

where



next

18 places to go in 2018.

BY AMY CASSELL

If we could bottle the thrill of touching down in a new destination, we would. We're always searching for great getaways to add to our list, and this year they include a Greek island without the crowds, newly accessible natural wonders in Colombia, and Scandinavia's coolest hot spot. So get packing: It doesn't matter if your travel speed is "toes in the sand" or "take me to the summit" – **it's time to go.**

Beyond its picturesque coast, Naxos is home to Mount Zeus, the Cyclades' highest peak.



EYEM/GETTY IMAGES

where next: the beach

naxos

The undiscovered Greek island.

Take everything you love about the Greek Isles – whitewashed architecture, rocky swimming coves, hilltop tavernas – and subtract the crowds. “Naxos is more under the radar than its neighbor Mykonos, but has all the same attractions,” says Daisy Patrick, a Virtuoso travel advisor from Larkspur, California. This 165-square-mile island (the largest in the Cyclades chain) relies less on tourism and more on agriculture than its prime-time sisters, a rarity in the Greek Isles. Nab your own stretch of sand on the west coast at Plaka Beach before lunching on platters of fresh clams and octopus croquettes at the oceanfront Tortuga restaurant. Inland, mountainous hiking trails cut through medieval villages, Byzantine-era ruins, olive groves, and lush farmland. Greece feels like it’s on every traveler’s must list – some 30 million people visited in 2017. Smart travelers will head for Naxos now, before the secret gets out.

60: Sail to Naxos on **Seabourn’s** 14-day, round-trip-from-Athens voyage aboard the 458-passenger *Seabourn Odyssey*. For a customized day of exploration, ask your travel advisor to work with **Travel2Greece**, a Virtuoso on-site tour connection, to set up shore excursions. *Departures: Multiple dates, June 16 through September 8; from \$6,999. Travel2Greece shore excursions from \$150.*

ibiza

Come for the party, stay for the surprising serenity. The Med’s capital of debauchery is known for its beach bars, cavernous nightclubs, and 4 AM DJ sets, but a decidedly more bohemian vibe makes daylight appealing too. “Over the past ten years, Ibiza has matured from a hedonistic party haven to a magnet for luxury revelers,” says New York City-based Virtuoso agency owner Jack Ezon. After late nights (or, let’s be honest, early mornings) in the town of San Antonio, retreat to the 205-room **ME Ibiza** for rooftop spa treatments and poolside cabanas. “To relax, charter a yacht to neighboring Formentera or hit the beach prior to 2 PM,” Ezon says. “No one wakes up before noon.” *Doubles from \$279, including breakfast daily, a \$100 dining credit, and a complimentary 50-minute massage for two.*

los cabos

Mexico’s Pacific enclave comprising Cabo San Lucas and San José del Cabo gets a lavish boost this year. In addition to the spring opening of the 122-room **Montage Los Cabos**, a handful of other five-star projects are in the pipeline. “It may be its proximity to Hollywood, but Los Cabos has always catered to an A-list clientele,” says André

Xavier, a travel advisor from Charlottesville, Virginia. “It’s more popular than ever, and hotels see this as a huge opportunity to expand.” For now, escape the winter blues at 84-room **Las Ventanas al Paraíso**, where a pop-up Champagne bar on the beach beats scraping ice off the windshield any day. *Las Ventanas doubles from \$1,025, including breakfast daily and a \$100 spa credit.*



Sleep it off by the rooftop pool at ME Ibiza.

where next: **adventure time**

colombia

Latin America's new ecotourism outpost.

Colombia is a wonderland of biodiversity: One out of every ten species found in the world thrives here. After a half century of civil war, a 2016 accord between the government and the jungle-based Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) has introduced a new era of peace to the country – great news for Colombians *and* sustainably minded travelers. More than 50 parks and reserves once deemed war zones are reopening, revealing rainbow-hued rivers and beautiful alpine lakes. Start your eco-exploration at Tayrona National Natural Park, where tropical cloud forest tumbles down to the Caribbean, before heading inland to explore Ciudad Perdida's ninth-century ruins. Then fly to Utría National Park on the country's west coast for treks through lush emerald forests, led by indigenous guides.

