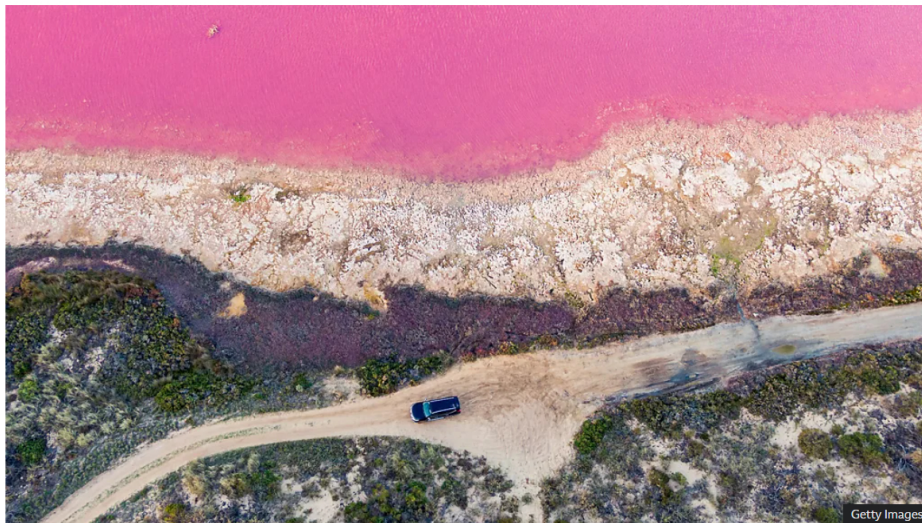


The 25 best places to travel in 2025

16 January 2025

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BBC Travel



From bubblegum-coloured lakes in Australia to a solar-powered safari camp in Botswana, these are BBC journalists' top destinations this year.

Travel has the power to connect, inspire and even transform us. Peering over the edge of a crashing waterfall in Newfoundland and ascending sawtooth spires in the Italian Dolomites reveal how wondrous the world can be. But while travel should be a force for good, the past year has reminded us that it also has the potential to overwhelm and even harm the places we love, and many destinations are now imposing new restrictions as they grapple with the negative effects of [overtourism](#).

In the BBC's inaugural guide to the best places to travel this year, we wanted to highlight the destinations experiencing the opposite phenomenon. Each of these 25 spots is not only welcoming visitors and offering incredible travel experiences, but also using tourism to support local communities, protect the environment or preserve their unique cultural heritage. We compiled the list with input from BBC Travel journalists and some of the world's leading sustainable travel authorities, such as the [United Nations World Travel Organization](#), [Sustainable Travel International](#), the [Black Travel Alliance](#) and the [World Travel & Tourism Council](#).

As tourism in many regions soars past [pre-pandemic levels](#), and extreme weather and climate change reveal the fragile impermanence of many bucket-list destinations, travelling thoughtfully means considering where your trip can serve a larger good.

From trekking through a moonlike landscape in Bolivia to Arctic glamping in Greenland on the world's largest island, your next great adventure is just ahead.





New direct flights from the US and hotel openings are making it easier to visit Dominica in 2025 (Credit: Getty Images)

1. Dominica

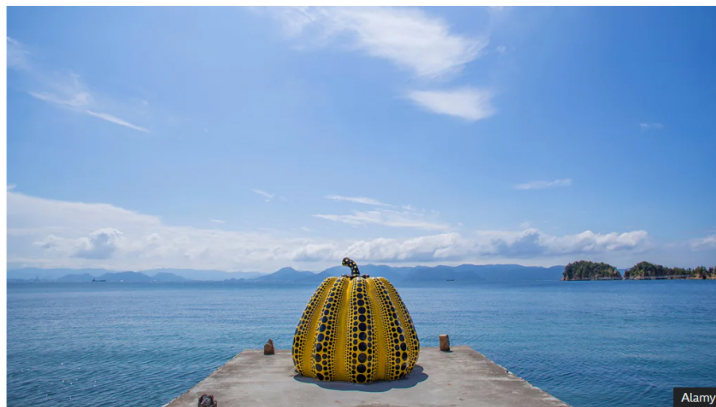
Ever wanted to swim alongside sperm whales? Dominica now offers the chance to do it in an ethical, sustainable way as part of the Caribbean island's groundbreaking commitment to marine conservation and regenerative tourism. The island nation recently established the world's first sperm whale reserve, a protected marine area designed to safeguard its resident giants. Limited permits for whale swims ensure intimate, respectful encounters, offering visitors a once-in-a-lifetime experience to share the water with these incredible cetaceans while facilitating research and creating sustainable tourism opportunities for local residents.

New for 2025, expanded infrastructure and systems are set to welcome visitors, including digital immigration forms to ease arrival and the development of a cable-car system taking riders from Roseau Valley up to Boiling Lake, one of the world's largest thermal springs. Access to the island has never been easier: on top of existing American Airlines flights from Miami, United Airlines is launching direct flights from Newark starting 15 February. Several new hotels are opening in 2025 (adding nearly 500 rooms with a 25% increase in inventory), including the six-star Hilton Tranquility Beach Resort and Spa in Salisbury. Or choose a tried-and-true classic such as Secret Bay, a luxury eco-property that frequently tops sustainability lists.



Dominica recently established the world's first sperm whale reserve (Credit: Alamy)

Dominica is also home to Project CETI, a groundbreaking international effort to decode whale language, clicks and codas, led by National Geographic Explorer David Gruber. Elsewhere, visitors can explore hidden gorges, towering waterfalls and feast on local cuisine at unique eateries, such as the farm-to-table Lacou. Dominica isn't just a destination – it's a movement to support a burgeoning model of eco-tourism that balances biodiversity conservation with economic growth, ensuring that your adventure helps protect this natural paradise for generations to come. – *Pier Nirandara*



Naoshima and other nearby islands have become major contemporary art destinations (Credit: Alamy)

2. Naoshima, Japan

Home to one of Yayoi Kusama's iconic yellow, polka-dotted Pumpkin sculptures, the Japanese island of Naoshima has become a must-see destination for connoisseurs of contemporary art and architecture. Once known (if at all) for its highly polluting copper smelting industry, the island's transformation is thanks to Benesse Art Site Naoshima, which has helped create major museums and site-specific artworks in the scenically stunning (and dramatically population-dwindling) Seto Inland Sea, located

between Japan's main island of Honshu and Shikoku.

