

# Holiday hotspots: where to go in 2014

Start planning your 2014 travels with the help of our top 40 destination round-up. Some are hosting major events, others are under-the-radar places only just starting to attract tourists, but all of them are inspiring or exciting right now

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Guardian writers

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Bangladesh, above, is among a number of often-overlooked destinations hoping to attract travellers this year.  
Photograph: Belinda Meggitt/The Multimedia Travellers

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## 1. Cape Town, South Africa

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Following in the footsteps of Helsinki and Seoul, Cape Town has been elected World Design Capital 2014, giving it the opportunity to showcase about 450 innovation projects. That it was selected more as a "one to watch" rather than a fully polished design leader makes it even more exciting to keep an eye on. To see a social/design experiment in action, go to Woodstock, a run-down suburb given a new lease of life through the Neighbourgoods Market), which sells artisan goods in a former biscuit

factory: The Old Biscuit Mill. This is also home to Luke Dale-Roberts' restaurants the Test Kitchen and the Pot Luck Club & Gallery. The city has got what is being billed as the world's coolest cafe – Truth, drawing on a Victorian steam-punk theme,. For a township "jazz safari", or a tour specifically linked to World Design Capital 2014, see coffeebeansroutes.com.



Truth coffee shop, Cape Town.

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## 2. Uzès, France

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Our enduring love affair with France, and with Provence in particular, has been seized upon by Eurostar, which is extending the direct six-hour summer service from Ashford to Avignon by two weeks (28 June-13 September), with a view to a year-round service from 2015. One place sure to please Francophiles is Uzès, a short hop west of Avignon in rural Languedoc-Roussillon. The town has Renaissance architecture, mazy streets and nuns selling jam in Place aux Herbes. But a sure sign that Uzès is becoming a style outpost is the number of restored houses being run as maisons d'hôtes. L'Albiousse (from €155 a night) is a tasteful four-room luxury B&B in a 16th-century house off Place aux Herbes, owned by two former Paris restaurateurs. It is near the Musée du Bonbon, aka the Haribo Museum, as Uzès is the production site for Gummi Bears.

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## 3. Austin, Texas, US

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Hotel Saint Cecilia.

Photograph: [Cheri Lucas](#)

Americans are well aware that this is Texas's coolest city, but a few happenings this year will help put Austin on the map for international travellers, too. British Airways now flies there non-stop from Heathrow five days a week; Terence Malick's as-yet-untitled new project features the city along with an epic cast (including Ryan Gosling and Natalie Portman); and hoteliers are cottoning on to its appeal: Austin-based healthy eating chain Whole Foods is planning its first health resort, and Mexico's hip Habita hotel group has its own impending opening. For now, the best places to stay are Hotel Saint Cecilia (doubles from \$430, +1 512-852-2400) and Hotel San Jose, its cheaper sister across the street (rooms from \$175, +1 512-852-2360).

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## 4. Carmarthenshire, UK

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The man himself would no doubt have approved. In the seaside town of Laugharne this year, the centenary of Dylan Thomas's birth, visitors who can prove it is their birthday can claim a free pint in Brown's Hotel, the very pub where Thomas liked to sit "mouldering" and giving his liver a punishing work-out ([dylanthomasbirthdaywalk.co.uk](http://dylanthomasbirthdaywalk.co.uk)). There will be festivals and events to mark the centenary all year, including a Dylan Thomas Poetry, Biography and Film Weekend in Laugharne, from 2-5 May, with poets including Simon Armitage and John Cooper Clarke performing in venues around town. (For a list of all centenary events see [dylanthomas100.org](http://dylanthomas100.org)). Brown's ([browns-hotel.co.uk](http://browns-hotel.co.uk), doubles from £95) has been refurbished in a 1950s retro style that Thomas would probably find familiar, but it is now a boutique hotel, with iPod docks and lovely organic linens in its 14 rooms. And the Dylan Thomas boathouse has fabulous views of the Taf estuary and the Gower beyond.



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## 5. Kolkata, India

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Tile mosaic on the Kolkata subway. Photograph: Alamy

Change is stirring in Kolkata. Travellers in 2014 will find the same Hooghly hubbub and ghosts-of-the-Raj atmosphere, but they'll also find a city on the move. There's a new airport terminal, a recently opened luxury mall and Kolkata's first skyscraper, The 42, a development just taller than Canary Wharf, has been dubbed the "cloud-kisser of Chowringhee" after the street it towers over. And Kolkata's metro system, India's first when it opened in 1984, is being expanded, eventually creating cross-town links for the first time. New hotel openings also sound a positive note. This month it's the legendary Great Eastern Hotel, opened in 1840 and hosting luminaries such as Mark Twain before falling into disrepair and eventually closing in 2005. In autumn, The Penthouse boutique hotel, from the Glenburn Tea Estate group, promises a dose of low-key chic.