– Costas Christ, *Virtuoso* global strategist, sustainability

60: Big Five Tours & Expeditions, a leader in promoting peace through tourism in Colombia, can create a custom coast-to-coast eco-adventure that includes the parks mentioned above, plus coffee plantations, colonial cities, and more. *Departures: Any day through 2018; from \$400 per person per day.*



A Big Sur hike payoff: McWay Falls.

big sur

Landslides damaged roads and made Big Sur's redwood forests and cinematic coastline largely inaccessible for most of last year (**Post Ranch Inn** helicoptered guests in), but parts of California's Highway 1 reopened in October, ushering in the area's newest addition. The former Ventana Inn & Spa reemerged as the 59-room **Ventana Big Sur**, with updated accommodations, an art gallery, 15 glamping tents, and an activity center offering beekeeping lessons and guided photography treks. "I love spending hours hiking in Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park," says San Francisco-based

advisor Michelle Murré. "The McWay Falls overlook, just under a mile from the highway, is one of its most beautiful sights." *Ventana doubles from \$675, including breakfast daily and a \$100 hotel credit.*

northern iceland

Iceland's next big attractions are far from the famed Blue Lagoon: inland to the remote Fjallabak Nature Reserve and north to quiet coastal towns such as Husavik. Travel to the Land of Fire and Ice is up fivefold since 2010, and Iceland is the top emerging destination in **Virtuoso's 2018 Luxe Report**, an annual trend survey of travel

advisors. The key to having untouched glaciers and dramatic vistas to yourself is to go beyond the Ring Road, to areas still relatively undiscovered by tourists. "Some of the country's remote wilderness areas don't have signs or protective measures for visitors, so it's best to explore them with a guide," says Chicago-based travel advisor Olya Kiriukhina. One off-the-beaten-path idea: **Backroads'** six-day northern Iceland trip, which includes hiking along Eyjafjörður, whale-watching off the coast of Husavik, and biking through some of the area's most charming fishing villages. *Departures: July 1, August 26, and September 2; from \$4,798.*

Jungle meets beach in Colombia's Tayrona National Natural Park.



Big Sur, KORENA SPOLING SINNETT, (COLOMBIA) ISTOCKPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES

where next: at sea

alaska by ship

Even more new ways to explore America's Last Frontier.

Alaska's cruise boom continues: **Norwegian Cruise Line's** 4,004-passenger *Norwegian Bliss* debuts in June, bound for Ketchikan; **Princess Cruises** is increasing its Alaskan cruise capacity by 15 percent; and even transatlantic queen **Cunard** wants in, with plans to sail to Alaska in 2019 for the first time in more than 20 years. All this competition means cruise lines are aiming to impress, luring passengers with enhancements such as craft beer and Broadway shows on the *Bliss*, and immersive shore excursions such as **Seabourn's** new four-day, pre- or post-cruise land adventure deep in Denali National Park and Preserve. "It's good news for travelers, who have more options to find an itinerary and line that's right for them," says Seattle-based travel advisor Susan Kelly. "Cruising to Alaska means one thing to me: connecting with Mother Nature. Go now for the pristine beauty – before even more ships arrive."

GO: Small-ship line **UnCruise Adventures** launches seven new Last Frontier itineraries this year, including a nine-day sailing round-trip from Petersburg, Alaska, on the 22-passenger *Safari Quest* that ventures to the less explored South Baranof and Kootznoowoo wilderness areas. *Departures: Multiple dates, May 24 through August 29; from \$7,495.*

Alaska's Frederick Sound, just south of the Kootznoowoo Wilderness area on Admiralty Island.

(ALASKA) OXFORD SCIENTIFIC RM/GETTY IMAGES.
(AUSTRALIA) JON DAVISON/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



The 350-million-year-old Bungle Bungle Range in Kimberley, Australia.

the kimberley, australia

Occupying 162,000 square miles in northwest Australia, the Kimberley is one of the world's remotest regions – a *Planet Earth*-worthy expanse of burnt-red sandstone formations and isolated savannas. Land adventures departing from Broome are popular, but approaching this wild coastline by sea is a pleasant alternative. This year, **Silversea** adds more Kimberley sailings on its 116-passenger *Silver Discoverer*, including a ten-day, Darwin-to-Broome voyage that dives into the region via Zodiac rides through horizontal waterfalls, and treks with Aboriginal guides to centuries-old stone formations and rock paintings. *Departures: Multiple dates, July 9, 2018, through June 14, 2019; from \$6,570.*

san blas islands, panama

Paradise found off Panama's north coast: 365 palm-fringed swaths of sand scattered across the Caribbean. The San Blas Islands, or Guna Yala, are controlled by the Kuna, an indigenous group known for their bright, handmade *mola* blouses. "The best way to visit is on a small yacht, chartered by a captain who has experience with the area," says Michelle de Guizado, a Virtuoso agency executive from Panama City. Tour operator **Blue Parallel** can customize a catamaran trip to the San Blas, with three days in Panama City and four days sailing around the islands. The getaway promises deserted beaches, lobster dinners, and time with the Kuna people. *Departures: Any day through 2018; from \$9,500.*

The Monumento a la Independencia – aka El Ángel – in Mexico City's Paseo de la Reforma.