Spring 2025 sees the opening of the [Naoshima New Museum of Art](#), designed by Tadao Ando, the award-winning architect behind nine other projects on the island. This new showcase for works by Asian artists will be a major highlight of this year's [Setouchi Triennale](#), with events and unveilings of artwork scattered across 17 islands and coastal areas of the Seto Inland Sea. Scheduled over 100 days and split between spring, summer and autumn to allow visitors to enjoy the region through the different seasons, this is the largest iteration of the Triennale since it began in 2010. The festival and activities of Benesse Art Site Naoshima have been instrumental in turning not only Naoshima's fortunes around but also reviving the neighbouring islands of Teshima and Inujima.

Book ahead to visit Rei Naito and Ryue Nishizawa's [Teshima Art Museum](#), a one-of-a-kind synthesis of art, architecture and nature; while on Inujima, travellers will be amazed by the remains of a historic copper refinery reimagined as an [epic-scale art installation](#). Memorable places to stay include Roka, a contemporary-styled ryokan on Naoshima, and the elegantly minimalist [Espoir Inn](#) on Teshima. – *Simon Richmond*



The stunning sawtooth cliffs of the Dolomites are one of Italy's most dramatic landscapes (Credit: Getty Images)

3. The Dolomites, Italy

Perpetual fan favourite Italy hardly needs more press – especially in a year when its supremely [overtouristed capital, Rome](#), will be even more overwhelmed due to the 2025 Jubilee. But if Italy is still on your bucket list for 2025, consider taking a detour north to the Dolomite Mountains.

For Italians, the ruggedly beautiful Dolomites are synonymous with family fun and luxury holidays. The stunning sawtooth limestone cliffs sprawl across the regions of Veneto, Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol and Friuli-Venezia Giulia, attracting vacationing Italians in droves each year for their exquisite villages; [peerless "white week" skiing](#); epic hike; and world-class, stick-to-your-ribs Alpine dishes. This classic Italian playground is often overlooked by overseas visitors – but that's all poised to change.



Cortina d'Ampezzo is co-hosting the 2026 Winter Olympics and is a renowned skiing destination (Credit: Getty Images)

The "Queen of the Dolomites", [Cortina d'Ampezzo](#), has been slated to co-host the 2026 Winter Olympics. The preparations, which will take place throughout 2025, include a vast series of infrastructure improvements throughout the area – all against a backdrop of pre-Olympic buzz. Visitors can expect to find expanded ski lift networks in the Dolomiti Superski area, where the towns of [Alta Badia](#) and [Val Gardena](#) will launch modernised lifts and enhanced connections to public transit operating within the area. New and upgraded cable cars, lifts and gondolas will also be introduced throughout the region's towns.

throughout the regions' towns.

But the Dolomites is a thrilling destination in all seasons; visit in spring, summer and autumn to enjoy excellent trails, like 2024's new [Cammino Retico](#) (The Rhaetian Way); a 170km, seven-day trail connecting remote villages between the Veneto and Trentino regions. And for pure relaxation, the luxury [Aman Rosa Alpina hotel](#) will have its grand reopening in 2025. The property will now offer 51 guest rooms and suites, two presidential suites and the private Chalet Zeno. Visit now, before the crowds descend.
– Eva Sandoval



The Ilulissat Icefjord and other Arctic attractions will be easier to explore with the opening of Nuuk's new airport (Credit: Getty Images)

4. Greenland

There is nowhere on Earth like [Greenland](#). Spanning more than two million sq km, the world's largest island has a population of less than 57,000. Covered by a vast ice cap and spectacular mountains, its [unspoiled wilderness](#) and majestic fjords aren't just a [coveted geopolitical entity](#); [they offer adventures of a lifetime](#).

Stunning hiking and spellbinding whale watching in summer and traditional dog sledding and the magical aurora in winter all make Greenland a bucket-list destination. However, it has been remote, expensive and time-consuming to reach – until now.

With the opening of a new international airport in the capital city of Nuuk and two more following in 2026, getting to Greenland has never been easier. The country is welcoming mindful adventure travellers who love exploring while also respecting its incredible nature and unique Inuit culture. Greenland has [adopted a pledge](#) "towards better tourism" and a new law aims to steer funds from tourism towards benefitting local communities.

A modern town with a historic waterfront, informative museums and impressive art galleries, [Nuuk](#) is also a launchpad for hiking, fishing and glamping trips and acts as a gateway for exploring a remarkable Arctic territory. Further north in [Ilulissat](#), visitors can discover the jaw-dropping icebergs of Disko Bay and dramatic [Unesco-recognised Icefjord](#). In the south, a region once settled by Vikings, there are gorgeous fjords and scenic green hills dotted with sheep farms. – *Adrienne Murray Nielsen*

