

Welcome to the World

Third Rock from the Sun. Mother Earth. The Blue Marble. The spinning ball of rock that is the world goes by many names, but it is also the place that each and every one of us calls home. And wherever it is that you call home, you can be sure that if you travel – near or far – the world will exhibit its overwhelming beauty and diversity. Adventure and inspirational experiences await around every corner, so what’s stopping you? Go forth and explore.

Natural Wonders

Comedian Steven Wright once quipped, ‘You can’t have everything – where would you put it?’ Weighing in at 5.97219×10²⁴ kg, and with 149 million sq km of landmass (and another 361 million sq km of ocean), the world has room enough to fit ‘everything’. Amidst all of that ‘everything’ there is so much to discover, from rivers deep, like the Nile (snaking 6850km from central Africa to the Mediterranean), and the sunken shores of the Dead Sea (427m below sea level), to mountains high, like the Himalayas (more than 100 peaks over 7200m, including Everest at 8848m), the Andes and the Alps.

Across seven continents and 221 countries, ‘everything’ takes plenty of wondrous forms. There are mighty expanses of greenery, like the Amazon basin (7 million sq km of jungle), while beneath the crystal-clear Pacific Ocean lies the Great Barrier Reef (stretching 2300km), and the scarred hide of the Grand Canyon is a repository of 2 billion years of geological history.

Not all the world’s wonders are inanimate, however. Wildlife spectacles include the annual wildebeest migration (two million strong) across the Serengeti, the stoic emperor penguins of Antarctica, and the diverse menagerie on the Galapagos Islands, where people seem out of place.

Spectacular Cities

It is people, not animals, who have colonised the entire planet. Since foregoing stone tools, inventing the wheel (3300BC) and first smelting iron (1200BC), humankind has embarked on a big production number that features countless cultures, civilisations and empires. History suggests that humans were naturally inclined to warfare but also – more positively – to congregating and cohabiting, thus, over time the city was born.

More than half of the world’s population now live in cities. They are the pulsating beacons that attract us, with their bright lights and human interaction, epicentres of culture, industry and endeavour. And each has its own distinctive character: New York with its skyscrapers and taxicabs, London with its parks, pubs and palaces, Sydney with its bridge and Cape Town set against the rugged panorama of Table Mountain. A tour of urban conurbations will take you to geographical oddities (Istanbul straddling the border of Europe and Asia), and cities of faith (Jerusalem, holy to Judaism, Islam and Christianity), cities with thousands of years of history (Athens, Damascus, Varanasi) and booming new cities mushrooming across Asia, Africa and South America.



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Heron Island, Great Barrier Reef, Australia

Man-Made Marvels

Cities may be the hubs that you pass through as you roam, but they are not necessarily humankind’s greatest achievements. These are many and dispersed, assuming myriad physical forms.

Mystery clings to many, such as the Great Pyramid of Giza built in 2560BC, the Terracotta Warriors in Xi’an and the mighty stone *moai* of Easter Island. Others no less awe inspiring were built for specific purposes, like St Basil’s Cathedral in the Kremlin, the Great Wall of China, and the Taj Mahal, a monument to love. More modern spectacles like the architectural extravaganzas of Dubai and the Shanghai skyline may lack the gravity of history but if anything are more dazzling.

All of these monuments contribute to the ways of life that go on around them, which reminds us that not all of human-

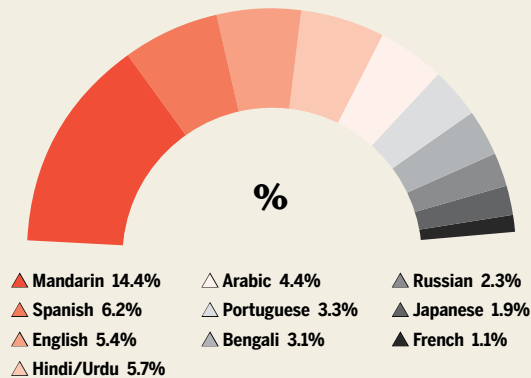
kind’s achievements are tangible. Just as intoxicating and just as worth getting out and seeing are cultures, festivals and events, from Viennese coffeehouse culture to Cuban jazz, from full moon parties on Koh Samui to Maasai warrior dances under an African sunset.