MEXICO CITY: ALAN GETTY IMAGES; SEOUL: TAWATCHAI PRASOBBIT/ALAMY; STOCK PHOTO

where next: **city scenes**

mexico city

Post-quake, the cool capital is leading by design.

Attention turned to Mexico City last fall when a 7.1-magnitude earthquake struck near Puebla. While certainly tragic, it doesn't mean you should cancel your travel plans. "Only a few areas sustained major damage," says Mexico City-based Virtuoso advisor Ana P. Rosete. "All the main attractions I usually send visitors to are fine." Mexico City is on the global stage for a more celebratory reason too: It's been named the **2018 World Design Capital** (the first city in the Americas to earn the title), a designation that recognizes the metropolis for architectural innovation and design-forward urban planning. Creativity can be found everywhere here – on the plate, in fashion, and on canvases. In fact, Mexico City has one of the world's largest concentrations of museums (it's hard to miss the shimmering Museo Soumaya, this issue's cover star), and February's annual Zona Maco is the country's equivalent of Art Basel. New shops and bazaar-style markets display an emerging sartorial scene: Rosete's pick is Barrio Alameda, a collection of galleries and boutiques in a revamped art deco building in the Centro Histórico district.

60: The 189-room **St. Regis Mexico City** connects guests with stylist Marco Corral for an in-the-know tour of the Condesa and Roma neighborhoods' best shops. *Doubles from \$289, including breakfast daily and a \$100 hotel credit.*

seoul

World-class athletes will meet in Pyeongchang, South Korea, this February for the Winter Olympics. While they go for the gold, three hours east in Seoul, the K-beauty-obsessed will be reaching for sheet masks – and serums, skin elixirs, and pore foams. The country's skin-care products line U.S. shelves, but travelers to the source are rewarded with affordable spa treatments, hard-to-find indie brands, and, in the Myeongdong neighborhood, entire streets lined with beauty-product shops. "Seoul has everything a cosmopolitan city should have: superb food, an up-and-coming design scene, and nightlife," says Tisha Neufville, an Atlanta-based travel advisor. "In Myeongdong, visit Olive Young first for a variety of popular brands." Get beauty sleep

at the 185-room **Park Hyatt Seoul** in the posh Gangnam district. *Doubles from \$310, including a welcome bottle of wine, breakfast daily, and a \$50 dining credit.*

oslo

Norway topped the list in last year's United Nations' World Happiness Report, and one visit to its capital affirms why its citizens are content. "Oslo is a clean, safe city with beautiful museums, galleries, and parks, all of which can be reached on foot," says Petra Holberg-Calvaruso, a travel advisor from Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. Beyond the revitalized Bjorvika waterfront, where a sleek new Edvard Munch museum will open in 2020, hip restaurants and food halls introduce travelers to seasonally focused New Nordic cuisine (try it at three-Michelin-

starred Maaemo), and locals convene over their love of a good cup of coffee at Fuglen. Spend a few days in Oslo on **50 Degrees North's** new private, ten-day Scandinavian city-hopping jaunt, with stops in Stockholm, Copenhagen, and Bergen, Norway. *Departures: Any day, May 15 through September 30; from \$10,578.*



Bright lights and beauty products in Seoul's Myeongdong neighborhood.

where next: **into africa**

rwanda

Gorilla trekking for good in Volcanoes National Park.

A chance to see endangered mountain gorillas in their natural habitat draws nature lovers to Rwanda's Volcanoes National Park, where a large group of the last remaining of these apes reside. Rwanda languished in the shadow of its 1994 genocide for more than a decade, but a stable government and a 30 percent increase in tourism in the past two years have put the small Central African nation on travelers' lists. A wave of new upscale (and conservation-minded) accommodations helps too, including **Wilderness Safaris'** six-villa Bisate Lodge, which recently opened near the park. "Rwanda is safe, vibrant, and welcoming to tourists," says Irving, Texas-based Virtuoso travel advisor Ralph Iantosca. Travelers need a government-issued permit for a Volcanoes trek (approximately \$1,500 per day; your advisor can help with logistics). Says Iantosca: "The investment really does have a big impact on helping protect the gorilla population."