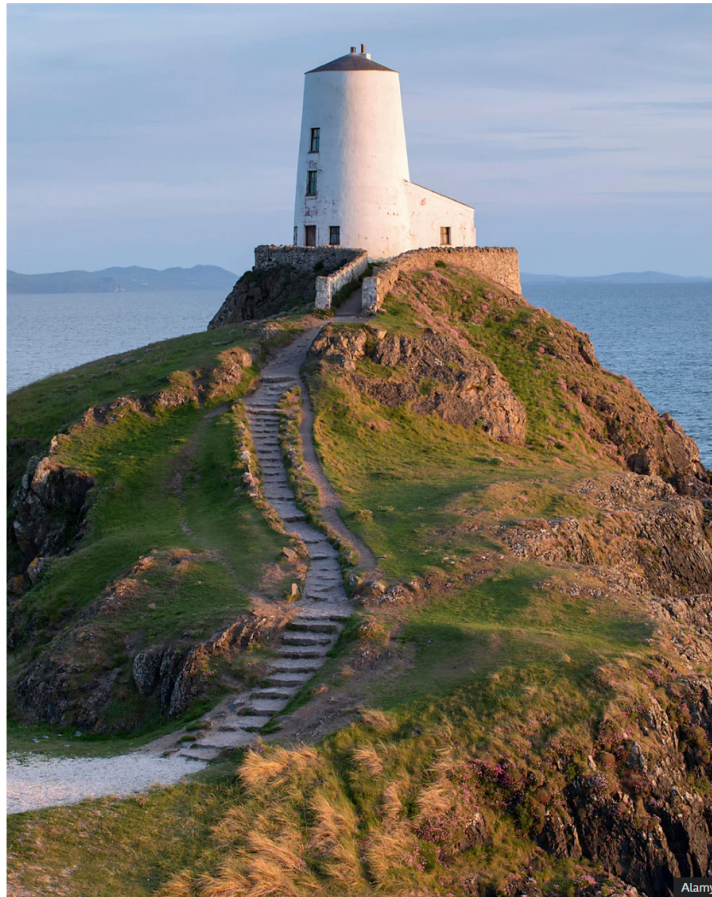


Wales is launching a year-long campaign showcasing Welsh culture and language to visitors (Credit: Getty Images)

5. Wales

Though just one-sixth the size of England and far less visited than its more famous UK counterparts, Wales is filled with stunning national parks, awe-inspiring medieval castles and virtually no crowds – which only adds to its appeal. The new year offers travellers an additional excuse to explore one of Europe's most up-and-coming destinations: Wales is celebrating 2025 as the [Year of Croeso](#) ("Welcome"). The year-long event showcases Welsh culture, language and attractions while inviting visitors

to "Feel the *hwy!*" – an untranslatable Welsh word describing a deep state of joy that comes from being immersed in the moment.



The Wales Coast Path rings the nation (Credit: Alamy)

In recent years, Wales has positioned itself at the forefront of sustainable, culturally focused travel. Tourism has helped play a role in the revival of the Welsh language and the nation is in the midst of a multi-year £5 billion programme that uses tourism funds to make various destinations more environmentally sustainable. As part of its Year of Croeso, Wales is investing in mobility bikes to help more adventure-seekers explore its wild side. What's more, Wales is home to the Wales Coast Path, the only hiking path in the world that runs the entire length of a country's coastline. – *Eliot Stein*



The Trans-Labrador Highway connects travellers to Labrador's windswept coastal villages (Credit: Getty Images)

6. Western Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada

Labrador, the mainland portion of Newfoundland and Labrador in eastern Canada, is a vast, rugged region known for its windswept coastal villages, towering icebergs, subarctic forests and massive waterfalls – all underpinned by more than 9,000 years of human history. In 2025, the completion of the last stage of the 1,200km Trans-Labrador Highway – a feat that took nearly 25 years and \$1bn to build – transforms this remote 294,330 sq km landscape into a more accessible destination.

The new circular route (known as Expedition 51) connects Labrador with five Canadian provinces while offering detours into the US and even France (via St Pierre and Miquelon). To encourage sustainable tourism and celebrate the cultural heritage

in this formerly isolated part of the north, the Canadian government has invested \$180m into Parks Canada sites in Western Newfoundland and Labrador. In 2025, [Red Bay National Historic Site](#), a Unesco World Heritage Site and former Basque whaling station, will debut a new interactive boardwalk and visitor centre; [L'Anse aux Meadows](#), home to the first Norse settlement in North America, is enhancing its ecological protections and upgrading visitor facilities; while [Gros Morne National Park](#) will introduce new interpretive exhibits that highlight the park's dramatic geology, wildlife and landscapes. – *Diane Selkirk*



The area around Tucson is the oldest continuously cultivated soil in the US (Credit: Getty Images)

7. Tucson, Arizona, US

Tucson has a lot to celebrate in 2025. This year marks the 10th anniversary of when it became the first city in the US to receive a [Unesco City of Gastronomy](#) distinction, as well as the 250th anniversary of the city's founding. Originally part of Mexico, the area now called Tucson will celebrate its unique multi-national history, as well as the deep-rooted Native American cultures that make it special, with a free event on 23 August featuring traditional Mexican music and dancing held at the [Presidio San Agustin del Tucson](#). Visitors throughout the year can explore Tucson's miles of [desert hiking trails](#) and historic buildings – like the 250-year-old [San Xavier del Bac](#), the so-called "White Dove of the Desert". Preservation like this points to why the city is set to receive a Sustainability Index Award from the [Global Destination Sustainability Movement](#) (GDS) this year.

But while the building's history is impressive, the nearby gardens reveal an even richer history: they are the oldest continuously cultivated soil in the US. Four thousand years ago, the Tohono O'odham's ancestors farmed squashes, beans and corn on this land. After mixing and melding with Mexican and other Indigenous flavours over the centuries, many of these ancient herbs and crops are still staples in kitchens across the city. Diners can immerse themselves in the city's unique food scene at one of its [city-of-gastronomy-certified restaurants](#) or [Heirloom Farmers Markets](#), which regularly feature unique local ingredients such as chiltepin chilis, edible cacti called nopales and prickly pear. – *Lynn Brown*



Western Australia encompasses 12,500km of pristine coastline and several bubblegum-pink lakes (Credit: Getty Images)

8. Western Australia

Known as the world's most isolated big city, [Perth](#) – and the state of [Western Australia](#) (WA) – have long played second fiddle to the east coast cities of Melbourne and Sydney. However, with [Australia's only direct flights to Europe](#), Perth is positioning itself as Australia's western gateway and a global aviation hub, with a \$5bn redevelopment of Perth Airport set to enhance the travel experience. And with [new connections to Asia](#), WA is poised to become a must-visit destination in 2025.