There is all this and plenty more besides to be encountered as you venture into the world. This book can act as inspiration and as a first step on your own voyage of discovery. Listed here is every country; each includes enough of a taste of its top sites and experiences to get your feet itchy, basic practical information to help you start planning, and a map to help you plot a rough itinerary. Where exactly you want to go and how you proceed from here is entirely up to you, but we encourage you to get out there and do it!

Need to Know

Most widely spoken languages

If you can speak one or more of the following languages, you can communicate with these percentages of the world's population.



Languages

It's the babble of Babel out there! There are almost 7000 languages spoken in the world today. These are divided into six major language families, and around 130 smaller ones. The distribution of languages across the globe reflects movements of people through history, and language families include some unlikely relatives: for example, Albanian is related to English, Hindi, Persian and Russian. The size of countries

and populations don't necessarily account for numbers of languages, either: in New Guinea almost 450 languages are spoken by a population of only 3.5 million people.

It's estimated that half of the world's population speaks more than one language. Fear not if you don't: a smile can go a long way, even amongst people you share no language with. That said, learning a few words of the language spoken at your destination can open a lot of doors.

Time

We all know that as the world orbits the sun, the planet is also spinning, meaning that for some of us the sun is setting, and for others it is rising. So, when it is bedtime in Sydney, locals will be reaching for a late-afternoon chai in Mumbai, lunching in London or getting ready to rise in New York. To make life easier, the world is divided into time zones.

Time zones

The clever fellows at London's Royal Observatory saw to it that from the 1880s Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) was adopted as the global reference time. Each time zone is designated as either being + or - whole numbers of hours (or half hours) from GMT. In 1972, Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) replaced GMT (it works the same way, but UTC accounts for stray 'leap seconds').

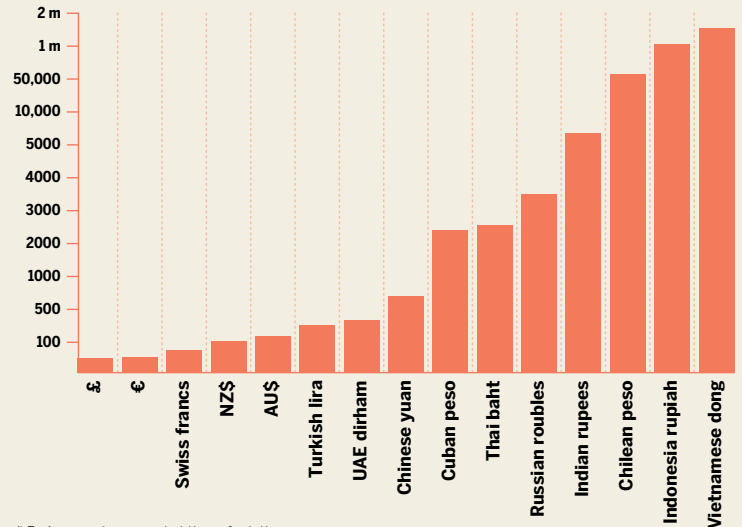
Websites

Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com) Travel portal

Time and date (www.timeanddate.com) Time differences

XE (www.xe.com) Currency conversion

So you want to be a millionaire? US \$100 buys you...



* Exchange rates correct at time of printing

Money

Wherever you go in the world you'll need a fistful of cash (or a credit card). There are around 180 different currencies circulating in the world today. So-called hard currencies – think the US\$, the British £, the European €, the Yen and the Swiss Franc – are widely accepted, so can be handy to carry.

Depending on where you go, and where you come from, you will need to exchange your own currency into that of your destination. How far your money will go depends on exchange rates: they may make you feel like a pauper, or a millionaire.