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## 6. São Tomé and Príncipe

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Together the neighbouring islands of São Tomé and Príncipe form Africa's second-smallest nation. But it is shaping up to be one of its premier surf spots. With uncrowded waters surrounded by palm trees and white sands, Radiation Point (Praia de Algés) is often said to offer some of the best breaks on the continent and, in December, the International Surfing Association (ISA) gave the country its official seal of approval by inviting it to become its 78th member. Base yourself at Hotel Praia Inhame (chalets for two from \$60), and you can also enjoy turtle watching, diving and fishing trips.

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## 7. Alaçatı, Turkey

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Outdoor dining in Alacati. Photograph: Alamy

Alaçatı, on the Cesme peninsula near Izmir on Turkey's Aegean coast, was for centuries a Greek settlement within the Ottoman empire. Ancient houses in the town were taken over by Turkish refugees in the 1920s, and city folk from Izmir would spend summers here. Then windsurfers discovered the near-perfect conditions in its bay and a hip Istanbul crowd fell for its cobbled streets and blue-shuttered stone houses. Over the past 10 years, boho-chic hotels, restaurants championing local produce and antiques shops have mushroomed. The latest opening is Alavya (doubles from £159 B&B with Exclusive Escapes): 25 bedrooms, two restaurants, a spa and a swimming pool set in a walled garden. Pale rooms are filled with contemporary Turkish art, and there's a private yacht for guests. There are also plenty of cheaper hotels such as the Tas (doubles from £80 B&B) or the Incirliye (rooms from £60 B&B). In the morning have coffee at Köse Kahve then browse Köse Dukkan for gifts and linens, and the art and antiques shops on Hacı Memiş street, stopping for more coffee at Dutlu Kahve (Mulberry Cafe), then a country-style lunch at Asma Yapragı. By day the streets are a treasure trail of strange fruits and vegetables, at night they resemble a vast outdoor cafe or club. Fly to Izmir with easyJet (from April), Pegasus or Turkish Airlines. See explorealacati.com.

## 8. George Town, Malaysia

Once George Town was named a Unesco world heritage site in 2008, the capital of the Malaysian state of Penang began changing into one of south-east Asia's hottest destinations. Penangites are renovating everything from Chinese mansions to old factories, which means there's something for all budgets – delicious street food or fine dining; funky hostels or boutique hotels. The latest spot is the Three Sixty Degree Sky Bar. Follow drinks there with either a plate of spicy duck soup from one of the stalls on

Kimberley Street or gourmet Penang Nyonya cuisine at Seven Terraces, the restaurant everyone wants to be seen at. In addition to the month-long George Town festival (1-31 August), this year the city will host the first south-east Asian edition of Tropfest (20-25 January, free), the world's biggest short film festival.

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## 9. Alberta, Canada

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The Glacier Skywalk. Photograph: Scott Rowed

Ontario has Toronto and Niagara; British Columbia has Vancouver and Whistler. Poor old Alberta comes third on UK visitors' lists, according to the Canadian Tourist Commission. But this may well change in 2014, with the opening of the Glacier Skywalk, pictured below, (from 17 May, £15 adults/£7 children) on the Icefields Parkway, between Banff and Jasper. The horseshoe-shaped, glass-floored walkway – similar to the Grand Canyon Skywalk – takes visitors 280m above the Sunwapta valley, over crashing waterfalls. The Glacier View Inn has a glacier package (from £84pp for double room and tour). World-class skiing is an hour or two's drive away: try Lake Louise, named Canada's best ski resort at the World Ski Awards. For city life try Calgary, which has gone from cowboy town to cosmopolitan cool.

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## 10. Bordeaux, France

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Like a classic wine, Bordeaux took a bit of time to come into its own. A renewal programme instigated by mayor Alain Juppé in the 1990s has transformed Bordeaux from a congested and claustrophobic place into a bright, modern city. Neo-classical facades have had a steam clean, sleek trams snake through the boulevards and the once-desolate riverfront has been redeveloped. The latest splash of colour comes in the form



of a fleet of Philippe Starck-designed scooter-bikes, being tested for a cycle share scheme. Starck is also behind the new Mama Shelter, (doubles from €59) a budget hotel that opened in the former HQ of France's national gas company last October.

