



CITY BREAKS

From seeking burgers in Boston to shopping in Strasbourg, via a night out in Newcastle (triple shots, optional), we've compiled 19 of the best – some often overlooked – city break destinations in the world

1 ISTANBUL, TURKEY

Traffic, hills and the vast, murky Bosphorus make Istanbul a slightly overwhelming city to navigate. Start by taking a food tour with Culinary Backstreets, where you'll stroll the streets learning about the history of the city – the mosques, the bazaars and the epic food scene (clotted cream and honey for breakfast as standard). In the evenings, head to the trendy Beyoğlu district, where the city's young population guzzle beer on low stools. Then take a ferry over to Karaköy on the Asian side for a taste of local life, including *pide*, the cheesy Turkish version of pizza. gototurkey.co.uk

How: Marti Istanbul is ideally located in the Taksim district, and a steal considering the luxe surroundings (rooftop bar and in-shower hammams? Yes please); nightly rates from £160. martiistanbulhotel.com; Turkish Airlines offers return flights from £100. turkishairlines.com

TAKE A FERRY TO KARAKÖY FOR A TASTE OF LOCAL LIFE ON THE ASIAN SIDE OF THE BOSPHORUS



ABOVE: Newcastle is one of the UK's best destinations for brilliant nightlife, from buzzing bars to refined restaurants

2 NEWCASTLE, UK

Coal mining was once the livelihood of this northeastern city, but nowadays it's the stomping ground of students and nightlife seekers. On the weekends the streets throng with friendly Geordies hopping between the city's 'trebles' bars; if triple shots aren't your thing, check out the concert schedule at the Sage and try a meal at the top of the restored Baltic Flour Mills, with views over the Tyne.

HOW: Plush rooms on the quayside are available at Malmaison. Nightly rates from £80. malmaison.com; Book in advance for cheaper train tickets. virgintrainseastcoast.com



ESCAPISM TEAM FAVOURITE

3 LISBON, PORTUGAL

HANNAH SUMMERS, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

"The most time-efficient (and fun) way to see the city is on a motorbike and sidecar tour. When you visit the Jeronimus Monastery (obligatory), load up on custard

tarts at the nearby Pasteis de Belem."

If the wallet won't stretch to Rio, try the Portuguese capital instead. The city's vibe and setting bear an understandable resemblance to Rio de Janeiro's – there's even a mini Christ the Redeemer. There are hills (seven of them), winding alleys of bars, and to top it all, golden curves of sand are a short train ride away. It's also cheap – just €0.60 for a bottle of Sagres, and belt-loosening seafood meals (try **Ramiro**) cost far less than in most other European capitals. Bring us back some custard tarts, please.

HOW: Try H10 Duque de Loulé for views of the Tagus. Nightly rates from £110 per room. h10hotels.com/en; EasyJet offers return flights from £70. easyjet.com

Known as the 'Seafood Temple' of the city, a meal at Ramiro has to finish with a 'prego', a garlicky steak sandwich. Now THAT'S the way to do dessert.



Jeep with EXPO MILANO 2015

jeep.co.uk



BE RENEGADE
THE ALL-NEW JEEP RENEGADE.

Jeep

Model shown Jeep Renegade 1.4 MultiAir II Limited 140 hp 4x2 Manual with optional two-tone alloy wheels and optional bi-colour paint at £23,545 OTR. OFFICIAL FUEL CO₂ EMISSIONS: 160 – 120 G/KM. Fuel consumption and CO₂ figures are obtained for comparative purposes in accordance with EC directives/regulations and may not be representative of real-life driving conditions. Factors such

as driving style, weather and road conditions may also have a significant effect on fuel consumption. Jeep® is a registered trademark of FCA US LLC.

