

Insight



Environmentally Friendly Air Travel

Databank



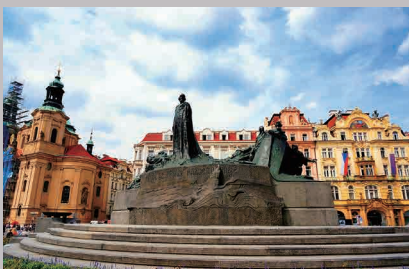
7 Cities Where Travel Tech is Hot

Leaders in Trade



Dublin Grows its Convention Facilities

City



Today's Prague: a Romance in Europe



15 Travel Moments That Mattered in 2016

“ Each year as we start pulling together our annual Megatrends forecast for the coming year we look back at everything that happened in the past twelve months that helped shaped the year we will soon leave behind. ”

And while we would hope that these stories are always fun — IPOs! New hotel products! Fantastic startup! — the headlines also must include events that had an adverse affect on travel: coups (fake or not), unrest, bankruptcies, and political choices we'll all soon regret.

As always, we want our readers to look beyond the headlines and towards the trendlines, which is why the stories here don't end when the next day's news arrives. They're indicative of bigger stories in the industry or have a ripple effect that touch other companies and sectors, and help point the way towards 2017.

Hilton Debuts its 'Stop Clicking Around' Campaign, Setting a New Tone for Hotels

Hilton wasn't the first or only major U.S. hotel company to launch a consumer campaign encouraging consumers to book direct, but it did so with the most aplomb (to a Rolling Stones soundtrack, no less), and its campaign to tell people to “stop clicking around,” continues, 10 months later.

Indeed, that campaign, the company's largest ever, was, arguably, one of the biggest shots fired in the so-called direct booking



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wars. The battle between hotels and online travel agencies like Expedia and Priceline were a dominant theme throughout 2016 as hotels sought to reclaim their market share from third-party distribution channels.

What Hilton did with “Stop Clicking Around” wasn’t just about bringing more direct business to Hilton; it was about educating consumers as a whole, to teach them you don’t always get the lowest price by booking on an OTA. “The purpose of the campaign started with that — to change the perception that was in the marketplace that the place to get the best price on any hotel was thru an OTA,” Geraldine Calpin, Hilton CMO told Skift. “We have 15 fabulous brands, but this wasn’t a branded campaign. It was about changing that misperception about where to get the best value and to introduce the new benefits for our loyalty members.” Other hotel brands have joined Hilton, too, and it’s no longer uncommon to see member discounted rates for those loyalty members who book direct. And it’s a trend we think will continue for many years to come.

First Movers Land in Cuba, Others Scramble to Catch Up

This year was a pivotal one for American travel companies hoping to plant their flags in Cuba for the first time in more than 50 years. While we’d seen glimpses of the earliest first movers like Airbnb, for instance, making their debut in 2015, this year was when the biggest travel brands finally got their opportunity to expand to the island.

On the hotel side, Starwood was first, followed shortly thereafter by its now parent-company, Marriott International.

On the cruise side, Carnival’s soon-to-be-defunct Fathom cruise line was the first, to be followed by five other lines that include Royal Caribbean International, Azamara Club Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line, Oceania Cruises, and Regent Seven Seas Cruises.

On the airline side, JetBlue was the pioneer, shortly followed by all the other U.S. airlines, including American, Delta, Spirit, United, Frontier, Alaska, and Silver Airways.



With the surge in American travel businesses headed to Cuba this year, that impact is already being felt and it’s clear that we’ve entered a period of change, not only for U.S. travelers, but for Cubans, too. The recent death, in November, of Fidel Castro is yet another milestone in the changing dynamics of U.S.-Cuba relations, too.

But for all the progress that’s already been made by the Obama administration, it’s also clear this détente is a tenuous one, as U.S. President-Elect Trump has already threatened to shut the door on Cuba. We’ll have to wait until 2017 to see if this progress can continue, or if it will be halted.

AccorHotels Moves into the Sharing Economy With Onefinestay Acquisition

Paris-based AccorHotels, led by CEO Sebastien Bazin, is one of the more exciting hotel companies to watch next year.

Aside from the fact that AccorHotels is buying or investing in almost everything, it’s also one of the few big hotel companies to have acquired a company that operates in the alternative accommodations space. In April, the company announced it had purchased luxury short-term rental company onefinestay for about \$168 million, after earlier announcing its investments in other short-term rental players Oasis and Squarebreak, too.

For the longest time, the hotel industry has largely ignored the onefinestays and Airbnbs of the world, but not anymore. They simply can’t afford to when Airbnb alone is valued at \$30 billion, the equivalent of the newly combined Marriott and Starwood. AccorHotels, for one, isn’t content to sit on the sidelines.

Facebook Kicks Off Dynamic Travel Ads

Travelers likely noticed many more ads from travel brands throughout their Facebook and Instagram feeds this year as the platform rolled out Dynamic Ads for travel in June.

Dynamic Ads for Travel is Facebook’s first ads product designed for a specific vertical and the company has said that it plans to focus on travel in the years ahead. These ads are designed for travel brands seeking to display images of destinations in their ads and help with retargeting travelers based on their browsing history and interests. The move makes it clear that Facebook wants to become a stronger player for driving trip inspiration and travel bookings — particularly direct bookings. Dynamic Ads can also include video and Facebook said it serves more than 100 million hours of mobile video every day. From that, travel brands have seen an opportunity to create compelling video content that naturally fits into newsfeeds without appearing gimmicky.