Money-saving tips

- ➔ Consider low-season travel
- ➔ Look for favourable exchange rates; when one currency rises against yours, another may fall
- ➔ Book ahead for the best deals

Travel documents

Back in the day, explorers and conquerors left home without so much as a note from mother and crossed borders with impunity. You can't get away with that nowadays. To leave your own country and to enter any other, you need a passport, a travel document certifying your identity and issued by your govern-

ment. To visit many countries you also may need a visa, a stamp in your passport that allows you to temporarily enter said country.

Rules & regulations

Regulations and rules regarding visas are many and complex, and vary from country to country. Some countries allow visa-free travel to passport holders of other countries (such as in the EU), while others may allow certain visitors to obtain a visa upon arrival. Still others require aspiring visitors to get a visa before they leave home. Bottom line: investigate visa requirements before you book your next trip.

world time zones

VANCOUVER
SAN FRANCISCO
LOS ANGELES

WASHINGTON
NEW YORK
BOSTON

CAPE TOWN
BERLIN
PARIS

DUBAI
MOSCOW

MUMBAI
DELHI

SINGAPORE
BEIJING
HONG KONG

SYDNEY
MELBOURNE

-12 -11 -10 -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 GMT 0 GMT +1 +2 +3 +4 +5 +6 +7 +8 +9 +10 +11 +12

MEXICO CITY
DALLAS

SÃO PAULO
RIO DE JANEIRO

DUBLIN
LONDON

DUBLIN
LONDON

If You Like...

Beach Paradise

Australia Plunging waterfalls, pristine beaches and reefs. (p53)

Maldives Whiter-than-white powder sand and luminous cyan-blue water. (p527)

Portugal The Algarve has a varied coastline; sandy islands, dramatic cliffbacked shores and rarely-visited beaches. (p688)

Puerto Rico Backed by low scrub rather than craning palms, Playa Flamenco is the only public beach on the island. (p690)

Seychelles White-sand beaches lapped by luxuriously warm waters and trees leaning over the shore. (p740)

Spain According to one count, the emerald-green northern Spanish region of Asturias boasts more than 600 beaches. (p784)

Tahiti & French Polynesia Bora Bora: a perfect Morse-code ring of small islets. (p828)

Thailand The soaring limestone karsts of Railay are one of Thailand's most famous natural features. (p850)

Cultural Festivals

Carnaval, Brazil Carnaval is nonstop revelry, with nearly 500 street parties happening in every corner of town. (p128)

Día de Muertos, Mexico Day of the Dead; the happy-sad remembrance of departed loved ones at the beginning of November. (p554)

Goroka Show, Papua New Guinea Massive feather head-dresses, rustling grass skirts and evocative face and body paint. (p658)

Holi, India Hindus celebrate the beginning of spring by throwing coloured water and *gula* (powder) at anyone within range. (p391)

Naadam, Mongolia Two or three days of serious wrestling, horse racing and archery action. (p564)

New Orleans, United States of America New Orleans' riotous annual Mardi Gras and Jazz Fest are famous the world over. (p901)

History

Brú na Bóinne, Ireland Ireland's finest Stone Age passage tomb, predating the pyramids by some six centuries. (p414)

Flanders Fields, Belgium Manicured graveyards with white memorial crosses bear silent witness in seemingly endless rows. (p87)

Gallipoli, Turkey Memorials and cemeteries mark the spots where young men from far away fought and died in gruelling conditions. (p878)

Machu Picchu, Peru A ruin among ruins with emerald terraces, backed by steep peaks and Andean ridges. (p665)

Persepolis, Iran The artistic harmony leaves you in little doubt that in its prime Persepolis was at the centre of the known world. (p404)

Petra, Jordan Petra has been drawing the crowds since Jean Louis Burckhardt rediscovered this spectacular site in 1812. (p447)

Pompeii, Italy A once-thriving Roman town frozen in time 2000 years ago in the midst of its death throes. (p425)