But it's not just about getting here – it's about what awaits. Outside of newly cool Perth and the picturesque Queen Elizabeth II Park, WA's natural beauty goes way beyond the 2.5

and its gorgeous [Swan valley wine region](#), WA's vast landscapes span more than 2.5 million sq km, encompassing 12,500km of pristine coastline, bubblegum-pink lakes, horizontal waterfalls, towering karri forests, wildflowers, wineries and wildlife encounters like swimming with whale sharks and snapping selfies with quokkas, the "[happiest animal in the world](#)". Sustainability-minded road trippers can explore it all on the new [6,600km Electric Vehicle Highway](#), the world's longest EV charging network.



Vineyards dot WA's Swan Valley Wine Region (Credit: Alamy)

WA is also championing its rich cultural heritage through the A\$20m [Jina Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan](#) that supports authentic Indigenous-led experiences for travellers as well as Indigenous business development. Learn about the oldest living cultures on Earth on a [truth-telling walking tour](#) in Rockingham or a [4WD tag-along coast foraging tour](#) complete with bush barbecue in Broome.

Add ancient petroglyphs at [Murujuga National Park](#) (under consideration for Unesco World Heritage status in 2025), new disability-friendly infrastructure and equipment on the stunning [Houtman Abrolhos Islands](#), [boutique hotels](#) in Fremantle and [tiny dream stays](#) in the Great Southern, and WA is set to redefine travel to Australia this year. – *Ellie Cobb*

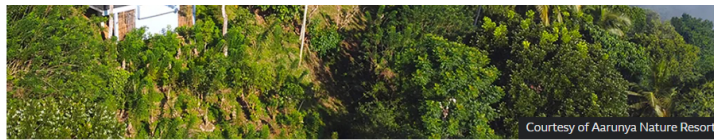


9. Sri Lanka

From its misty hilltop tea plantations and roaming wild elephants to its ancient temples and rolling surf, Sri Lanka is a country that ticks lots of boxes. In April 2022, the former prime minister announced Sri Lanka's bankruptcy, but a [new president](#) aims to rebuild the country's fortunes after it was hit by a pandemic and civil unrest.

The resilient island nation is hoping to get back on its feet through tourism. The city of [Kandy](#) will see the opening of its first seven-star hotel, [Aviyana Private Chalets](#), while [Aarunya Nature Resort](#) has a new family villa that includes an oculus for stargazing. There's a [\\$1bn megaresort](#) opening in Colombo, and the launch of Sri Lanka's new airline [Air Ceylão](#), which will fly as far as Europe and Australia. The nation also recently launched the [Good Travel Seal initiative](#), which celebrates local businesses who have adopted sustainable practices.





The Aarunya Nature Resort is a prime stargazing destination (Credit: Courtesy of Aarunya Nature Resort)

Visitors looking for a coolcation can take a [legendary train ride](#) into its mountainous interior, or travel to Colombo and Galle to discover a new generation of mixologists putting their spin on arrack, a 5th-Century drink. The island has also opened the 300km [Pekoe Trail](#), which takes hikers through tea plantations and rural villages in the Central Highlands. For those who want to cover more ground, an innovative startup allows travellers to [self-drive a tuk tuk](#) across the island, with the money going directly to the owner. – *Claire Turrell*



Panama City is Central America's most vibrant capital city and a short drive from the Panama Canal (Credit: Getty Images)

10. Panama

After managing the Panama Canal for decades, the US handed control of it over to Panama at the end of 1999 in a treaty signed by the late US President Jimmy Carter. This year marks the 25th anniversary of Panama's sovereignty over its namesake waterway, and as President-elect Donald Trump [hints at the possibility](#) of using military force to re seize it, a series of new permanent exhibits at the landmark's [Museo del Canal](#) highlighting its path to Panamanian rule feels especially timely.

Yet, there's more to see in this nation of vast jungles, idyllic islands and mountainous forests beyond the canal. In 2024, the [Meaningful Travel Map to Panama](#) launched in partnership with non-profit Tourism Cares to make it easier for visitors to find locally led travel experiences across the country. After embarking on a [Localintpy](#) walking tour through Panama City's Casco Antiguo and El Chorrillo neighbourhoods, head south-west to the La Pintada district, where artists weave fibers to make traditional Panama hats by hand – a Unesco-recognised practice known as [sombbrero pintao](#). In [El Valle de Anton](#) (named one of the best community tourism villages by [UN Tourism in 2024](#)) take a hike through a lush cloud forest on the [Cerro Gaital Lookout Trail](#) where you can see both the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea on a clear day from the summit. This newly opened path is part of Panama's ongoing [1,000 km of Trails](#) project, which seeks to boost sustainable tourism in rural communities while bringing hikers face to face with [Panama's staggering biodiversity](#). – *Kathleen Rellihan*



The city of Chefchaouen is known as the "Blue Pearl" (Credit: Getty Images)

11. Rif Mountains, Morocco

Snowcapped mountains, sweeping deserts, ancient cities and [rich cultural heritage](#) have long made Morocco one of North Africa's most popular destinations. But the [Al Haouz earthquake of September 2023](#) not only devastated parts of Marrakech and the

Atlas Mountains, it also severely impacted tourism. As Morocco continues to build (and rebuild) its tourism infrastructure in preparation for co-hosting the 2030 FIFA World Cup, the nation is aiming to double its tourist arrivals in the next five years.

Bypass the crowds by taking a road trip through the Rif Mountains in Morocco's less-frequented northern region. The planned 2025-2027 expansion of Morocco's High-Speed Rail (HSR) network will create a multitude of new train lines, including a link from Rabat to the ancient, 1,300-year-old walled Rif Mountain city of Fez; home to a Unesco World Heritage medina and the host of several games in the Africa Cup of Nations 2025. From Fez, it's a 65km drive north to Moulay Idriss, an ancient hilltop village once closed to non-Muslims. Pass through olive and almond groves and mountain villages for a stop in Ouezzane – a centre of Sufism – then continue north to Talassemtane National Park to hike through cedar forests, climb craggy red peaks and dive into natural swimming holes. Further north is the town of Chefchaouen, known as the "Blue Pearl" for its blue-painted buildings and streets. Finally, cruise along Morocco's northern coast, unwinding in sleepy Mediterranean fishing villages like El Jebha and the white-washed Spanish colonial buildings of Tetouan. – *Alicia Erickson*



Bradford has been named the 2025 UK City of Culture (Credit: Getty Images)

12. Bradford, England

The northern English city of Bradford is finally poised to step out from the long shadow cast by its giant Yorkshire neighbour, Leeds, as it takes its place as the 2025 UK City of Culture. A fabulous year-long programme of events includes the re-opening of the National Science and Media Museum, plus innovative celebrations of local cultural icons: more than 400 works by Bradford-born artist David Hockney held in a Unesco World Heritage 1850s mill; new digital takes on a fantasy world dreamed up by the famed literary Brontë sisters; and a musical programme mixing an electronic bassline symphony, old factory folk music, brass bands and South Asian sounds.