The Pro-Brexit Vote Throws UK Tourism into Flux

Hardly anyone saw the Brexit vote coming. Most observers believed that the British public would ultimately reject the uncertainty of leaving the European Union despite polls in the run-up suggesting a close race. The shock defeat for the establishment plunged the country into turmoil. The Prime Minister David Cameron resigned and was eventually replaced by fellow Conservative MP Theresa May but almost as worrying was the collapse in the value of the pound. While the fall against currencies such as the dollar and euro has made the UK more attractive to foreign visitors, it has also made it more expensive for sun-loving Brits to go abroad.

Many travel companies have yet to see a drop-off in bookings for next summer but there are predictions that so-called staycations will grow in popularity. Whatever the result, the repercussions of the Brexit vote will continue to be felt across the whole of Europe over the next few years.

Short-Lived Pokemon Craze Gives Travel Industry Real Glimpse at Augmented Reality

As travelers had to catch them all, travel brands watched how last summer’s Pokemon Go global gaming sensation give birth to a new dimension of marketing.

Pokémon Go, which launched at the beginning of July, was the most popular mobile gaming platform ever in U.S. history and at one point had more daily active users than Twitter. The goal of the game is to catch digital gremlins (Pokémon) in the Google Maps-based app



at specific places around a city (PokéStops) and compete with other gamers. Some U.S. tourism boards such as Travel Portland and Visit Anaheim quickly launched resources geared towards Pokemon Go players and saw web traffic surge as a result. But it was real-world efforts that translated into food traffic. The British Museum, for instance, had a PokéStop in its iconic Parthenon exhibit, and many smaller institutions that previously had a hard time appealing to a younger demographic saw visitors surge in pursuit of digital glory. These examples alone demonstrate the potential gain for brands embedding content in new gaming and mobile technology, and finally, after so many years of failed efforts, show the potential promise of augmented reality for the industry.

U.S. Legacy Airlines Create Bargain Fares to Compete with Ultra Low-Cost Carriers

The market has spoken.

It has been a decade since Spirit Airlines changed models, becoming the first ultra low-cost carrier in the United States. That means Spirit, while charging low fares, assess fees for nearly everything, from carry-on bags to Cokes.

For years, American, Delta, Southwest and United let Spirit grow. The big airlines may have calculated that Spirit carried a different type of traveler, one more cost-conscious than a legacy airline passenger.

Business travelers still tend to prefer full-service airlines. But people who fly once or twice a year have been defecting to Spirit, and the two other airlines with similar models — Frontier and Allegiant. Now, American, Delta and United are all tweaking their pricing structures to better compete for those occasional travelers. Delta has had a barebones fare for four years — it comes without advanced seat assignments and other extras — and it spent much of 2016 rolling it out in new markets. In late 2016, United announced its own similar fare, and passengers who buy it will not even be able to stuff big bags in the overhead bins. American is planning to implement a similar fare in 2017.

Disney Grew its Global Presence with a Giant New Park in Shanghai

After nearly 20 years of planning, Mickey Mouse moved into mainland China and quickly started making room for his friends.

The new \$5.5 billion Shanghai Disney Resort hadn't been open long before breaking ground for an expansion, a move that showed The Walt Disney Company's ambitions — and its confidence.

Shanghai Disneyland drew 4 million visitors in its first four months after opening in June and is expected to nearly break even in year one. The new addition, a Toy Story-themed land, will open in 2018. But

Disney doesn't just see potential for its theme park business in China. Experts expect the company's physical presence to lead to lifelong loyalty for Disney's television, film, and consumer products empire. As Walt Disney Co. chairman and CEO Robert Iger told CNBC: "It clearly will serve as sort of a booster rocket for people's appreciation for Disney."

Uber Sells China Business to Didi

When you can't beat them, join them. Or in Uber's case in China — sell to them. In August Didi Chuxing, Uber's largest competitor in China, announced it would take over Uber China and operate it as a separate brand. As part of the deal, Uber received a 20 percent stake in Didi Chuxing which makes it Didi's biggest shareholder. Uber founder Travis Kalanick also joined the Chinese company's board while Didi Chuxing founder Cheng Wei joined the Uber board. Kalanick said in February that Uber was losing \$1 billion a year in China.

Didi was formed by the February 2015 merger of competing ride-hailing services launched by Chinese Internet giants Tencent Holdings Ltd. and Alibaba Group.

It operates in 400 Chinese cities and completed some 1.4 billion rides in 2015. Before the sale, Didi and U.S. ride-hailing company Lyft joined forces in April against Uber that allowed users of each app to use the other app when traveling in the U.S. or China. The deal stopped the losses for Uber,

But time will show how much it limits its growth.



National African American Museum Opens in Washington D.C., Leading a Wave of Civil Rights Tourism

America's only national museum devoted to black history opened at a historic time — during the nation's first black presidency, amid violent debate over police brutality, mass incarceration, and renewed white nationalism. The \$540 million-dollar National Museum of African American History and Culture is a hit — timed tickets are booked solid through spring 2017 and reviews have raved about the design, restaurant, and visitor experience.

It's the crown jewel in a new landscape of civil rights tourism. Blockbuster museums have cropped up recently across the South, with more to come, others receiving multimillion-dollar renovations. They're proving to be beautiful landmarks that draw visitors and their spending dollars, like Atlanta's museum, which sits on land donated by Coca-Cola and is well integrated into the city's network of attractions.

Marketers and urban planners are just realizing that civil rights is a tourism asset — a crucial part of a place's identity, like jazz in New Orleans or antebellum architecture in Charleston. Washington's new museum sets the bar high.

New Chase Sapphire Reserve Card Gives Life to Points Geeks

The buzz was akin to the release of a new Star Wars film or Apple product. For months certain corners of the Internet were full of speculation that JPMorgan Chase was preparing to unveil a new credit card. In August the company finally released the Chase Sapphire Reserve and it immediately became a hit.

