

Traditional Japanese
architecture of
teahouses at Higashi
Chaya district in
Kanazawa.

Where to Go in 2017

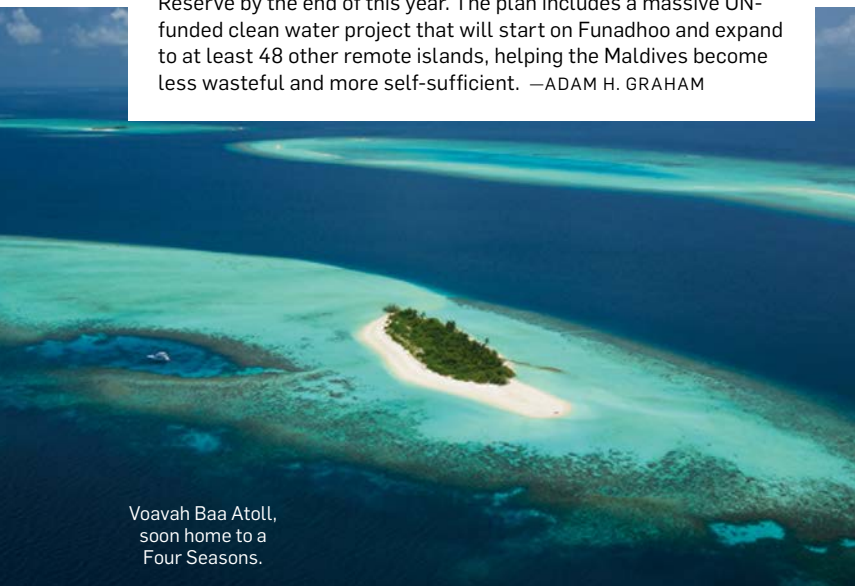
We know that technology and globalization can make the world feel small and thoroughly explored. But we also know that the world is big and that there are always places to discover—and rediscover—for yourself. From familiar getaways that have found a new groove to far-flung corners that are finally within easy reach, these are the 20 buzziest destinations to visit this year.

CHECKING IN

Maldives Multiplication

So many villas, so little time.

The islands have reached beyond the honeymoon market and are seeing the next generation of overwater bungalows cater to a wider variety of niche interests like surfing and yoga. A staggering 23 new hotels opened in 2016 and about a dozen more will open in 2017. **Baglioni Hotels** (baglionihotels.com; doubles from US\$1,100) acquired a private island named Maagau, part of the Dhaalu Atoll, a 30-minute sea plane ride from Malé. It will be home to a brand-new resort to be completed this summer, composed of above-sea villas, and three restaurants. **Soneva Jani** (soneva.com; villas from US\$3,085) is a new 25-villa family-friendly resort set within its own private six-kilometer-long lagoon, which opened in late 2016. Its modernist timber architecture and bedrooms with retractable roofs are raising the bar for bungalow design. Another newcomer is the **Four Seasons Voavah Baa Atoll** (fourseasons.com; rates not yet available), which will be the world's only private resort located entirely within a UNESCO biosphere. And those who can't bear to leave the water will appreciate **Hurawalhi** (hurawalhi.com; tasting menu at 5.8 Undersea Restaurant US\$280), the world's largest subsea restaurant where you can dine on the very fish that swim past you. Getting to the Maldives will be easier too: this year **Costa Cruises** (costacruise.com; rates not yet available) is launching a cruise with stops in the Maldives, and Malé International Airport's US\$450-million refurb includes a new runway to accommodate more passengers. If all that weren't enough, UNESCO has been working with Maldives officials to make the entire archipelago a Biosphere Reserve by the end of this year. The plan includes a massive UN-funded clean water project that will start on Funadhoo and expand to at least 48 other remote islands, helping the Maldives become less wasteful and more self-sufficient. —ADAM H. GRAHAM



Voavah Baa Atoll, soon home to a Four Seasons.



Cliff pool villa lounge, Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar.

HISTORY LESSON

Oman of My Dreams

The Arabian peninsula's best-kept secret is on an upscale swing.

