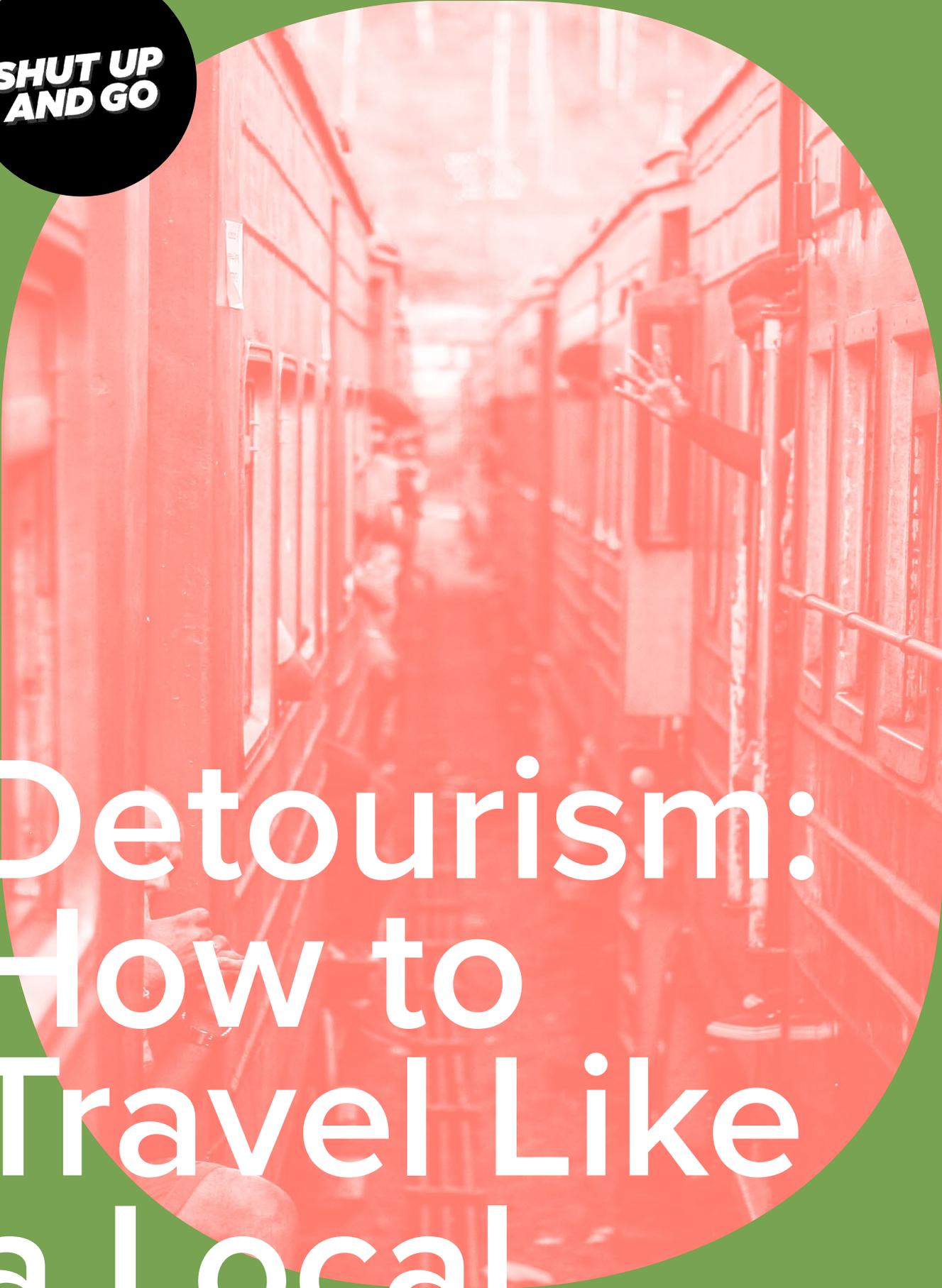


**SHUT UP
AND GO**



Detourism: How to Travel Like a Local

Author's Note

When I discovered Shut Up and Go, I was a clueless seventeen year-old who couldn't point out Germany on a map. I was desperately trying to figure out how to navigate the prescribed path of SATs, college apps, and nine-to-five jobs. Traveling on my own, speaking foreign languages, or having a social impact on my community wasn't on my radar. Not even a blip.

But I am continually inspired by the unique voices on our platform, individuals who overcome everything from flight anxiety to familial pressures just to travel. Individuals who work three jobs just to save up for that two-layover flight. Individuals who take gap years in order to see the world before settling down. Everyone in this group has such a raw curiosity for different customs, landscapes, and vibes. We recognize that we don't really know much about anything, and then we push each other to learn and grow, especially through exploration - and of course humor.

I try to avoid evangelizing travel because I recognize the barriers that many face when crossing country lines, from visa issues and vacation days to more intrinsic, involuntary facets of identity such as ethnicity and class. It's important to remember that no one chooses their own circumstances - some studies say your health is more determined by your zip code than your genetic code. I care about locals as much as I care about travelers, and I want both to benefit from this e-book.

When we're 80, sitting in rocking chairs, and reflecting on our Polaroids, we'll remember that we did everything we could to make sure the places we traveled to stayed intact. Who am I kidding, we'll still be shutting up and going.

Written by Samar Ahsan.

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001



**Guilty as
Charged**

001

Guilty as Charged

You've planned for weeks. Your itinerary spans four pages carefully detailing everything from what SIM card to buy, to what public transportation app to download; you update it obsessively. You follow new Instagram accounts that feature your destination. Ooh, I need to get a picture there, you think. It matches your laid-back, colorful aesthetic perfectly.

Your travel group chat is blowing up - "Can we please buy Cheetah Girl outfits and go to Parc

Guell on Friday?" "No Rachel, we're doing Gothic Quarter on Friday! Keep upppppp." Of course, you're the planner of the group. You wonder why you don't solo travel more often, but then you remember how you're splitting the price of the Airbnb rental with your friends. Rachel doesn't have to keep up, as long as she keeps putting down her card number!

Okay, it's time. Flight leaves in an hour, and you're already saddled up with your favorite Cabeau travel pillow and your mint gum to

avoid the irksome ear popping. You set up an automatic email that reads, “Sorry, I’m in Barcelona for the week, I’ll get back to you as soon as I can.” Ain’t nobody got time to be reading emails on vacation.

All boarded. You sob to a small-screen rendition of *The Hate U Give* while enjoying the free Cabernet and vigorously applying moisturizer to the dry patches erupting on your face. You’re landing at 9 a.m., shouldn’t you try to sleep? Nah, sleep is for the weak, you think. You can go a mere 36-hours without shut-eye; college prepared you well.

Fake news! It’s noon in Barcelona and you’re exhausted. Your friends aren’t faring any better - you all could really use that post-flight siesta right about now. Since Spaniards party until dawn, your internal clock will be thrown off for at least three days, so you better drink that café con leche and power through. First on your list is La Sagrada Familia, the Gaudí-designed basilíca that looks more like a spaceship than a house of worship. You admire the exterior before realizing that the line you saw snaking up the street is for the basilíca. Ugh, you hate lines.

You ask a man in a red vest, “Hola, señor, ¿cómo podemos entrar La Sagrada Familia?” That Spanish minor is really paying off, you think.

“It sold out at 9 a.m. this morning, maybe try again tomorrow,” he shrugs.

Today was supposed to be for Gaudí! you scowl. His other famed work, Casa Batllo, is no better. That line stretches for two blocks, and that’s with the €30 quick pass.

Your friends are getting antsy. They really just came to tan on the beach. “That house looks cool, what is that?” Rachel asks nonchalantly.

You don’t have the patience to school Rachel on the essence of Antoni Gaudí’s modernist architecture, inspired by patterns of nature - or his gruesome death by streetcar.

“Let’s just go check into our Airbnb,” you say dejectedly. At least you got a picture of the outside of the basilíca for your VSCO. At the Airbnb, which is a super chic apartment with red couches and two bedrooms, you meet your elderly host and her husband. The apartment has everything a tourist needs: easy metro access, strong Wi-Fi, and great air conditioning. You ask the hosts, “Are y’all from around here?”

“Of course not,” starts the Zara-clad abuela, “we live in Sant Cugat, we just rent this place out for the extra income!”

Must be nice to actually own property, you think. Millennials out here be struggling. You had envisioned a meet-cute with a Catalan hunk in the apartment complex stairwell, but then you realize your neighbors are loud British tourists. Not quite your type, but Rachel looks really excited.

The second day has you heading to La Rambla to do some shopping and, more importantly, eating. You’ve been dreaming of tapas ever since your ex took you to Mercado Little Spain in NYC. You dumped him, but you could never part with albondigas or patatas bravas. When you get there, La Rambla is packed. You trip over a street-seller in an effort to avoid a club promoter’s incessant solicitations. What you thought would be a quick stop in Pull & Bear took two hours, since your friends had to wait for the fitting rooms. Finally, you’re starving and can’t wait any longer. Your friends spot a truly authentic place nestled between garish souvenir shops. There are even pictures of the paella on the outside! How Spanish of them.



Everyone gets their own pitcher of sangria, which features a few chunks of apple and some wisps of an orange that didn't show up to the party. The paella looks nothing like the picture outside. I should've done more restaurant research, you think sullenly. At least you're getting buzzed. Time to hit the epic Barcelona nightlife scene.

Opium is your first stop of the night. If you had epilepsy, this nightclub would not be your best option. The lights are so trippy that you immediately lose all sense of direction. One of the guys from your friend group wasn't let in after a 40-minute wait outside because he was wearing sandals. You kept telling him, "Birkenstocks aren't for every occasion, Jeff." Now look where it has gotten him. After hearing maybe one Spanish song for every three English songs, you decide to head home.

The trip more or less continues in this direction. Parc Guell is a sea of tourists. You could hardly find a foot of clear sand at Barceloneta beach. The bus tour of Montjuic was, well, a bus tour. You blame yourself - your expectations were too high, you think.

When you arrive home, back to the hustle and grind of American work culture, you show off the pictures to your co-workers and post them on Facebook. "You have to go here, it was a dream!" you tell the world. All 1,000 of your Instagram followers start thinking that a trip to

Barcelona is in the cards. Abroad will change them. Boom, their plane tickets are bought, and the cycle continues.

Someone sends you an article. It's about how Barcelona is becoming a theme park for tourists. They even have a word for it in Spanish: *parquetematización*. Barcelona is slowly losing the cultural flavor that made it a tourist hotspot in the first place. But it's not just Barcelona that is actively trying to keep out tourists by limiting cruise ship entry, fighting airport expansions, and swerving cars away from the city center. Places like Venice, Paris, Dubrovnik, Kyoto, Berlin, Bali, and Reykjavik are struggling to keep up with demand for their incredible beauty. And when cities suffer, the locals suffer too. Venice's Port Authority President, Pino Musolino, put it best: "I don't think anybody would be happy to live in a city that is just a beautifully wrapped box with nothing inside."

If you find that story #relatable, then you know the struggles of either being a disappointed tourist or being priced out of your home by an Airbnb host. Obviously, we know that the latter is worse. As educated, tech-savvy travelers, we need to make sure to concern ourselves with the impact we have while seeing the world. In some ways, tourism is incredibly positive. It creates jobs, expands minds, and destroys preconceived notions. But in other ways, it's not so pretty.

002



The Pros and Cons of Travel

002

The Pros and Cons of Travel

Alright, let's do the math and figure out the pros and cons of tourism. These are what economists like to call 'positive and negative externalities,' because the dollar price of a good does not always encapsulate the real cost or benefit of having it around. For example, Norway offers tuition-free education to its students because it recognizes that education creates a lot of positive externalities like increased innovation and reduced poverty, therefore justifying the price tag.

Meanwhile, Germany has levied an ecotax on petroleum producers because of the negative externalities of gas like pollution, because pollution costs way more to society than just its price tag. The same goes for tourism - sometimes, the government needs to step in if tour operators are being a nuisance to the community, or the sheer number of travelers becomes a burden to the infrastructure of a city. Still with me?

Pros:

For the locals:

- Creates new infrastructure projects - no more potholes and hello upgraded metro system.
- Pays for essential workers such as police and sanitation engineers.
- Implements clean beaches, outdoor art installations, and is that a new festival?
- Creates jobs - now the locals can spend all day teaching surfing lessons instead of working 9-5.
- Protects culture, monuments, and important historical attractions.
- Builds local pride - now you can walk around covered in your city's merch.
- Generates a higher density of nice restaurants, cafés, and entertainment.
- Enhances airports to offer locals more flight connections.

For the travelers:

- Allows us to go beyond our comfort zones and become risk-takers.
- Spurs us to create memories and stories.
- Encourages us to gain experience with different education systems, transportation, and languages.
- Motivates us to escape from our day-to-day routines.
- May be more affordable than our typical lifestyle.

Cons:

For the locals:

- Environmental concerns and pollution.
- People are priced out of their homes - higher prices in general.
- A service economy is instilled with low-skill, low-paying jobs.
- Seasonal fluctuations in tourism revenue.
- Foreign poaching - multinational companies get all the profits.
- Beast Boy or tourist? Both are animals sometimes.
- Development of illegal and destructive economic activities (markets for drugs, endangered species, etc.)
- Cruises. Just cruises.

For the travelers:

- Can't get a nice picture - overpopulation ain't pretty.
- Higher prices overall - is your wallet feeling a little lighter?
- Less authentic experience and exasperation with tour operators and lines.
- Lack of infrastructure can lead to drastic measures.



In most places, the pros outweigh the cons. Tourism makes up a hefty percentage of some countries' GDP, and they will continue to market themselves in the hopes of attracting your dollar dollar cash money. But if these

countries want to keep the tourists coming without ruining the local way of life, they will have to try a little harder. And so do we as travelers.

003



Sustainable Travel Tips

Sustainable Travel Tips

As tourists, we thrive off of developed property, a bit of Wi-Fi, and good plumbing, but when these amenities are not around, it's not pretty. For example, in 2018, Icelandic officials had to deal with desperate tourists POOPING on the ground in more rural areas. I'm no expert, but I'm sure that locals don't want to see that behavior on their daily strolls. I'm not saying we travelers have to be perfect - it's okay to succumb to plastic water bottles or order non-seasonal vegetables once in a while. But as they say, you can't change a behavior until you recognize that it is a

problem. Welcome to your ten-step program!