Remarkably the hype was generated not by advertising but by the message boards and blogs that have become incredibly successful on the back of airline and hotel rewards programs. The card commands an annual fee of \$450 but savvy consumers can make that back with a formula of 3x points bonus for travel and dining as well as a hefty sign-up bonus of 100,000 points. The total package has made it more attractive than offerings from rivals such as American Express and Citi.

But how long will it last? The metal used to make the card is more expensive than plastic and at the end of last year/earlier this month JPMorgan Chase's CEO said the card would lower company profits by between \$200 and \$300 million.

Airbnb Launches Trips

When Airbnb said it wanted its users to feel like they really "live there" in April of this year, it made that a reality when the company announced its largest product launch to date in November: Trips.

Beyond marking Airbnb's official, formal foray into the world of tours and activities, this announcement was a signal that Airbnb isn't just a home sharing marketplace: it's a mature "super-brand of travel," as CEO Brian Chesky and Airbnb Global Head of Hospitality and Strategy Chip Conley have said.

In addition to launching Airbnb Trips, the company also launched Places, expanding on its ability to offer in-destination services. It also hinted at the possibility of adding flight and services to its mobile app, so that, eventually, it's conceivable you could book and experience your entire trip via Airbnb.

The evolution of Airbnb into what it is today has been eight years in the making and in that time, the company has grown by leaps and bounds, with a recent valuation of \$30 billion and more than 100 million users in 191 countries and counting around the world.

And as the company continues to evolve, it's also experiencing some growing pains, as to be expected: challenges involving regulations, managing scale and quality control, battling discrimination on its platform, and learning how to run a tours and activities business, too. Whatever roadblocks or detours lie ahead, however, one thing is clear: Airbnb is no longer just a place where you stay anymore.

Carnival Tested a New Type of Cruise Line. It Didn't Work Out.

When Carnival Corp. first introduced its new social-impact cruise line Fathom, the concept sounded like a win all around: The company would tap into a new customer base, earn glowing headlines for its benevolent ways, and repurpose an old ship for better returns.

The reality turned out to be more complicated, in part because no one had encountered a cruise company with goals loftier than helping people vacation. Fathom started sailing with its single ship in April, alternating between purpose-driven cruises to the Dominican Republic and culture-focused voyages to Cuba. It was the first cruise line in decades to get permission to sail from the U.S. to Cuba, and those sailings were popular. But the purely social impact cruise proved a tougher sell. In November, Carnival announced that Fathom the cruise line would be no more as of June 2017. Fathom the brand will live on in a new form: as an optional

experience for passengers on other Carnival-owned lines who want a regular cruise with some social impact mixed in.

Ctrip \$1.7 Billion Acquisition of Skyscanner Shocked The World

Ctrip's acquisition of Skyscanner was a transaction heard 'round the world. Ctrip's surprise buy of Scotland-based flight metasearcher Skyscanner in November was interesting in its own right but it has even more import for what it says about the emergence of China, already the largest business travel market on the planet, as a travel power and difference maker.

China's Ctrip is already the globe's second largest online travel agency by market cap (around \$22 billion) and its Skyscanner buy will bolster that substantial girth and open new points of sale. After years of Kayak's CEO disparaging Skyscanner for its lack of size and profits, Skyscanner will have a powerful benefactor to get even.

Expedia and TripAdvisor are among the U.S. companies that basically tried China and then left while the Priceline Group partnered with Ctrip, which has feasted on everything in sight, including rivals Qunar and eLong. But mostly the deal shows how the balance of power in online travel is shifting from North America to Asia and that the travel powers that be in China will have an increasing say in the evolution of the travel industry.



Trivago Journeys from TV To Nasdaq

Get ready for the next big and impactful travel company, Germany-based Trivago, which is hoping to debut on Nasdaq for its initial public offering and is growing like a weed, 59 percent in 2015.

Majority-owned by Expedia Inc., hotel-searcher Trivago took a tack almost opposite from Booking.com to get where it is today, emphasizing TV advertising over digital marketing, although it does plenty of the latter, too. Trivago intends to use the net proceeds of its IPO to do more such TV advertising and to make its brand more of a household name in more countries beyond its core European markets.

Lessons from the journey so far? Companies can get there without such dependence on Google but the top line has to be enormous to have the euros and hubris to redirect it all back into marketing. Trivago spends about 88 percent of revenue on advertising in a bid to get consumers to come directly to its sites.

And despite all the talk that rate parity, which is under fire in Europe, meant that metasearch, or price comparison sites, would fade faster than old soldiers like General Douglas MacArthur, Trivago's IPO, if successful, would mean that there is plenty of appetite for sites that help consumers find rock-bottom deals that feature rooms \$6 cheaper than the hotel across the street. ➤

(Source: skift)

WTCF Supports Establishment of the China Cultural & Tourism Investment Alliance



Executive Deputy Secretary-General, Li Baochun, shared information on the international tourism industry's development and investment opportunities. He also outlined the functions and achievements of WTCF in recent years, including promoting tourism-related investment and researches.

About 150 guests attended the ceremony, in-cluding the Senior Manager of Private

Equity and Asset Management Association, tourist industry experts, and other related organization's managers.

To promote development of cultural tourist industry and expand investment channels, the China Cultural & Tourism Investment Alliance will gather financial capital to build a strategic tourism investment platform for tourism projects and investment organizations.

The establishment ceremony for the China Cultural & Tourism Investment Alliance was held on Nov. 27th, 2016. The alliance is supported by China Association for the Promotion of Development Financing, China Real Estate Chamber of Commerce, and World Tourism Cities Federation (WTCF). Li Baochun, Executive Deputy Secretary-General of WTCF attended the ceremony and delivered a speech.