You'd be forgiven for wondering how a cradle of civilization and a major intersection of global trade routes has managed to stay off the tourism radar for so long. Oman, with its rich history exemplified by the 10,000-year-old city of Al Wattih and its unrivaled scenery that ranges from the limestone Al Hajar mountains to a 3,000-kilometer coastline, has big draws for every type of traveler. Trek windswept deserts, spot rambunctious dolphins in the gulf, visit dazzling mosques, stay in charming Bedouin towns. Even capital city Muscat, famed for its souks and seafood, boasts an incredibly diverse terrain—not to mention a laid-back, liveable scene that's less over-the-top than neighboring Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

No, the wealth hasn't run rampant in this sultanate, but they still know how to do luxury right. Intrepid brands the likes of Six Senses, The Chedi and Alila long have had covetable outposts in Oman, and the 30-tent, Arabian fantasy Desert Nights Camp has been on our bucket list for ages. Last year brought the opening of the first five-star on the south coast, **Al Baleed Resort Salalah by Anantara** (salalah.anantara.com; doubles from US\$395), and, on the curving rim of a canyon, the **Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar** (jabal-akhdar.anantara.com; doubles from US\$636), the highest-altitude resort in the Middle East. A Jumeirah is scheduled to open near Muscat later in 2017. Now's the time to avail yourself of that legendary Omani hospitality. —JENINNE LEE-ST. JOHN

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF ANANTARA AL JABAL AL AKHDAR; COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS



Grilled octopus is a tentacled treat at Toyo Eatery, in Manila.

HOT TABLES

Feast of the Future

Lively drinking and dining scenes have put three destinations on the culinary map.

MANILA / PHILIPPINES

The recent renaissance in Filipino-cuisine culture, slotting classic menus into quirky settings, makes Manila a worthy destination for the traveling foodie. **The Alley at Karrivin Plaza** (thealleyatkarrivin.com) is an easy one-stop shop: browse hand-embroidered tunics and gorgeous sting-ray home décor while sipping an iced coffee from **Lanai** (lanai-manila.com) before heading to dinner at **Toyo Eatery** (63-91/7720-8630; *tasting menus from P1,000*) where chef Jordy Navarra fancifully recreates childhood memories on a plate: think dolled-up street-style pork barbecue and wagyu beef *silog*. If you're after an evening drink, sip a refreshing gin-based Cucumber Frost on the terrace of **Wild Poppy** (5666 Don Pedro St., Poblacion, Makati). For gooey desserts topped with homemade soft-serve ice cream, stop in at neighboring **Bucky's** (buckysnotabrownie.com; *soft-serve ice cream P100*). Stay at **La Casita Mercedes** (lacasitamercedes.com; *doubles from P3,000*), a small bed-and-breakfast in a restored 1930s home, in the Poblacion district: the hotspot for quirky rooftop bars, artsy cafés and hipster restaurants. —STEPHANIE ZUBIRI

BELGRADE / SERBIA

Since the end of the Yugoslav wars, Belgrade has attracted steady investment—its graffiti-covered neighborhoods are now full of restaurants and bars. You'll find hearty platters of *čevapi*—smoky sausages without casing—and stuffed *somborka* peppers at **Sokače** (381-11/328-7939), paprika-laden kebabs at **Tri Šešira** (trisesira.rs; *mains RSD914–1,714*), and pan-Latin tapas at **Toro** (richardsandoval.com/torobelgrade). But the biggest draw is the growing craft-beer scene (the city has 37 breweries). Don't miss the Kabinet Supernova IPA at **Prohibicija** (fb.com/prohibicija.beograd) in the bar-filled Savamala district, as well as Kas's full-bodied pale ales and Salto's IPA at **Bajloni** (bajloni.com), set in a former brewery.

IPOH / MALAYSIA

Though it is one of the largest cities in the country, Ipoh's dining scene is still something of a secret held by Malaysian foodies. At **Restoran SYW** (sunyeongwai.com; *mains RM8–RM55*), birds reared in former tin-mining pools result in tasty roasted duck. Drive by **Aun Kheng Lim Salted Chicken** (60-5/254-2998; 24, Jalan Theater, Taman Jubilee; *whole chickens from RM16*) to bring home steamed chickens packed in coarse salt, angelica root and five spice powder. Meanwhile at **Garvy's** (garvysmy.com; *tasting menus from RM250*), one of the city's swankiest date spots, you'll find French-tinged dishes like cod with artichoke puree. Check in to the funky **Happy 8 Retreat** (fb.com/thehappy8; *doubles from RM250*), located in the foodie haven of Old Town for a Bohemian taste of what life must have been like half a century ago when the neighborhood buzzed with commerce and social intrigues. —MARK LEAN

A tent at Wild
Coast Tented
Lodge.