ONAVO

Ever downloaded an email abroad, then paid the price for it when the bill comes in? Onavo could be the answer to your overseas data problems. The Onavo system drastically reduces the data needed to perform everyday tasks like downloading emails and posting to Insta. Cheers to more beer money! iPhone/Android (free)



4 PALERMO, SICILY (ITALY)

Palermo isn't the prettiest Italian city you'll ever visit, but the Sicilian capital – once famous for the Mafia and *The Godfather III* – boasts a mishmash of global cuisine, with heavy Arabic influence. Take a street food tour with Streat Palermo for the best veal intestine and spleen sandwiches. Be sure to check out Piazza Garraffello – the buildings there have remained crumbling and neglected since the second world war, but Austrian artist Uwe Jäntsch has done his best to improve them with tasteful graffiti. Palermitans take their football seriously, so if you're in town during a game, head to Stadio Renzo Barbera – sorry, the 'Cathedral' – for a night of intense Italian passion and noise. **HOW:** Classic Collection offers three-night breaks from £572, including flights and transfers. **classic-collection.co.uk**; for food tours and football, try Streat Palermo. **streatpalermo.it**

5 PALMA, MALLORCA (SPAIN)

Mallorca's capital is often overshadowed by the lairy foam party antics of Magaluf, but good-looking Palma has serious long weekend potential. Check into one of the many new boutique hotels before strolling along cobbled lanes, dipping into baroque churches and visiting the Palau de l'Almudaina – the Islamic fort that was converted into a residence for the monarchy at the end of the 13th century. This is real 'yachtie' territory, so to catch some rays, hop aboard a half-day catamaran trip, and experience the best of the island. **HOW:** Hotel Cort in the city centre has to be one of the prettiest boutique hotels on the island, with hot tub cathedral views. Nightly rates from £150. **hotelcort.com**; Iberia Express offers return flights from £120. **iberia.com**

THE TRAMS IN MONTPELLIER HAVE BEEN LABELLED THE SEXIEST IN THE WORLD

FROM TOP: Montpellier, home to the sexiest trams in the world; the unspoiled Kassandra peninsula in Greece; red rooftops meet brutalist architecture in Skopje, Macedonia

6 CAIRO, EGYPT

Turmoil in Egypt over the last few years has resulted in a drop in visitor numbers, but Cairo isn't an unsafe city to visit. Contiki leads tours to Cairo and Egypt for 18-35s, spending time in the city's cafés, while also cramming in the out-of-city pyramids – touristy they may be, but there's a reason for that, as quite simply, they're spectacular. Cairo also boasts a lively nightlife – to get involved, join the crowds drinking coffee and beer on the streets.

HOW: Eight-day trips from \$652. **contiki.com**

7 THESSALONIKI, GREECE

For a true cultural melting pot – think Byzantine walls, Ottoman mosques and Turkish hammams – try the port city of Thessaloniki. It doesn't serve up rustic Greek beauty at every turn, but the locals' passion, particularly for seafood and pastry, more than makes up for it. What the city also has is history, and lots of it – from the iconic White Tower to stretches of sixth-century streets – while the large student population means the nightlife is heaving. If time allows, head down the coast to the powdery beaches of Halkidiki – it would be a shame to waste those sparkly waters, wouldn't it? **discovergreece.com**

HOW: Try Hotel Excelsior for art deco glamour. Nightly rates from £80. EasyJet offers return flights from £100. **easyjet.com**



ESCAPISM TEAM FAVOURITE

8 MONTPELLIER, FRANCE ABY DUNSBY, STAFF WRITER

"Take a trip to le Lac du Crés for a day of woodland walking and freshwater swimming." Montpellier is one of France's most multicultural cities, and eternally young at heart. Just off the coast (you can hire bikes and cycle 30 minutes to get to the sea), the city is an elegant, laid-back choice. It's pretty, too – the trams have been labelled 'the sexiest in the world', though we can't

Photograph by Hemis; Aleksandr Mazurkevich; Iarni Dimitrov Pictures / Alamy



imagine the competition's hot. Have a drink in the Place de la Comédie, arguably the most graceful square in France, but save your food for a wine and cheese picnic at Jardin de Peyrou for views over the city.