In the northern docklands, old warehouses are being recast. Les Tontons (from €10 for two courses) in the cavernous former dock offices serves up to 500 people a chic take on canteen-style food. Just over the Bacalan Bridge is Le Garage Modern, car repair shop by day and performance venue by night.

But everything leads back to wine. The CAPC Musée D'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux is in an old wine warehouse on the harbour, and just five minutes from Wine & Soul (23 rue du Couvent), a cosy cave-like wine bar.

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## 11. Iran

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Mosque in Imam Square, Esfahan, Iran. Photograph: Alamy

November's historic nuclear agreement means there hasn't been a better time for westerners to visit Iran since the 1979 revolution. Although the Foreign Office (FCO) still advises against all but essential travel (because the UK has no embassy there), other countries, including the US and Australia, deem most areas safe. The FCO does say groups are safer than independent visits, and the options are increasing. Wild Frontiers has three group trips to Iran (15 days from £2,705pp), and its website has a guide covering insurance, safety and dress codes.

In the first journey of its kind, the Danube Express train will travel across Iran for 15 days in October (from £8,695pp). Despite the high price, demand is such that new dates for 2015 have already been added. Iran's highlights include Persepolis, Esfahan, Tehran

and Shiraz, the Zagros mountains and the Bavanat valley.

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## 12. Belgium

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The world's eyes will be on Belgium this year for the centenary of the outbreak of the first world war. The first soldier to be killed in the fighting died in Liège at dawn on 4 August 1914; the first and the last British soldiers to die were both killed in Mons, near the French border. Brussels is staging a major exhibition, 1914-18: It's our History!, which opens on 7 February at the city's Royal Army Museum. There are also scores of other commemorative events all over Flanders, the northern part of Belgium: see [visitflanders.co.uk](http://visitflanders.co.uk) for details. Tour operators are running guided trips, too: such as Ramblers Worldwide, which has a Walking the Ypres Salient tour (from £999, including half-board accommodation and Eurostar travel, which includes the Tyne Cot cemetery, near Ypres).

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## 13. Brazil

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A beach on Itaparica island in the Baía de Todos os Santos, Bahia, Brazil. Photograph: Alex Robinson/Getty Be prepared for Brazil to take over your living room this year: images of Sugarloaf and Cristo will be everywhere in the build-up to the World Cup. But Brazil's real magic is in the jungles and beaches of its 8,000km coastline. Website Hidden Pousadas Brazil showcases small pousadas, ecolodges and hotels all over the country.

In the relatively unexplored north-eastern state of Alagoas, a succession of rustic-chic laid-back beach pousadas offer fabulous cuisine: try Pousada da Amendoeira (bungalows from £110) on Praia do Toque, or Pousada Casa Zulu (doubles from £46) in



Icaraizinho de Amontada. Beaches aside, anyone heading to Manaus for England's opening match against Italy should make time to explore the world's greatest tropical rainforest: Pousada Uacari (three nights full-board from \$550pp) is a floating lodge in the heart of the jungle.

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## 14. Macedonia

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Despite a history of winemaking that goes back to Roman times and romantic Mediterranean villages with Byzantine churches and terracotta roofs, Macedonia continues to be overlooked in favour of better-developed attractions in nearby Italy and Greece. But with the number of visitors steadily increasing year on year, it's only a matter of time before the obvious appeals of this small, picturesque nation begin to be recognised. Next year marks the completion of the Skopje 2014 project, a multimillion euro scheme to transform the capital city – including the building of new bridges and museums and replacing the facades of buildings in a neo-classical style. However, the real treat for visitors is spectacular Lake Ohrid, a vast lake by whose edge perches a town of the same name the perfect place for a dreamy, and affordable, escape (see [ohrid.com.mk](http://ohrid.com.mk)).

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## 15. Paso Robles, California, US

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The Artisan restaurant in Paso Robles

Napa and Sonoma wine-tasting rooms can get crammed with cheesy honeymooners but Paso Robles attracts an earthier oenophile – which isn't to say that the wine's not excellent. Dubbed "the anti-Napa", Paso is slowly transforming into one of America's foodiest little towns.

"You can feel the energy," says Steve Heimof of Wine Enthusiast Magazine, which recently named Paso Robles wine region of the year. "Over the past two years these winemakers have been making crazy, wild blends of red. It would be hard to do that in Napa: it's so traditional there."