When I used trusty ole' Google to teach me the ways of the sustainable gurus, the first solution to traveling green was "Don't Travel." Not the most helpful advice. But don't worry, I'm going to give you real tips on how to go green while traveling the scene. From eco-resorts to biofuel, here's your guide to traveling while keeping it as sustainable AND cheap as possible (and we're not just talking about giving up straws, people).



1. What's an offset? No, not the rapper.

Flights are expensive, but you know what aren't? Trees! By paying a service to plant a tree in your honor, you will veritably offset the amount of carbon that you just expelled into the atmosphere. While we should aim to cut back on our carbon emissions altogether, this is a great way to feel better about your flights while waiting for airlines to switch over to biofuel. Use the website TripZero to book your stay, or donate \$10 to the National Forest Foundation's Carbon Capital Fund. I named my first tree 'Alaska.' Sorry, am I being too sappy?

2. Direct flight? Don't mind if I do...

Want to skip that stressful two-hour layover in a random airport in Texas while also traveling greener? Well, non-stop flights are the answer - it's actually takeoffs and landings that create most of an airplane's carbon emissions. However, larger planes do emit more carbon, so having a larger plane fly directly isn't always the solution. According to Kathryn Kellogg, the founder of Going Zero Waste, the flight sweet spot is four to five hours.

3. Or just take a train!

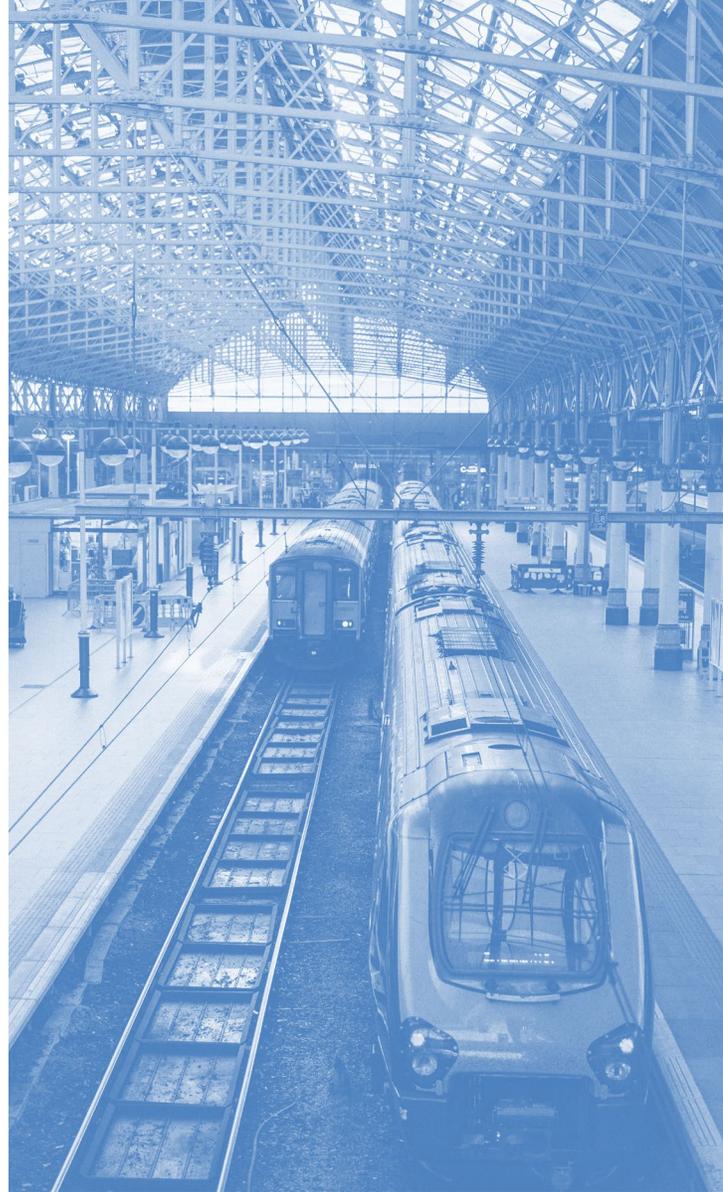
Known as the most environmentally-friendly mode of transportation, trains can also offer you a stunning passthrough of the most scenic countrysides while saving you cold hard cash. Try the Glacier Express in Switzerland, the Pride of Africa in South Africa, or the California Zephyr in the USA.

4. Into luxury? Stay at an eco-resort!

Nothing is more hilarious than going up to your friends and saying, "I stayed in a geodesic dome and ate scallops while watching the Aurora Borealis." They might burst out into envious tears right in front of you. And the best part? Geodesic domes are some of the many types of eco-resorts that practice energy and water conservation, proper sewage treatment, wildlife monitoring, and low-impact tourism activities.

5. Voluntourism 101: Do a Clean-Up!

Okay, let's be real - voluntourism usually helps the volunteers more than it actually helps the local community. While I don't think that a trip advertising that it will 'Save the African Orphans!' will do any good whatsoever, doing clean-ups is a cool way to spend an afternoon while also offsetting the impact of your journey. If you're walking on a beach, a cliff, through a rainforest, in a canyon, or in another gorgeous natural setting, bring a reusable bag and pick up all of the plastic that you see!



6. Buy handmade, unless it used to be alive.

Sounds self-explanatory. If it's made of fur, ivory, tortoiseshell, snakeskin, or bone *shudder*, do NOT BUY IT. If it's a cute postcard for your mama, make sure she recycles it or keeps it forever. Try to buy local products, whether that be native-crafted art or woven goods. Support the local economy instead of factories while also looking super chic in those new woven earrings.

7. Sunscreen? I don't know her.

I haven't gone scuba diving yet, but apparently, by the time I finally learn, all of the coral reefs will be gone due to people using SPF 100 like they're made of PAPER. Approximately 6,000-14,000 tons of sunscreen are deposited into coral reefs every year, which is aiding in the degradation of these fragile ecosystems and ruining my chances of seeing Nemo. Start buying biodegradable sunscreen, which does not contain oxybenzone, or better yet, wear a long sleeve swim shirt. I promise you'll still look cool.

8. Water-saving ~hacks~

The easiest thing to do here is to carry a reusable water bottle. Cue the "duh, Samar. I already knew that. I have my trusty Hydro Flask. I even put stickers on it." That's cute. What are you gonna do if the water is less than sanitary? Buy a bottle of Dasani? The answer is a portable filtration system - maybe

you've heard of LifeStraw? Some more hacks include taking showers instead of baths, washing your clothes in the shower instead of using the hotel's laundry service, and eating less meat abroad.

9. Become a sitting duck

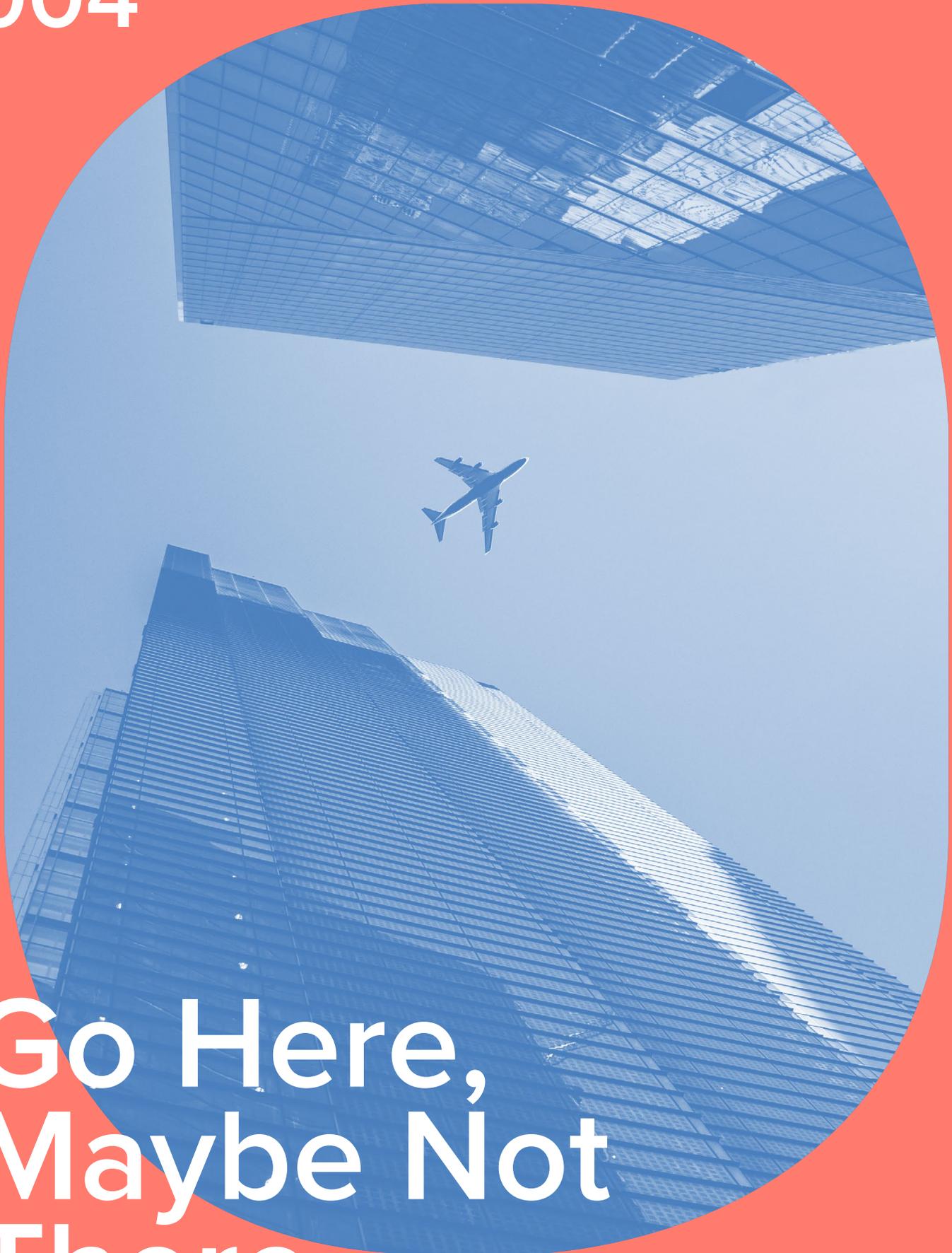
If you stay longer at your destination, you not only have a better opportunity to make local friends, uncover the best hidden gem restaurants, and really engage with the culture of a place, but you'll also fight the impacts of 'fast travel.' When your goal of travel is to increase your country count, like getting through the entirety of Mexico, Central, and South America in one month as a backpacker, you rush around and lose all connection to the communities you visit. Slow down, chiller. Give yourself the freedom and flexibility to hit popular tourist sites as well as less mainstream locales.

10. Locals know best.

Period. If you're interfering with the local way of life, you're not traveling sustainably.



004



Go Here,
Maybe Not
There

004

Go Here, Maybe Not There

I would never suggest skipping out on a destination unless there were acute safety issues, sweeping human rights abuses, or environmental degradation stemming from overpopulation. And while many popular destinations do not fall under these criteria, you might be better off hitting up nearby, untrammled spots. I would like to introduce you to my favorite game: go here, maybe not there! The goal is to introduce my beautiful readers to less-traveled destinations that are still very worthy of tourist dollars. We want culture, not caricatures. We want real souvenirs, not Venetian masks made in China. We want hand-sewn hammocks, not plastic ones that could be bought on Amazon. We want authentic cuisine, not canned stroganoff. And these destinations, full of recondite

splendors, can offer that to us. I have based my recommendations off of tireless research, from the World Economic Forum's Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report to Shut Up and Go's own Facebook group.

I also recognize that the recommendations I give could contribute to the next wave of overtourism, but my hope is that by subverting some traffic away from those places already affected, they can begin to heal, and travelers can keep shutting up and going without feeling like they're contributing to the madness. For example, by closing Maya Bay in Thailand, the beach has already seen the return of blacktip reef sharks. And that's just the beginning. Let's spread out the 1.4 billion travelers, and spread the wealth as well



Cancún and Cozumel, Quintana Roo, Mexico

Let's face it - you're either in a college spring breaker, honeymoon, or a mid-life crisis kind of mood if you're headed to Cancún for vacation. Located in the Mexican state of Quintana Roo, Cancún used to be populated by indigenous Yucatec Mayas, known for Chichén Itzá, their juicy cochinita pibil tacos and the Tzolk'in, the calendar that prophesied the world ending in 2012. Cancún does have a lot to offer if you're looking to put absolutely no effort into planning anything yourself. Yes, I mean all-inclusive. And sometimes all-inclusive can be necessary, because work is hard and you deserve a break, goddamnit. But with only seventeen miles of beach and 32,000 hotel rooms, you might have to contend with some other guests for the best beach chair.

Also, Cancún is currently dealing with violence due to drug-trafficking in the downtown area. While the Hotel Zone may be safe, the drug-trafficking stems largely from tourists engaging in high-risk behaviors while abroad and chaotic foreign developers moving in on local property.

Cozumel, on the other hand, is a docking site for cruises, and more than five million people show up every year to the tiny island. And you can imagine what that does to the coral reefs.

Instead...

San Jose del Pacifico and Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca, Mexico

You must be wondering, “Why is Samar recommending the magical mushroom capital of Mexico to visit? Didn’t she just tell us to stop engaging in high-risk behaviors?” Well, this is my e-book, so I can do whatever I want. San Jose del Pacifico is three hours outside of Oaxaca City and is your perfect stopover on the way to Puerto Escondido, a lovely little beach town on the coast of Oaxaca. San Jose del Pacifico is nestled in the mountains, and the views are mind-numbing. As are the mushrooms, I’m sure. Enjoy warm tlayudas (a cross between a taco and a pizza), cold cervezas, and firepits shared by people from all walks of life. And be sure to wake up and go hiking the next day, or participate in a Temazcal ceremony, which consists of nudity, a sauna, intense chanting, and spiritual cleansing.