Tikal, Guatemala The remarkably restored temples are a testament to the cultural and artistic heights scaled by this jungle civilization. (p351)

Food & Drink

Beer, Czech Republic Czechs claim to have the best *pivo* (beer) in the world and who are we to argue? (p228)

Champagne, France Celebrated around the world for the sparkling wines that have been produced here since the days of Dom Pérignon. (p298)

Copenhagen, Denmark One of the hottest culinary destinations in Europe, with more Michelin stars than any other Scandinavian city. (p232)

Japan Attention to detail, genius for presentation and insistence on the finest ingredients results in memorable cuisine. (p442)

Malaysia Start with Chinese-Malay 'Nonya' fare, move on to Indian curries, Chinese buffets and Malay food stalls. (p524)

San Sebastián, Spain Chefs here have turned *pintxos* (Basque tapas) into an art form. (p782)

Turkey Mezes aren't just a type of dish, they're a whole eating experience. (p876)

Vietnam Essentially it's all about the freshness of the ingredients. The result? Incomparable texture and flavour combinations. (p928)

Whisky, Scotland Scotland's national drink has been distilled here for more than 500 years. (p730)

Adventure

Blue Hole, Belize The sheer walls of the Blue Hole Natural Monument drop more than 400ft into the ocean. (p90)

Diving, Red Sea, Egypt Underwater world of coral cliffs, colourful fish and spookily beautiful wrecks. (p257)

Hiking, Dolomites, Italy This tiny pocket of northern Italy takes seductiveness to dizzying heights. (p428)

Hiking, New Zealand The sublime forests, mountains, lakes, beaches and fiords have made NZ one of the best hiking destinations on the planet. (p611)

Outdoor Adventure, Switzerland This country begs outdoor escapades with its larger-than-life canvas of hallucinatory landscapes. (p819)

Rafting, Slovenia Slovenia is an outdoor destination and fast rivers like the Soča cry out to be rafted. (p756)

Safari, Botswana Chobe National Park ranks among the elite of African safari destinations. (p117)

Skiing, Andorra 193km of runs and a combined lift system that can shift over 100,000 skiers per hour. (p24)

Zip Lining, Costa Rica Few things are more purely joyful than clipping into a high-speed cable, laced above and through the seething jungle canopy. (p204)

Natural Wonders

Cappadocia, Turkey The hardest honeycomb landscape looks sculpted by a swarm of genius bees. (p875)

Dead Sea, Israel & the Palestinian Territories Cobalt-blue waters, outlined by snow-white salt deposits, reddish-tan cliffs and tufts of dark-green vegetation. (p419)

Grand Canyon, United States of America It took 6 million years for the canyon to form and some rocks exposed along its walls are 2 billion years old. (p902)

Great Barrier Reef, Australia Stretching more than 2000km along the Queensland coastline, with dazzling coral, languid sea turtles and tropical fish of every colour and size. (p53)

Iguazú Falls, Argentina The roar, the spray and the sheer volume of water live forever in the memory. (p39)

Lake Baikal, Russia Baikal's gob-smacking vistas and the tough going will leave you breathless. (p706)

Mt Everest, Nepal Tibet has easily the best views of the world's most famous mountain. (p597)

Ngorongoro Crater, Tanzania The magic starts while you're still up on the rim, with the chill

air and sublime views over the enormous crater. (p842)

Northern Lights, Iceland Celestial kaleidoscope known for transforming long winter nights into natural lava lamps. (p381)

Salto Ángel (Angel Falls), Venezuela Witness the cascade of the world's tallest waterfall, as it thunders 979m from the plateau of Auyantepui. (p921)

Man-Made Wonders

Acropolis, Greece Embodies a harmony, power and beauty that speak to all generations. (p329)

Stonehenge, England People have been drawn to this myth-rich ring of boulders for more than 5000 years. (p263)

Pyramids of Giza, Egypt Witness the extraordinary shape, impeccable geometry and sheer bulk of the pyramids. (p255)