Since 2000, the number of wineries has quadrupled to 200 (sample top zinfandels and red blends at Dusi Vineyard or Epoch Wines , and while it seems a new chef moves in from LA or San Francisco every few months, an "old" favourite restaurant (circa 2006) is Artisan, famous for decadent lamb-leg dip and Cuban sandwiches.

"It's been exploding – for good and ill," says Jon Bonné, wine editor for the San Francisco Chronicle. "There's more tourist infrastructure – restaurants, small bakeries, places aimed at visitors who might not have appreciated Big Bubba's Bad to the Bone BBQ."

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## 16. Rabat, Morocco

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Ask people to name a Moroccan city and most will say Marrakech or Fes, or even Casablanca. Poor Rabat – the country's capital – will probably be way down the list. Which is a shame, because it certainly has its draws, including a historic medina plenty of souks, and a French-colonial "new town", one of the most ambitious 20th-century urban projects in Africa. Many visitors say they find it less chaotic than Marrakech. Rabat was given Unesco world heritage status in 2012 and the city could be on the brink of experiencing the Ryanair effect, as new flights link it to Stansted from February. (See [rabat-tourisme.org](http://rabat-tourisme.org).)

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## 17. Yunnan, China

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The rice terraces of Yuanyang. Photograph: King Wu/Getty

With its dramatic scenery and cultural diversity, the far south-western province of Yunnan is rapidly becoming a favourite with domestic tourists yet remains relatively unknown to foreigners. It's not difficult to see the appeal: in contrast to so many other parts of China, the province has managed to stave off smog and factories, instead preserving a pristine countryside dotted with traditional villages and overlooked by the kind of majestic mountainous landscapes that have inspired Chinese poets for centuries. The ancient town of Dali has become a magnet for the nation's bohemians. Other highlights include the rice terraces of Yuanyang: these centuries-old paddy fields are home to the Hani people, just one of over 50 recognised minority ethnic groups that call Yunnan home, and each with its own colourful and distinct customs, language and dress. Travel with [Wendy Wu Tours](#), which offers a 17-day Yunnan Adventure from £2,690pp including flights, meals and accommodation.

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## 18. Budapest, Hungary

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Wes Anderson's latest flick, [The Grand Budapest Hotel](#), was mostly filmed in Górlitz, in eastern Germany. But its fantasy pastel hues and sepia-toned aesthetic do what the appetite for a central [Europe](#) escapade. And Budapest is still the best-value European city for a mini break according to a [recent report by the Post Office](#). Renaissance and art-nouveau architecture provides a romantic backdrop to an increasingly hip destination; the newly opened [Baltazar Hotel](#), with rooms by cutting-edge designers, is just one example, while the eighth district – previously a no-go zone – continues to flourish, with galleries and laid-back cafes.



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## 19. Rwanda

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Lake Kivu, Rwanda This April marks the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide (and an annual month of mourning). Few countries can have transformed so much in two decades. Today, under controversial president Paul Kagame, streets are spotless, people live in tin- or slate-roofed houses and 98% of the country has Wi-Fi access. But it's the country's natural wonders that are the big draw. The mountain gorillas made famous by Dian Fossey used to be the preserve of high-end travellers, but mid-range accommodation is starting to open in Virunga national park, and the development of the Congo Nile walking and mountain-biking trail – which takes in stunning Lake Kivu – will no doubt lure intrepid active travellers. With Nyungwe forest named a top trip by National Geographic, Rwanda's future as a nature destination is starting now. Africa.

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## 20. Cuba

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"Go now before it changes" is the common refrain but Cuba is already changing. Legislation governing private enterprise is altering the visitor experience. Tourists have long been able to stay in a room in a private home – a casa particular – but now entire historic houses can be let. Suite Havana is a fantastic two-bedroom apartment with a roof terrace in Old Havana. Ydalgo's Penthouse, is a three-bedroom apartment owned by a designer, in the city's Vedado district – which also features chic Cafe Madrigal. Both accommodations are available through new operator Miraviva, from about \$250 a night. Casa particulares are changing too: kitsch homestays being superseded by stylish homes, such as beautiful Finca Kenia in Trinidad – a great spot to enjoy this year's 500th anniversary celebrations. "Now is a brilliant time to visit," says Charles Tyler of

Miraviva. "You have the trappings of communism, with no advertising, and no McDonalds, no Starbucks and so on, but a better standard accommodation, really good food and new experiences."