Puerto Escondido, which is another three-hour drive from the mountains, literally means ‘hidden port.’ Go surfing - a lesson only costs around \$25 an hour, including board rental. Compare that to Cancún, where surf lessons cost around \$100. And the waves, according to an Australian dude I met during his surf tour of Mexico, are “freaking gnarly.”



San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico

Chiapas is intense - it has jungles, ruins, waterfalls, caves, and a colorful city to base your travels out of. San Cristóbal de las Casas is still largely inhabited by indigenous Maya locals (looking at you, Cancún), and features beautiful churches and colorful homes. If you’re into photoshoots, this city is your ideal backdrop. And you can launch yourself to amazing, other-worldly destinations like the Agua Azul waterfalls or Palenque, the most mysterious ruins in the middle of the jungle that you can actually climb, unlike Chichén Itzá. Just be wary not to mess up the ancient architecture while you’re up there! Zip-lining is also very common here - you can do a 40-second zipline over El Chiflon cascadas (another waterfall). We love low-impact eco-adventures!





Cairo, Egypt and Marrakech, Morocco

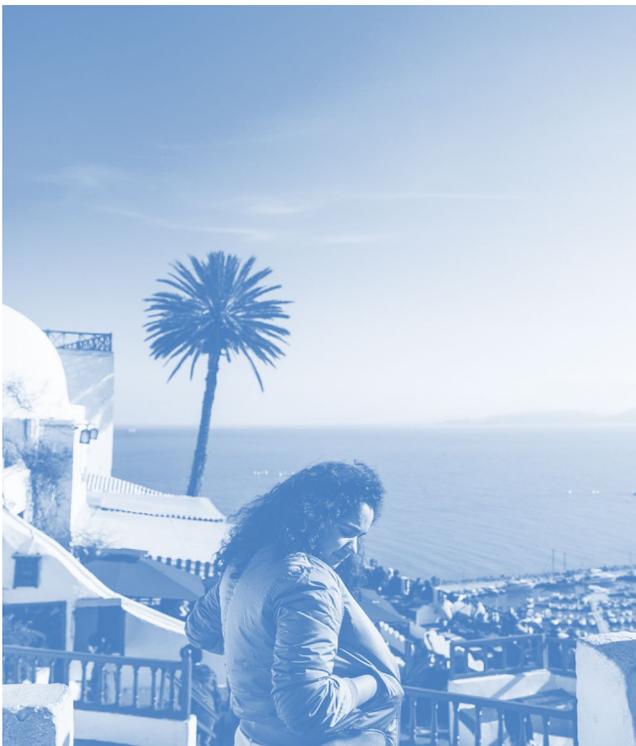
Egypt rather enjoys its tourism when it can keep it around. Tourism contributes 11.9% to Egypt's bottom line, so when it declined due to increased terrorism in past years, Egypt was not happy. But Cairo tourism is looking to grow steadily in the next decade, and the Valley of the Kings needs no help attracting snap-happy tourists that want to strut like a mummy. In fact, Cairo was ranked as the fastest-growing tourism destination in the world by the World Travel & Tourism Council in 2018. But if Egypt doesn't protect its ancient tombs from the moist bodies of tourists (literally, the moisture is destroying the rock), either the tombs will fall apart or the mummies will come alive. Straight facts.

Marrakech is a strong, independent brown woman that don't need no man. It is pandemonium - one minute you're admiring botanical gardens, the next minute you've got a snake wrapped around your neck while someone massages argan oil into your scalp. A savvy salesman sticks a mint leaf up your nose and then shows you freshly slain leather hides. A nice lady strips you naked and then rubs your skin raw at a hammam. Marrakech is extra, but so am I. Although I love Marrakech, the local population is getting priced out of their riads as foreign developers move in. Marrakech used to have deals, but now they have steals - as in steal money out of your pocket because you're paying a premium on that leather wallet, not a discount. But there are other destinations nearby that pack a similar punch.

Instead...

Tunis, Tunisia

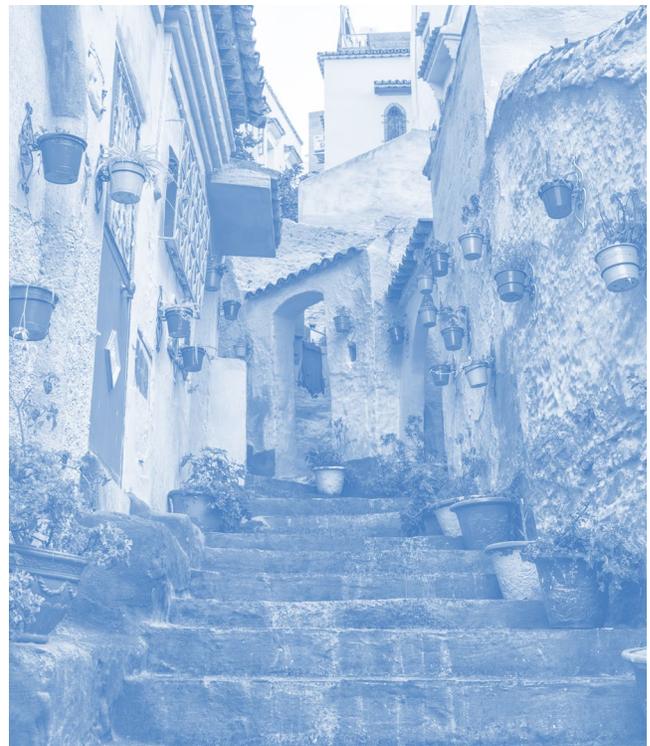
Tunis has a bustling medina, iconic mosques, and two types of sand - beach and desert. Your Instagram will be popping with Roman ruins, like the remnants of Ancient Carthage, or the Santorini-esque blue and white architecture in the neighborhood of Sidi Bou Said. Tunisia was part of the Arab Spring that occurred from 2010 to 2011, and then had to deal with another blow to its international reputation when 38 people, including 30 British tourists, were killed in a terrorist attack in 2015. That might seem scary, but think about this: 724 Americans died abroad in 2018. Compared to the 3,000 Americans that died from food poisoning in 2018. Or the 40,000 Americans that died from US gun violence. But we don't live our lives in fear of undercooked burgers or domestic terrorism, so we shouldn't define entire countries by their tumultuous pasts! Tunisia is now thriving and waiting to share its illustrious beauties with more dauntless travelers.



Chefchaouen, Asilah, and Tangier, Morocco

Chefchaouen is that blue-walled city known for its Instagram appeal, rare shopping, grand mosque, and easy access to Spiderman's wife. I'm talking Mary Jane, people. Why is Chefchaouen blue? Some say it's to remind us of the heavenly sky or to keep mosquitos away. However, the locals say they started painting it blue in the 70s to attract tourist attention. Well, it worked - if blue walls were honey, tourists would be bees.

If you're looking for a lesser-known option, head over to Asilah, where the beauty is just as prevalent. Asilah is a haven for artists and has a colorful summer festival that cannot be missed. Also, it is by the sea, which adds a layer of depth to any getaway. If you want some chaos, head to Tangier, or the 'gateway to Africa.' Grab a cup of orange juice from the roadside, ride a camel on the beach, check out the Royal Palace, or go see the Caves of Hercules.





Agra and Delhi, India

Delhi could be the world's most populous city by 2028. Its government deals with the three Ps on the daily - politics, pollution, and now population control. Why add to that load when you could visit so many other amazing Indian cities less burdened by yoga-lovers? You'll still get the full treatment of rich cuisine, stunning Mughal and Indo-Saracenic architecture, and vibrant culture. But less traffic, because no one has time for Delhi standstills.

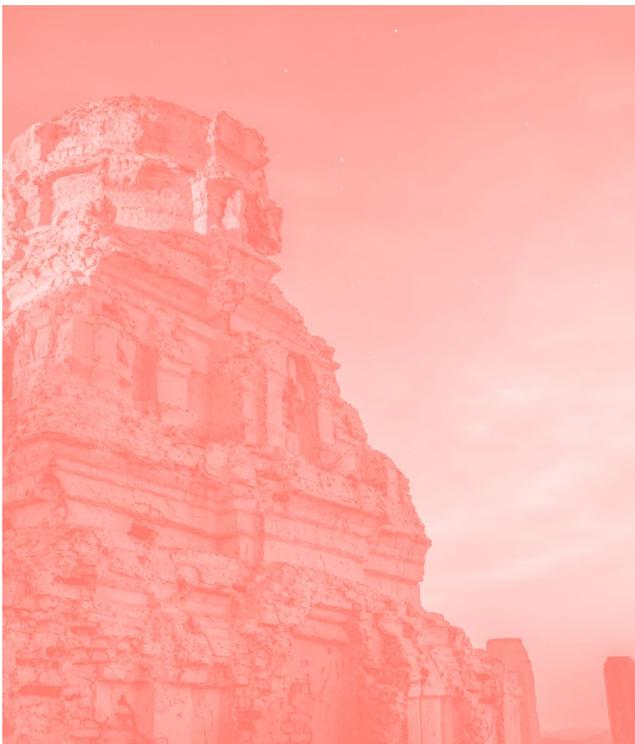
Agra wants to keep tourists moving. From imposing three-hour time limits at the Taj Mahal to raising prices of tickets, tourists are not living their best lives. White marble maybe wasn't the right choice for India's most visited attraction. It just gets so dirty, plus with 50,000 people a day standing on it, it might just crack. But wait, there's more! By that, I mean more deforestation in Agra to make room for guest complexes. Agra has a lot on its plate, so let's lighten the load.

Instead...

Bangalore and Hampi, India

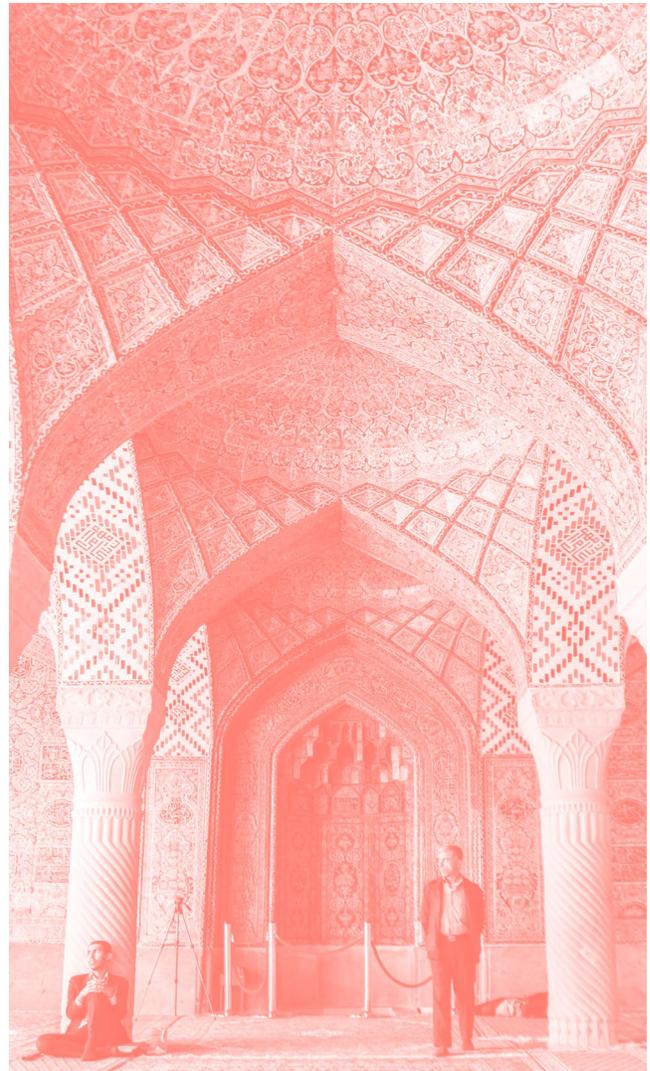
Bangalore is both the tech hub of India and the city of gardens. This dichotomy works in a tourist's favor, as we can enjoy modern luxuries like espresso-coconut milk infusions and microbreweries while also soaking in palace views and lounging around lakes. I recommend seeing Bangalore Palace and Cubbon Park for the historical building action, as well as the Bannerghatta Biological Park for the tiger action. ¿Por qué no los dos? Or in Hindi, kyun na dono?

Hampi, on the other hand, is an ancient village with rail access to Bangalore, which means you can hit both stops on your trip. Hampi has incredible monuments, temples, and markets galore, so feel free to immerse yourself in one of the oldest trading cities in the world. Unfortunately, since it was sacked by several Muslim sultanates well before India became a country, it's slightly in ruins. Still super cool though.



Shiraz, Iran

I actually want to name my future kid Shiraz. No, not after the wine - after the capital of Persia, the City of Roses, the House of Learning - that Shiraz. Besides, I hate red wine. Shiraz is the side of Iran that no one in the West sees - we only see nuclear threats and long beards. But after listening to my father talk about the wonders of this Persian marvel, I couldn't help but do more research. Besides surreal architecture and expertly-crafted gardens, Shiraz is home to a splendid poetry and arts scene. Check out Eram Garden, stop by the Pink Mosque, and break down preconceived notions while eating kebabs at the Vakil Bazaar.





Bali, Indonesia and Boracay Island, Philippines

What island shut down for six months due to overtourism and was called a 'cesspool' by its own president? Ding ding ding, you guessed it - Boracay! What was once an idyllic beach has turned into a nightmare of burdened infrastructure and sewage. Sixty-six tourists for every local has got to be some kind of record! Don't worry, Boracay Island reopened in 2018 with strict conditions - locals can no longer raise animals, no one can drink on the White Beach, and absolutely no gambling. There goes your hope of becoming a Filipino millionaire.