NATURAL WONDER

Go Wild

A new glamp site in Yala National Park, Sri Lanka, is adding creature comforts to creature sightings.

With more than 200 avian species flaunting their plumage and mammals including ruddy mongooses, golden jackals, sloth bears, langur monkeys, elephants and Indian palm civets roaming the forests, this 130,000-hectare protected park has always been a mecca for wildlife enthusiasts. Later this year, nature-lovers will be able to explore the biodiverse region in comfort while keeping their eco-footprint to a bare minimum. Set on the southeastern Sri Lankan coastline just outside the park boundaries, **Wild Coast Tented Lodge** (resplendenceceylon.com; rates not yet available) will feature just 28 plush, low-impact tents. Some 30 leopards prowl the area, meaning the odds of spotting one of these elusive creatures are uncommonly high. —DIANA HUBBELL

ROYAL TREATMENT

Pure Jaipur

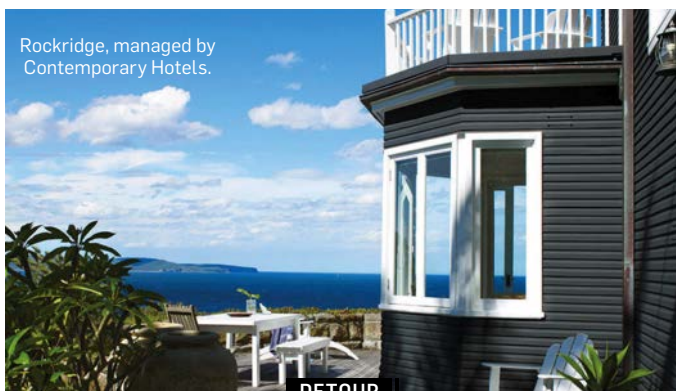
The new wave of trendy boutiques in Jaipur is both modern and, in keeping with the city's past, super lavish.

The bedrock of Indian royalty and village craft, Jaipur is pivoting. Young heirs and a new wave of hip design studios—a lively milieu of kings and king-makers—are transforming the Pink City into a modern craft-and-design hub. A mere 300 years old (a babe in the woods by Indian standards), Jaipur has become an emblem of the jewel-encrusted Raj. From the get-go, the famously lavish Rajput clan filled their city with decadent palaces and positioned handsome stone fortresses atop the golden Aravalli hills. Inside the city walls, the creative din of goldsmiths and embroiderers fuelled the world's love affair with Indian handicrafts, textiles and jewels. Old and new have always mixed well here, and these days the collaborations head into uncharted territory.

Studio Kassa's (studiokassa.com; leather bags Rs3,640-15,000) designers introduced a collection of hand-crafted leather bags; **Kalee** (B-42, Lalkothi, Sahakar Marg; 91-141/274-4621) is turning heads with minimalist threads; and **AnanTaya** (anantayadecor.com; Rs150) teams up with *kaligars*—the city's traditional craft guilds—repurposing old techniques to create haute homeware. **Rasa's** (rasajaipur.com) arresting prints and geometric motifs push block-printing into the realm of contemporary art. Artist Siddharth Kasliwal reimagines his father Munnu's legacy at **The Gem Palace** (gempalacejaipur.com; prices upon request), as jeweler to the international jet set. After exploring and shopping the bazaars, stow your loot at the arty quarters of **28 Kothi** (28kothi.com; doubles from Rs8,763) or retreat to rarefied chambers at **Sujan Rajmahal Palace** (sujanluxury.com/raj-mahal; doubles from Rs47,000). —RACHNA SACHASIN



Haute homeware at AnanTaya.



Rockridge, managed by Contemporary Hotels.

DETOUR

Hamptons Down Under

Just an hour north of the city, Palm Beach is the go-to escape for the Sydney's wealthiest residents and now new home-sharing sites are making it easier to rent one of the mansions that dot the peninsula.

