

## Places of interest

- Japan — Fushimi Inari Taisha (Kyoto): A mountainside Shinto shrine famous for thousands of vermilion torii gates forming glowing tunnels through cedar forest. Hike to the summit for quiet sub-shrines, fox statues, and overlooks of Kyoto. Go at dawn or dusk for cooler temps and fewer crowds.
- Italy — Colosseum (Rome): The Flavian Amphitheatre (c. 80 CE) once hosted gladiatorial games for tens of thousands. Explore the arena floor and hypogaeum to see lifts and animal pens that powered the spectacles. Pair your visit with the Roman Forum and Palatine Hill for the full ancient-Rome story.
- France — Eiffel Tower (Paris): Built for the 1889 World's Fair, this wrought-iron lattice rises over the Seine with three levels of viewing platforms. The first level has a glass floor; the summit offers a Champagne bar and sweeping city vistas. At night, a sparkle show lights up the tower every hour.
- Spain — Sagrada Família (Barcelona): Gaudí's still-rising basilica blends organic geometry, symbolism, and dazzling stained glass. Inside, tree-like columns branch into a canopy of light; outside, the Nativity and Passion facades tell contrasting stories in stone. Book a tower visit for skyline views and a closer look at the carvings.
- United Kingdom — Tower of London (London): A Norman fortress turned royal palace and infamous prison, it houses the Crown Jewels and centuries of intrigue. Join a Yeoman Warder (Beefeater) tour for vivid tales, then meet the ravens that "guard" the tower. Walk the battlements and pop over to nearby Tower Bridge.
- United States — Grand Canyon National Park (Arizona): A mile-deep chasm revealing two billion years of geology in striated reds and ochres. The South Rim's viewpoints glow at sunrise and sunset, while trails like Bright Angel descend into the inner canyon. Stargazing, rafting, and helicopter flights offer other epic perspectives.
- Canada — Banff National Park (Alberta): Turquoise lakes like Louise and Moraine shimmer from glacial "rock flour" suspended in the water. Drive the Icefields Parkway for glaciers, peaks, and frequent wildlife sightings. Summer brings hiking and paddling; winter transforms the valley into a prime skiing and snowshoeing playground.
- Brazil — Christ the Redeemer (Rio de Janeiro): The 30-meter Art Deco statue crowns Corcovado Mountain, arms outstretched above Guanabara Bay. Ride the cog train through Tijuca Forest for a scenic ascent, then take in views of Sugarloaf, Copacabana, and the Maracanã. Go early to beat clouds and crowds.
- Mexico — Chichén Itzá (Yucatán): This Maya-Toltec city centers on El Castillo, a stepped pyramid aligned so a "serpent" of shadow slithers down its staircase at the equinoxes. Explore the Great Ball Court, Temple of the Warriors, and sacred cenote. Arrive early for cooler temperatures and quieter ruins.
- Peru — Machu Picchu (Cusco Region): An Inca citadel perched amid cloud forests, terraced slopes, and knife-edge ridges. Wander temples, fountains, and the Intihuatana stone, then hike to the Sun Gate or request permits for Huayna Picchu. Reach it by train and bus or trek the multi-day Inca Trail.
- Egypt — Pyramids of Giza (Giza): The Great Pyramid of Khufu and its companions rise from the desert edge, guarded by the enigmatic Sphinx. Venture inside a pyramid's narrow passages or visit the nearby boat museum exhibits to glimpse pharaonic engineering. Sunset casts dramatic shadows across the plateau.
- South Africa — Table Mountain (Cape Town): A flat-topped icon with sweeping views over the city, Atlantic coast, and Robben Island. Ascend via rotating-car cableway or hike routes like Platteklip Gorge, watching for dassies and unique fynbos plants. Weather changes fast—clouds can form the famous "tablecloth."
- Morocco — Jemaa el-Fnaa (Marrakesh): A vast square that transforms each evening into a living theater of storytellers, musicians, henna artists, and sizzling food stalls. Sip fresh orange juice, sample tagines, and watch the spectacle from a rooftop café. Wander into the medina's souks for spices, leather, and lanterns.
- Turkey — Cappadocia (Göreme): Honey-colored "fairy chimneys," cave homes, and rock-cut churches create a surreal volcanic landscape. Drift over valleys in a sunrise hot-air balloon, then explore the Göreme Open-Air Museum and underground cities like Derinkuyu. Cave hotels add a cozy, atmospheric stay.
- Greece — Acropolis (Athens): A limestone citadel crowned by the Parthenon, Erechtheion, and Propylaea—masterworks of classical architecture. Climb early or late for softer light and

cooler air, then visit the Acropolis Museum to see original sculptures. The hill offers panoramic views over Athens and the Aegean beyond.