HOW: You'll find arty options on Airbnb.

airbnb.co.uk; EasyJet offers return flights from £60. **easyjet.com**

9 OSTEND, BELGIUM

Bruges and Brussels may flex their touristic muscles, but Ostend is where the local city-dwellers go for their jollies. The only city on the 42-mile 'Belgian Riviera', it boasts some of the country's best restaurants (although you can't go wrong with a portion of fries and mayo, a local delicacy). If you're really fond of beer, visit during the North Sea Beer Festival, from 28-30 August, when you can try 150 varieties from 20 local breweries. If the dates don't work, be sure to sample one of Belgium's many fine brews at the Old Harbour. Just don't, you know, fall in.

HOW: Ferry/Airbnb it from Ramsgate in Kent.

transeuropaferry.co.uk; **airbnb.co.uk**



ESCAPISM TEAM FAVOURITE

10 COPENHAGEN, DENMARK TIM SLEE, CEO

"Nyhavn is where the sailors used to get beers and tattoos. Today it's quite touristy, but it's a great place for people-watching with a cold beer."

Copenhagen's got some edge, especially compared to its neighbours and Scandi sisters. There are Skittle-hued townhouses, world-class museums and, according to some people in our team (pictured above), the most attractive residents in the world. There's a decent reggae scene, 24-hour clubs and open-air swimming in the city – check out the Copenhagen Harbour Baths (which have won awards for their streamlined architectural design), or if sand's your thing try Amager Strand, the urban beach where you can swim, sunbathe or play mini-golf. **How:** Urban House is a hostel/hotel with hotdogs, rooms and a tattoo parlour. Beds from £18. **urbanhouse.me**; Ryanair offers return flights from £18. **ryanair.com**

11 SKOPJE, MACEDONIA

If you're interested in design, you'll probably know Skopje for its Communist-era brutalist architecture. But you'll also find honey-coloured walls, majestic arches and the largest Old Bazaar in the Balkans (shopping potential = high). A highlight has to be the city's Museum of Contemporary



LAND DOWN UNDER

DRIVE AUSTRALIA'S INCREDIBLE NATURE COAST

There's so much to explore in Australia: isolated beaches, nature-packed rainforests, hip cities and wide open roads that lend themselves to epic road trips.

So the question is, where should you go? Luckily, Austravel is here to help. Experts in tailor-made trips to Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific, the team offers tip-top travel advice and handy insider suggestions and itineraries.

Australia's Nature Coast is just one of Austravel's recommended destinations. Stretching along east Australia's Pacific Ocean coastline, this Instagram-worthy part of southern Queensland combines the dazzling Sunshine Coast and rugged Fraser Coast – two regions of abundant natural wonder.

Easily accessible from the cosmopolitan cities of Sydney and Brisbane, this area guarantees an incredible nature experience and unbeatable adventure activities.

Take a self-drive trip with Austravel and you can explore at your own leisure. Check out the epic volcanic scenery of Glasshouse Mountains, the crystal-clear waters of Mooloolaba Beach, and the sands and huge koala population of Noosa Heads. Inland, take a dip in the deep waterfall pools of Kondalilla National Park, home to hundreds of bird species and the rare pouched frog.

And that's not all. Fraser Island offers 184,000 hectares of terrain to explore, where lakes are bathing spots for wallabies and possums, and humpback whales and dolphins can be spotted from the shores. Meanwhile at the spectacular Great Barrier Reef you can dive with loggerhead turtles, rays and the most incredible coral in the world.