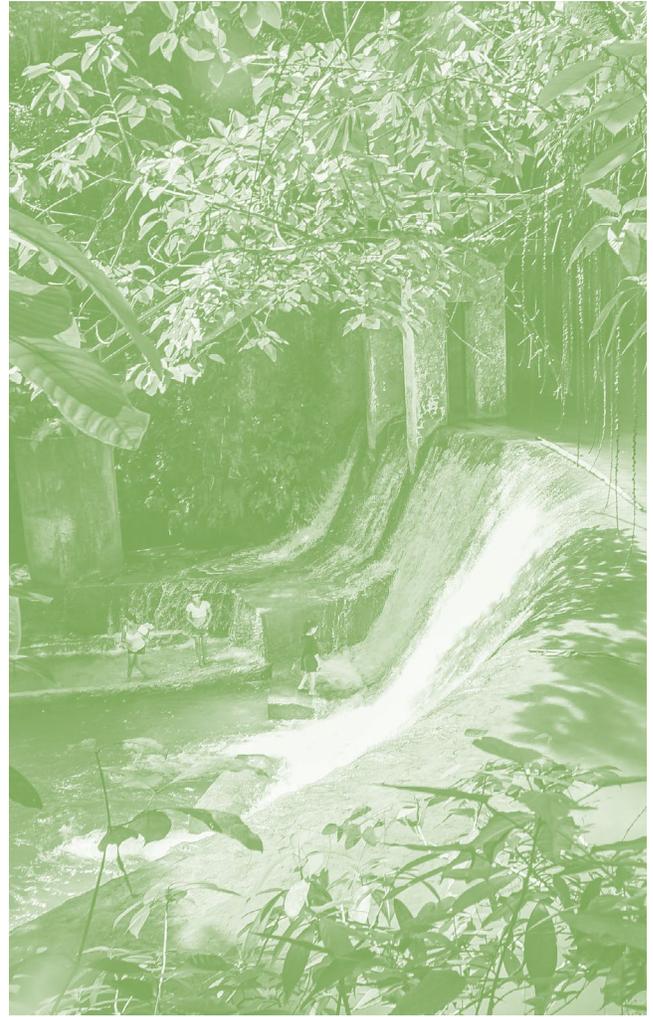
You've probably heard of Bali's overtourism - even Anthony Bourdain made an episode about it in 2018 for his show, Parts Unknown. People who come for the rice fields, beaches, and temples end up leaving single-use plastics all over the place. They obviously didn't read my sustainable travel tips. Bali is considering a tourist tax of \$10 per person, which may not be much for Westerners, but could change Bali's fortune for the better.

Instead...



Bandung, Indonesia

There are over 17,000 islands in Indonesia, spanning four time zones and teeming with uncharted beauty. Another destination that features similar eye candy to Bali is Bandung, located on West Java. It has great coffee (get it, Java), along with stunning mountains, volcanoes, tea plantations, and a great shopping scene. Since Java was a battleground between the Dutch and British for around 350 years, Bandung also has some colonial architecture, if you're into that sort of thing. Check out the Lembang Floating Market, go off-roading to the milky crater of Kawah Putih, or sneak up to Keraton Cliff for a scenic view.



Cebu, Philippines

Forget Boracay - there's another white beach that deserves your dollars. Bounty Beach on Malapascua Island has stunning sunsets that you can soak in while preparing for your dive with manta rays and thresher sharks the next morning. While Malapascua means 'bad Christmas,' you'll have a great holiday staying at one of the beachside resorts. If you want to go farther than this small island, feel free to check out the Kawasan Falls, do a sunrise hike on Osmeña Peak, or reflect on Spanish relics in Cebu City.

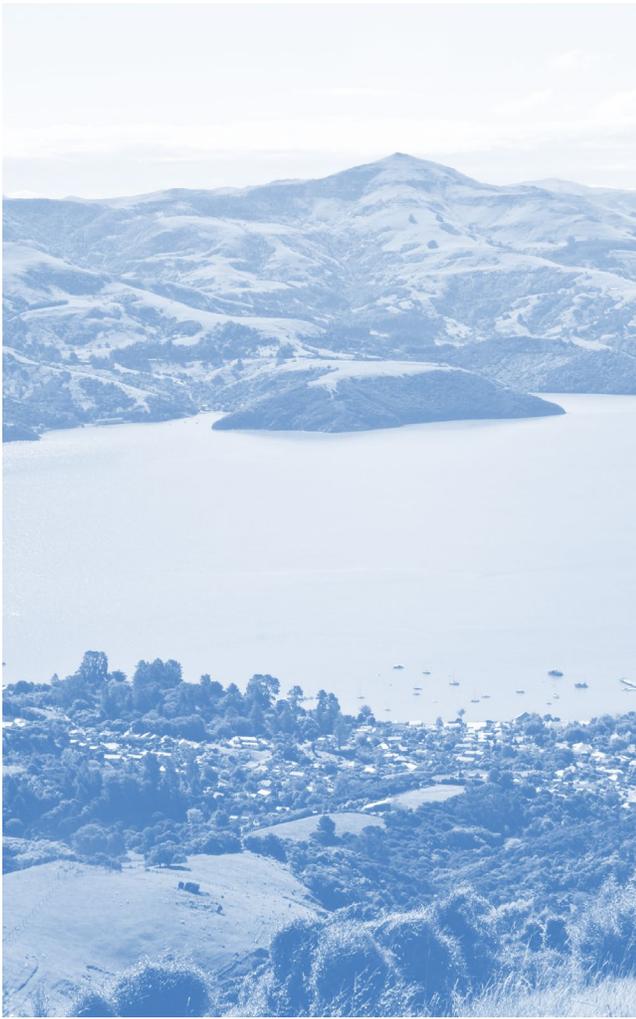


Uluru, Australia and Queenstown, New Zealand

Located near Alice Springs is a giant red monolith made of sandstone and mysticism. It's called Uluru, and is a SACRED monument, y'all. I don't know who's out here peeing on the thing, but you're making some Aboriginal Australians extremely upset. On October 26th, 2019, the Australian government officially banned tourists from making the upward trek and climbing Uluru, and locals celebrated. However, tourists can still walk around Uluru and take cultural workshops.

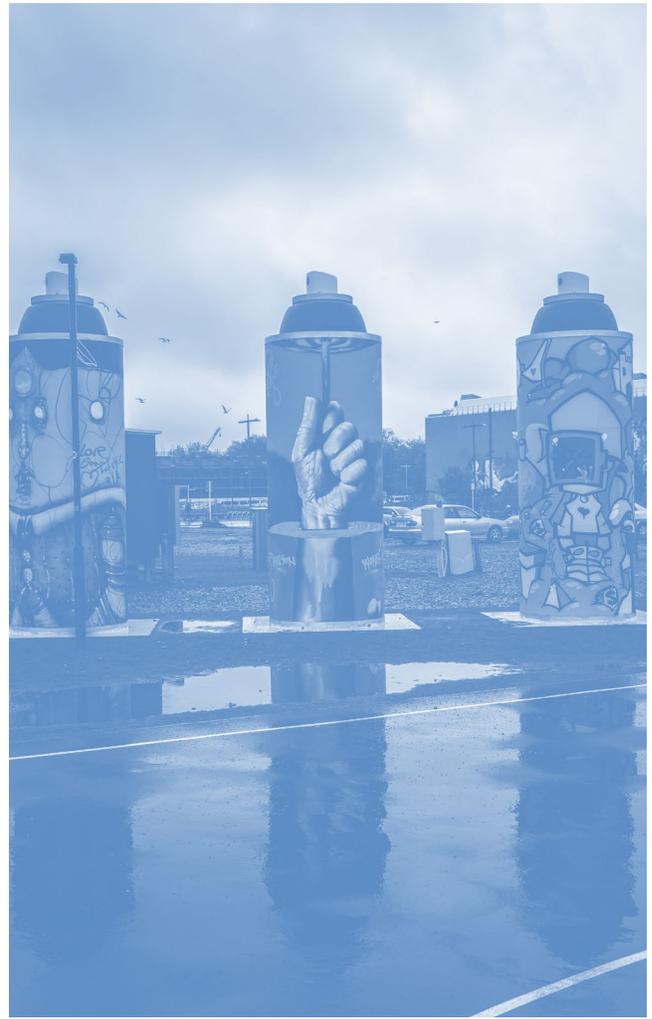
New Zealand moved quickly to institute a tourist tax after it realized that its sensational natural features are being thrashed by too many curious wanderers. And the tax is steeper than most at \$35 dollars. But again, you're getting what you pay for - New Zealand is stunning. No tourist tax could deter me from dreaming about the Matapouri Mermaid Pools. However, these natural beauties closed in February of 2019 due to issues of defecation and sunscreen clogging up its cerulean waters. Overtourism is a bleak reality, my friends.

Instead...



Akaroa, Christchurch, NZ

Sometimes I am swayed by Eurocentric beauty standards. Listen, I'm as woke as the next guy, but occasionally I see French architecture and I'm just like "That's it. That's the Tweet." Akaroa may be in New Zealand, but that doesn't mean that it can't have French colonial architecture that accentuates the composition of any photo. Akaroa even has a festival in October commemorating when the French landed in the harbor. More importantly, Akaroa also has nature reserves, scenic diving, dolphin sightseeing, kayaking, and even wine tasting. Jesus Christchurch.



Northern Rivers, Australia

Some tourists will proudly discuss their recent trip to Sydney. But you'll be there to gloat over them - "Well, I went to the most Easterly point on mainland Australia." Okay, that's not that big of a flex, but Byron Bay in Northern Rivers is truly a beach to behold. If you're a foodie, the options here are endless - everything is locally-sourced and the seafood is so fresh. If you want quaint or hippy vibes, take a tour of this region and hit the small towns like Kingscliff or Nimbin.



Easter Island, Chile and Machu Picchu, Peru

Traveling to the Lost City of the Incas is like an episode right out of an Indiana Jones or Lara Croft saga. But instead of solving mysteries or parachuting into abandoned temples, you'll be sashaying down a mile-long tourist conga line to get a sneak peek at the Citadel, struggling to breathe at an altitude of 7,972 feet (2,430 meters). If you have a bucket list, sure, go check out this amazing Wonder of the World. If you're just winging life, maybe peruse a different ruin to satisfy your curiosities, one without a four-hour time limit or an ongoing effort to drive tourists away from the main attraction. Although Peru may be breaking ground on a new international airport only miles away from the Lost City, Machu Picchu definitely cannot keep up with demand.

Another bucket list item is Easter Island. If you don't know about it, it's an island featuring giant head sculptures called moai, popularized by the famous line "dum dum give me gum gum." Night at the Museum was actually super educational, don't @ me. However, the residents of Easter Island, mostly indigenous Rapa Nui, are dealing with some bad behavior from tourists, including some statue climbers and statue nose pickers. And with three flights coming in per day from Santiago, locals have had enough of the disrespect.

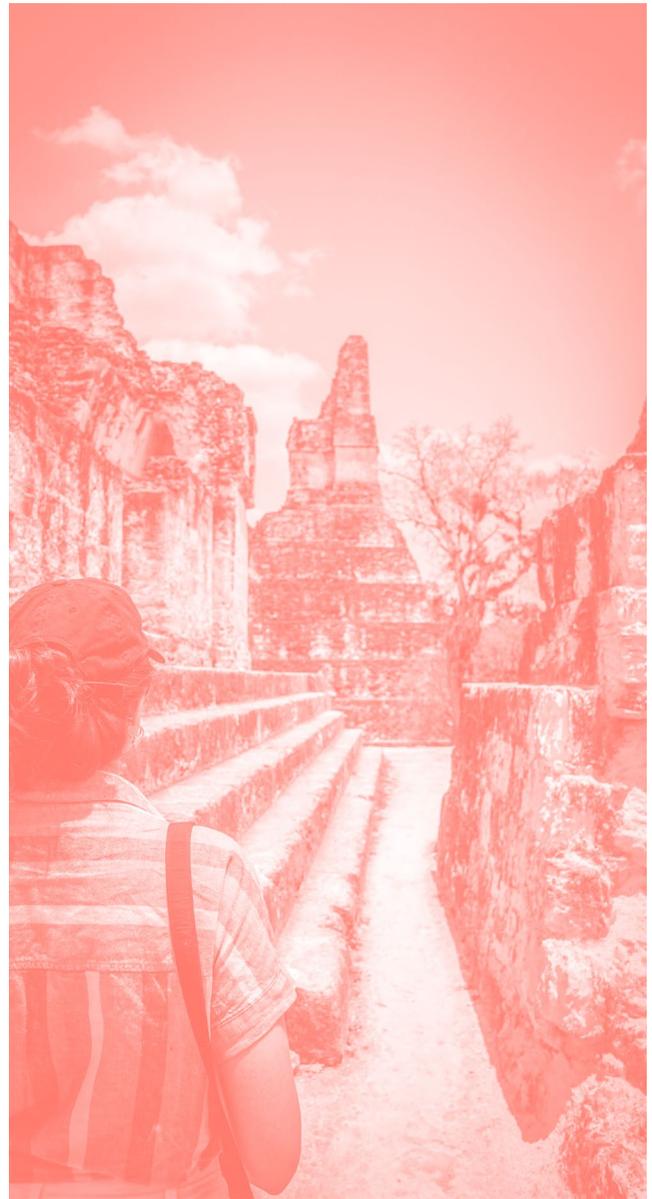
Instead...



La Paz and Uyuni, Bolivia

I am recommending a place even higher than Machu Picchu, so get ready to take some Diamox and fight off that altitude sickness. La Paz is one of the TWO capitals of Bolivia (the other is Sucre) and can be seen entirely by the aerial cable cars that run high above the city called Mi Teleferico. La Paz also has lucha libre-esque wrestling called Cholita, but if you want to participate in some danger, you can ride a bike on the Cycle Death Road. Or you could go skiing on the highest slope in the world, Chacaltaya. Or if you still want to see some Inca ruins, you can visit Tiwanaku, a 500-year old site near Lake Titicaca.

You've probably seen Salar de Uyuni on your friends' Instagrams or in National Geographic. These salt flats trick the eye into thinking that visitors are standing on the sky, when they're actually standing on a glassy reflection. Go during the rainy season, when the salt flats turn into a giant mirror, or in dry season, when they become cracked in geometrical shapes. And it won't be crowded, because the salt flats extend 4000 miles. There's plenty to see, from flamingoes and llamas to volcanoes and hot springs. Who needs Mars when you have Salar de Uyuni?



Antigua and Tikal, Guatemala

Don't worry, I'll get you your fix of Mayan ruins. First, go to Antigua and snap pictures of the churches, participate in bean-to-bar chocolate tours, and explore the local volcanoes. Though do be careful, I heard those things are active. After your various walking tours and ATV rides, head to Tikal, which is similar to Machu Picchu in that it's ancient as hell. Check out the Acropolis and remember to visit the history museum - I won't give any spoilers!