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## 21. Iceland

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Iceland's mountains and lava field are making it popular with filmmakers. Photograph: Miles Wills/Getty Iceland is gaining credibility as the "Hollywood of the North" after several blockbusters were shot there, including *Oblivion*, *Prometheus* and The Secret Life of Walter Mitty. Two of this year's anticipated hits were also shot amid the lava fields and glaciers: *Interstellar*, Christopher Nolan's sci-fi movie, and Darren Aronofsky's *Noah*. Tick off the locations on a road trip along the spectacular 832-mile "route one" ring-road (from £690pp with discover-the-world.co.uk). The first hotel in the new Stracta chain opens in May near Hella in south Iceland, with doubles from £86. Wow Air flies from Gatwick to Reykjavik from £138 return.

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## 22. Abu Dhabi, UAE

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An island off Abu Dhabi is the antithesis of the glitz around it. Sir Bani Yas was founded as a wildlife reserve in the 1970s and, following a conservation programme, is home to Arabian oryx, cheetahs and flamingoes. The Anantara group's accommodation is "luxury" but its two new hotels feel unflashy: the 30 villas of Al Yamm overlook the beach and the turtle nesting grounds; the 30 villas of Al Sahel are in the savannah grasslands, where gazelle and giraffes graze in front of your balcony. Trailfinders has a seven-night two-hotel break from £1,389pp.

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## 23. Catskills, US

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Phoenicia Diner, Phoenicia.

These lush mountains 100 miles north-west of Manhattan have long been a refuge for city folk, with New Yorkers sailing here up the Hudson river since the early 19th century and, of course, Woodstock has long attracted hippies. In recent years, though, the Catskills' rustic barns and one-street towns have drawn a clutch of fashionable Brooklynites. Their top spot is the 300-person town of Phoenicia, where The Graham and Co hotel (doubles from \$125, +1 845 688 7871) lives up to a hipster's country fantasy: guests are greeted with cans of Pabst Blue Ribbon at check in; rooms are furnished with machine-age metal fans, rough-hewn tables and potted succulents; and in the evenings everyone watches old movies sitting round a campfire. But New Yorkers would not venture here if the food wasn't decent. While it's all chocolate milkshakes and shrimp-and-grits at the Phoenicia Diner, a 1962-era haunt with a recent makeover, it's more New Yorky 10 minutes east at Peekamoose Restaurant in the town of Big Indian. Here, the menu includes clam-studded ramen and succulent beef short ribs supplied by local farms and cooked by Manhattan chef-owners Devin and Marybeth Mills. At Lucky Dog Organic Farm in Hamden, home-produced ingredients are made into lunches of meatloaf panini or cauliflower and cheddar soup, followed by "killer chocolate" ice-cream from Mama's Boy Coffee Shop

Some burn everything off by hiking the 5.6-mile Mount Tremper trail; others prefer browsing vintage dresses and vinyl at The Mystery Spot in Phoenicia. On the drive back to the city, you'll soon be able to stop at the Marina Abramovic Institute, where the revered performance artist is creating a cultural spa.



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## 24. Blackwater estuary, Essex, UK

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Island hopping in Essex? The idea may never have crossed your mind but there are great little spots out in the Blackwater estuary. Osea, the private island a few miles from Maldon where the rich and famous party, is hosting several special events this year: kids' camps, boutique festivals, pop-up restaurants. Although a restaurant for daytrippers has been rumoured, only overnight guests are currently allowed to cross Osea's exclusive causeway (cottages for two from £295 for two nights).

Less pricey and open to all is Mersea Island, famous for its seafood. Don't miss the delicious platters at The Company Shed . Leeward House, a B&B by the beach, has doubles from £70, or splash out – almost literally – on The Raft, a floating cabin sleeping four near Maldon from £195 a night.

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## 25. Lagos, Nigeria

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Kingdom brand by Caven + Etomi. Photograph: Picasa

Lagos is emerging as something of a creative hub. In fashion, the striking colours and bold fabrics used by labels such as Maki Oh (by Maki Osakwe) and Kingdom by Caven + Etomi, are helping bring global attention to the Nigerian fashion scene. The capital's art scene is opening up, too, with organisations such as Video Art Network Lagos curating film festivals and experimental media art events around the capital – though these are small-fry compared with the big-bucks Nollywood film industry. While it is predominantly visitors from other African countries who are drawn by Nollywood, the steady attention Nigerian films are getting in America and the UK means more international visitors will want to visit its heartland.

"Nollywood has become a worldwide phenomenon," says Lagos- based artist Emeka Ogboh. "People are curious to see the space it depicts." People are coming to feel the city's vibes and energy."