WTCF Attends the 2nd Global Tourism Forum to Discuss New Future of World Tourism Industry



The 2nd Global Tourism Forum was hosted in Suining City, Sichuan Province, on Nov 30th, 2016. Experts and media outlets from the United Kingdom, the United States, Singapore and other countries gathered together to discuss the new future of world tourism industry. Yan Han, Deputy Secretary-General of World Tourism Cities Federation was invited to attend the forums and to deliver a speech.

The theme of this year's forum was "Cultural Symbol and Tourism Renovation," which was divided into two sessions and hosted by famous talk show host Chen Luyu. During the forum, industrial experts, tourism department leaders, and media representative discussed two topics: "Tourism Industry

Innovation and International Cultural Tourism Symbol" and "Cultural Tourism Development and Future."

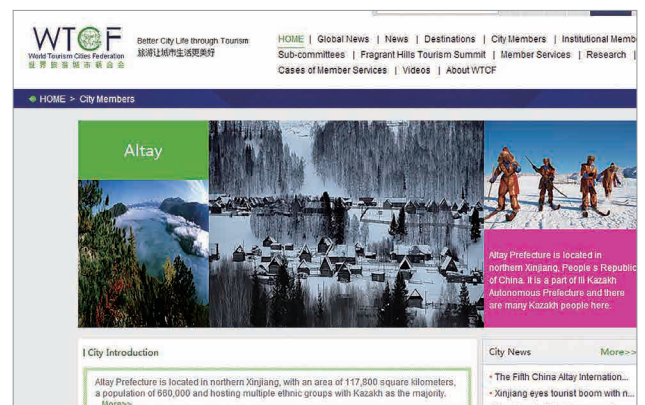
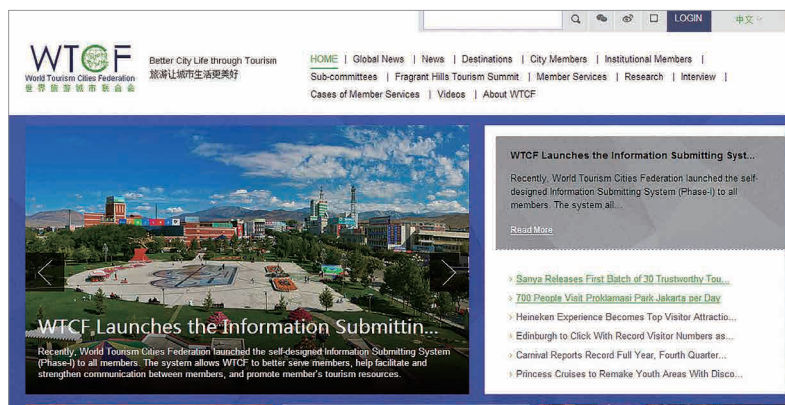
WTCF Deputy Secretary-General Yan Han said at the forum that the key to tourism development is innovation. Take Suining City as an example, this city is famous for its energy resources. In recent years, when developing the tourism industry, the city utilized its resource advantage to turn itself into an eco-tourist destination. This reflects the sense of innovation. Nowadays, tourism plays an important role in the world financial market and has been a new driver of the world economy. For most tourists, the purpose for travelling has changed from "to see something new" into "to

experience something.” At the same time, destination operator’s philosophy has changed from “to build a grand destination to attract as much tourists as possible” into “to build a better destination to attract a specific group of tourist.” When developing a new tourist attraction, managers should be focusing on the target groups’ need, interactive experiences and cultural connotation. A good tourism project should demonstrate a city’s cultural heritage.

The Global Tourism Forum is hosted by Global Times, and co-hosted by Romandisea Seven Star International Cultural Tourism Resort. During the first forum in 2014, the organizer announced that the Global Tourism Forum will be held in Suining City every two years. The forum will integrate political, business, academic and media resources into an influential platform to promote better international tourism industry communication.



WTCF Launches the Information Submitting System: Altay Sends First Message



Recently, World Tourism Cities Federation (WTCF) launched the self-designed Information Submitting System (Phase-I) to all members. The system allows WTCF to better serve members, help facilitate and strengthen communication between members, and promote member’s tourism resources. Through the system, members can now submit their tourism-related information according to categories. Collected information will be used not only in WTCF’s self-owned media including official website, WeChat, Weibo and official magazine, but also in other collaborative influential media platforms. This system will help WTCF members to spread their information to the end consumer in a quick, targeted and efficient way.

On December 7th, the first week that the Information Submitting System was launched, city member Altay submitted 11 posts through the system. Contents of the posts include: Altay’s destination information, festivals, culture and tradition,

transportation, and others. The information was reviewed, translated and then uploaded by WTCF’s editors to WTCF’s official website and WeChat. Aside from member news publishing and tourism related information sharing, tourism investment project information can also be found within the submitting system. The uploaded investment projects will be published in both Chinese and English so that members of all countries and regions can access the information in time. A key highlight of the System is the Internal Message function. In the future, notices and invitations for activities and events organized by WTCF will be sent through the Internal Message system to members. Also, members can directly contact WTCF staff via the messaging system. Members can also search for other members’ contact information and get in touch with them by utilizing the messaging system. The Internal Message function achieves unhindered connection between 181 members of WTCF.





Environmentally Friendly Air Travel

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Solar panels, recycled aircraft, reused construction materials – airports and airlines often try to become more environmentally friendly. Who are the best in their efforts? Discover the greenest airlines and airports in the world.

