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| TRAVEL |

On the rise: 20 trending destinations for 2020

Discover tips, tours, and secrets from travel planners and experts.

9 MINUTE READ

BY JESSICA FLINT

Where do the pros say you should travel this year? We asked more than a dozen

industry insiders for inspiration on where to go and what to do in 2020. Here are their top suggestions, from surprising under-the-radar destinations to classics with a new twist. One prevailing theme? Sustainability—and the many ways travelers can support it.

Andaman Islands

Why go now: “The Andaman Islands have a new lease on life,” says [Greaves Tours](#) president Carole Cambata of the scuba diving destination in the Bay of Bengal between [India](#) and Myanmar. “Due to local regulations, dive boats were limited to two miles offshore. There is now one dive boat certified to reach even the farthest dive sites, with a second due in January. The result is enforced conservation with dive sites not having been visited for two-plus years.”



PHOTOGRAPH BY GEORG KNOLL, LAIF/REDUX

What to do: Spend two nights in Chennai, on the Bay of Bengal in eastern India, before departing for five nights at the [Taj Exotica Resort & Spa](#) on Swaraj (formerly Havelock) Island, says Cambata. On the return, a stopover night at Port Blair allows for excursions to the Cellular Jail, where the British held political prisoners during India's independence movement, and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose (formerly Ross) Island, home to an abandoned British settlement evocatively overtaken by ficus trees.

[Want to dive deeper? Explore 21 of the world's best scuba sites.](#)

Egypt

Why go now: “In 2020 we're taking travelers to [Egypt](#), which is really exciting,” says [National Geographic Expeditions](#) director of sustainability O'Shannon Burns.

“Tourism is picking up in Egypt again—the country is buzzing and the local people are excited to welcome travelers.”

What to do: During National Geographic Expeditions' 11-day “[Egypt: Ancient Wonders of the Legendary Nile](#)” trip, travelers on some departures will have the chance to meet such experts as Egyptian archaeologist Nora Shawki, who is working to excavate sites along the Nile Delta to better understand how non-elite Egyptians lived. Other experiences include visiting a National Geographic–funded research site and the Egyptian Museum after hours.

Eritrea

Why go now: “Eritrea has had very little tourism in the last three decades, is home to an extraordinary modernist architectural legacy, and possesses something of a wonder in the Dahlak Archipelago,” says [Journeys by Design](#) and [Wild Philanthropy](#) founder Will Jones of the country in northeast [Africa](#). “Eritrea links perfectly with [Ethiopia](#), which is an easy two-hour flight away.”

What to do: Jones suggests a two-week trip: Stay in a private tented camp on the

Dahlak Archipelago, followed by a few nights with the Rashaida, a Red Sea trading community north of the port city of Massawa. Start and end in Asmara, Eritrea's capital, for a trip through history and Art Deco architecture.

Greenland

Why go now: “Greenland has sensational scenery, new experiential accommodations in Kiattua camp, and remote access,” says Red Savannah founder and CEO George Morgan-Grenville. “Where else can you forage for wild berries and mushrooms, catch salmon with your bare hands, and kayak among giant icebergs under the midnight sun?”

What to do: Seven days with Red Savannah includes four nights at Kiattua (accessible only by boat or helicopter) for glamping by the sea as well as two nights at Ilimanaq Lodge overlooking Disko Bay, where whales navigate through the icebergs.

Guyana

Why go now: “With a new direct flight from New York and strong eco-credentials, South America's Guyana embodies the global trend toward sustainable tourism,” says Brown + Hudson founder Philippe Brown, who also points out that the country is an alternative to more crowded destinations on the continent.

What to do: A trip to Guyana with Brown + Hudson includes visiting villages where indigenous people live and contributing to local projects that support healthcare and education and restore cultural heritage. The company has worked with organizations such as World Wildlife Fund to create travel experiences linked to responsible development.

India

Why go now: “The city of Rishikesh has been an essential part of Hindu India for millennia,” says Greaves Tours' Cambata. “The Taj hotel group has a new resort property in Rishikesh, taking visitors away from the hustle and bustle of the town

center and letting them relax in a unique and appropriately tranquil setting.”

What to do: Cambata suggests spending two nights in [New Delhi](#), one in Agra, and two in Jaipur before a three-night stay in Rishikesh. There, don't miss evening prayers and yoga. Other activities include white water rafting down the Ganges River and visiting ashrams to learn more about the Hindu religion.