If the perfect, sweeping arch of sand edged by pine trees an hour's drive north of Sydney looks familiar, that's because it's the set of *Home and Away*, the iconic Australian soap opera about the lives of small-town people. But the real Palm Beach sits far atop the food chain: stacked with the high-design weekend escapes of affluent Sydneysiders. Now, thanks to the sharing economy, many of the best properties here are being rented out to celebrities like Nicole Kidman, Mick Jagger and, frankly, anyone who can afford it.

"Sharing beach houses has always been an Australian tradition. But the offerings in Palm Beach differ dramatically from the rustic no-frills cottages of yesteryear," says Terry Kaljo, CEO of **Contemporary Hotels** (contemporaryhotels.com.au), which manages and provides concierge services for 34 high-end holiday homes in the area. The list includes Rockridge, an elegant 1940s residence with a clifftop pool; and the Spaceship House, a six-bedroom mansion with its own cinema. Add a smattering of cafés, restaurants, galleries, a liquor store that only sells wines that have been tasted by staff, and an annual polo event (polobythesea.com.au) held January 14 that attracts the who's who of Sydney, and you'll see why Palm Beach has emerged as the Hamptons of the Antipodes. —IAN LLOYD NEUBAUER

Rotterdam Uncovered

Known for its pulsing student nightlife and alternative vibe, Rotterdam is starting to steal Amsterdam's spotlight. Here's how to spend three days in this dynamic Dutch city.

FRIDAY

Start your weekend off by checking in to the **Mainport** (mainporthotel.com; doubles from €153), a wellness-oriented hotel where you can book a room with a Finnish sauna, or the **CitizenM Hotel Rotterdam** (citizenm.com; doubles from €85), which feels like your design-savvy friend's living room. Wander north for some shopping in Oude Noorden, a vibrant residential area with experimental fashion and homedesign boutiques. Grab a pre-dinner drink at **Brouwerij Noordt** (brouwerijnoordt.nl), a brewery with 20 beers on tap situated in a former firehouse. Continue the tasting tour with a 15-minute bike ride to **Roffa Streetfoodbar** (roffafood.nl; entrées €8–€25), a smokehouse that serves bread, beer and cheese from some of Rotterdam's best producers. The brisket—slow-cooked over oak for 24 hours—is a must-try.

The lobby lounge at the CitizenM Hotel.

SATURDAY

Stroll to the nearby **Het Nieuwe Instituut** (hetnieuweinstituut.nl), a museum dedicated to Dutch design and architecture. Afterward, cruise the river in a water taxi to spot a few examples in person, like the Erasmus Bridge and De Rotterdam, a striking skyscraper by Rem Koolhaas. This summer, cool off with a dip at **RiFO10** (rif010.nl), an artificial wave park in the Steigersgracht canal. Once you've worked up an appetite, take in the skyline while dining on dishes such as veal tartare with langoustines and *pata negra* at **HMB Restaurant** (hmb-restaurant.nl; small plates €5–€22). Cap off the evening with a bespoke G&T at **Ballroom** (ballroomrotterdam.nl), where your ideal elixir is crafted with one of more than a hundred gins.

SUNDAY

Art is everywhere in this city—more than a thousand pieces adorn the public spaces. Walk along the Rijnhaven for a glimpse of Bobbing Forest, a surrealist installation of floating trees by art collective Mothership, then head to **De Markthal** (markthal.nl), a vast, mural-covered space where vendors sell aged Goudas and cinnamon-kissed *stroopwafels*. It's also home to De Tijdtrap, an exhibition of medieval artifacts excavated from the ground on which the building now stands. Save room for dinner at **Fenix Food Factory** (fenixfoodfactory.nl; mains €3–€25), in buzzy Katendrecht. In the winter, a hip crowd hovers indoors over cured meats and pear cider. In warmer months, benches overlooking the canal are the setting for long, boozy evenings.

Ballroom's lamb meatballs.



New direct flights put central Vietnam within quick reach.

FAST TRACK

Getting Here Just Got Easier

Infrastructure and transportation updates have made travel to these three destinations a much smoother process. Go now, before the secret's out.

KANAZAWA, JAPAN

This city on the western coast of Honshu has seen a boost in visits since a bullet-train extension shortened the trip from Tokyo to just 2½ hours.