Halong Bay, Vietnam and Maya Bay, Thailand

If someone saw Leonardo DiCaprio at my beach town on the Jersey Shore, I'd drop all my responsibilities to go find him. Likewise, when swooning travelers witnessed his bare body in the movie *The Beach*, filmed at the stunning Maya Bay, they dropped their responsibilities, booked flight tickets, and went to find Mr. DiCaprio. Sadly he wasn't there, but the avid fans stayed anyway, causing the most popular beach in Thailand to close until 2021. Their goal is to restore the mangrove, coral reefs, and beach back to its former glory - and that means keeping us out for the time being.

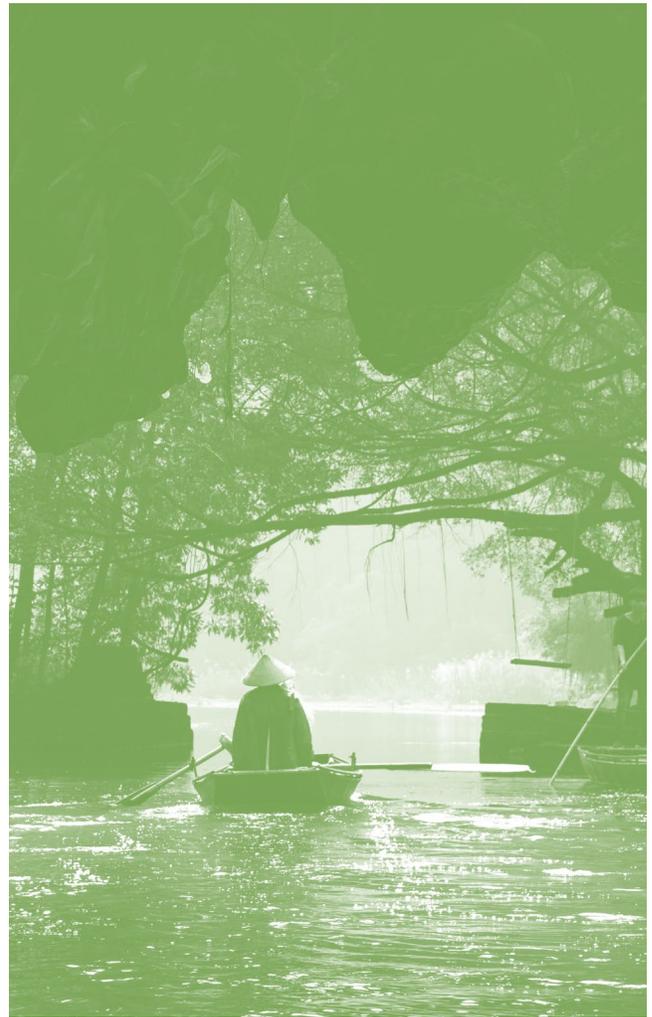
As for Halong Bay, DiCaprio didn't even need to show up for crowds to form around its stunning emerald waters, which are turning a quite unfortunate shade of murky brown. The deaths of 12 tourists in a 2011 boating accident turned heads towards this UNESCO World Heritage Site turned-tourist trap. Kayaking is cool - until you unwittingly swim next to a school of dead fish. Cave touring is fun - when it's not strewn with Coke cans and neon signs. You know the drill; let's find some alternatives.

Instead...



Marang, Malaysia

If you want beauty on a budget, hit up Marang. Since it's a little less renowned than the above mentioned bays, you'll get all of the cultural and physical activities but none of the lines, pollution, or sketchy tour guides. Okay, I can't promise that last one, but I can promise snorkeling, kayaking, or just relaxing on the beaches of Kapas or Gemia Island.



Ninh Binh, Vietnam

Ninh Binh is called 'the Halong Bay on land.' But don't get it twisted, it is far less popular than Halong Bay. You can get to Ninh Binh from Hanoi with a scenic train ride on the Reunification Express, a name stemming from the reunification of North and South Vietnam in 1975. In Ninh Binh, you can check out pagodas, explore caves in Trang An, hang out with goats, or hike around Cuc Phuong National Park, which is a crucial place for Vietnamese biodiversity. And if you're hungry, head to one of the local restaurants for a goat dish. We love a hidden gem!



Havana, Cuba

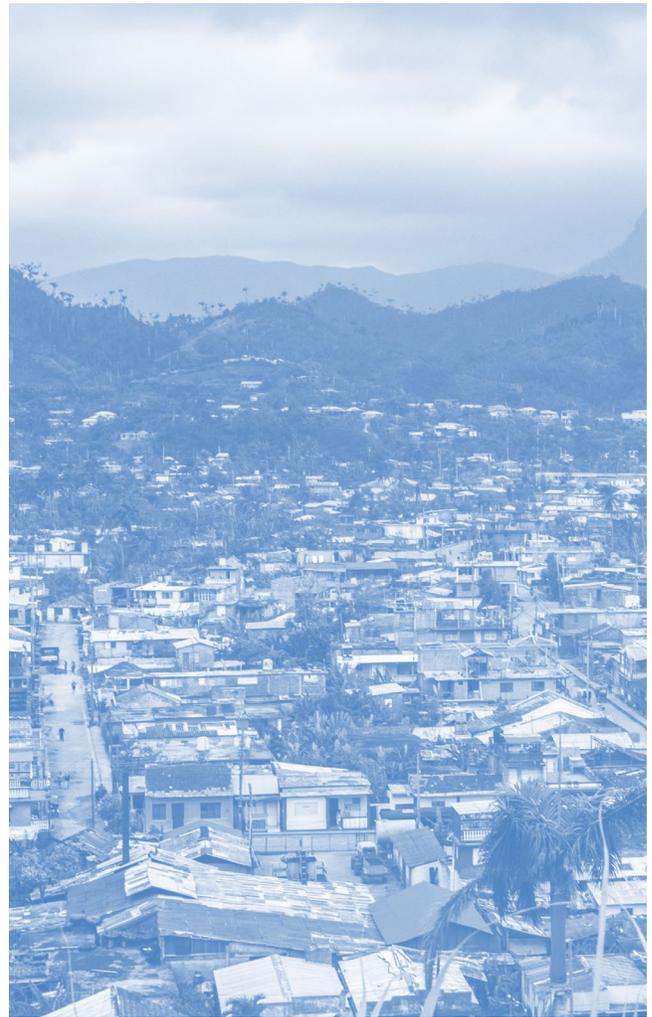
I included Havana on this list not because it's being suffocated by Cadillac and cigar-lovers, but because the sudden influx of tourists has been challenging to handle for the socialist government. I would never want my vacation dinners to come at the expense of locals' empty bellies, but the reality is that restaurant demand for simple staples like tomatoes and onions to feed incoming tourists drives up the price, so Habaneros can no longer afford to buy these commodities. Cubans cannot afford to smoke the cigars they make at their plantations. They can't import new cars, so they stick with the outdated Detroit models. The aspects of Cuba that we find charming may actually be quite insidious. Some ways to curb the negative consequences of your tourism while also helping the Cuban economy prosper is to eat at 'paladares,' which are restaurants run out of locals' homes. Also, bring some school supplies for the local children - a box of Crayola goes a long way.

Instead...



Leon, Nicaragua

If you want a politically-charged, gorgeous beach town vacay, Leon may edge out Havana. Check out the Pro-Sandinista revolutionary graffiti art, inspired by the leftist movement to oust the Somoza dictatorship in the 70s. Tour the largest cathedral in Central America, cook and eat delicious Nicaraguan barbecue, or engage in the most hardcore activity in this whole dang book - surfing down a volcano. Yeah, you read that right. You'll walk up Cerro Negro, the second youngest active volcano in the world, and surf down the cenizas right to the bottom, hitting up to 70 mph (112 kph). All for about \$21.



Baracoa, Cuba

If you want to travel to an idyllic destination in Cuba and actually learn about the local way of life, check out Baracoa, the 'first city' of Cuba. Although it's a bit more difficult to get there, it is extremely easy to stay once you've made it. Bum out on the beach while eating cucurucho, a mixture of coconut, sugar, and fruits like orange, pineapple, and guava all wrapped in a palm leaf. Watch the sunset over the table mountain El Yunque while nibbling on the locally-grown chocolate. Or maybe visit Salto Fino, the highest waterfall in the Caribbean. And sigh from the happiness of a simple life.



Kyoto, Japan and the Great Wall of China

Imagine an astronaut looking at the Great Wall of China from space. The astronaut rubs her eyes, turns to her partner and says, “Why is the Great Wall covered in ants?” This story is implausible for many reasons. First, the astronaut is wearing a helmet and can’t rub her eyes. Second, the Great Wall of China is not actually visible from space, contrary to popular speculation. And third, those weren’t ants on the Wall, they were tourists. I know the Wall is an awe-inspiring architectural feat associated with dynasty after dynasty trying to keep out Xiongnu invaders (which sounds incredibly similar to Mulan baddie Shan Yu). But during Chinese national holidays, the Great Wall vaguely resembles a sardine can, packed to the brim. And lax oversight by the Chinese government means that the Wall may not be so great in the future.

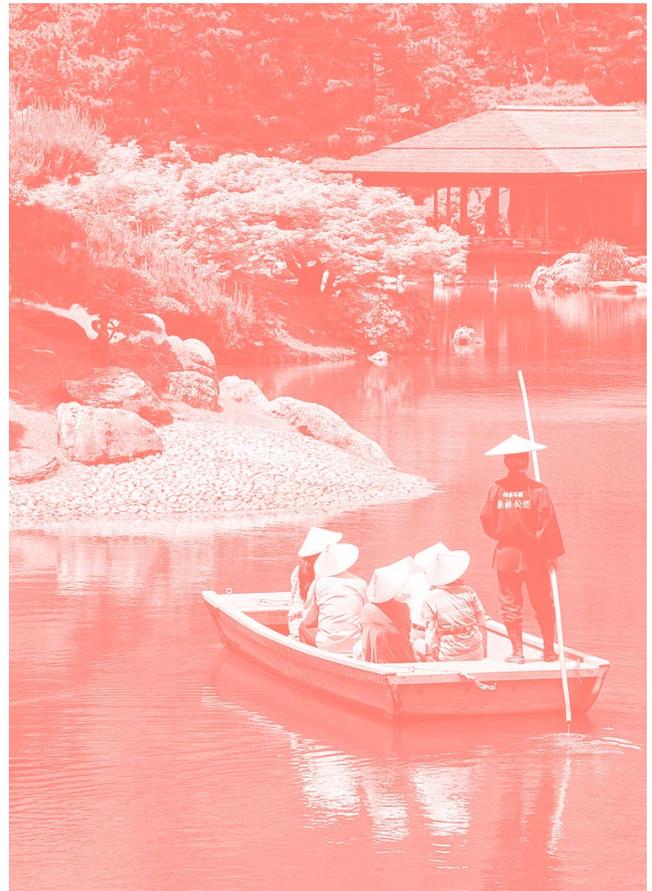
And Japanese mono-ethnicism is at risk of getting watered down as people from everywhere crowd into cities like Kyoto and Tokyo, desperate to try out the cool vending machines, model kimonos, and watch geishas perform. Just know that the Japanese won’t appreciate it for long. Especially with the Olympics coming to Tokyo soon, Japan could face a ballooning effect on its tourism. So your sake-and-sushi tasting flights could be booked for months.

Instead...



Taipei, Taiwan

The Republic of China will go unrecognized no more! At least not by me - the People's Republic of China isn't gonna change its tune so easily. Taipei City has so much to offer, from Japanese colonial streets to a giant commercial skyline and intense nightlife. But if you want a break from the chaos, soak in the Beitou Hot Springs, powered by a dormant volcano. You can even eat ramen made from the spring water. Speaking of food, make sure to load up on every type imaginable at Shilin Night Market. There are 539 stalls, meaning it would take you six months to eat at every single one. From there, climb Taipei 101, formerly the tallest building in the world. Immerse yourself in Taiwanese-Chinese relations at the Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall. And feed your Instagram with the various temples, cherry blossoms, and mountains galore.



Takamatsu, Japan

I want you to get in touch with your spiritual side. I mean meditating in gardens, eating fresh noodles and thin-sliced sashimi, and unlocking the Kanso in your life (basically Japanese feng shui). Takamatsu can help you do that. Takamatsu is a port city on the island of Shikoku, a little removed from the hecticness of Honshu but still very much a bustling port city. Visit the Ritsurin Park to get a true sense of Japanese beauty, from fall colors to cherry blossoms. Check out Takamatsu-jō, a castle that hasn't been occupied since the Meiji Restoration 300 years ago. Every spring, there's a race in the moat! And Takamatsu has access to some of the best beaches in Japan, including the Setouchi Islands, which hosts a contemporary arts festival every year called the Setouchi Triennale.