Indonesia

Why go now: “[Indonesia](#)'s Raja Ampat is one of the top scuba diving destinations in the world, but visitors in the past often had to charter their own ships,” says [Travel Beyond](#) vice president Jenny Mikkelson. “A variety of new small ships like *Aqua Blu* are fresh on the scene, making it even easier for travelers to visit the hundreds of islands and thousands of species of tropical marine fish.”

What to do: Travel Beyond can provide recommendations for the best boat, whether a private charter or shared cruise. A seven-night stay allows enough time for water activities—such as snorkeling, diving, kayaking, and standup paddleboarding—as well as visits to local villages and hikes in lush landscapes. For an extended trip, combine Raja Ampat with mainland Indonesia or other Southeast Asia destinations such as [Cambodia](#), [Laos](#), Myanmar, [Thailand](#), or Vietnam.

Japan

Why go now: “[Japan](#) will be bigger than ever in 2020 due to the [Olympics](#),” says Catherine Heald, co-founder and CEO of [Remote Lands](#). Aside from the Tokyo sports events, Heald encourages travelers to go beyond the expected destinations: “The heart and soul of Japan is in the country's nature and small towns.”

What to do: Heald recommends spending 12 days in Japan. First-timers shouldn't miss [Tokyo](#) and [Kyoto](#), but everyone should venture to off-the-beaten-path stunners such as the ancient forests on Yakushima Island in the Kagoshima Prefecture, the active volcano Mount Aso in the Kumamoto Prefecture, and the incredible landscape of Iya Valley in the Tokushima Prefecture.

Morocco

Why go now: “While Morocco has been popular for years, some of its coastal regions will draw new tourists, especially with the Al Houara resort opening near Tangier and properties from St. Regis and Ritz-Carlton Reserve opening near Tétouan,” says Indagare founder and CEO Melissa Biggs Bradley.



PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTHEW SCHOLEY, GETTY IMAGES

What to do: For a 10-day journey, Bradley recommends experiencing Morocco’s wide variety: culture and history in the cities of Fez and Marrakech as well as outdoor adventures in the desert, in the Atlas mountains, and along the coast. For a six-day trip, combine one of the cities with some relaxing downtime at the beach.

Love music? Take the ultimate sonic journey through Morocco.

Myanmar

Why go now: “Myanmar is set for a resurgence in 2020, but visitors are increasingly wanting to ensure they travel there responsibly,” says Wild Frontiers Travel founder and CEO Jonny Bealby. “Wild Frontiers has put together a tour specifically designed to ensure tourist money goes to those who have suffered a loss in income since the Rohingya crisis.”

What to do: The 15-day private journey includes activities that support community-based initiatives, such as taking cooking lessons from locals, helping out at an elephant refuge, visiting a tortoise conservation center, and staying in small guesthouses and homes.

Namibia

Why go now: “Namibia has few crowds, otherworldly landscapes, and incredible wildlife,” says Gray & Co. CEO Cari Gray of the country in southwest Africa. “Outstanding properties include Zannier Hotels’ Omaanda near Windhoek and the brand’s new Sonop in the Karas region.”

What to do: On a two-week trip, Gray says travelers should seek out places that focus on conservation like the Omaanda-affiliated Naankuse Wildlife Sanctuary. Here visitors learn how Rudie and Marlice van Vuuren rescue and rehabilitate animals ranging from orphaned rhinos to injured cheetahs, hyenas, and elephants.

Nepal

Why go now: “Nepal experienced a bit of a slump following the big earthquake in 2015 and some negative press about overcrowding in the Everest region,” says MT Sobek senior director of product Anne Wood. “Still, serious adventurers like ours will always want to support Nepal.”

What to do: MT Sobek’s 19-day journey to Everest Base Camp offers the chance to

experience Everest and other iconic Himalayan peaks without the risks of technical climbing. The company also offers a half-dozen other trips to the country, including at times other than the prime spring Everest climbing season.

[Read about the Everest expedition that installed the world's highest weather station.](#)

Pakistan

Why go now: Pakistan is perhaps the ultimate adventure travel destination,” says Bealby of Wild Frontiers. “It offers ancient Indus civilizations and exciting cities like Lahore with its forts, mosques, and palaces. But most of all, it has incredible scenery, particularly in the north, where the world’s greatest mountain ranges—the Hindu Kush, Karakoram, and Himalaya—collide.”

What to do: Pakistan is great for trekking, mountain biking, rafting, and cultural tourism, says Bealby. On a 15-day group tour with Wild Frontiers in and around the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, travelers go from the capital, Islamabad, to the former princely state of Chitral and on to the stunning Hunza Valley.