”

Greenest Airlines – Ryan Air Tops the List

The aviation industry is responsible for roughly 2 or 3 percent of the total greenhouse gas emissions. While not a large figure, the constant increase in air traffic is bound to reveal a higher percentage soon enough. International regulations in order to thwart emissions haven't been implemented yet, since they would limit the profits.

Brighter Report has compiled a list that presents the top greenest airlines in the world. The criteria used include the numbers of passengers and seats, the age of the planes (older aircraft consume more kerosene), freight share and the distance of flights (since taking off and landing eat through much more fuel than cruising at high altitude).

While this classification shows low-cost companies as the greenest, that trend is bound to change. Other airlines like United, or KLM, or Alaska Airlines, make great efforts to ensure a healthier future for our planet and, most often, they have more to invest in it. Here come the world's greenest airlines.

10. Alaska Airlines

For Alaska Airlines, these rankings, which were devised in 2011, acted as a wake-up call. Since then, the airline has shown great transparency

when it comes to both their CO2 emissions and activities. They launched a program in 2012 that reveals their intent to bring their carbon footprint down. They plan to do so by respecting the Brighter Planet criteria but also improving on others, like using resources on board of the plane and waste management. They purchased 50 new aircraft and plan to lower emissions by a fifth until 2020.

9. Delta

Delta is yet another example of an airline that won't yet get with the times. There's a lot more it could do for bettering the environment but it seems they can't be bothered about it. Their development strategy remains a mystery in that regard, as proven by their own official website.

8. American Airlines

Even though their fleet is quite new and their aircraft more environmental-friendly, American Airlines does little else to decrease their CO2 emissions. To be fair, one such attempt has been made as the company partnered up with Dallas Airport in an effort to lower the carbon footprint.

7. KLM

While this company sports a rather aged aircraft fleet and quite a bunch of empty seats during flights, there is hope for the better. Together with Air-France, KLM aims to reduce emissions by five-hundred thousand tons by the year 2020, which amounts to about 10 percent of its total.

6. Jetblue

A low-cost airline from the U.S., Jetblue uses newer aircraft than most other companies. They take distance optimization seriously when it comes to flights and do their part in regards to freight-share. While not in the top three, Jetblue is certainly far from the worst ones out there when it comes to greenhouse gas emissions.

5. United Airlines

This airline seems genuinely interested in reducing its emissions. They launched the Eco-Skyes program in 2013 in an attempt to find alternative fuels and they began using biofuels in 2015. Their fleet has also gotten some new additions that are much friendlier to the environment.

4. Continental Airlines

This airline's flights are not only filled to the brim but also long-haul and almost around the clock, a good reason to rank them on the fourth place, along with the normal density of seats and a rapidly aging fleet. Even with so many things going against them, Continental airlines still manages to come out ahead of many other airlines due to their fuel management.

3. Easy Jet

Much like Ryan Air, this airline prioritizes cost optimization. Seat density, the consumption of fuel and policy regarding luggage are all crucial for the company. Easy Jet's plane fleet isn't as new as the ones of Cathay Pacific or Ryan Air, and that's the sole reason why this airline comes in third.

2. Cathay Pacific

An airline from Hong Kong, Cathay Pacific sports the newest aircraft fleet and thus generates the least amount of emissions. Their flights are long-haul, they optimize seat density and they also do freight share, taking other cargo for a maximum of a third of their full capacity.

1. Ryan Air

Since Ryan Air is a low-cost company, the policies regarding luggage weight are rather strict. They manage to often fly with most, if not all, of their seats occupied by passengers which means there's little waste of fuel. Their pilots are in command of Airbus A319 aircraft, a newer model that makes better use of kerosene.

Old Aircraft? 90% Can Be Recycled

Cathay Pacific Airways, who have always considered themselves to be the airline most committed to green technology, sustainability and protecting the environment, recently unveiled their largest recycling project ever.

In November, Cathay Pacific announced that they will begin to dismantle and recycle the Airbus A340's that are going to be retired from their fleet. Given their focus on responsibility and sustainability, it only seems logical that their priorities would include effectively managing resources, reducing the energy consumption, and minimizing the amount of waste they leave behind.

Cathay Pacific's first Airbus A340 arrived in the year 1996, and has

since operated a jaw-dropping 13,000 flights – including several regional and long-haul routes. Today, the well-traveled, four-engine aircraft are being gradually retired from Cathay Pacific's fleet. The airline, working in concert with AerFin Ltd (a United Kingdom-based company which works out of a facility located in southwestern France), has discovered a more environmentally friendly solution for the question of what to do with the retired aircraft.

Four of these aircraft left their ranks in the year 2015, and were quickly transferred to a facility where the recycling process could begin. Firstly, the aircraft is decommissioned, and both its fuel and water tanks are fully emptied. In the second step, the company dismantles the rest



“ In November, Cathay Pacific announced that they will begin to dismantle and recycle the Airbus A340's that are going to be retired from their fleet. ”

of the plane – equipment and parts like landing gear and engines – and tags these pieces before reusing them in other aircraft. Phase three is the removal and separation of the pieces that cannot be recycled. The fuselage, which can't be reused, will be broken down into pieces that can be sent to various recyclers. Aluminum accounts for roughly 40% of the plane's weight, so it is melted down for reuse in construction, where it can be used to make doors or window frames. Aluminum may also find new life in car manufacturing.