- India — Taj Mahal (Agra): A luminous marble mausoleum built by Shah Jahan for Mumtaz Mahal, famed for perfect symmetry and pietra dura inlay. Its color shifts with the sun—from rosy dawn to golden dusk—reflected in long pools and gardens. Consider sunrise entry and combine with Agra Fort nearby.
- Thailand — Grand Palace (Bangkok): A glittering complex of gilded spires, mosaic-tiled halls, and Wat Phra Kaew, home to the Emerald Buddha. Respect the strict dress code (covered shoulders and knees) and arrive early to avoid heat and crowds. Nearby ferries and canals make scenic approaches along the Chao Phraya.
- China — Great Wall (Mutianyu/Badaling, near Beijing): Stone ramparts snake over ridgelines, with steep steps and watchtowers revealing vast mountain vistas. Choose restored Mutianyu for slightly lighter crowds and a fun toboggan descent; Badaling offers easier access. Spring and autumn bring clear skies and crisp air.
- Australia — Great Barrier Reef (Queensland): The world's largest coral system teems with turtles, reef sharks, and kaleidoscopic fish. Snorkel or dive from Cairns, Port Douglas, or the Whitsundays, and consider eco-certified operators supporting reef conservation. Calm, warm waters and outer-reef platforms suit beginners and pros alike.
- New Zealand — Milford Sound (Fiordland): A dramatic fjord where sheer cliffs plunge into inky water beneath the spire of Mitre Peak. Frequent rain ignites hundreds of waterfalls, and cruises or kayaks reveal seals, dolphins, and sometimes penguins. The drive via Te Anau and the Homer Tunnel is an adventure of its own.

#### Must-try dishes

- France: Coq au vin — chicken slowly braised in red wine with mushrooms, pearl onions, and smoky lardons, enriched by a bouquet garni. The long, gentle cook yields silky meat and a glossy, deeply flavored sauce, perfect over buttered potatoes or noodles.
- China: Peking duck — the bird is air-dried, glazed, and roasted until the skin turns lacquered and shatteringly crisp. Carved tableside and wrapped in thin pancakes with scallions, cucumber, and sweet bean or hoisin sauce, it balances rich meat with fresh crunch.
- India: Masala dosa — a fermented rice-and-lentil batter is griddled into a large, lacy, ultra-crisp crêpe. It's filled with turmeric-scented mashed potatoes tempered with mustard seeds and curry leaves, and served with sambar and coconut chutneys for a tangy, savory finish.
- Japan: Sushi — impeccably seasoned vinegared rice is paired with pristine fish or vegetables in forms like nigiri and maki. The focus is on seasonality, knife work, and balance, typically enjoyed with soy, a dab of wasabi, and pickled ginger to cleanse the palate.
- Italy: Pizza Napoletana — a high-heat, wood-fired bake creates a tender center and leopard-spotted cornicione. Topped simply with San Marzano tomatoes, fresh mozzarella, basil, and extra-virgin olive oil, it celebrates restraint, quality ingredients, and a supple, chewy crust.
- Mexico: Tacos al pastor — thinly sliced pork marinated with chilies and achiote is stacked on a vertical spit, then roasted and shaved into tortillas. Juices mingle with charred pineapple, onion, cilantro, and salsa for a smoky, sweet, and savory bite.
- Thailand: Pad Thai — rice noodles are wok-tossed with tamarind, palm sugar, and fish sauce to hit a sweet-sour-salty balance. With shrimp or tofu, egg, bean sprouts, and garlic chives, it's finished with lime, roasted peanuts, and chili for crunch and heat.
- Morocco: Lamb tagine — slow-cooked in a conical pot that traps steam, the meat becomes meltingly tender. Fragrant spices like cumin, ginger, and cinnamon mingle with prunes or apricots, almonds, and sometimes preserved lemon to create a richly aromatic, slightly sweet sauce.
- Spain: Paella — born in Valencia, it's cooked in a wide pan so the rice forms a prized socarrat crust. Saffron-tinted grains absorb a flavorful broth, with versions ranging from seafood to the classic Valencian mix of rabbit, chicken, and beans.
- Greece: Moussaka — layers of sautéed eggplant (and sometimes potatoes) cradle a tomatoey, cinnamon-kissed ground meat sauce. A thick, velvety béchamel crowns the dish, which bakes to a golden top and delivers comforting, casserole-style richness.