The diversity of offerings reflects the eye-opening variety of a city whose historic enclaves like Little Germany – where 19th-Century Teutonic wool merchants built an array of neoclassical warehouses – are complemented by a landscape of dramatic moors that play host to an extraordinary open-air immersive sound walk mixing contemporary classical music with a sculpture trail. A special energy also comes from the local residents who represent diverse backgrounds (and youth – a quarter are under 20 years old).

Bradford's historic streets and rugged country setting helped the city become Britain's first Unesco City of Film (an accolade shared with places as varied as Rome, Sydney and Busan) – a setting for screen hits including BBC series like *Peaky Blinders* and *Gentleman Jack*, and classic films like *The Railway Children* and *Wuthering Heights*.

And this year, there's even an interactive cookbook project, celebrating recipes from local communities and showing that in 2025, Bradford is truly a destination to please all tastes. – *Norman Miller*



Jordan is widely regarded as the Middle East's top adventure destination (Credit: Peter Tassan)

13. Jordan

Home to some of the world's most breathtaking desert landscapes and the ancient capital of one of history's **most mysterious civilisations**, Jordan never fails to evoke wonder. But take a closer look and you'll find that the country has been quietly building up its reputation as the Middle East's go-to destination for outdoor adventure-seekers.

Visiting Jordan

While the ongoing Israel-Gaza war continues to **compromise Jordan's tourism industry**, both the **UK Foreign Office** and **US State Department** currently consider Jordan to be relatively safe to explore.

In 2023, a stunning new 10-day, 120km-long hiking path known as the **Wadi Rum Trail** opened, which weaves through the rust-red walls of Jordan's iconic Wadi Rum, tracing the otherworldly landscapes featured in the films Star Wars, Dune and The Martian. Visitors have traditionally breezed through the desert here on 4x4 tours, but this community tourism project promotes **a slower, more sustainable form of travel** that protects the desert's delicate ecosystem while safeguarding the rich cultural heritage of the local Bedouin community.

Elsewhere, this Maine-sized nation is teeming with 33 protected land and marine ecosystems. At the **Wadi Mujib Biosphere Reserve** (the world's lowest-lying nature reserve at 410m below sea level), visitors can search for the illusive desert-dwelling Nubian ibex while climbing, swimming and sliding their way through a sandstone gorge to the base of a crashing waterfall. **The Dana Biosphere Reserve** (Jordan's largest), is home to 180 bird species and 25 endangered mammal species. The rich coral reefs of the **Aqaba Marine Reserve**, which was added to the **IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas** in January 2025, support more than 500 fish species and a growing **diving** scene. – *Florence Craig*



Bhutan's mesmerising Haa Valley has become a global leader in sustainable travel (Credit: Getty Images)

14. Haa Valley, Bhutan

Almost completely isolated from the outside world for centuries, this erstwhile hermit kingdom nestled in the Himalayas only began welcoming foreigners in 1974. It's since become a global leader in sustainability: it's the **world's first carbon-negative nation**, more than 60% of its land is protected forest and it measures **Gross National Happiness** instead of GDP.

The Haa Valley, a pristine forested district along Bhutan's western frontier with Tibet, has long been the country's best-kept secret: a culturally distinct region still untouched by mass tourism. This forgotten corner of the Thunder Dragon Kingdom was the last district to open to foreigners in 2002, and today, fewer than 2% of international travellers visit, despite it being a yak's graze from Paro International Airport. It's now emerging from the shadows, balancing preservation with thoughtful development in its bid for more visitors.

Travellers can explore Haa's raw beauty through the newly restored 400km **Trans Bhutan Trail**; the freshly-added 11km **Haa Panorama Trail** (a revival of an ancient route); and the two-day **Joy Bay Tsho Trek**, which snakes through pastures, canopy forests and bamboo groves between the villages of Mochu and Youkha.





Sustainable locally run homestays in the Haa Valley allow a window into its unique culture (Credit: Getty Images)

Haa's commitment to sustainable tourism means you'll find locally run homestays (and some local hotels) offering glimpses into centuries-old rural life. Two distinct, low-impact accommodations have also opened: the community-run [Katsho Eco Camp](#), built along the Haa Panorama Trail by guides and cooks who lost their jobs during the pandemic, and the luxury [Sangwa Camp](#). Here, visitors witness local culture, like [Bon rituals](#) and rare experiences such as breakfast in Bhutan's [lone strict nature reserve](#), a highly protected biodiversity hotspot home to rare species like the red panda and snow leopard.

With Bhutan's [Sustainable Daily Fee](#) halved through 2027 (now \$100), this once-secluded paradise is now more accessible while remaining just as committed to low-impact tourism. – *Erin Levi*

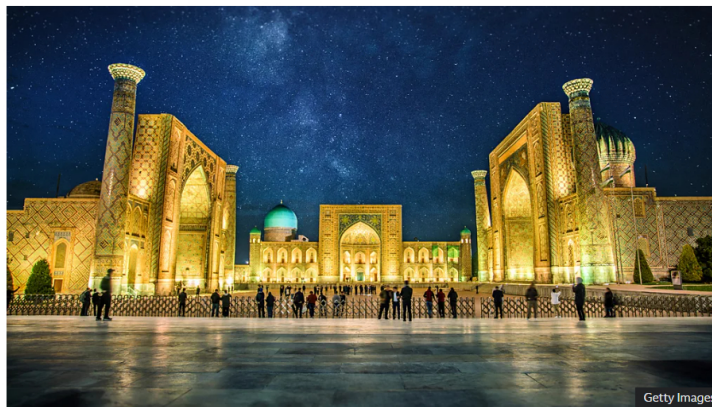


As Hawaii rebuilds after a series of devastating wildfires, thoughtful, responsible visitors are welcome back with open arms (Credit: Getty Images)

15. Hawaii, US

More than a year after a series of deadly wildfires [devastated Maui](#), the entire state is experiencing a dramatic [downturn](#) in visitors. As families and local businesses continue to rebuild, they're asking travellers to return, but to [do so responsibly](#).

