Top 10 Tourist Destinations in Asia

There are so many exciting top destinations in [Asia](https://www.tripsavvy.com/asia-4138876), deciding where to go can be difficult; but that's a good problem to have.

Don't despair! With [cheap budget flights between major hubs in Asia](https://www.tripsavvy.com/cheap-flights-to-asia-1458389), you could easily catch a couple or more of these tempting top-spots on a single trip. Regardless of where you begin, you'll have access to culture, [UNESCO sites](https://www.tripsavvy.com/top-unesco-world-heritage-sites-in-asia-1458722), nature, and exciting culinary treats.

If planning your first big trip to Asia, consider a soft landing in one of these top destinations for first-time travelers.

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## [Chiang Mai, Thailand](https://www.tripsavvy.com/chiang-mai-travel-guide-1458476)

Many travelers prefer Thailand's pleasant northern capital over the hectic pace of life in Bangkok. Most of the tourist action happens within Chiang Mai's Old City, where orange-robed monks from the many temples smile as they pass.

From numerous cultural festivals and sprawling night markets to mountain trekking and scores of beautiful temples, Chiang Mai attracts over a million visitors a year who just can't wait to come back. Chiang Mai is certainly the most popular among the [top 10 places to visit in Thailand](https://www.tripsavvy.com/places-to-visit-in-thailand-1458668).

[Pai, a riverside village](https://www.tripsavvy.com/things-to-do-in-pai-thailand-4170084) only four hours north of Chiang Mai, is a bonus; you can visit both of them together as a "package."

Although inflation is on the rise due to popularity (Bangkok is consistently one of the most visited cities in the world), a [vacation in Thailand is still relatively inexpensive](https://www.tripsavvy.com/how-much-money-for-thailand-1458578).

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## [Penang, Malaysia](https://www.tripsavvy.com/penang-malaysia-travel-guide-1629544)

Known as the "Pearl of the Orient," Penang is a place to relax, eat delicious food to the brink of misery, and appreciate Malaysia in a new way. Malaysians are quite proud of their large island — and they should be!

A legacy of immigration and colonization in Penang has produced what is arguably some of the best cuisines in all of Southeast Asia. [Penang hawker food](https://www.tripsavvy.com/malaysia-street-food-4157626) combines the best of Malay with influences from Chinese and Indian immigrants to produce mouthwatering creations.

Superb food is not the only indulgence on the island. You'll find ​hip museums and art galleries along with plenty of other things to do in Penang. Georgetown may have some grubby edges, but it's not only charming, it's *groovy*.

Penang is easy to reach and is certainly among the [top destinations in Malaysia](https://www.tripsavvy.com/top-destinations-in-malaysia-1458504).

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## [Singapore](https://www.tripsavvy.com/singapore-travel-information-1629785)

[Notoriously expensive](https://www.tripsavvy.com/suviving-singapore-on-a-budget-1458501) and often unfairly shunned by budget travelers [afraid of getting fined](https://www.tripsavvy.com/how-to-stay-out-of-trouble-in-singapore-1458521), tiny Singapore is a modern-yet-green city/island/country well worth a visit for the food, mega-mall shopping, and unique blend of cultures.

Don't assume that Singapore is all about concrete shopping blocks! You'll find ample green space and an impressive system of elevated biking and walking trails that interconnect city parks.

Yes, Singapore costs far more than neighboring Malaysia or the rest of Southeast Asia, however, the city has a pleasant vibe, lively Indian and Chinese cultures, speaks good English, and is pleasant enough just to stroll. You could spend months living in Singapore and still discover hidden places and eateries the guidebooks have missed! Even the [museums in Singapore](https://www.tripsavvy.com/museums-in-singapore-1458499) will remain in memory forever.

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## [Malaysian Borneo](https://www.tripsavvy.com/guide-to-malaysian-borneo-1458498)

[Borneo in Southeast Asia](https://www.tripsavvy.com/guide-to-malaysian-borneo-1458498) is the third-largest island in the world, shared between Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei.

Hands down, Malaysian Borneo is a natural paradise. And with plentiful rainforests, endangered orangutans, and indigenous cultures, it's certainly worth grabbing a [cheap flight from Kuala Lumpur](https://www.tripsavvy.com/find-cheap-flights-to-borneo-1458628). You'll often see deals to Borneo for US $20 or less!

Malaysian Borneo has two states: [Sarawak and Sabah](https://www.tripsavvy.com/malaysian-borneo-sarawak-or-sabah-1458574). Kota Kinabalu, the capital of Sabah, is a happening tourist city in the shadow of towering Mount Kinabalu. [Kuching](https://www.tripsavvy.com/things-to-do-in-kuching-sarawak-1458262), the capital of Sarawak, has a pleasant waterfront that helped earned the city "cleanest in Asia" for many years.

When you've had enough shopping and cheap seafood, trade the concrete for the undeveloped beaches and nearby national parks where there are plenty of opportunities to experience Southeast Asia at its wildest.