Taj Mahal, India The marble mausoleum is the world's most poetic parting. (p389)

Great Wall, China Perfectly chiselled bricks, overrun with saplings, coil splendidly into the hills. (p177)

Eiffel Tower, France Pedal beneath it, skip the lift and hike up, buy a crêpe from a stand here or visit it at night. (p295)

La Sagrada Família, Spain Barcelona's quirky temple soars skyward with an almost playful majesty. (p779)

Temples of Angkor, Cambodia The Cambodian 'god-kings' of old each strove to better their ancestors in size, scale and symmetry. (p143)

For other themes & activities, see the index p949



Itineraries



3 MONTHS

A Mighty Asian Junket

This is the "Asian century", so a jaunt through the great cities and landscapes of Asia is definitely in order!

Start your trip in booming **Tokyo**, a city combining tradition and ultra-modernity, from where you can visit the solemn majesty of **Mt Fuji**. Crossing to the continental land-mass of Asia, head for **Shanghai**, the most dynamic city in the world's fastest changing nation. Then turn your gaze southward to **Hong Kong**, for fantastic shopping and leisurely ferry trips, or lap up the Portuguese ambience in nearby **Macau**. Zip across to historic **Hanoi** to savour its graceful architecture en route to the surreal-looking limestone islands of **Halong Bay**. Returning via Hanoi, hop across to **Luang Prabang**, glistening with temples and on the banks of the **Mekong River**. Move on to the moated old city of **Chiang Mai** to enjoy a meditation retreat, before heading for the awe-inspiring ruins of **Siem Reap** and **Angkor**. Skipping south it's time for a beachside idyll on the Andaman Sea, either at **Phuket** or **Krabi**. Move on to **Singapore** for shopping and for planning your next moves.



6 MONTHS

The Hippy Trail: London to Melbourne

A rite of passage for many, the overland trail from Europe and across Asia has inspired generations of travellers, including Maureen and Tony Wheeler, the founders of Lonely Planet.

Starting from **London**, head to **Paris** for a view of the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre. Motor eastwards to view the half-timbered houses of **Strasbourg**, then trundle through the **Black Forest** en route to the provincial charms of **Munich**. Take in the musical atmosphere and charming architecture of **Salzburg** then head for the operas and coffeehouses of **Vienna**. Stately **Budapest** and buzzing **Belgrade** provide spa treatments and throbbing nightlife en route to **Istanbul**, the mighty Turkish city astride two continents. Catch a Bosphorus ferry, then make a bee-line for the otherworldly landscapes of **Cappadocia**. Passing the foothills of **Mt Ararat**, aim for **Tabriz** across the Iranian border. Enjoy the teahouses of **Tehran** before revelling in the breathtaking architecture of **Esfahan** and hitting the desert road. Head to the old city of **Lahore** for its arts scene and serene Mughal gardens.

Cross the Indian frontier and head to thunderous **Delhi**, with its Red Fort and fragrant bazaars, and continue to **Agra** to swoon before the sublime architecture of the **Taj Mahal**. Zip westward to the deserts and dreamy fortresses of **Rajasthan**. Then, passing through the clamour of **Kolkata**, move on to **Myanmar**, now opening up to tourism. From there it's a short hop to a spa retreat in **Chiang Mai**, before zipping in to throbbing Bangkok. **Koh Samui** provides an island idyll in the Gulf of Thailand before you move on to Indonesia. **Jogjakarta** is a centre for Javanese art, and puppetry and is the gateway to the Buddhist monuments at **Borobudur**. Next, hit **Bali** for some sun 'n' surf before skipping to rapidly changing **Dili**. From there it's a short hop to **Darwin**, Australia's most Asian-flavoured city, from where you can drive across the desert to **Adelaide**, before hitting **Melbourne**, the artistic and cultural capital of Australia.



2 MONTHS

A Mediterranean Odyssey

The Mediterranean has been the scene of countless cultures, empires and civilisations throughout history – come here for a dizzying array of art, culture and natural beauty on show.