Enter the [Mālama Hawaii](#) programme. Meaning "to protect" or "give back", *mālama* is a Hawaiian word embodying a sense of stewardship and respect for the environment. As such, the programme pairs travellers with more than 350 volunteer opportunities, ranging from [restoring native forests](#) to [sewing and cooking](#) with Maui families to [helping to preserve plant and animal habitats](#) on the slopes of Mount Kea. In exchange, travellers receive discounted – or in some cases, free – stays at [dozens of hotels and resorts across the islands](#), including the famous [Four Seasons Resort Maui at Wailea](#) where the first season of *The White Lotus* was filmed. – *Elliot Stein*



Uzbekistan's new generation is infusing the nation with modern art and culture, while working to retain its ancient customs (Credit: Getty Images)

16. Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan has one of the youngest populations in the world – more than 60% are

Uzbekistan has one of the youngest populations in the world – more than 60% are under 30. Being surrounded by a sea of young people on Tashkent's metros, which double as art museums with Soviet-era mosaics, you can see a new generation taking over. As the country strives to maintain its unique traditions and cultures, it is investing in tourism with new hotels, train routes, domestic flights and cultural attractions to grow its economy, retain its youth and attract more visitors.

Uzbekistan is getting its first major international biennial with the **Bukhara Biennial** in September 2025. Other major cultural developments include an **expansion of the State Museum of Arts** designed by Tadao Ando and the restoration and partial reconstruction of the **Palace of Prince Romanov**.

As of May 2024, **citizens of more than 90 countries** (including the UK, Canada and Australia) can visit Uzbekistan without a visa. The president has said he intends to create a **Global Green Tourism Startup Lab** to bring together the country's commitment to a green economy with tourism. Crossing the border with neighbouring countries has also become easier. The region's first international railway route, the **Silk Road railway tour**, launched in November 2024 and now connects Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. – *Kathleen Rellihan*



New legislation aims to revitalise Indigenous Haida culture (Credit: Getty Images)

17. Haida Gwaii, Canada

Haida Gwaii, an archipelago of more than 150 islands off the coast of British Columbia, offers more than breathtaking landscapes – it provides a profound connection to nature, culture and history. Isolated from the mainland, the ecologically rich islands are home to more than 6,800 species, including endemic birds, mammals and plants that have sustained the Haida People for at least 15,000 years.

What makes Haida Gwaii a standout destination in 2025 is the groundbreaking **Gaayhlxid/Giihlagalgang "Rising Tide" Haida Title Lands Agreement**. This legislation marks a transformative moment in Indigenous rights in Canada, officially recognising the Council of the Haida Nation as the territory's governing body under federal law. This shift is working to revitalise Haida culture and strengthen their environmental stewardship.

Visitors can explore long-abandoned Haida villages like **SGang Gwaay**, a Unesco World Heritage Site with ancient mortuary poles and longhouse remains; and encounter distinctive wildlife such as the **Haida Gwaii black bear** (called *taan* in the local dialect) and seabirds like puffins and ancient murrelets. Upon arrival, guests are introduced to Haida Laws, including the concept of *Gina 'waadluxan gud ad kwaagid* ("everything depends on everything else"), a teaching that underscores our shared responsibility to care for the Earth. – *Diane Selkirk*



The Carretera Costanera highway will make it easier to reach Nicaragua's surf hubs like San Juan del Sur (Credit: Getty Images)

18. Emerald Coast. Nicaragua

Home to mist-shrouded rainforests, emerald lakes, towering volcanoes and one of the Americas' oldest and most attractive cities (Unesco-enshrined **Granada**, which celebrated its 500th anniversary in December 2024), Central America's largest country remains one of its least visited. That may soon change with the opening of the new Carretera Costanera: a \$400m, 350km-long highway linking 53 beaches along the nation's Pacific Coast, from the Gulf of Fonseca in the north to the turquoise waters of Playa El Naranjo in the south.



Nicaragua's Unesco-listed city of Granada celebrated its 500th anniversary in December 2024 (Credit: Getty Images)

Set to be completed in 2025, the ambitious new infrastructure project makes it much easier to shoot south from Nicaragua's sprawling capital, Managua, to the tropical forests and the world-class surf hubs of San Juan del Sur and Popoyo along the country's 50km-long Emerald Coast – which has been luring in-the-know backpackers for years. More importantly, the Costanera is aiming to breathe new economic life into the nation, which is **one of the poorest** in the Western hemisphere and views its **growing tourism sector** as key to its economic growth.

After learning to ride a wave at a locally owned **surf camp** and sleeping in a **treehouse** tucked inside a rainforest, venture to the **Refugio de Vida Silvestre La Flor** at the highway's southern tip, where thousands of endangered olive ridley and leatherback turtles lay their eggs between September and October in a once-in-a-lifetime experience. – *Eliot Stein*



One of the best ways to get to the heart of this cliff-fringed island is to explore it on foot (Credit: Getty Images)

19. Isle of Man

Despite being ringed on all sides by the UK – Northern Ireland to the west, Scotland to the north, England to the east and Wales to the south – this cliff-fringed island isn't actually part of the Commonwealth. Instead, the self-governing isle is said to be ruled by the world's oldest continuous parliament, the Tynwald, and it's committed to preserving its distinct character and developing a sustainable tourism model.

