HOLIDAY AHOY!

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The most frightening aspect of this pandemic, according to me, is how horrifically similar the current scenario has become to the one depicted in Steven Soderbergh’s dystopian thriller “Contagion”, where a similar virus, hitherto unknown to mankind, threatened to destroy all of humanity. Prophetically, that fictional pandemic also originated in China.

That said, this article is not about the woes of our times. Undeniably, these are trying times where even the simple act of existence has grown to be something of a chore. But in the past, even with the weight of the world on our shoulders (no offence to you, Atlas), we have had post- work coffee sessions to look forward to with our bosom friends. Courtship hours had to be carefully seeded and vacations were to be daydreamed about.

Ah! To imagine visiting a place, never seen before, and to bask in its natural, cultural and historic glory. To return with a host of tangible souvenirs and a clutch of memories as bright as the beams of the sun and as beautiful as a shell resting by the crashing waves. But the current international situation demands social distancing of the highest order and for the foreseeable future, travel for purposes of pleasure will remain halted. Courtesy of this predicament, here is a list of places you can consider visiting in your quarantine dream bubble. After all, it is only in our dreams that we enter a world structured strongly by the fuel of imagination, guarded by decisions and choices of our own making.

1. Hogsmeade Village

Our daydreams surrounding the moving staircases of Hogwarts, the glistening hourglasses and the imposing magical castle in the Scottish highlands have resulted in us in being thrown out of our real classes on multiple occasions. But if one really had to choose, then one should definitely consider the nearby village of Hogsmeade for a holiday escapade. The Zonko's Joke Shop will have one rolling on the floors in splits (quite literally) and maybe by now, the other Weasley brother has already set up an outlet of his shop as well. One must definitely indulge in Madam Rosmerta’s famed butterbeer by the cosy fireplace of the Three Broomsticks and once the sweet tooth is sated by the sweets from Honeydukes, one can always head out for a stroll in the nearby mountains with rolling valleys and sheaths of snow. A real holiday indeed!

2. Middle Earth

With its precarious mix of goblins, elves, banished bastard princes and witches as old as the moon, Middle Earth is the perfect place to go looking for adventure. But one must consider doing one's homework well before this visit because it is quite easy to get lost in this realm, steeped in Elvish history. With fuming volcanoes and locked caves to be explored, this trip promises to be dangerous as scintillating. (Early reservations will result in Gandalf as your tour guide, just saying).

3. 1920s New York

If you’re looking for a place to party hard, with an abundance of champagne and an overdose of heartache, then welcome to the Upper East Egg. Here you will find handsome young men roaming the streets clueless while grand old men throw deliciously amorous parties, standing by docks, attempting to reach out and grasp a beam of green light. There’s the Valley of Ashes, the poster of the all-seeing-eye and then there’s New York City itself. The roaring 20s really was the age of unabashed candour and slanderous secrets, booming business stocks and technology. Life as people knew it had never been better. But be warned: there are no brakes in this world. Drive carelessly and suffer being “borne back ceaselessly into the past.”

4. Narnia

This is a criminally underrated fandom, and therefore it is no surprise that Narnia is a criminally underrated realm. Just imagine being transported to a whole new world altogether just by passing through a cupboard filled with old, moth-eaten coats. But this is not your regular fairytale land of pixie dust, Karen. Here you have raging seas, and seasons that don’t follow the course of the natural order as we know it. Here you have talking lions, hospitable beavers and magic that is at once serene and destructive. Narnia is the sort of magical land where visitors do not control the course of any event whatsoever. You enter this world at its wish and you’re ousted again when the time is right, sometimes never to return again. Morality stands no ground and justice enforcement is uncontrolled. But what is truly endearing about this land, of course, is the sheer vitality of its own unique existence as a living, breathing and often a singularly human entity.

5. Manderley

Ever since Daphne du’ Maurier created the Gothic world of ‘Rebecca’, lovers of Austen and the Bronte sisters have dreamed of visiting this haunted beauty of a house. With its huge walls lined with layers of flaming red rhododendrons, and its willow trees whispering the secrets of past betrayals and lies, Manderley is the dream destination for every romantic. It is the perfect blend of the decadence of Yorkshire Heights and the haunted interiors of Rochester mansion. With an omnipresent housekeeper hell-bent upon keeping the memory of the mansion's erstwhile mistress alive, this sprawling property with its inky moon is the perfect setting for a Regency-era love story with a tinge of post-modern murder.