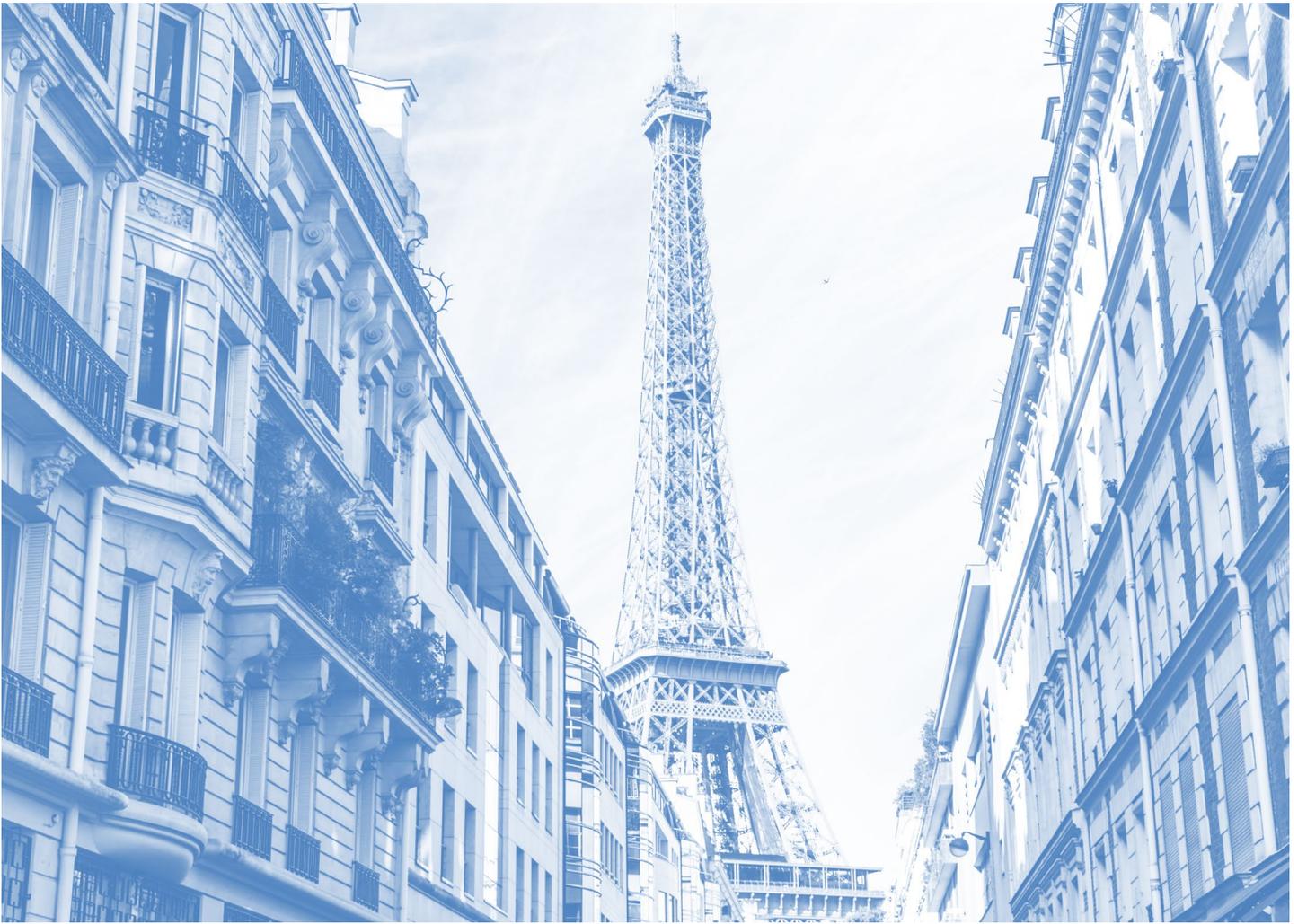


Addendum: The Rise of the Chinese Middle Class

The biggest come up in the tourism industry is upon us - the rise of the Chinese tourist. 150 million departures and counting. \$277 billion dollars and counting. Compared to Americans spending just \$144 billion. And get this: only around 9% of Chinese citizens have passports. Some places are very excited - Vanuatu believes that Chinese tourists are the key to rebuilding after a cyclone hit in 2015. German ski towns are seeing dollar signs. Latin America gets 1% of Chinese tourists, but even that is enough to bolster a struggling economy. And Chinese tourists have gone from worshipping big cities and luxury items

to seeking a more green, adventurous travel experience.

Think about it - the first time you went abroad, you were probably young, maybe even a baby, traveling with your parents to an exotic destination. You were taught how to respect different customs, leave a small footprint, and say thank you. But some tourist destinations perceive Chinese tourists to be quite the opposite of an invisible tourist, leading to overt racism against Asian travelers. Although a Chinese tourist may have photobombed your last selfie in front of the Louvre, they deserve to be there as much as you do. The Chinese government is taking matters into their hands by offering pre-travel classes and making dos and don'ts signs in Mandarin at popular destinations. Let's all work together to create an equitable travel experience. Xièxiè.



Amsterdam, Netherlands and Paris, France

This is peak study abroad energy. When my classmates come back from Paris with a French boyfriend and a vocabulary of 'oui oui baguette,' I visibly cringe. My French roommate, a Hossegor native, loses a brain cell. But the Amsterdam study abroaders are worse, I think. They immediately buy a bike, tout their newfound appreciation of 420, and post pictures of themselves climbing the 'I Amsterdam' sign. My sister went to Amsterdam on a weekend whim during her study abroad and got hit by a biker while taking a canal picture. A typical Amsterdam experience.

But Amsterdam and Paris are also facing some low points. In the former, tourists are trampling the beloved Dutch tulips, taking pernicious tours of the Red Light District, and overcrowding the city center. In the latter, Parisian locals feel like the city is becoming a tourist theme park. Staff at the world-famous Louvre went on strike because of crowd mismanagement and overall suffocation of the museum. The Deputy Mayor is pushing for a tour bus ban. Tourism is breaking Parisian hearts in the City of Love.

Instead...



Maastricht, Netherlands

Maastricht is a dreamy Dutch paradise lined with cobblestone streets. It's not only one of the oldest cities in the Netherlands, but one of the oldest human settlements in the world - you would be a Neanderthal not to go here. Get it? Check out the underground caves and historical tunnels that have seen everything from sieges to WW2 bombings. Take a boat cruise on the Meuse river, eat stroopwafels at Vrijthof, or explore the ruins of Lichtenberg Castle. And it's a college town, so make sure your tolerance is high in case you go head to head in a drinking contest with a third year.



Lille and Amiens, France

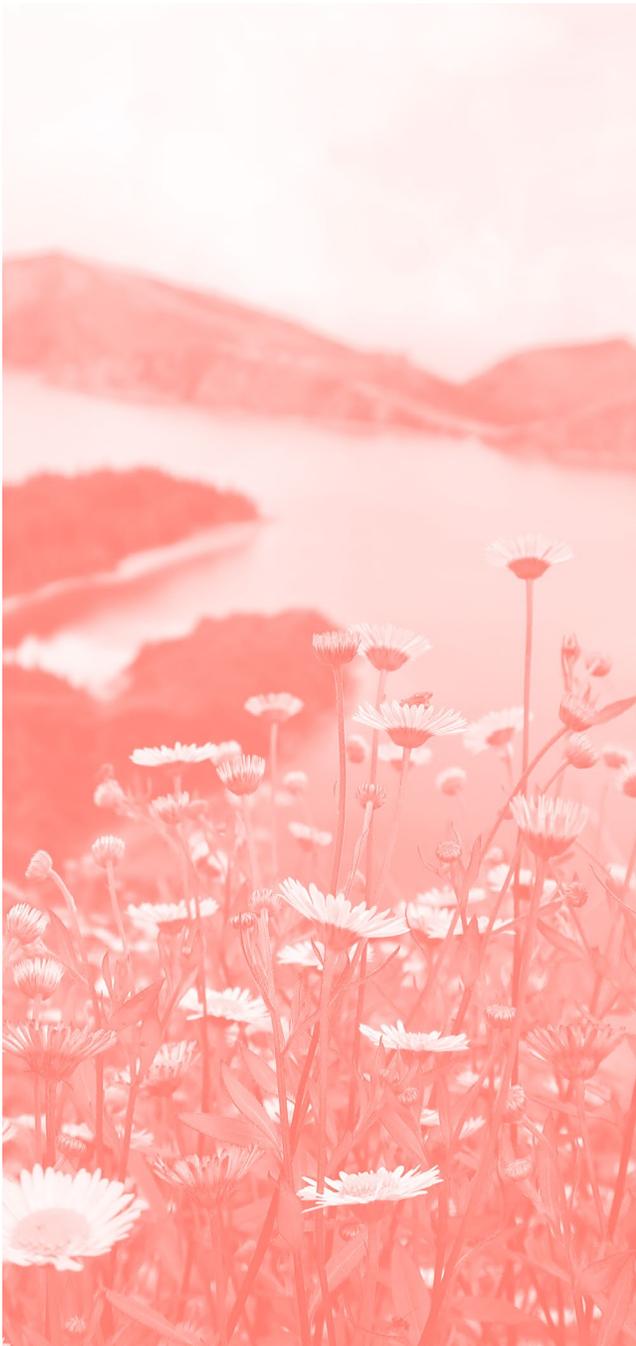
Lille used to be a Flemish city until the Sun King, Louis XIV, took it from present-day Belgium. Lille may not be broke, but it definitely is Baroque. Check out the intricate details on everything from the historic district to the Palais des Beaux-Arts, second only to the Louvre in size but way less crowded. And if you want cathedrals that rival the Notre Dame and floating gardens that make you think you're in Eden, look no further than Amiens. It's super family-friendly, and Parc de Samara can fill all of your historical needs. Try to find all of the sculptures by Amiens-native Albert Roze, and definitely take a barque tour down the Les Hortillonnages floating gardens.



Barcelona, Spain and Palma, Mallorca

I refer to the story above for all the reasons why Barcelona locals want to keep out cruises, limit short-term rentals, and fight airport expansion, among other actions. Parquetematización is real, peeps. Another victim is Mallorca, one of the Balearic islands off of the coast of Spain. While most Americans associate the Spain island travel scene with Ibiza, Mallorca is huge with German and British travelers looking to do a few booze cruises and live their best, most debaucherous lives. When I went to Mallorca, I really enjoyed all the drunk Brits that flashed me on the street. So fun! And the locals love it too. Just kidding, they're staging protests at the Mallorca airport and graffitiing the all-inclusive hotels. ¡Es una locura!

Instead...



Azores, Portugal

Known as Portugal's best-kept secret (that I'm totally spilling), the environment is an untouched biosphere featuring volcanoes, hot springs, a variety of marine life, and cute little towns to walk through. Since non-stop flights from Boston and Toronto have emerged, get ready for this nine-island archipelago to become way more popular in the near future. Head there before the yachts beat you to it.



Cádiz, Spain

The 'z' is silent, guys. The 'Gateway to the Mediterranean' has seen a lot, from the signing of the first Spanish Constitution to the murder of King Gerion by Hercules (I love my Greek mythology). Despite being coined the oldest city in Europe, it's still not as well known as Madrid or Barcelona, or even Seville or Valencia. From 3-8 p.m., don't expect to see any restaurants open - but if you hold out long enough, prepare to gorge on fresh cracked oysters on the side of the road, ham and cheese delicacies, and tuna tapas that will make you crave más. If the food doesn't get you excited, the whitewashed plazas and vivid green bays sure will.



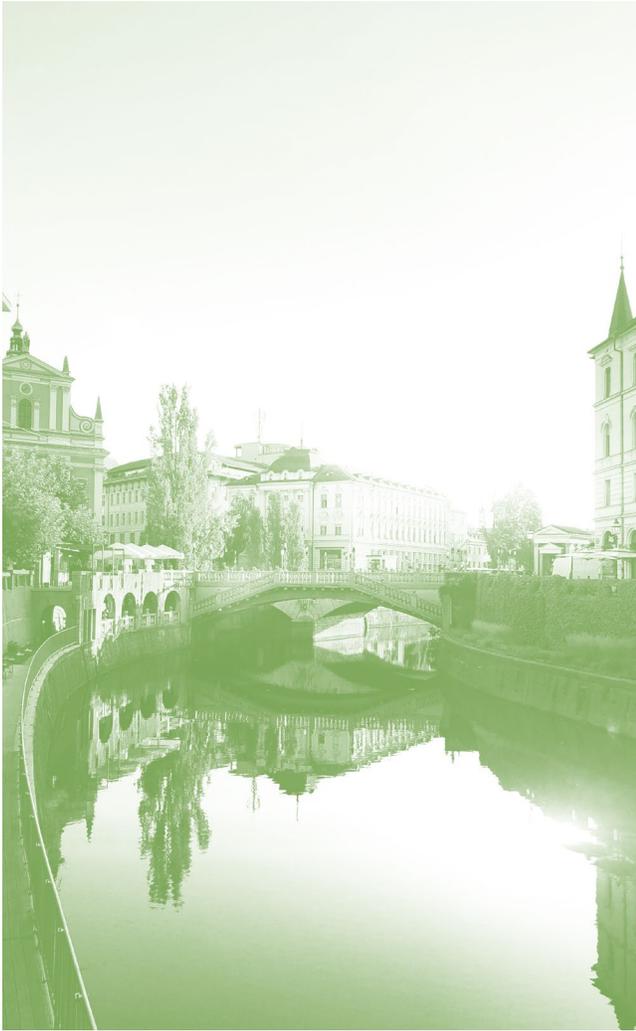
Dubrovnik, Santorini, and Literally All of Italy

I didn't realize that the immense fandom for Game of Thrones was so dedicated until I read that they caused an overtourism bubble in Dubrovnik, where the scenes of King's Landing were filmed. The show was just way too violent for me; I only watch TV when I'm eating, and I lost my appetite every time Sandor Clegane came on screen. Anyways, Dubrovnik is struggling to maintain its identity in the face of 1,000 tourists per resident cramming the Old Town.

I maintain that Santorini is the most photogenic island in the world. Day or night, you could take a half-assed, blurry picture of Santorini on your iPhone 5c and it would still be the best picture on your camera roll. But so many people are lined up behind you at the cliff face of Oia to get that same picture - and immediately upload it on their own Instagrams, further driving Santorini fever. Grecians are hoping that an 8,000 person cruise cap can save this formerly-destitute island turned daydream. Until then, the locals will try to fight the rent increases and fix the waste management systems.