60: Spend eight days hiking, gorilla trekking, and learning about Rwandan history on a private **Abercrombie & Kent** tour that includes a stay at Bisate Lodge. *Departures: Any day through 2018; from \$10,595.*

ethiopia

Intrepid wanderers don't go to Ethiopia for the "big five." The country deals more in the history of humankind and Simien Mountain gorges than in vast savannas and classic safaris. "Thousands of years of history and heritage, from the Ark of the Covenant to the Queen of Sheba, make Ethiopia an

alluring destination," says Austin, Texas-based advisor Crisney Lane, who recommends the country for adventurous travelers returning to the continent. **Lakani World Tours'** ten-day, private exploration provides a proper introduction, with visits to museums and open-air markets in Addis Ababa, cave churches in Lalibela, and Simien Mountains National Park to look for

gelada baboons. *Departures: Any day through 2018; from \$4,995.*

madagascar

The island nation off the coast of Mozambique promises magic on multiple levels: "I love Madagascar's diverse ecosystems, pristine beaches, vibrant markets, and Malagasy people, who remain curious about visitors and eager to tell you all about their lives," says Kylan Falk, a Calgary, Alberta-based Virtuoso travel advisor. He suggests spending at least eight days in the country and working with your advisor well in advance to secure the best accommodations in this new-to-tourism destination. Focus on the eastern and southern sides of Madagascar while meeting members of the Antandroy tribe and spying on ring-tailed lemurs in gallery forests during **African Travel's** ten-day journey. *Departures: Any day, March 21 through December 31; from \$5,495.*

Ethiopia's Simien Mountains National Park.



(ETHIOPIA) HOMOCOSMIC/GETTY IMAGES. (GORILLA) DAVID YARROW/GETTY IMAGES

Conservation efforts are helping save Rwanda's mountain gorilla population from extinction.

Piran, on Slovenia's Adriatic coast, is known for its olive oil, fleur de sel, and Venetian-inspired architecture.



where next: **culture trips**

slovenia

Everything we love about Europe in one place.

Hilltop castles straight out of a fairy tale. Hot springs, vast forests, and alpine lakes. Medieval towns with cobblestoned streets and Venetian-inspired architecture. They're all packed into this compact country bordered by Croatia, Austria, Italy, and Hungary. "Slovenia is quintessential Europe – it has a little bit of everything," says Barbara Taylor, a Brighton, Australia-based Virtuoso travel advisor who grew up in the country. "Slovenes are open, friendly, fluent in English, and quick to share their favorite spots with visitors." Don't leave without a taste of Slovenia's 400-year-old wine-making tradition: Its vintners grow 52 grape varieties, including the Goriska Brda region's *rebula*, used to make orange wine, a recent cult favorite among American wine drinkers.

60: Travel advisors can work with **Luxury Slovenia**, a Virtuoso on-site tour connection, to create a varied itinerary that covers everything from the country's most photographed spot, Lake Bled, to hard-to-snap reservations at *Hisa Franko*, the rural restaurant owned by *Chef's Table* star (and 2017's World's Best Female Chef) Ana Roš.

luang prabang

Immaculate Buddhist temples and French colonial architecture are highlights of Luang Prabang, Laos' former royal capital along the Mekong River, a relatively undeveloped destination that's less traveled than others in Southeast Asia – for now. Luxury hotels are on their way to tap into the UNESCO World Heritage city's peaceful appeal. Settle in at the 24-room **Amantaka**, where, as part of the resort's new meditation retreats, guests witness the city's daily Buddhist almsgiving ceremony. "I recommend adding three days in Luang Prabang to a Southeast Asian trip," says Tom Chongruk, a travel advisor from Fallbrook, California. "However, even longer would allow for excursions into the countryside or more time spent indulging in Laotian spa treatments." *Doubles from*

\$760, including airport transfers, breakfast daily, and one complimentary 60-minute massage.

upcountry maui

Maui's traditional draws may be lazy beach days and volcano-top sunrises (the island is the No. 2 getaway in the U.S. on this year's Virtuoso Luxe Report), but on the western slopes of Haleakala, a thriving homegrown culinary scene shines. "Maui's Upcountry is an unexpected Hawaiian experience," says Novato, California-based travel advisor Robin Jenkins. "You're greeted by green pastures, grazing cattle, and a Zen-like peacefulness that's light-years away from crowded beach walks." Farmers invite visitors to sample goat cheese, coffee, and lavender scones, and pop-up farm-to-table dinners draw chefs from afar. Go big with a new experience from the

383-room **Four Seasons Resort Maui at Wailea**, which includes a helicopter transfer to Piiholo Ranch for a day in the Upcountry with its owner, Peter Baldwin, a fifth-generation *paniolo* (cowboy). *Doubles from \$599, including breakfast daily and a \$100 dining credit. Upcountry experience, \$16,500 for six. VI.*

Lavender fields in Upcountry Maui.