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## [Islands in Thailand](https://www.tripsavvy.com/islands-in-thailand-1458562)

TripSavvy / Lauren Breedlove

From islands large enough for busy airports to tiny, generator-powered paradises, the islands in Thailand are among the world's most beautiful.

Imagine​ white sand and blue water, cheap diving, and your choice of isolated tranquility or savage nightlife — all for far less than the cost of a trip to Hawaii. Even better, you [won't need to bring that much stuff along](https://www.tripsavvy.com/packing-hacks-for-asian-travel-1458596).

The diversity of the Thai islands is amazing. Phuket and Koh Samui are developed, tourist hot spots with vibrant nightlife, while tiny Koh Lipe once barely maintained electricity. Beautiful [Koh Lanta](https://www.tripsavvy.com/koh-lanta-thailand-1458479) is the perfect island compromise.

The great news is that you don't have to choose just one. Island hopping is a *thing* in Thailand.

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## Siem Reap, Cambodia

[Siem Reap](https://www.tripsavvy.com/travel-to-siem-reap-cambodia-1629775) is the gateway to exploring one of Southeast Asia's most fascinating UNESCO World Heritage Sites: [Angkor Wat](https://www.tripsavvy.com/visiting-must-see-temples-in-angkor-cambodia-1629156). Over 900 years old, the temples of Angkor are scattered across 600 square miles of jungle. The jungle is slowly reclaiming the ancient temples as vines strangle ruins and break apart bricks.

The picturesque Angkor temples frequently serve as movie sets and bring to life the inner-archaeologist in over one million visitors each year. While not at the temples, Siem Reap is a tourist destination all on its own.

If [visiting during the shoulder seasons at Angkor Wat](https://www.tripsavvy.com/best-time-to-visit-angkor-wat-1458704), you could have some of the jungle temples all to yourself!

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## [Beijing, China](https://www.tripsavvy.com/travel-guide-beijing-459705)

Crowded, polluted, dreadfully appealing — [love it or hate it](https://www.tripsavvy.com/dealing-with-chinese-culture-shock-1458319), Beijing is the pounding heart of China. Amazing UNESCO World Heritage Sites such as the [Great Wall](https://www.tripsavvy.com/great-wall-of-china-facts-1458742) and the Forbidden City make navigating Beijing's urban sprawl well worth the effort.

Give Beijing a chance; rather than fleeing from the madness, stick around long enough to become a part of it. Wandering the busy streets can actually become quite addictive!

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## [Bali, Indonesia](https://www.tripsavvy.com/where-is-bali-1458554)

Bali, with its miles of beaches and volcanic landscapes, is nothing short of magic. Once mainly a [destination for honeymooners](https://www.tripsavvy.com/honeymoon-destinations-in-asia-1458497) and surfers, Bali is now one of the top destinations in Asia.

Most of the action culminates in South Bali at hedonistic Kuta Beach. Travelers in search of more than surf or a hangover go for [Ubud](https://www.tripsavvy.com/ubud-bali-tips-4066238), the peaceful cultural center of Bali. Some even opt to climb a volcano in the verdant Kintamani Region in the center of the island.

Excellent beaches, a welcoming Hindu culture, and beautiful scenery make Bali the busiest of [places to visit in Indonesia](https://www.tripsavvy.com/where-to-go-in-indonesia-1458545). Plus, [flights to Bali are really cheap](https://www.tripsavvy.com/find-cheap-flights-to-bali-1458625) from Bangkok.

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## [Tokyo, Japan](https://www.tripsavvy.com/tokyo-4138861)

Perhaps not the cheapest of places to visit in Asia, bustling Tokyo is the world's largest metropolitan economy, even exceeding New York City. Urban marvels, talking toilets, and an aloof culture begging to be understood await as soon as you exit the airport.

Learning a few [Japanese travel tips](https://www.tripsavvy.com/japan-travel-tips-1458580) will help you save money while traveling in Japan. If you don't mind a lot of company, go during the spring to [appreciate cherry blossoms](https://www.tripsavvy.com/japan-cherry-blossom-festivals-1550069) with the locals.

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## [Rajasthan, India](https://www.tripsavvy.com/know-before-you-travel-to-india-1539595)

While Goa gets a lot of attention because of the beaches, intrepid travelers head west into [India's](https://www.tripsavvy.com/before-going-to-india-1458418) desert state of [Rajasthan](https://www.tripsavvy.com/tourist-places-in-rajasthan-1539659). Rich with history, stories of romance, camels, and impressive forts, Rajasthan is an unforgettable destination.

If the sun and tourists become too much, consider heading north to the Himalayas with a visit to [Manali](https://www.tripsavvy.com/manali-india-travel-guide-1458536) or the [home of the Dalai Lama](https://www.tripsavvy.com/mcleod-ganj-india-1458483).