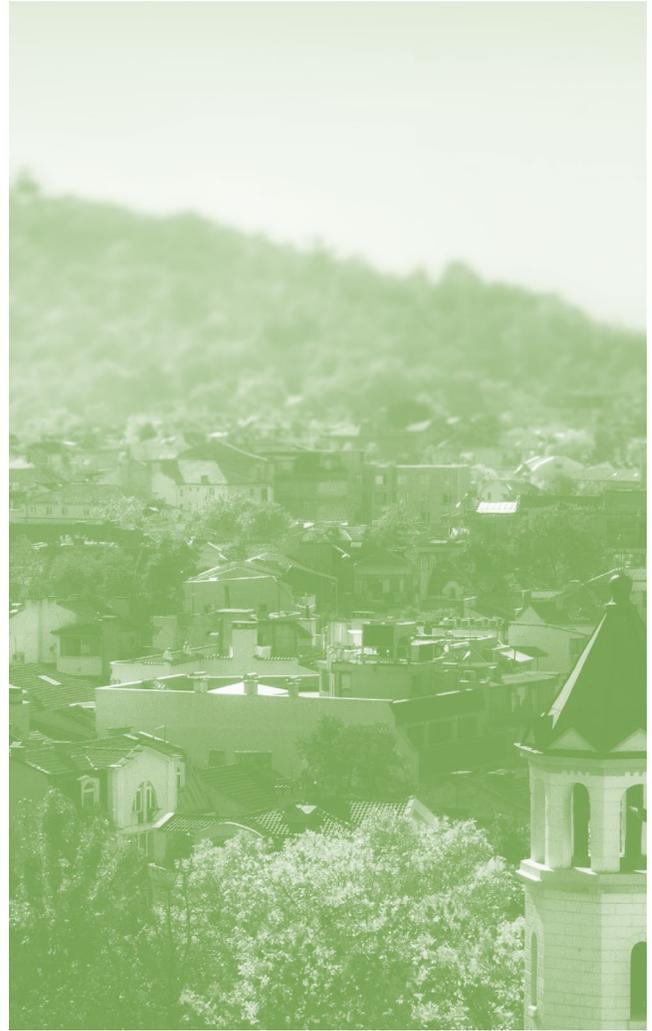
Mamma Mia. From the Vatican to Rome, Venice to Cinque Terre, Italy's 55 UNESCO World Heritage Sites beckon tourists from around the world. Even I have traipsed the better part of Italy's cities, making a path from Rome to Florence to Venice to Milan, which I liked in that order exactly. Italian food slaps, Italian culture is novel and colorful, and so many people want an Italian boyfriend. But Venice's population has halved in the last thirty years, so good luck finding a real Italian to date.

Instead...



Ljubljana, Slovenia

If you're a Game of Thrones fan, this city is known for its dragons - they're everywhere, from the street art to the bridge architecture. Pronounced lyoo-blyah-nuh, because I know you were wondering. This city was apparently founded by ancient Greek skinny legend Jason and his band of Argonauts. You can do an escape room in the Ljubljana Castle, stand-up paddle board on the Ljubljanica River, or just chill in Tivoli Park. Or you can try some Slovenian sausage at a riverside terrace cafe. Ljubljana is a family-friendly destination yet to be overrun by dragon-lovers, and it will make your heart soar.



Plovdiv, Bulgaria

For Bulgarians, aylyak (айляк) is a way of life. Unfazed by external pressure, living your best life, big chilling - it's all encompassed by this one untranslatable word. That's how I want my readers to live. So check out Plovdiv, where people work to live, not live to work like some people I know *cough cough all Georgetown students.* Plovdiv has a Roman theater that rivals the Colosseum and even hosts live performances. It also boasts the longest pedestrian street in Europe, because cars are soooo not aylyak. And its nightlife is next level, encompassing everything from bars that feature the best Bulgarian wine to nightclubs that operate everyday of the week, because who limits partying to Fridays and Saturdays? Not Plovdivians.

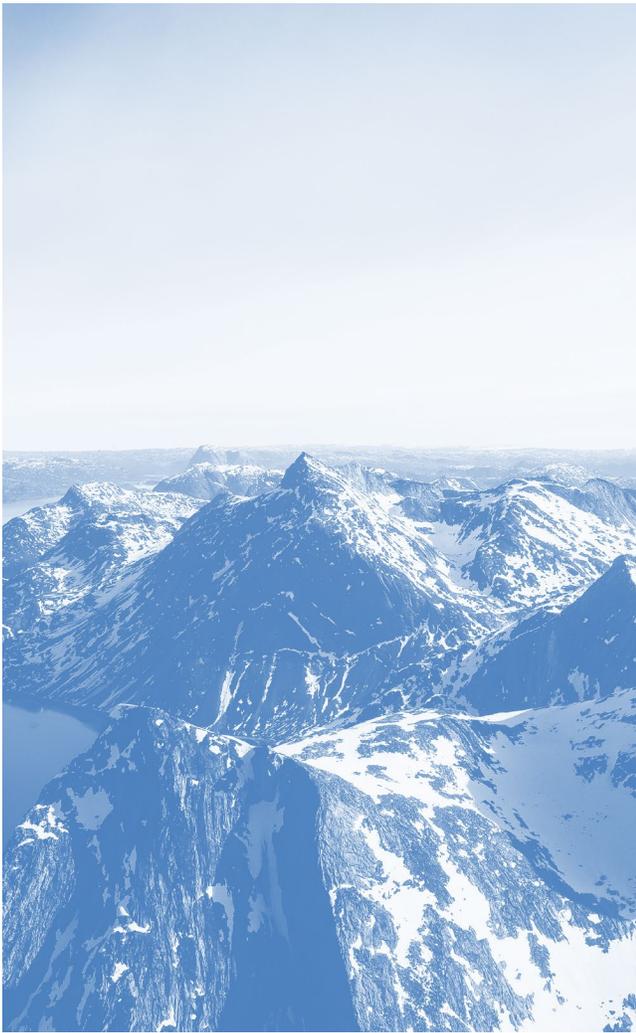


Reykjavik, Iceland and the Isle of Skye, Scotland

I knew I would be blaming Justin Bieber for something in this e-book. After an astonishing 454 million views of his music video “I’ll Show You,” where he is seen traipsing around Iceland’s natural wonders like the Seljalandsfoss waterfall, black sand beaches, and the Fjaðrárgljúfur Canyon, people were like “Damn, I want to feel Bieb’s energy. Imma go there.” At least, that’s what I think happened. Some other things probably contributed to Reykjavik’s intense overtourism issues, like WOW Air flight prices and movies like Journey to the Center of the Earth or The Secret Life of Walter Mitty (which is still one of my favorite travel movies). Oh, and don’t forget Instagram influencers. But since Iceland’s 2008 financial crisis, it has relied heavily on tourism to keep its economy afloat - at the expense of environmental precaution and housing prices.

I’d never thought I’d say this, but the Skye is full. The Isle of Skye in Scotland, which features the Fairy Pools and the dramatic views of Storr, is getting busy. This time, I blame Harry Styles, who filmed his video of “Sign of the Times” at Skye. What is it with male pop stars and making their ballad music videos at beautiful, soon-to-be-exploited destinations?

Instead...



Nuuk, Greenland

Also featured in *Walter Mitty*, Nuuk not only has a cool name but also hosts a repertoire of activities to add to any bucket list. The world's largest island may be melting faster than you can say 'Nuuk', but in the meantime, you can see the Northern Lights or the Midnight Sun, depending on the time you go. Write a letter to Santa and then place it directly in Santa's Mailbox, which is located in the city. The Katuaq Cultural Center can also enlighten you to the wonders of Greenland, and you can use Nuuk to base your travels out to the Ilulissat Ice-fjord, the Uunartoq Hot Springs, or whale-watching right out of the city.



Newfoundland, Canada

I think people forget Canada exists sometimes. If the US was the loud, nosy head cheerleader of your high school, Canada was the quiet girl in the back of the classroom, reading for fun, and apologizing even when you accidentally stepped on her foot. Newfoundland is not Banff, nor is it Niagara Falls, so you might not have heard of it yet. But Newfoundland is a hiker's dream, as there are trails for days along stunning fjords and cliffsides. They have the usual fishing and whale-watching, but you can also kayak through icebergs in Twillingate or zip-line through Steady Brook. And you might have an easier time on the pronunciation.

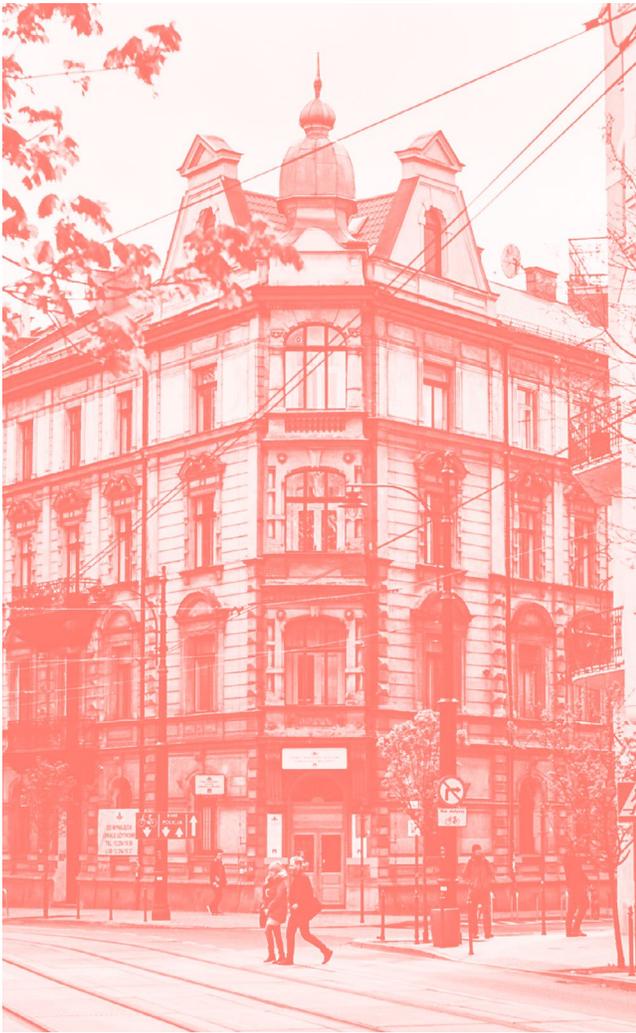


Prague, Czechia and Budapest, Hungary

When I went to Prague, which is actually called Praha by the locals, I saw no less than ten brides along the banks of the Vltava. Prague does look like a fairy tale, but it just feels so unoriginal when all the brides and grooms on the same bridge could have a whole ass soccer game. The pub crawls don't help the situation, keeping the locals up past 4am as 120 drunk tourists pass by residential areas screaming at the top of their lungs. Some locals call the souvenir shops and Thai massage parlors 'visual smog', which I find hilarious because that's just clever writing. And the Lennon Wall is a disturbing bedlam of tourists fighting for the most colorful section for their Instagram. Again, I did the same thing. You can see it @samarminaa. Or don't. Beautiful things don't ask for attention. *flips hair*

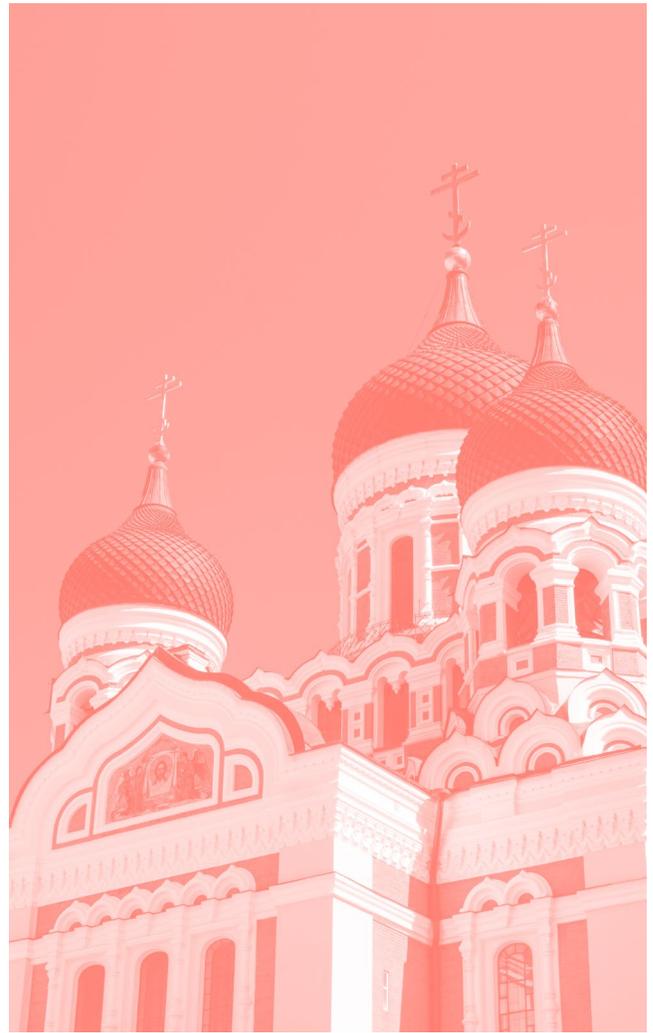
Budapest is slowly approaching the point of overtourism, which is why it is crucial that the government addresses it before it gets out of hand. Budapest is the edgy, grunge city of Eastern Europe, and I don't want it to lose its cool flavor. Budapest doesn't want to either - it rejected hosting the Olympics in 2017, and is working to clean up its notorious nightlife. You wouldn't want to be soaking in the Széchenyi Thermal Baths with 400 strangers rubbing up on you. Unless that's your thing.

Instead...



Krakow, Poland

Used as the Nazi headquarters during WWII, Krakow may seem a bit daunting and solemn. But the city is back on the map as one of the up-and-coming cities of Europe, and for good reason. You can commemorate the lives of thousands of Jews by visiting sites like Oskar Schindler's factory or the Jewish District, or you could toast to the city's future with some vodka and pierogi (Polish dumplings). The Main Market Square is popping, or you could take a stroll down Kanonicza Street, the oldest street in Krakow, with your camera to capture the most elegant shots.



Tallinn, Estonia

This recommendation is flawed - Tallinn is already on the overtourism hit list, and I feel like I'm exasperating it by pushing my readers towards this little city. You should use it only to base your excursions out of and discover the rest of Estonia, including 1,500 islands, instead of crowding the Old Town. Tallinn used to be called 'Reval', and it rivals the beauty of Prague and Budapest. See what I did there? Visit the baroque-styled Kadriorg Art Museum or the KGB Museum, or check out other cool Estonian destinations like the Rummu Underwater Prison or the Kaali Meteorite Crater Field.



Manhattan, NYC

As a New Jersey resident, I feel obligated to say that there's no place like NYC - you should visit once to take in the sights and sounds of the magical metropolis, including Times Square, Broadway shows, and the BAGELS. But as a South Jerseyan, I also feel obligated to tell you not to go back ever again because New York will never be as cool as Philly. And as a DC student, I feel obligated to tell you that DC is not just a political snake den. But this is about New York. Tourists hit Times Square, Rockefeller Center, the Met, and Central Park the hardest, while locals tend to stick around the other boroughs like Staten Island and Queens. To avoid a crush of tourists while still rocking that New York State of Mind, travel to some lesser known areas of NYC. Or, check out some other East Coast cities that are just as cool.