Go for the old wooden teahouses of the Higashi Chayagai district, the beautiful samurai residence in Nagamachi, and the contemporary art museum. Then have your pick of sushi that's just as good as, and much cheaper than, what you'd find in Tokyo. Try it at Sentori, Kagayasuke, or Omi-cho market—a favorite of sushi master Masa.

DANANG

New direct flights, an expansion for the international airport, and an easier e-visa application system, which is scheduled to roll out next month, are clearing the way for travelers to Danang. There are now direct flights from Bangkok (on Bangkok Airways) and Taipei (on Jetstar Airways), and the Danang Department of Tourism just launched an app to help travelers navigate the pretty port city in central Vietnam; its position makes it a perfect gateway to explore neighboring Hue and Hoi An.

CAMBODIAN COAST

Cambodia has some of Southeast Asia's most stunning islands, but getting to them has always been arduous (a flight to Phnom Penh, a four-hour drive, then a choppy ferry ride). Luckily, there are now direct flights into the coastal Sihanoukville airport via Saigon. That means a smoother journey to the island escapes coming this year: the wellness-minded **Six Senses** (sixsenses.com) on Krabey Island and the **Alila Villas** eco-resort (kohrussey.com; doubles from US\$350) on Koh Russey.



A leopard cat
in Sabah.

ANIMAL QUEST

Sabah Safaris

New tours reveal a few of Borneo's more elusive inhabitants.

Cruise through the wilds of Borneo with **Pandaw's** (pandaw.com; seven days all-inclusive cruise RM10,284 per person) new expedition on the upper reaches of remote Western Kalimantan, sailing between the towns of Tayan and Lanjak. This 550-kilometer-long journey is an untamed exploration of the Kapuas river system where you will experience the natural habitat of elusive Sumatran rhinoceros.

In Sabah, new tours by **Sticky Rice Travel** (stickyrice.travel.com; two-night Danum Valley packages from RM1,400 per person) to the Danum Valley Conservation Area offer a chance to discover hundreds of different species of Bornean flora and fauna. Scour the canopy for shy orangutans, clouded leopards and western tarsiers as you take to this 130-million-year-old rainforest on foot, and then spend the night at eco-friendly Borneo Rainforest Lodge for a real boutique jungle experience. —MARCO FERRARSE

GUIDED TOURS

Kayah Uncovered

After half a century of isolation, Burma's Kayah State is opening up to select tour operators, offering travelers a glimpse of the region's many splendors.

With unspoilt jungle and gilded mountaintop pagodas, long-necked Kayans and floating villages, Kayah State was but a land unto itself and its inhabitants for decades, forbidden fruit for all others. Now, Burma's tiniest region has opened its doors to tourists after more than 50 years of state-sanctioned isolation, making it one of Asia's most promising last frontiers.

Expect an influx of new tours into the once conflict-riddled region, as some parts of Kayah State cannot be accessed unless traveling with tour groups. InsideAsia Tours runs the new 13-night **Rural Burma Explorer** (insideasiatours.com; £2,400 per person) where for two nights travelers explore the Kayah State's capital, Loikaw, and visit several Padaung tribal villages.

Also riding the wave of authentic, hyper-local travel opportunities, The Flash Pack has recently added two days in Kayah State in its 12-day **Myanmar Mysteries Tour** (flashpack.com; £2,099 per person). Guests arrive to the mystified region via long-tail boat through the grassy, open-air expanse of Bilu Creek, and share smiles and authentic dishes such as *wet au chaung*, or barbecued Kayah sausage, with Pan Pet locals in their ancient mountaintop settlement. Both tours include the opportunity to interact with the storied Kayan women, known for adorning their necks with brass coils as a centuries-long symbol of beauty. — TRAVIS LEVIUS



A long-tail boat
cuts across Bilu Creek.

CITY ON THE RISE

Big in Bolivia

Once beleaguered by frequent strikes, roadblocks and a paucity of amenities, the backpacker haven of La Paz, Bolivia, has emerged as a true culture capital. Infrastructure has played a key role: in 2014 the city introduced Mi Teleférico, a network of aerial trams that transport riders across the city in minutes on routes that once took an hour by bus. Travelers can glide from Zona Sur up to the windswept Altiplano in El Alto, where architect Freddy Mamani is designing whimsical, New Andean-style homes for the newly wealthy.