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## 26. Dyess, Arkansas, US

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Arkansas isn't the type of place that figures too often on travel bucket lists. And Dyess, Arkansas (population 500) probably never has. But that is set to change this year with the opening of Johnny Cash's boyhood home as a museum (<http://dyesscash.astate.edu>). The single-storey wooden farmstead is being returned to its original state as part of a \$10m tourist project designed to get the town back on its feet – echoing the fresh start Cash's parents got when they were given the farm in the 1930s as part of President Franklin D Roosevelt's New Deal.

The house is the centrepiece of a restoration project that aims to tell the history of the purpose-built Depression-era town. It is scheduled to open on 26 April, and the hope is that some of the 600,000 people who visit Graceland, home of Cash's contemporary Elvis Presley, will drive a further 50 miles north from Memphis to the Man in Black's museum. Cash's surviving brother and sister have ensured that all the furnishings – upright piano, pot-bellied stove, Silvertone tabletop radio – are authentic and accurate.

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## 27. Mongolia

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Chinggis Khaan statue near the Mongolian capital, Ulaan Baatar. Photograph: Alamy  
Mongolia, land of windswept plains, nomadic herdsman and abundant wildlife, used to be the preserve of explorers and intrepid backpackers. But an increase in visitor

numbers, by 11% between 2009 and 2012, has prompted interest from tour operators. Overland specialist Dragoman has a new 21-day trip for 2014, with wild camping, hiking and horse-riding (from £1,102pp with a kitty of US\$710, excluding flights), while Black Tomato has introduced a nomadic ski adventure ending with an ice festival on a frozen lake (from £4,285pp).

With the government pouring money into infrastructure – construction has started on a new airport near capital Ulan Bator – tourism is set to play an even greater role in the country's economy. That's not to say the place is about to get crowded - this is still one of the last untamed destinations in the world.

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## 28. Yorkshire, UK

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Hosting the Grand Départ of the 2014 Tour de France puts a place on the map but there's a lot more to Yorkshire than two days of carbon bikes and Lycra. In fact, the Tour route misses a lot of what's best in the region: the North York Moors, the North Sea coast, and the Wolds in East Yorkshire. Whitby has been an attraction since Victorian days: Lewis Carroll was a regular at what is now the La Rosa Hotel, but Scarborough and Filey further south are great, too. Even Bridlington, powered by resident David Hockney, is on the up, perhaps helped by the award-winning Wold Top Brewery.

Beer is excellent throughout Yorkshire and there's a new brewery, Stod Fold, in Halifax, to add to an impressive list. Good food is found in simple cafes: the Little Organic Bakery on Wellington Road in Bridlington is a new gem; and for great fish and chips, try the Harbour View Cafe on Scarborough's West Pier. There are Michelin stars, too – more than in any other county. One newcomer, The Star in the City in York, is run by Andrew Pern, who built The Star at Harome into a top restaurant with rooms. With Hull set to be City of Culture 2017, Leeds' modern events arena, and Sheffield boasting more artists than London, Yorkshire is definitely buzzing.

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## 29. La Maremma, Italy

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La Maremma. Photograph: Alamy

La Maremma was Tuscany's final frontier, a quiet area of rugged protected coastline from Capalbio up to Cecina. Over the past few years, though, the cognescenti have been taking notice, and while it is still no Forte dei Marmi (Tuscany's most fashionable resort), there have been some illustrious openings: Alain Ducasse's L'Andana hotel in Castiglione della Pescaia (from €300), Leonardo Ferragamo's marina in Puntone, and Renzo Piano's £6.7m winery at the Rocca di Frassinello vineyard.

But the super-rich don't have it all to themselves. New to boutique accommodation website i-escape this year is Locanda Rossa (doubles from €120 B&B) in Capalbi, close to the beach at Chiarone. It has 13 rooms, four apartments sleeping six, a restaurant and a pool.

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## 30. Panama City

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When hipster hotel chain Ace started looking for its first forays outside the US, it picked London first, then Panama City. Central America wasn't an obvious second move, but those who have spent time in the city's Casco Viejo neighbourhood can see the appeal. Sometimes compared to the French Quarter of New Orleans, the area mixes faded glory (dilapidated townhouses and 17th-century city walls) with newfound style (boutiques, cafes and fancy ice-cream parlours such as Granclement on Central Avenue).