Venice, seaboard city of art and maritime endeavour, has been the embarkation point for many an odyssey. Follow in the footsteps of Lord Byron, that swashbuckling romantic, and head towards **Ravenna**, with its Byzantine mosaics, before moving on to the Renaissance time capsule that is **Florence**, then to **Rome**, to gawk at the **Colosseum**. Ferrying across the Adriatic brings you to Croatia's idyllic **Dalmatian coast**, dropping in at **Split** and **Dubrovnik**, described by Byron as the 'pearl of the Adriatic'. From here cross into Bosnia-Herzegovina to the achingly slim bridge in Mostar. Back on the coast, savour the breathtaking scenery of the **Bay of Kotor**, then push on to gorgeous beachside **Sveti Stefan** and **Bar**. Heading into Albania you'll encounter post-communist **Tirana** with its colourful buildings and the hilltop citadel of **Gjirokastra**. Down on the Ionian coast lie idyllic Corfu, Ithaka, the island home that Homer long sought, and **Cephalonia**, where Lord Byron fetched up. From here you can reach **Athens** to see the **Acropolis**, or catch a ferry onward throughout the Greek islands, or back to Italy.

Naples is Italy's pulsing southern metropolis and is the transit point for **Sicily**, home to Greek temples and slumbering **Mt Etna**. From here aim for Sardinia's crystalline **Emerald Coast** then the quiet fishing villages and rugged interior of **Corsica**. The Corniche at **Nice**, and **Monaco** are sun-splashed places to linger. **Marseille** then beckons, with its castle and gritty port ambience. Inland is **Aix en Provence**, and the Provençal landscapes of **Arles** that inspired Van Gogh. Beyond lies **Barcelona**, city of art and architecture and gateway to the **Balearic Islands**. Head south for the nightlife in the Spanish capital, **Madrid**, then onward for the Moorish delights of **Córdoba**, **Seville** and **Granada**. Finish in **Gibraltar**, gateway to the Atlantic, and the westernmost point of Hercules' travels.



2 MONTHS

Road Trippin' the Americas

Considering the wide open spaces of the American landmass, it stands to reason that this was the birthplace of the road trip. You can tailor your own odyssey, following in the footsteps (or tyre treads) of Jack Kerouac, and many more besides.

Start in **New York**, the city that never sleeps, then ramble down to historic **Philadelphia** for a picture of what colonial American cities looked like, then press on to **Cincinnati** on the banks of the Ohio River, where Jack Kerouac once passed. From there head south to **Nashville**, country music Mecca and home to historic buildings and big-name sports. Continuing the musical theme, roll on to **Memphis** to pay respects to Elvis and Johnny Cash, then follow the Mississippi down to steamy **New Orleans** for southern cooking, ornate architecture and the jazz clubs that Kerouac haunted. Then, if you're inclined, you could head to Latin-flavoured **Miami**, and roll on to reverse the tracks of Che Guevara by heading south to **Caracas**, **Bogotá** and **Lima**, en route to the lofty heights of **Macchu Picchu**, before fetching up in **Buenos Aires**, a slice of Europe in the southern hemisphere.

Alternatively, go west, young man, hitting **Dallas** for cowboys and cheerleaders, then mozy on down to sprawling, boot-scootin' **Houston**. For awesome desert views and iconic landscapes the **Grand Canyon** is a must, before getting a dose of glitz and striking it rich in **Las Vegas**. Cruise on to **Los Angeles** to spot a star in **Hollywood**, then follow Kerouac's footsteps again to **San Francisco**. Head north to counter-culture **Portland**, before crossing the Canadian border and hitting the hip neighbourhoods of **Vancouver**. Don your spurs to drop in at 'cowntown' **Calgary**, then cruise over the seemingly endless prairie and above the Great Lakes to **Montréal** for diverse cuisines and European-style architecture. Complete your loop to New York either via Lake Ontario and the muscular shoals of water plummeting over **Niagara Falls** or through the picturesque landscapes of **New England**.