

# Off The Beaten Track

Time to make travel plans to discover new destinations and what they have to offer. Here's a sneak peek at 10 unusual destinations to watch out for in 2024...

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

Post pandemic, travel has become one industry that has grown by leaps and bounds. An interesting aspect is that people who travel are now seeking experiences and destinations that are off the beaten track. If you are looking at 2024 as the year to travel around the world, here's a list of 10 unusual places that we have curated with expert insights that must be on your itinerary.

## DETROIT

Detroit is a city on the rise, with revitalized urban spaces, an innovative technology hub, and major events and festivals that make it a must-visit destination in 2024. But what truly sets Detroit apart are its unusual aspects and hospitality options, from the Motown legacy to the vibrant street art scene, historic architecture, diverse culinary offerings, and boutique accommodations. "Our properties range from cosy cabins nestled in the woods to luxurious lakeside resorts, all designed to provide the perfect home base for exploring the hidden gems of Michigan. Whether you are seeking outdoor adventures like hiking, fishing, or skiing, or simply want to relax and take in the natural beauty of the area, our properties offer something for everyone. With RCI, you can experience the best of both worlds - the vibrant energy of Detroit and the peaceful serenity of Michigan's countryside. Book your stay today and discover all that this amazing state has to offer," says William Hall, Vice-President, Marketing & Digital, RCI EMEA, APAC & India.

## GUATEMALA

Tucked away in Central America, Guatemala is a hidden paradise packed with incredible natural and cultural appeal. "Often called the Land of Eternal Spring, January to May is the best to visit when it's warm and dry. Visitors can explore the breath-taking Lake Atitlán, cradled by volcanic peaks, or enjoy the colonial charm of Antigua, where cobblestone streets lead to hidden courtyards and historic churches. Casa Palopó and Villa Bokéh are two great hotel options here. Casa Palopó with its hillside location offers uninterrupted views of Lake Atitlán and Villa Bokéh is located at the edge of Antigua's old

Budapest, Hungary

town, offering 15 rooms, a nice restaurant, and beautiful grounds," says Sandeep Arora, Director, Brightsun Travel.

**KIMBERLEY**

Western Australia's Kimberley is home to abundant wildlife and marine life, magnificent canyons, freshwater swimming holes, untouched coral atolls, and rugged islands. It is also known for great food, luxury accommodation, friendly locals and one of the most romantic beach towns in the world. "One can visit Kununurra and Derby - the eastern and western gateways to the Kimberley, visit the rugged pioneering towns of Wyndham, Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek or Western Australia's World Heritage listed Purnululu National Park, featuring the famous beehive-shaped Bungle Bungles, witness the ancient cave systems at Dimalurru (Tunnel Creek) National Park and the beautiful waterways of Danggu Geikie Gorge National Park. Cruise the vast inland sea of Lake Argyle or explore one of the world's largest meteorite craters at Wolfe Creek Crater National Park, and much more," says Daniel D'souza, President & Country Head - Holidays, SOTC Travel Limited. Accommodation options in Western Australia's Kimberley range from eco-luxe lodges to local-infused culinary experiences,



William Hall, Vice-President, Marketing & Digital: RCI EMEA, APAC & India



Cyclades Greece



Guatemala

seamlessly blend with the untouched beauty of the surroundings.

**KOBE**

Located on the north shore of Osaka Bay, Kobe is Japan's sixth largest city with extensive views of mountains and the ocean. Kobe is a cosmopolitan delight and known to be the fashion Mecca of Japan. "The destination is the centre of jazz music, gastronomy and is known for its light festival, Kobe Luminarie. Kobe is also known for the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake Memorial Museum that pays homage to the lives lost during the 1995 earthquake. Travellers seeking less crowded destinations opt to travel to Kobe over Osaka and Kyoto making this unique destination alluring to India's discerning travellers. Kobe is home to some premium hotel brands; however, it also offers hotel options for every traveller from budget to luxury," says Rajeev Kale, President & Country Head - Holidays, MICE, Visa, Thomas Cook (India) Limited.



Sandeep Arora, Director, Brightsun Travel

**YORKSHIRE**

Securing the third position on a leading travel portal's list of best places to visit in 2024, Yorkshire stands out for its diverse and breath-taking landscapes. "From quirky cities to quaint towns, rolling hills, and stunning coastlines, the region caters to outdoor adventurers and tranquillity seekers alike. Tourists can explore the wonders of the Yorkshire Dales, North Yorkshire Moors, and Peak District National Parks nestled within this picturesque county. The charm extends to the coastal areas, boasting vibrant towns like Whitby, Runswick Bay, Scarborough, Staithes,



White Temple, Chiang Rai

and Filey. The total budget for a good exploration of Yorkshire is in the range of 800 pounds to 850 pounds for a five-day trip," says Dmitrijus Kononov, Director & CEO, wowtickets.com. "Tourists can try Yorkshire's best food - Yorkshire pudding, cheese from Yorkshire, rhubarb, curd tart, parkin, cream tea, beer brewed etc. Whether you seek adventure, history, or relaxation, Yorkshire promises an unforgettable experience in 2024."