The Ace project – a collaboration with Commune Design of Los Angeles and local property developer Conservatorio – has just opened as the American Trade Hotel (doubles from \$259 +tax). At the other end of the scale, hostel Luna's Castle (dorm beds from £8 a night) is a down-to-earth party favourite.

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## 31. Gdansk, Poland

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Gdansk skyline. Photograph: Maria SwÃfÂ¸rd/Getty

In 1980, Lech WaleÅsa started a strike in a Gdansk shipyard that was the beginning of the end of the Soviet bloc. In summer 2014, the European Solidarity Centre – a museum, library and research centre – is set to open on the same spot, as a celebration of freedom and democracy. And that's not the only reason to come to this Baltic seaport. Gdansk has plenty to offer as a city-break destination, without feeling as touristy as Krakow. There's also far more to the local food scene than potato- and cabbage-stuffed pierogi; try the seafood at [Bulaj](#) in the nearby seaside resort of Sopot, or modern Polish recipes at [Brovarnia](#) , a buzzing waterside microbrewery and restaurant in the city.

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## 32. Glasgow, UK

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If your image of Glasgow is all rusting shipyards and deep-fried confectionery, 2014 would be a good time to rediscover Scotland's largest city as it welcomes the world during perhaps the biggest year in its history. That Glasgow is a fast-growing city-break destination is impressive: it did not even have a tourist office until the 1980s. In 1990, European City of Culture status kickstarted the regeneration. In 1999, the UK City of Architecture and Design award had a similar effect. Glasgow is indeed a city transformed.

In Finnieston, in between the centre and the West End, Zaha Hadid's [Riverside Museum](#), named European Museum of the Year 2013, was joined last September by the sleek [SSE Hydro](#) concert and sports venue. The Hydro will be one of the stars of this summer's [2014 Commonwealth Games](#).

The cultural scene will be further boosted by Homecoming Scotland 2014, with dozens of cultural, historic and gastronomic events. Then there are the MTV Music Awards, being held in this Unesco City of Music for the first time, partly in recognition of the successful recent staging of a trio of Mobo Awards.

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## 33. Tasmania, Australia

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Bruny Island. Photograph: Jodie Griggs/Getty

With one of the world's finest state capitals, some great beaches and a hinterland made for adventure and exploration, Tasmania already has a lot going for it but 2014 promises to be especially good. There's stylish new accommodation such as the "boutique budget" Alabama Hotel (doubles from £44) in a rejuvenated 1830s building in Hobart, or the full wilderness experience at New South West Wilderness Camp, which has just opened four huts in the South West national park, a largely untouched mountain region. The outdoors does come first in Tasmania – remember the successful campaign to protect the Franklin River? – but it is swiftly followed by food. On Bruny Island, captain Rob Pennicott does a great day trip where you collect seafood and then cook it on board (pennicottjourneys.com.au, day trips £370pp). Garagistes is arguably Hobart's top restaurant of the moment, but there are a few snapping at its heels: Lebrina, also in Hobart, and Stillwater in Launceston are fine places. And for an informal cafe atmosphere Hobartians head to Smolt in the Salamanca market area.

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## 34. Somerset, UK

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Somerset is no longer a West Country backwater. First came the celebrities. Then independent shops, restaurants and elegant places to stay such as At The Chapel helped



put pretty-but-otherwise-unremarkable spots such as Bruton on the map. Now, the whole world looks set to take notice of this tiny village, as global art powerhouse Hauser & Wirth sets up shop on nearby Durslade Farm. The project is driven by visionaries Iwan and Manuela Wirth, who live nearby, and will include contemporary art spaces, a guesthouse and gardens by Piet Oudolf. Across the county in Bath, the Gainsborough (doubles from £289) is the first hotel to tap the town's thermal waters (the famous Bath Spa does not have accommodation). It will open this spring with 99 rooms and an enormous spa/bathing area inside a listed Georgian building.

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## 35. Taiwan

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Yong Kang Street, Taipei, Taiwan. Photograph: Justin Guariglia/Corbis

Ever tried gua bao, the Taiwanese dish of pork belly in a steamed bun? A Taiwanese street food purveyor called Bao, based in London's Hackney, is on a mission to bring it to the British masses and has had an exceptional first year, winning accolades from Young British Foodies and the British Street Food Awards (people's choice award). Now the team behind it are hoping to inspire people to travel to Taiwan by launching a food tour, via Opentrips ([opentrips.co.uk](http://opentrips.co.uk), five nights from 14 March, £645pp excluding flights). Founder Erchen Chang says her top tip is to visit the city of Tainan in southern Taiwan: "It's the true capital of street food – and definitely not made for tourists."