Awash with ancient historical sites, such as **Cashtal yn Ard** ("Castle of the Height", the largest Neolithic tomb in the British Isles) and **Castle Rushen** (one of the most complete medieval structures in Europe), the 85,000-resident island is decidedly forward-thinking. In 2016 it was recognised as a **Unesco Biosphere** (the world's only self-governing territory whose entire land and sea area has such designation) for its commitment to environmental preservation and cultural heritage. This year, witness the isle's spectacular native bird species at the new **Manx Birdlife Point of Ayre National Reserve**, which opened to the public in July 2024. Also on tap for 2025 is the 175th anniversary of **Okell's Brewery**, so celebrate this iconic Manx brew by partaking in tasting tours that will be held throughout the year.

In addition to learning a few words in Manx Gaelic (the island's historical language) and familiarising yourself with the Manx pound (the island's unique currency), one of the best ways to understand this unique British Crown Dependency is to **explore it on foot**. Taking advantage of the isle's **myriad** of organised **walking events**, hikers will find rolling English fields, misty Irish hills and craggy Welsh coastlines – as well as dramatic Scottish Highland-esque peaks on the Isle's highest point, Snaefell mountain. On a clear day, trekkers can turn in a circle on its wind-whipped summit to see each country in the UK and Ireland. – *Lynn Brown*



Five of the planet's tallest mountains are located in northern Pakistan (Credit: Getty Images)

20. Pakistan's Gilgi-Baltistan region

Pakistan is one of the world's most populated nations, yet it remains one of the great surprises for travellers. That may soon change, as the country is hoping a slew of **responsible tourism initiatives** and **new sustainable efforts** will lure eco-conscious visitors to explore its breathtaking northern regions; home to five of the planet's 14 peaks towering over 8,000m – including the world's second highest, K2.

Salam Pakistan (Pakistan's first-ever national tourism brand, which launched in 2023) allows travellers to easily apply for e-visas and make bookings on the digital platform, including the coveted mountaineering and trekking visa. It only takes a quick glance at the list of **mountain peaks** and **treks** to see the scale of Pakistan's unmatched adrenaline opportunities.

Yet, Pakistan is much more than staggering mountain trails. The scenic Gilgit-Baltistan region – dubbed "heaven's gate" – is brimming with lush valleys, pristine lakes and glacial waterfalls. Cradled between trails are the Hunza Valley's fragrant cherry blossoms and apricot orchards, undulating Unesco-listed **Deosai plains** and Shangri-La-esque mirrored lakes. Venture towards the Pakistan-China border to find the Khunjerab Pass, which will be operational **year-round** starting in 2025. – *Aysha Imtiaz*



The Azores boast some of the continent's most dramatic black-sand beaches and best whale-watching opportunities (Credit: Getty Images)

21. Azores

Marooned in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean some 1,500km west of Lisbon, this nine-island Portuguese archipelago is one of Europe's most isolated destinations and is known for its steaming natural hot springs, jewel-coloured lakes and sparkling lava tubes. The Azores already boast some of the continent's most dramatic black-sand beaches and best **whale-watching** opportunities, but the islands can now add another superlative to the list: **Europe's largest protected marine sanctuary**.

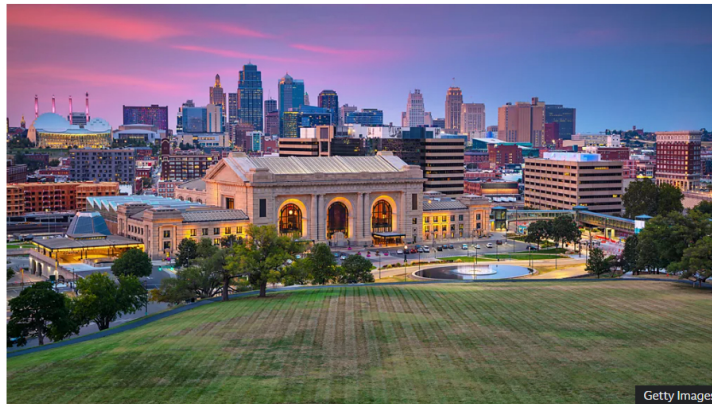
In a groundbreaking piece of legislation approved in October 2024, the Azores' newly designated Marine Protected Area will extend 287,000 sq km (an expanse larger than all of Great Britain) and safeguard deep-sea corals, sharks and the 28 species of whales and dolphins found here. Protecting the long-term health and biodiversity of these

and dolphins found here, protecting the long-term health and sustainability of these coral reefs will be a boon for travellers eager to participate in whale-watching and sustainable marine research expeditions in the years to come.



The Azores have made protecting their coral reefs a top priority (Credit: Getty Images)

Elsewhere, a scenic drive from the capital of Ponta Delgada, **Furnas Valley** is home to two active volcanoes. Spend some time hot spring hopping your way across the bubbling geothermal valley, wander through lush botanical gardens or enjoy a leisurely stroll in **Terra Nostra Park**, arguably one of Europe's most beautiful parks. Dating back to 1775, the eponymous **Terra Nostra Garden Hotel** is a bonafide green retreat that will offer guests 24-hour access to their newly enhanced thermal pools and jacuzzis starting in January 2025. Don't leave without sampling the **cozido das Furnas** – a local meat stew buried underground and slow-cooked using the volcanic hot springs' natural heat. Nearby, sample purple volcanic tea at **Chalet da Tia Mercês**, or plan a visit to the family-owned **Gorreana Tea Factory**, the oldest (and only) tea plantation in Europe. – *Michelle Gross*



In 2025, Kansas City is rebranding itself as one of the country's top cultural destinations (Credit: Getty Images)

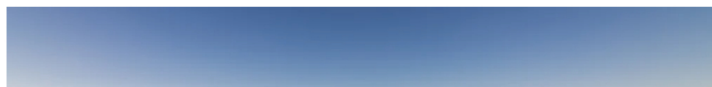
22. Kansas City, Missouri, US

Kansas City, Missouri is making 2025 its glow-up year. The city heretofore known as "Paris of the Plains" is busily promoting its creative arts scene and status as one of North America's barbeque capitals, all while launching an urban revitalisation plan that includes new museums, entertainment districts and hotels.