According to Cathay Pacific's director of corporate affairs, James Tong, the airline takes environmental protection very seriously, which has led to their determination to identify and adopt the most responsible, environmentally friendly approach to dismantling and



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recycling retired aircraft. Thus far, says James Tong, they are pleased with the results of their efforts – up to 90% of the A340s' weight is recycled, and less than 10% of the planes' weight ends up as waste rotting in landfills. They are retiring old aircraft as part of their endeavor to replace older technology with brand new, more fuel-efficient planes. As such, all of the remaining A340s will disappear before the end of 2017. Cathay Pacific uses 147 different types of plane. The airline plans to remain on the cutting edge, using new technological advances to allow them to operate in a continually more sustainable manner.

Top 10 Eco-Friendly Airports

With all the talk about the increasing pollution in the world, governments and contractors have been concerned about the environment. One major step that most governments have been taking is to build eco-friendly airports. The most eco-friendly airports can be found all around the world.

10. Indira Gandhi Airport, Delhi, India

The 8th largest and the youngest eco-friendly airport in the world is the IGI or Indira Gandhi Airport in New Delhi. This airport was awarded the LEED New Construction Gold Certification by the Indian Green Building Council. During the construction of the airport, only recycled materials were used. The site uses only natural light during daytime. Moreover, energy efficient LED screens and water recycling system have been used.

9. Logan International Airport, Boston, Massachusetts

The Logan International Airport's Terminal A became the first airport terminal in the United States to receive the prestigious LEED certification. The certificate was awarded in 2006. The airport was able to achieve this feat by using only customer savvy and eco-friendly plans. For the heat reflecting roof and construction, only recycled materials were used. With such environmental hacks, Logan is considered to be one of the best eco-friendly airports in the world.

8. Dubai Airport, Dubai, UAE

The producer of the largest gold chain in the world resides in Dubai. Since it is among the richest cities on the planet, you do not expect it to

focus on recycling business. However, Dubai did a great job by making their airport green. In order to save water, the site uses high-end flow arrestors. It also features an energy efficient electricity system.

7. Zurich Airport, Switzerland

The Zurich Airport has the technology to use local weather and natural resources to the maximum extent. Cooling and heating run on geothermal energy, while flushes in toilets use rainwater. In order to save energy, the airport collects solar power. It also uses a compressed natural gas station to reduce the carbon footprint.

6. Helsinki-Vantaa International Airport, Finland

Helsinki has always been famous for being a green city. It has numerous playgrounds, public parks and recreational sites. In order to focus on an energy efficient transportation system, the airport uses green energy sources and recycling materials.

5. Denver International Airport, Denver, Colorado

The recycling and power saving technology employed at the Denver International Airport is quite impressive. The airport has the largest solar power system in the U.S. It also features the greenest parking lot in the world.

4. Queen Alia Airport, Amman, Jordan

Petra, Jordan is famous for being home to one of the seven wonders. The primary airport serving Petra is the Queen Alia Airport. It focuses on sustainable and eco-friendly airport architecture. The environmental techniques and strategies in place focus on pre-conditioning of air and promoting tree plantations.



3. Kuala Lumpur International Airport, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Kuala Lumpur is the perfect mix of traditional living, cultural diversity and innovative technologies. It is the 6th most visited city in the world. The airport was based on the theme of a rainforest. This caters to the needs and requirements of millions of passengers travelling to Malaysia.

2. Munich International Airport, Germany

Germany is considered one of the greenest countries in the world. Munich International Airport has been designed mostly from glass. The airport authority maintains a very high level of eco-friendly management system. It employs lighting machinery and air supply



technology to reduce the carbon footprint. In the airport, you will see only LED lighting equipment to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

1. Changi International Airport, Singapore

If you want to see nature, travel to Changi. The Changi International Airport is the perfect start for your journey. Though it is one of the busiest airports in world, it is also the most eco-friendly one. The airport is famous for its gardens and greenery. It seems similar to what Singapore actually looks on the outside. The design and construction of the airport focuses on sustainability. It aims to relieve the stress after long travel. Passengers can enjoy nature while waiting to board their flights. The site is relaxing and soothing.

Ecological Airport Becomes a Popular Tourist Attraction

The Galapagos Islands is one of the most environmentally-friendly regions in the world. The Islands are home to an ecological airport, which has been dubbed as the first green airport in the world. Coming in an era when the world is under threat from climate change, and with airports being one of the largest contributors to the global carbon emission, the ecological airport has helped to conserve the environment maintaining the natural surroundings.

Galapagos Ecological airport, formerly known as the Seymour Airport was built in 2012 in the Galapagos Islands, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The airport makes use of renewable energy, being powered by both solar and wind energy.

In addition to the renewable energy sources, it was also constructed using recycled materials (80%) from the old airport buildings. The airport also helps to conserve the environment by recycling water. Its water supply comes from a desalination plant, which converts the local seawater into fresh water.

Another great green feature of the airport is the shutters, which open and close depending on the heat and carbon II oxide levels. This helps to conserve the energy, while at the same time, reducing the

amount of carbon emission. The airport also features several endemic plants, which grow around the entrance of the building.

The Galapagos Ecological Airport has received recognition all over the world for its environmentally-friendly initiative. The project was awarded the prestigious Gold Certificate in the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification system due to sustainable construction. It is the first airport in the world to receive the recognition due to a complete construction.

The airport is also seeking to earn other awards and recognition for their efforts in conserving the environment. Some of the recognitions they are targeting includes certifications for Green Operation and Maintenance and Reduction of Carbon Footprint.

While the airport has made huge achievements in conserving the environment, the construction was not easy. To start with, most of the construction had to be conducted on the mainland, since the islands are a protected UNESCO World Heritage Site. In addition, the project required training engineers and architects so as to impart them with the expertise required for ecological construction. The ecological airport has since become a major tourist attraction, luring tourists from all over the world who come to see the wonder of a full sustainable green airport. The airport has also increased the significance of the Galapagos Islands as a bio-diverse tourist destination. According to the creators of the project, the airport will appeal to a lot of eco-tourists, who visit the islands to experience the ecological adventure of the region.