The first rumblings of a renaissance came in 2013, when Noma cofounder Claus Meyer opened **Gustu** (restaurantgustu.com; *tasting menus from \$b409*), a fine-dining restaurant where—in classic Noma fashion—local ingredients like caiman and fermented Amazonian honey get haute-cuisine treatment. It's the flagship of a larger culinary revitalization project that includes 10 cooking schools in low-income areas, a collective of street-food vendors, and a bar devoted to regional craft brews, Tarija wines and Bolivian spirits like *singani*.

Since then, the La Paz restaurant scene has exploded with surprisingly diverse ventures from Gustu alums: elevated vegan fare at **Ali Pacha** (alipacha.com; *tasting menus from \$b152*), locally inspired pastas at **Propiedad Pública** (*591-2/277-6312*; *mains \$b62–76*), and house-roasted coffee at **Typica** (fb.com/typica.cafe).

The city's latest upgrade came with the arrival of its first Design Hotel, the **Atix**, which opened in the upscale Calacoto neighborhood last fall (atixhotel.com; *doubles from \$b1,116*). If a stellar Bolivian restaurant and a bar featuring cocktails by award-winning mixologist David Romero aren't enough of a draw, each of the 53 rooms doubles as a gallery, displaying works by Bolivian artists like Gastón Ugalde. It's a microcosm of the city's thriving contemporary art scene: galleries like **Mérida Romero** (fb.com/meridaromeroarte), **Mamani Mamani** (mamani.com), and the reopened **Salar Galería de Arte** (salart.org) showcase much of the country's top talent.

La Paz, as seen from the Atix hotel.



Packing for La Paz



1. Issey Miyake mosaic coat, US\$2,375 (issey-miyake.com).
2. Yosuzi rabbit-felt fedora, US\$460 (net-a-porter.com).
3. Fresh Vitamin Nectar Vibrancy-Boosting Face Mask, US\$62 (fresh.com).
4. Jason Wu saddlebag, US\$1,195 (saksfifthavenue.com).
5. Valentino ballerina shoes, US\$945 (valentino.com).

HAPPENINGS

Right Time, Right Place

The openings, events and festivals worth planning a trip around this year.

PATTAYA in FEBRUARY

The third installation of Thailand's super-green music, arts, food and culture festival

Wonderfruit

(wonderfruitfestival.com; from Bt3,800 for an adult day-pass) was postponed from last December out of respect for the passing of beloved King Bhumibol Adulyadej. Those who can make it February 16-19 instead are promised headlining acts Rudimental, Liana La Havas and Young Fathers at a 100-percent carbon neutral, four-day frolic in the fields two hours southeast of Bangkok.



Picking up steam as it goes, the fifth edition of **Art Basel Hong Kong**

(March 23-25; artbasel.com/hong-kong; tickets HK\$300) promises to be a visual candy store for art-lovers, with 241 galleries from 34 countries. New this year is the Kabinett sector, in which galleries offer curated shows within their booths.



HONG KONG in MARCH



RWANDA in JUNE

Travelers hoping to see East Africa's waning population of mountain gorillas will be able to do it in style starting this summer, when Wilderness Safaris' first Rwandan property, the upscale, six-villa **Bisate Lodge** (wilderness-safaris.com; villas from US\$1,400 per person), opens near Volcanoes National Park Volcanoes National.

QUEENSTOWN in

JULY

There are two new places to stay in New Zealand's adventure capital (ski season starts in mid-June, but there's bungee jumping and jet boating year-round). Bed down at the boutique

Hulbert House

(hulberthouse.co.nz; doubles from NZ\$950), with six suites in an 1888 Victorian villa, or the 69-room **QT Queenstown** (qthotelsandresorts.com), which is slated to land on the shores of Lake Wakatipu this year.



LAKE LUCERNE in SEPTEMBER

The ultramodern **Bürgenstock Resort** (buergenstock.ch), which opens in mid 2017 with four hotels and a spa, is one of the biggest developments to come to this part of Switzerland. Get there quicker via the 56-kilometer Gotthard Base Tunnel (the world's longest train tunnel), which has shaved 40 minutes off the trip from Milan. And don't miss Mount Pilatus—its popular cog railway is now included in the Swiss Travel Pass.