At the heart of the rebrand is the **Museum of BBQ**, the world's first museum dedicated to the art of smoked meat. Slated to open at the **Crown Center** shopping district in spring 2025, the immersive experience will delve into **Kansas City's deep barbeque culture**, leading visitors through interactive exhibits culminating in a gift shop selling all manner of BBQ goods.

The **Berkley Riverfront** will continue to see new dining experiences, shops and apartment buildings among its incoming development.

The **Kansas City International Airport** completed significant renovations in 2023, with the \$1.5bn expansion replacing outdated terminals and improving passenger flow. This year will also see upgrades to the **KC Streetcar**, a 3.5-mile Main Street extension expected to open this summer that will make it even easier to reach some of the city's premier destinations, including the **Union Hill** shopping district and the **National WWI Museum and Memorial** – home to the world's most comprehensive collection of World War One objects and documents. And when **Rock Island Bridge** re-opens in spring 2025, it will become the site of a new entertainment district set 40ft feet over a river. – *Eva Sandoval*





Bolivia is hosting a full year of parties to celebrate its bicentennial in 2025 (Credit: Getty Images)

23. Bolivia

Even if you've already stargazed at the spacelike Uyuni salt flats (the world's largest) and trekked breathlessly around the hilly capital of La Paz (the world's highest), Bolivia is worth a visit in 2025. This August marks the country's 200th anniversary and it's celebrating with events and attractions throughout the year in the capitals of its nine regions.

Visit from 24 February to 5 March for the Oruro Carnival, which includes a multi-day folk-dance parade and has earned Unesco Heritage status for preserving oral tradition. In Potosí, sip a bicentennial singani (Bolivia's answer to Peru's *pisco*). This strong spirit, now a symbol of national pride, is said to have started viticulture in the region in the 1500s in what was once a booming mining town – and Potosí still has the colonial architecture to prove it.

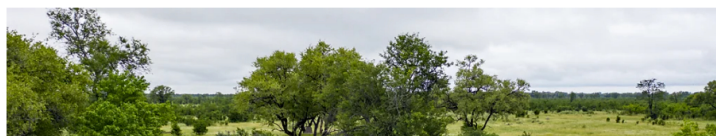
Bolivia has the largest proportion of Indigenous people in South America, with roughly two-thirds of the population directly related to the area's original inhabitants. Bolivia's prettiest city, Chuquisaca (also called Sucre), where the declaration of independence was signed in 1825, is home to many Quechua peoples. While there, be sure to visit the Museo de Arte Indígena for an up-close look at the country's ancient textile tradition. The Aymara people of the altiplano welcome visitors to the Isla del Sol (an island in the middle of Lake Titicaca) whose moonlike terrain makes for an incredible daylong hike. Elsewhere, a new network of community-based tourism brings attractions (and work opportunities) to these sometimes-remote communities, such as the Chalalan Ecolodge in the Amazon's Madidi National Park, where capybaras, cougars and macaws make their homes. – *Laura Norkin*



Botswana is the "Elephant Capital of the World" (Credit: Getty Images)

24. Botswana

Botswana has been hailed as Africa's leader in green safari tourism due to its expansive wildlife reserves and the government's focus on high-income, low-impact ecotourism policies; a strategy that has traditionally meant allowing fewer tourists. But as the country ushers in a new government and continues to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic, its tourism sector (and sustainable cache) only stands to grow in 2025, with an increased demand for sustainable and culturally immersive travel experiences. In a bid to bolster tourism and strengthen the economy, Botswana has granted visa-free entry to visitors from 104 countries in recent years – including those from the US, UK, Germany and Canada. This means more travellers can now explore Botswana's natural beauty, including the "Elephant Capital of the World", Chobe National Park, and the Unesco-listed Okavango Delta; a vast wetland in the Kalahari Desert that is one of the world's last havens for cheetahs and the black rhinoceros.





Botswana's Okavango Delta is one of Africa's premier luxury safari destinations (Credit: Getty Images)

The Okavango Delta will also see a number of new openings, including the 100% solar-powered **Mbamba Camp** in the delta's lagoon-and-savannah-dotted north, a luxury lodge offering a blend of comfort and family-friendly wildlife adventures that's slated to open in April 2025. Opening in May 2025 is **Monachira Camp**, where visitors can enjoy walking safaris, mokoro canoe rides and **armchair safaris** while coming face to face with elephants, lions and the Pel's Fishing Owl.

Starting in April 2025, new Air Botswana routes will connect Gaborone to Cape Town, making it even easier for visitors to explore Botswana's magical nature for themselves – sustainably. – *Eva Sandoval*



The Norwegian capital is famous for its modern architecture and dedication to sustainability (Credit: Getty Images)

25. Oslo, Norway

"Is it even a city?" a **recent viral ad** for Oslo, Norway asked. The tongue-in-cheek video nodded to how overtourism has sullied other European capitals while showcasing the Norwegian capital's **extreme walkability**, **world-class dining**, and easy access to nearby fjords, islands and serene **postcard-perfect landscapes**. Known for its modern architecture, sweeping waterfront and no shortage of trees (it's one of **Europe's most-forested cities**), Oslo is luring the kinds of visitors who will do their part to ensure that it remains **one of the world's most sustainable cities**.

Visitors here are encouraged to refer to the **Visit Oslo Responsibly** guidelines and the **Green Oslo Guide**, which break down the concept of sustainable tourism into four categories: planet, people, prosperity and partnership. It's not unusual for hotels in the city centre to feature green roofs that produce food, reduce energy use, manage rainwater and support urban biodiversity.

Travellers can ensure their visit has a positive impact on residents and the local environment by supporting local businesses like the **Norwegian Adventure Company**, which offers "life-changing and sustainable experiences" from its base in Oslo, like kayaking through glacier-carved fjords, and chasing the Northern Lights. After a long day of exploring the spectacular Nordic countryside, dine at one of the city's many farm-to-table restaurants, like the Michelin-starred **Maaemo**, which utilises locally grown organic produce. So, is it even a city? Find out in 2025. – *Lynn Brown*

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