One of the major achievements of the Galapagos Ecological Airport is that it has set an example for other airports all over the world. As a result of the project, other airports across the world are now taking a more "greener" approach in their operations. Already, plans for construction of a new ecological airport in the Philippines are underway. The new airport will make use of solar energy to power lights and air conditioning. The Mexico City International Airport is also expected to be redesigned, with the people in charge of the project hoping it will become the most sustainable airport in the world. ➤

(Source: tourism-review)

7 Cities Where Travel Tech is Hot

“ In the business venture world, travel tech startups and established firms alike have to compete for attention with financial tech, property tech, education tech, to say nothing of AI and security, the list goes on. ”

Online travel has been growing since its early days and still appeals to startups around the world which are looking to launch new and exciting ventures into the market.

The travel startup community is a truly global one, and around the world a number of cities have emerged as hubs of excellence, driven by not only a critical mass of expertise but also favourable social and economic conditions.

Here are ten excellent locations to make your base camp.

Silicon Valley

What kind of tech location list would this be without Silicon Valley on it? Undoubtedly the world's tech capital, Silicon Valley in San Francisco, California and is home to tech giants such as Apple, Google and Facebook. However it's also a hub for tech businesses of all sizes, including startups.

It's like its own little bubble, densely filled with established tech companies and startups alike, Silicon Valley is full to the bursting with people working on tech ideas – many of which are in the travel industry.

Advantages

1. ease of access to large cities in California
2. huge tech ecosystem, home to large and

small startups alike – great hub of knowledge where you can learn from other companies who have been there and done it.

Disadvantages

1. very expensive for hiring workforce, living costs etc
2. will require a lot of money fund development
3. potential issue of building what's considered cool in the valley but not the rest of the world

Notable Travel Tech Companies

● **Abroadler:** This is a comparison site which helps you find the best prices on hotels, flights, rental cars and cruises. Abroadler helps users save up to 80% on their next trip and covers worldwide destinations.

● **Purple Tent:** It's a little like Airbnb but for renting tents or campsites. You can register either as a camper or a host and they even provide you with your own little purple tent if you want to become a host but lack the camping equipment!

London

London has always been a thriving hub of business, and with Shoreditch being nicknamed “tech city” it's no wonder the UK's capital is an attractive prospect for startups and aspiring entrepreneurs.

Advantages

1. easily access other parts of the UK and Europe in a matter of hours
2. plenty of scope to meet clients/investors in one of the world's largest cities
3. close proximity to world-class universities such as Oxford and Cambridge, London is a city full of talented professionals with many skills to offer

Disadvantages

1. expensive to live in
2. “Brexit” still yet to happen and could make the economic and regulatory climate in the UK unstable in the short-term and unknown in the medium term

Notable Travel Tech Companies

● Not quite a startup itself, but Travel Tech Lab is a co-working space for tech companies in the tourism sector.

● **Bd4travel** is a travel AI app for those selling travel. It interprets an individual's user signals to interact on a personal level, creating a bespoke buying experience.

Amsterdam

Amsterdam is one of Europe's most connected tech cities. Its compactness means Amsterdam is easy to travel around.

Home of Booking.com, Amsterdam also boasts a wealth of both established companies and startups. Its cost of living is cheaper than most large European cities, and the quality of life is great, with a large focus on liberal values.

Advantages

1. great number of English speakers (only a plus if you're an English speaker yourself of course!)
2. large amount of freelance workers, which means that if you can't hire talent permanently you can always take on temporary/fixed term contractors
3. while Amsterdam itself has a high cost of housing, it's easy to find cheap accommodation outside the city within a 30 minute commuting distance

Disadvantages

1. all laws will be in Dutch, so you will either have to learn the language or get a Dutch translator
2. while the Dutch have a great work ethic they also value job security and added benefits which could prove costly

Notable Travel Tech Companies

- Travelbird offers travellers unique travel packages and deals.
- Favoroute lets users create personalised travel guidebooks based on the sights and attractions they want to see when they visit a new location.



Berlin

Berlin is one of the hottest European cities to live in at the moment, which means there's a large population of tech startups there. It's similar to Silicon Valley in that it's seen as a sort of bubble. People from all over the world to come and work in Berlin's thriving internet sector, which makes it a great place for finding talented workers. There's also Germany's strong network of large manufacturers and research bodies (such as the Fraunhofer and Max Planck institutes), which gives it a bit of a business-to-business edge over other European cities.

Advantages

1. very cheap living costs
2. established technology hub with a thriving startup ecosystem

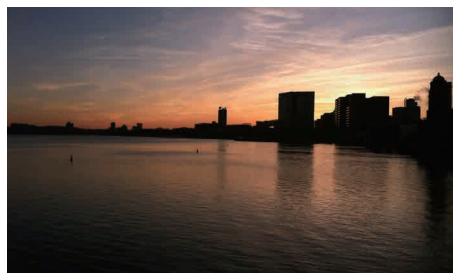
3. large number of English speakers in a multicultural city

Disadvantages

1. the attitude to failure is...not great. Startups are taught to embrace failure and see it as a learning curve (which can be seen as good) but you don't want to end up flitting from startup to startup.
2. similar to Amsterdam, most employee laws will be written in German, so you may need to employ a translator.

Notable Travel Tech Companies

- GoEuro allows you to easily book your rail, bus and air travel all in one search.
- RoomSurfer lets you quickly and easily find roommates to bunk with for long term or short term stays and even lets you filter and choose based on shared interests.