**QUEBEC**

In 2024, Quebec has emerged as an unparalleled destination, seamlessly blending European charm with North American allure. Bhavna Jobunputra, Partner, World Key Travels, says, "The historic city of Quebec, a UNESCO World Heritage site, enchants with cobbled streets, centuries-old architecture, and a palpable sense of heritage. Beyond the cities, Quebec's natural splendour unfolds in diverse landscapes - from the majestic Laurentian Mountains to the picturesque Gaspé Peninsula, offering a haven for exploration. The commitment to sustainable tourism ensures these treasures remain pristine for generations. Indulge in culinary delights as French and North American influences merge into a gastronomic masterpiece. From delectable poutine to exquisite pastries, the local cuisine reflects a rich cultural tapestry." In 2024, vibrant festivals celebrating Quebecois art, music, and traditions abound, providing immersive experiences for travellers.



Bhavna Jobunputra, Partner, World Key Travels



Rajeev Kale, President & Country Head - Holidays, MICE, Visa, Thomas Cook (India) Limited



Daniel D'souza, President & Country Head - Holidays, SOTC Travel Limited

**CYCLADES**

Cyclades in Greece is another offbeat destination that attracts travellers with its timeless allure. Within easy reach of Athens, the Cyclades islands are the Aegean's most precious gems, so-called by ancient Greek geographers because they saw that they formed a circle of sorts around the sacred island of Delos. "Like the Greek flag, the colours of the Cyclades islands are blue and white and they come in all sizes. And though the ingredients are the same - incomparable light, translucent water, heavenly beaches, lustrous white buildings, and bare rock - each has a distinct character. The group's



Detroit Fountain at Belle Isle during Sunset

stars, Mykonos, and Santorini, need no introduction but the lesser-known islands, big and small, are just as rewarding. For the island lover, this chain of small, secluded islands is paradise regained. A visit here recalls the Greek island experience of 20 years ago, when things moved slower and pleasures were simpler. In the Small Cyclades, it's all about switching off and reverting to island time," says Pranjal Mohan, Founder, Hotel Aroma Residency.

### CHIANG RAI

With so many accommodation options and experiences, Chiang Rai is a new adventure waiting to be discovered. "The city's temples, such as the White Temple (Wat Rong Khun) and Blue Temple, beautifully showcase the neo-traditional Buddhist artistry also known as the Lanna style. The vibrant Chiang Rai Night Bazaar is the perfect destination to buy some local handicrafts and try some local flavours, I would personally recommend Khao Soi, a savoury meat-based noodle soup. For thrill-seekers, the city offers activities like rock climbing at Singha Park, ATV riding, and kayaking in the Mae Kok River," says a spokesperson from Tourism Authority of Thailand, Mumbai. When it comes to accommodation, Chiang Rai promises a diverse range of experiences right from luxury camps to cosy homestays. The Anantara Golden Triangle Elephant Camp and Resort is the place to get up close and personal with the gentle giants or go glamping in the Four Seasons Tented Camp near the Mae Kong River. Suanthip Resort is another luxury resort that is a little away from the Chiang Rai downtown but very close to nature.

### BRAZIL

In 2024, Brazil will be an unparalleled destination that captivates the world's attention. It is a unique and vibrant location with a blend of indigenous, European, and African influences, making it an unusual destination worthy of exploration. Brazil offers breath-taking natural wonders, such as the Amazon Rainforest and Pantanal wetlands, providing travellers with eco-tourism and adventure opportunities. "Brazil's culinary scene is a fascinating fusion of flavours, including traditional dishes like feijoada and street food delights like acarajé, making it a gastronomic journey that delights food enthusiasts. The country is famous for its vibrant festivals and celebrations, including the iconic Rio Carnival, which promises an extra layer of excitement in 2024, inviting visitors to immerse themselves in the lively atmosphere and cultural richness. Moreover, Brazil is committed to sustainable tourism initiatives, ensuring that travellers can contribute to and witness the



Dmitrijus Konovalovas Director &amp; CEO, wowtickets.com



Pranjal Mohan, Founder, Hotel Aroma Residency



Lubaina Sheerazi, CEO &amp; Co-founder, BRANDit



Quebec

preservation of its natural beauty and biodiversity," says Hall. Adding to the allure are the diverse hospitality options, ranging from luxurious beachfront resorts to eco-friendly lodges in the heart of the rainforest.

### BUDAPEST

Recent projections suggest a dispassion for conventional tourism and a heightened desire for immersive experiences. The quirks of Budapest align well with this trend. Hiking trails, opera houses, wineries, nightclubs, river cruises and mineral-rich thermal baths, name it – the city has got it all. "Travellers who appreciate art and history are awestruck by the art nouveau architecture and ancient relics. The great Danube River, which bisects the city, is a compelling attraction that offers a stunning vantage point of this city with a unique blend of ancient and modern flair. Not to forget the Michelin-starred restaurants and quaint cafes that give vacations a whole new meaning. The exclusive heritage hotels in the city are excellent for celebrating milestones and hosting intimate weddings. What distinguishes it from other European cities is its richness and diversity," says Lubaina Sheerazi, CEO & Co-founder, BRANDit (India Representative of Visit Hungary). 