Instead...



Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Sure, there are some touristy things you can do in Philadelphia. If you've seen the Rocky movies, you can run up the steps of the Art Museum. You can visit the Liberty Bell, or Independence Hall. But have you ever heard of the Magic Gardens? Or Rittenhouse Square? Have you ever gone ice skating in front of City Hall, or scared yourself witless at

the Eastern State Penitentiary? Okay, I'm just spilling all of my childhood memories. Philly is cool because it's so overlooked by those that want that iconic tourist experience in New York. But Philly is the chill, cultured younger brother - the city of brotherly love, to be precise. It has museums like the Barnes and Rodin, but also Irish pubs that could rival, well, Ireland. Spruce Street Harbor Park is fun for the whole family, but the Craft Beer Trail is not. Just tell the bartenders that you know Samar, and they'll be like, "Who the hell is that?" I'm not famous yet, peeps.



Maui, Hawaii

I'll be the first to admit that Katy Perry's new song 'Harleys in Hawaii' actually slaps. But I'll also be the first to admit that the Road to Hana is overrated and dizzying from all the twisty roads, with little to no payoff. It is fifty-two miles of tortuous nausea, probably because my father was driving like a maniac, plus I've seen better waterfalls in Virginia. Hawaiian officials have found that the road is four times over capacity. Some poor Hawaiians commute everyday on that road. I can't even imagine their frustration. While the roadside coconuts, fresh poké bowls, and the great surfing all attract visitors to the island paradise, the place is starting to resemble a lot of other cities on this list - mismanaged and overrun, instead of an idyllic paradise.

Instead...



Dominica

Whenever someone labels a destination as a hidden gem and then writes an article about it, it immediately erases its status as a hidden gem. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't race out to Dominica, the hidden gem of the Caribbean. Its sweeping mountain views, seascapes, coral reefs, and hiking scene means it is a great option for nature-lovers. Dominica is also the health and wellness capital of the Eastern Caribbean, which means one thing - treat yo' self. You can do this through hot sulphur spas, forest bathing, or just a good old massage. There are plenty of eco-lodges to base your travels out of, or you could stay at a local village with the kind-hearted Kalinago people.



Puerto Rico

No passport vibes - if you're American. Puerto Rico is a US territory that has had it rough in the last few years, from hurricanes and uncertain death counts to protests in the capital against the governor. But Puerto Rico's tourism game is still on point. From rum factories and bioluminescent bays to the best music in Latin America (Bad Bunny, Ozuna, Luis Fonsi, Daddy Yankee, Nicky Jam, Wisin & Yandel, Anuel AA, it's not even a contest), Puerto Rico still hits a home run in terms of travel quality. Waterfall climb in Rocaliza, float around the bioluminescent Mosquito Bay, or explore Viejo San Juan - you'll never run out of things to do.



Mount Everest, Nepal

A case of overtourism is usually just a nuisance for tourists, while the real burden rests on the city's shoulders. But at Mount Everest, it's the tourists that get punished when the lines start snaking and the bottlenecks start erupting. Since Nepali officials handed out more permits to take on the highest mountain in the world, more summiters die during the ascent by using too much of their oxygen in these lines, as many as eleven this past season. And the environmental toll isn't pretty. Climbers sometimes don't bring their rubbish down, and obviously don't bag and tag every poop that they take. This leads to Nepali sherpas removing 11,000 kilograms of the stuff from base camps every year. And since the mountain is thawing, bodies that have been frozen for 50+ years could thaw out and just be like, extremely gross to look at. Makes you think twice about repeating Norgay and Hillary's success.

Instead...

Gilgit-Baltistan and Swat Valley, Pakistan

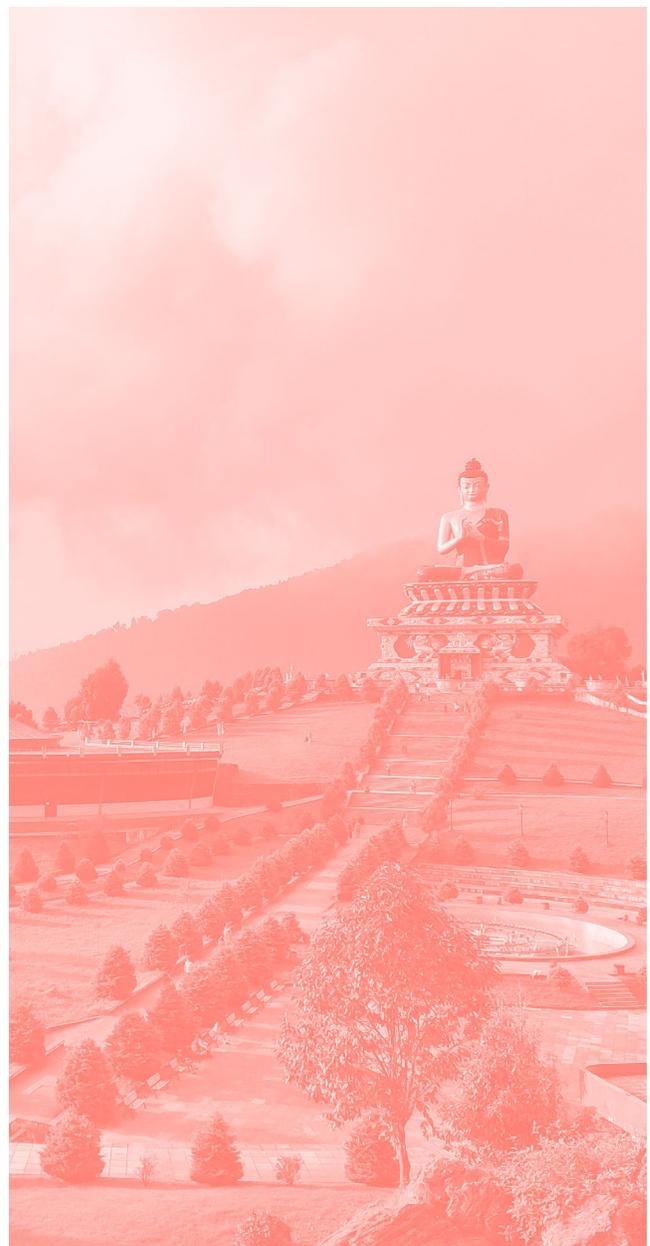
Swat Valley is extremely overlooked as an outstanding destination for natural beauty, and I'll tell you why - it starts with 't' and ends with 'ism'. No, not tourism! Terrorism. Taliban. They are the worst, but their presence in Swat has been virtually invisible since 2018. Swat Valley is looking to make a comeback; you can thank Malala Yousafzai. Known as 'Pakistan's Switzerland,' Swat Valley features dramatic landscapes and fiercely-blue rivers. There's a touch of Buddhist presence there, and even some great skiing areas.

Gilgit-Baltistan is technically a part of Kashmir, which is in a bit of pickle right now between India and Pakistan. But since it is administered by Pakistan, my hot take of this e-book is to put it in the Pakistani section. It's not that hot of a take since the UN agrees - it's all about that Line of Control! Anyways, check out Hunza Valley, boat through Attabad Lake, ride horses at the Nanga Parbat base camp (which sounds suspiciously like Arrow's Nanda Parbat), or hike through Hopper Glacier. And if you're feeling really ballsy, check out K2, the second-highest mountain in the world but the most dangerous one to climb.



Sikkim, India

Yes, I did just recommend the second-tallest mountain in the world, and now I am recommending the third-tallest: Kangchenjunga. It's located in Sikkim, which is the most environmentally-conscious state in India. Plastic water bottles are banned there in any government capacity, and all of the food they grow there is organic. It has terraced rice paddy fields to tour, Himalayan momos to snack on, and Buddhist monasteries to peruse at your luxury.



005



In Action -
Become a
Travelocal

In Action - Become a Travelocal

Let's revise the first story I told. You just resigned from that draining first job to pursue a master's degree, and you're avoiding the anxiety of uncertainty by researching destinations and obsessively updating Skyscanner - on incognito mode, obviously. No one can be out here tracking your cookies.

Becoming a full-time student again is stressful, but subletting your room for a month is more stressful, especially because you have to convince your ninety-year old Sicilian landlord, Marie, that your subletter is not trying to replace you. "But-a what if your 'ousemates like 'er more? I'm not going to vouch-a forr you," she says in true Marie fashion - blunt and brutal.

When deciding where to go for your quarter-life crisis trip, you had some criteria. You wanted to be in a hip city with plenty of history, culture, and of course, nightlife. You needed some natural beauty nearby, preferably some that could be accessed within a day's drive. Throw in delicious national cuisine and agreeable weather, and you had a Google extravaganza on your hands.

You decide on Medellín, Colombia. A historic city, older than present-day America, but also going through a rebirth. In 2012, Medellín was named the Most Innovative City of the Year for making huge strides in public transportation, including electric elevators built into the

Colombian hillsides and gondolas that fly over the city.

You convince your mom, who only knows about Colombia through her occasional binge-watch sessions of *Narcos*, that Medellín is totally safe and has a lower violent crime rate than New Orleans. Your dad, who mostly judges destinations by their aesthetic value, nods in approval.

You convince your friend Paul to kick it with you in Colombia. After all, he's a remote app developer that has never stayed in one place for more than a few months. All he needs is good Wi-Fi, his handy-dandy Microsoft Surface Pro 6, and his iconic red travel backpack. He's an outfit repeater, but who cares when he'll be the one taking the pictures? Plus he's always down for anything - and he loves spicy food.

You've locked down a travel buddy, an Airbnb steps away from Botero Plaza, and your plane tickets, which are dirt-cheap United Basic Economy. You pick out a new travel backpack - it's a little pricey, but it has a lifetime warranty. You're shopping for quality, not quantity.

Flash forward to Medellín. You've cartwheeled through Comuna 13, taken a Colombian fruits tour (the mangosteen was your favorite), and watched theater at Cerro Nutibara. You've done your first day trip out to Guatapé, a scrumptious little resort town with emerald waters and a giant granite centerpiece called Marial Stone. Paul is still complaining about the 740-step climb.

Tonight, you've got a coffee flight to attend, despite the fact that you're not a fan of

black coffee. You've heard that Colombian coffee has fruity notes, and you can't wait to spout some facts that you learned from that YouTube video called 'Guide to Coffee Cupping'. At the coffee flight, which is located in a chic coffeehouse with an exquisite leafy interior, you meet a San Franciscan couple that is embarking on the same adventure as you. A Nashville music producer is also there, as well as some local Colombians that know all the best nightclubs in the area. You go out with your newly-formed squad right after, discussing your caffeine buzzes and appreciation for light roast.

After haphazardly trying to salsa with at least ten men at the club, including a tipsy Paul, your squad heads out for some late night arepas and buñuelos. Your Nashville friend claims that she's leaving the next day - ugh, the Last Day Curse. You always meet the coolest people right before they leave. You convince her to take a panoramic Metro Cable ride with you to cap off her trip, and you promise to visit each other in your respective cities. You meet people twice in life, as they say in Germany.

After a month of making genuine connections, gorging on bandeja paisa, and hiking through stunning mountain sides to keep up your fitness, you head home. Each picture you post has an intense memory behind it, and you become an ambassador for slow Colombian travel. Your Spanish has never been better!

And you spread the wealth.



The whole list:

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Australia - Byron Bay	Germany - Juist Island
Australia - Uluru	Greece - Athens
Belgium - Bruges	Greece - Corfu
Brazil - Rio de Janeiro	Greece - Mykonos
Bulgaria - Sunny Beach	Greece - Santorini
Cambodia - Angkor Wat	Hungary - Budapest
Canada - Banff National Park	Iceland - Reykjavík
Chile - Easter Island	India - Agra
China - Great Wall of China	India - Darjeeling
Colombia - Caño Cristales	India - Goa
Colombia - Cartagena	India - Jaisalmer
Croatia - Dubrovnik	India - Shimla
Croatia - Plitvice Lakes National Park	India - Srinagar
Cyprus - Ayia Napa	India - Taj Mahal, Agra
Czech Republic - Prague	India - Varanasi
Denmark - Copenhagen	Indonesia - Bali
Ecuador - Galápagos Islands	Indonesia - Komodo Island
Egypt - The Great Pyramid of Giza, Cairo	Ireland - Dublin
England - Stonehenge	Islands - Faroe
Estonia - Tallinn Old Town	Israel - Tel Aviv
Everest - Mount	Italy - Cinque Terre National Park
Finland - Rovaniemi	Italy - Rome
France - Mont Saint-Michel	Italy - Venice
France - Parc Naturel Régional des Monts d'Ardèche	Japan - Kyoto
France - Paris	Japan - Nara Park
	Kong - Hong

Latvia - Riga
Lithuania - Vilnius old town
Luxembourg - Echternach
Malaysia - Kuala Lumpur
Mallorca - Palma
Malta - Malta
Mexico - Cozumel
Mexico - Mexico City
Mexico - Pyramid of the Sun, Teotihuacan
Montenegro - Kotor
Myanmar - Bagan
Netherlands - Amsterdam
New Zealand - Matapouri Mermaid Pools
New Zealand - Waitangi
Norway - Geirangerfjord
Norway - Nusfjord, Lofoten Islands
Peru - Machu Picchu
Philippines - Boracay
Philippines - El Nido, Palawan
Portugal - Lisbon
Romania - Bucharest
Scotland - Edinburgh
Scotland - Isle of Skye
Slovakia - Tatranská Lomnica
Slovenia - Bled
South Africa - Durban

South Korea - Jeju Island
Spain - Barcelona
Spain - Lobos Island
Spain - Madrid
Sweden - Stockholm
Switzerland - Lucerne
Thailand - Maya Bay, Ko Phi Phi Leh Island
The Bahamas - Big Major Cay
USA - Grand Canyon National Park
USA - Great Smoky Mountains National Park
USA - Hawaii
USA - Las Vegas
USA - Lombard Street, San Francisco
USA - New Orleans
USA - Rocky Mountain National Park
USA - The Statue of Liberty, New York
USA - Yellowstone National Park
USA - Yosemite National Park
USA - Zion National Park
Vatican - Vatican
Vietnam - Ha Long Bay
Wales - Snowdonia National Park

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