From oyster omelettes in Taipei's night markets to tea in a Maokong plantation, Taiwan is a fascinating place to eat and drink your way around. For year-round food tours, see [taiwanfoodadventure.com](http://taiwanfoodadventure.com), or learn to make the dishes yourself with a cookery lesson at Jodie's Kitchen.

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## 36. Bangladesh

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"Visit before the tourists come": it's telling that the Bangladesh tourist board's slogan, introduced in 2006, still applies. While Burma and India, which it borders, are high on many travel wishlists, Bangladesh remains largely overlooked, despite having assets that include the world's longest beach (Cox's Bazar's 77 miles of sand, pictured) and the tiger's share of the world's largest mangrove forest (the Sundarbans, home to Bengal tigers). Travelling here isn't necessarily easy (and protests ahead of January elections mean visitors should check before booking), but they will be warmly welcomed. British-Bangladeshi Yasmin Choudhury has started [Lovedesh.com](http://Lovedesh.com), a website that focuses on the positives of otherwise stigmatised "third world" destinations, and to ensure her parents' homeland is not written off as a pitiful place, known only for floods. The website has a travel element and she will lead its first trip to Bangladesh at Easter (10 nights from £1,400, excluding flights), utilising her local contacts to showcase the country's little-known highlights, including boat trips through rural Sylhet and plenty of wood-fired curries. [Exodus](http://Exodus.com) has also just launched a 15-day tour (from £2,099, including flights).

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## 37. Moscow, Russia

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Jeff Koons' Caterpillar Chains at The Garage, Moscow

It's hard to ignore the furore around Russia at the moment. But although the recent releases of Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Pussy Riot may have been more government charm offensive than genuine democratic change (homosexuality is not illegal, as is commonly reported, though anti-gay hostility does exist), some areas, such as Moscow, are more forward-thinking. The capital is buzzing with a post-bling nightlife and a

contemporary arts scene, and there is at least talk of change in the air, much of it about Dasha Zhukova's Garage cultural centre. A new home for this ambitious project by the socialite, art collector and girlfriend of Roman Abramovich is still under construction in Gorky Park, on the site of a ruined Soviet-era restaurant, but there are already plans to stage fairs and shows that will attract both artists and visitors from around the world.

Interested Brits should be aware that Moscow is not your typical budget airline city break: it's a four-hour flight, and you need to brave the Kafkaesque business of applying for a Russian visa. But easyJet's new routes to Moscow from Manchester and Gatwick, and Ryanair's Dublin-Moscow route, which will launch this spring (with flights from the UK sure to follow if it's successful), mean the travelling classes will be arriving soon.

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## 38. Folkestone, UK

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Beyond the town's shabby (but improving) seafront, a grassroots arts scene has bubbled into a fully-fledged movement. Buoyed by the renaissance of nearby Hastings and Margate, the work of its artisans is now celebrated in the Folkestone Triennial. The event, curated by Lewis Biggs, formerly of Tate Liverpool, returns for a third time from 30 August-2 November. Works will be shown in public spaces such as the Creative Quarter, a colourful area of shops, studios and cafes, and a picturesque symbol of the town's changing mood.

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## 39. Canberra, Australia

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National Museum of Australia

The joke is that you "See Yourself in Canberra", as the tourist board puts it, because

there's not much else to see in the Australian capital. And while it will never be a creative rival to Sydney or Melbourne, a commitment to art and architecture is adding cultural depth to the diminutive city (population 358,000). The new [Hotel Hotel](#) (doubles from £167) is not just a 90-room place to stay. It aims to promote local artisans by showcasing their work in the form of locally made or found furniture, artwork inspired by the bush or soft furnishings reflecting aboriginal patterns, and is part of a striking new complex that includes an open-air cinema, a bike shop and an art gallery. Meanwhile the geometric new cafe extension to the [National Museum of Australia](#) is an example of a burgeoning design scene.

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## 40. Umeå, Sweden

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As enthusiasm for all things Scandi continues, lesser-known corners are muscling in. The small town of [Umeå](#) in northern Sweden is on the periphery of Europe culturally as well as geographically, so its status this year as a European Capital of Culture is perhaps surprising, especially given that one of its attractions is the weird [Umedalen sculpture park](#), with Gormleys and Kapos in the grounds of a former mental asylum. It also has two Eurovision-themed clubs and is about to get a snazzy new cultural centre. Renovation of the historic [Stora](#) hotel in the centre will be completed by March.

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