Austravel offers 10-night Australia's Nature Coast Self-Drives from £1,249pp including hotels, flights and car hire. Call 0808 163 6043 or visit **austravel.com/australiasnaturecoast**



THUN IS YOUR STORYBOOK DESTINATION – CASTLES, MOUNTAINS AND LAKES



FROM ABOVE: Head to Cork for some of Ireland's finest food and drink offerings; fairytale landscapes in Thun

Experiences **CITY BREAKS**

Art, which was built after an earthquake in the 1960s. Artists around the world were encouraged to donate, and now it hosts a brag-worthy collection of art that punches above the country's size and weight.

HOW: Hotel Solul is a good-value hotel in the city. Nightly rates from £46. hotelsolun.com; Wizz Air offers return flights from £120. wizzair.com



ESCAPISM TEAM FAVOURITE

12 BERGAMO, ITALY JON HAWKINS, EDITOR

"The Centro Sportivo Italcementi in the modern lower town has three outdoor pools (one Olympic-size), and grassy banks where you can kick back in the sun."

For a city with two identities, try Bergamo in northern Italy. There's the tiny and pretty medieval hilltop town – La Città Alta – within the city walls, which connects by funicular to the modern lower town. It's a great launchpad for the Lombardy countryside and Italian lakes if you have time, but if you're staying in town we recommend heading to the small but

atmospheric Piazza Vecchia for aperitivo – including the locally-produced **Franciacorta** from Brescia.

HOW: Splash out at Relais San Lorenzo, a 30-bedroom retreat. slh.com; nightly rates from £180. Ryanair offers return flights from £30. ryanair.com

Local sparkling wine Franciacorta is produced in exactly the same way as champagne. Bottles are few and far between in the UK so if you see any, grab one (or four, or five).

13 THUN, SWITZERLAND

While hardly high on most travellers' Swiss hit lists (you have one, right?), tiny Thun is every bit a storybook destination. There's a turreted castle, it's ringed by mountains and it sits on the shores of the dazzling Lake Thun (which you can sail around, too). Aside from the history, there's a young, spirited vibe – join the local crowd hanging out at the riverside cafés.

HOW: Stay in a local home with Airbnb.

Airbnb.com; SkyWork offers return flights to Bern from £120. flyskywork.com

14 STRASBOURG, FRANCE

Home to France's second-highest student population, and the EU HQ, Strasbourg straddles the border between France and Germany. There are shops, but break up your backstreet meandering with *tarte flambée* – a traditional Alsatian dish of thin crispy dough with cheese and onion. Spring time is pretty in the region, but Strasbourg really comes into its own in the run up to Christmas – the markets (and sausages) are hard to beat. During the summer evenings, wander the lantern-lit

plaza of Grande Île – Strasbourg's UNESCO World Heritage-listed island. Here, pastel-coloured houses sit beneath the towering Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Strasbourg.

HOW: Hôtel Gutenberg is a modern, zesty-walled option. Nightly rates from £46.

hotel-gutenberg.com; EasyJet offers return flights from £48. easyjet.com

15 CORK, IRELAND

Next time you're planning an Irish city break, think beyond Dublin. Specifically, think Cork – the compact city in the south of Ireland that's prime city break fodder. Hungry travellers won't be disappointed; Cork's food scene is arguably one of the best in the country, and the Franciscan Well Brewery, on the site of an old monastery, pours the city's best selection of beer,

CITY MAPS 2GO

Paper map?! Get with the times! We love City Maps 2Go, an offline map system for virtually every country in the world. Maps are seriously detailed, and you can drop pins in the haunts you want to return to, leaving notes on them, too. All features, such as address details and your GPS location, work offline without data roaming. iPhone/Android (free)



Photographs by (Cork) Ian Dagnall / Alamy

**ESCAPISM TEAM FAVOURITE****18 CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA**
HANNAH SUMMERS, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

"Avoid the V&A Waterfront for drinks – it's tourist central. Instead, bar hop down Long Street with the locals."

Splash some cash on a trip to the Mother City. It may seem like a long way, but there's no jet lag. The open bus tour is actually really good, and a handy, quick way to see the sights in a day. The rest of the time? Hit the golden beaches – the water comes straight from the Antarctic, so a dip's an exhilarating way to cool off.