Peru

Why go now: “The south of Peru—specifically Colca Canyon, Arequipa, and Paracas—is up-and-coming,” says Travel Beyond’s Mikkelson. “The Belmond *Andean Explorer* train has contributed to making Colca and Arequipa more accessible, and a nonstop flight on some days of the week between Cusco and Paracas has made that connection easier. Additionally, new Nasca Lines were recently discovered here.”

What to do: Mikkelson says newbies should plan on two weeks in Peru, heading south after experiencing Cusco, the Sacred Valley, and Machu Picchu. For repeat visitors, she recommends 10 days in the south. Travel Beyond can arrange a sand-boarding excursion, a flyover of the Nasca Lines, or a day on a private yacht to explore the bay and wildlife of the Ballestas Islands.

Republic of the Congo

Why go now: “The western lowland gorilla of the Republic of the Congo’s Odzala-Kokoua National Park is an increasingly large blip on our frontier travel radar,” says Journeys by Design and Wild Philanthropy’s Jones. “The recent introduction of a scheduled flight nicely links the experience to Dzanga-Sangha reserve across the border in Central African Republic.”



PHOTOGRAPH BY PETE OXFORD, MINDEN PICTURES

What to do: A 15-night trip with Journeys by Design includes trekking through rain forests to glimpse lowland gorillas, visiting the local net hunters of Dzango-Sangha, and strolling beaches of the island nation São Tomé and Príncipe.

Rwanda

Why go now: Seeing mountain gorillas was the original draw for many travelers to Rwanda. “Now the region has a variety of newer travel offerings to help take in more of the country, including luxe new properties such as Singita’s Kwitonda Lodge and new villas at The Retreat in Kigali,” says Gray & Co.’s Gray.

What to do: Fly into Kigali and head northwest to Volcanoes National Park for the active adventures—like gorilla trekking—that Gray & Co.’s bespoke trips specialize in. Good add-ons for travelers with more time include golden monkey sightings in Volcanoes, the new Mantis Kivu Queen cruise on Lake Kivu, and the Genocide Memorial and Campaign Against Genocide Museum in Kigali.

Rwanda’s war nearly destroyed this park. Now it’s coming back.

Turkey

Why go now: “Istanbul has a massive new airport, incredible sites that have been restored like the Blue Mosque, Topkapi Palace, and the Basilica Cistern, as well as the new Istanbul Modern art museum,” says Indagare’s Bradley. “Everyone there is talking about the new hotel that has opened in Antioch—the Museum Hotel Antakya, which features a 9,000-square-foot mosaic.”

What to do: Two weeks in Turkey, whether one of Indagare’s set departures or a custom trip, generally features three days in Istanbul for historic holy sites, art museums, nightlife, and shopping, then stops in Cappadocia and Antioch, capped by visits to the ancient Greek city of Ephesus or the beach clubs of Bodrum.

United Kingdom

Why go now: “Brexit has brought with it a weak pound and a surge in travel to the United Kingdom,” says Brown + Hudson’s Brown. “Recent royal births, weddings, and Netflix’s *The Crown* have all inspired renewed interest in the monarchy and British aristocracy. Plus, in 2020, new sections of the England Coast Path will be opened, and once completed, the path will be almost 3,000 miles, giving people access to England’s entire coastline for the first time.”

What to do: Brown + Hudson can provide rare royal access, stays in castles and palaces with lords and ladies, and insights into British etiquette combined with the adventure of hiking what will be the world's longest managed and waymarked coastal trail.

Utah

Why go now: “In an election year, we always see an increase in U.S.-based trips,” says MT Sobek’s Wood. “I think we’ll see piqued interest in [Utah](#), especially our Cataract River trips, partly due to this. Also, [United Airlines](#) has started operating direct flights to Moab from Denver, making this remote adventure paradise much more accessible.”

What to do: MT Sobek’s Utah adventures focus on rafting in Cataract Canyon. Travelers fly into Moab, are on the river by lunchtime, and then spend three to seven days charging through rapids, hiking, and camping.

Vietnam

Why go now: “The stunning new Zannier Hotel’s [Bai San Hô](#) is opening just north of Nha Trang, and the launch of the gorgeous [Ylang](#) small cruise boat will help travelers discover Lan Ha Bay—the quieter alternative to Halong Bay,” says Red Savannah’s Morgan-Grenville. “The new [Mandarin Oriental](#) is also debuting in Saigon.”

What to do: Eight days in northern [Vietnam](#) allows for two nights in Hanoi followed by an overnight on a boat in Lan Ha Bay, where travelers can explore Cat Ba Island by bicycle and experience local life at Viet Hai Village. Morgan-Grenville suggests continuing on to the Yen Tu Mountains, a pilgrimage site for Vietnamese Buddhists.

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