HOW: Daddy Long Legs is a cheap and colourful budget option, from £42. daddylonglegs.co.za; South African Airways offers return flights from £600. flysaa.com

19 LEIPZIG, GERMANY
Coffee runs through the blood of Leipzig's locals. The city boasts one of the **oldest coffee shops** in the world, and if you're really into your beans and grinds, there's a museum you can visit, too. Also visit the Spinnerei Leipzig – formerly a cotton mill and now home to Leipzig's top galleries and more than 100 artists' studios. Known as the City of Heroes for the peaceful role it played in the 1989 revolution, the city is full of culture, with nightlife to rival Berlin.

HOW: Pentahotel Leipzig is a cool choice, with nightly rates from £110. pentahotels.com; EasyJet offers return flights from £60. easyjet.com

While they won't be serving up any double soya frappes with extra cream and sprinkles, Leipzig's Coffe Baum dates back to 1720. Read it and weep, Starbucks.

FINDERY

Sharing is caring, or that's what our nan says when she gives us sweets. Findery ("the treasure map of your life") also embraces the sharing concept, and the app is a place for you to document your favourite finds at home and abroad – from record stores in a city to a family-run taverna.



Leave notes and pictures on the app for others to enjoy. iPhone/Android (free)



ABOVE: Colourful buildings overlook the river Onyar in Girona, from historic monuments to houses where washing billows in the wind

lager and stout. For a full Irish the next day, try Tony's Bistro – there's even a huge €30 version if you're really hungry/hungover. Wannabe chefs should book a session at the famous Ballymaloe Cookery School.

HOW: The River Lee Hotel is a tranquil option. Nightly rates from £110. doylecollection.com; Aer Lingus offers return flights from £60. aerlingus.com

**ESCAPISM TEAM FAVOURITE****16 BOSTON, USA**
MARK HEDLEY, EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

"The perfect-sized city: just small enough that you feel you can get under its skin in a short time. It's even better if you're heading to Martha's Vineyard afterwards..." It's a fairly long flight for a short city break,

but the hardcore can handle it. And it's worth your efforts – this friendly home of the Red Sox (and their fanatics) has just had its harbour revamped, resulting in handsome views out to sea. Hunt down the blue Cookie Monstah food truck for a signature Snickerdoodle or cookie and ice cream sandwich, then follow it up with a hike along the 2.5-mile Freedom Trail, where you can tick off 16 historically significant sites in one swoop. Still hungry? Try Mr Bartley's for burgers with a 48-year history, and names such as the Viagra, the Snoop Dog and the Beyoncé.

HOW: Sleep on the water with Bed and Breakfast Afloat for cabin and boat options from £150 per night. bedandbreakfastafloat.com; Virgin Atlantic offers return flights to Boston from £600. virgin-atlantic.com

17 GIRONA, SPAIN

Barcelona may be the more obvious city break choice in Catalonia, but for something a little smaller and more manageable, head for the cobbled streets and ancient churches of Girona. Food here has a regional variation known as *mar y muntanya* (sea and mountain) – chicken, lobster and rabbit all feature heavily. If you're feeling flush (and organised, as you'll need to book up to 10 months in advance), try the world's best restaurant, El Cellar de Can Roca, run by the Roca brothers – Joan, Josep and Jordi – who work together as head chef, sommelier and pastry chef respectively. Culture-wise, there's a cinema festival in September, closely followed by a celebration of theatre in October.

HOW: Hotel Ciutat de Girona is ideally located in the heart of the old city. Nightly rates from £70. hotelciutatdegirona.com; Ryanair offers flights from £50 return. ryanair.com

TRY MR BARTLEY'S IN BOSTON FOR BURGERS WITH NAMES LIKE 'THE SNOOP DOG'

Photograph by Cheslav Vodov / Alamy