Boston

Boston is developing its own thriving startup ecosystem – after all, it's the city where Facebook and Dropbox were created. Home to world-class universities such as Harvard and MIT, Boston offers a massive pool of talent and offers some of the highest rates of venture capital investment in tech businesses. The city itself is more compact and manageable than places such as LA and New York.

Advantages

1. great public transport system, easy to get around
2. generally well connected transport wise – easy to get to Europe and to other US cities
3. world leading universities make an excellent talent pool

Disadvantages

1. high cost of living
2. extreme temperatures in summer and winter – not great if you can't handle the heat or the cold

Notable Travel Tech Companies

- SilverRail is a well-funded and growing rail tech specialist which, although now based in London has its roots in Boston.
- Lola is an app-based personal travel assistant.

Bangalore

Bangalore is often referred to as India's answer to Silicon Valley. This city is home to India's IT industry housing a multitude of international and domestic technology companies and creates millions of jobs for young developers from all over the world. Its neighbouring cities, Chennai and Hyderabad, are also among the top global destinations for tech talent, meaning Bangalore is very well connected indeed.

Advantages

1. a diverse city with a good number of English speakers
2. schools such as the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore (IIMB) mean finding a suitable workforce shouldn't be an issue
3. city is well connected with its metro network

Disadvantages

1. three-month monsoon seasons might be a bit of a shock to those not used to the climate
2. high levels of traffic and pollution which could make commuting a nightmare

Notable Travel Tech Companies

- Tavisca is an online travel booking engine.
- Stayzilla finds "homestays" which saves customers money without compromising on comfort, luxury or an authentic holiday.

Shanghai

China's booming IT industry has mostly focused on developing online applications, manufacturing high tech products, designing software, and creating innovative technologies. Zhangjiang Hi-Tech Park in Shanghai has been a major contribution to these goals, generating an equivalent of nearly \$8.5 billion in 2010 alone. The park is home to a number of tech incubators which creates a great support network for startups, providing training and skills development for new companies. There's also a great number of venture capital funds in the area that give financial support to these growing businesses.

Anywhere in the World!

As long as you have a reliable connection to the internet you can base your startup anywhere in the world.

I should know as I created my tech travel startup The Booking Factory from a small town in Wales! But when the business takes off you might want to think about relocating to a tech hub nearby as connections, partnerships and access to talent can be much better. 📍

(Source: tnooz)



Dublin Grows its Convention Facilities

“ The Convention Centre Dublin has secured 90 events in the last six months, including 32 international conferences, forecast to generate €55.5 million for the local Irish economy and to attract over 37,000 international delegates to Dublin. Adrienne Clarke, Head of Conference Sales of The Convention Centre Dublin speaks about the features and facilities of The CCD.



Adrienne Clarke, Head of Conference Sales of The Convention Centre Dublin

Q: How has the Convention Centre been since its opening?

A: When The CCD opened, it clearly helped establish Dublin as a strong contender to host some of the world's highest-profile conferences. This is evidenced not only by the standard of events we have hosted, but also by the city's climb up 10 places in the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) rankings over the last three years.

In just three and a half years we have welcomed over 900 events with over 900,000 total delegate days, and have built an impressive corporate and association client list. We are now taking booking enquiries up to 10 years in advance for large-scale association events, and we are also experiencing strong demand for shorter lead-in

corporate meetings and conferences throughout the year. Furthermore, winning 26 awards, including runner up for 'World's Best Conference Centre' at the AIPC Apex Awards, has also helped cement our reputation as one of Europe's most esteemed conference venues.

Q: The CCD claims to be the world's first carbon neutral convention centre which has been designed by Kevin Roche. What exactly is 'carbon neutral convention centre'? How does it add to the concept of green meetings?

A: When The CCD opened, it was declared the world's first carbon neutrally constructed international convention centre, with a net impact of the building's construction on the environment of zero. The

building was considered 'carbon neutral' due to the low carbon cement used during its construction phase, together with the fact that all unavoidable carbon emissions were offset by investing in carbon credits in accordance with the Voluntary Carbon Standards (VCS). Using this material over standard concrete significantly saved on the emission of carbon dioxide and other harmful pollutants which can contribute to global warming. Since then, we achieved ISO 14001 accreditation just one year after opening, and we consistently strive towards on-going environmental improvement in our business practices with a view to leading environmental best practice across our industry. For example, effective waste management procedures and staff training helped us to achieve a remarkable recycling rate of 92% in 2013, a figure which we are working hard to maintain.

Q: What are the main features of The CCD? (Please mention the number of rooms, meetings space, their rental facilities etc.)

A: Made up of 22 multi-functional rooms, we have hosted meetings, conferences, receptions, banquets and exhibitions of all shapes and sizes. In addition the building boasts a 2,000 seat auditorium, 4,500 sq meters of exhibition space and banqueting facilities for up to 3,000 guests. Made up of 22 multi-functional rooms, we have hosted meetings, conferences, receptions, banquets and exhibitions of all shapes and sizes. In addition the building boasts a 2,000 seat auditorium, 4,500 sq meters of exhibition space and banqueting facilities for up to 3,000 guests.

The entire venue is finished to the highest specifications and incorporates the latest technology throughout, while the stunning glass atrium over six spacious foyers offers panoramic views of Dublin's cityscape and never fails to impress!

On the outside, the building's signature coloured ring beams have become an iconic part of the city's skyline. They also give our clients the unique capability of branding the whole building in their signature colour, creating the ultimate statement for arriving guests.

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Q: Being named as one of the top four convention centers in the world at the AIPC Apex Award, what are the premium features that make The CCD markedly different than any of the other European convention centers?

A: As Ireland's first purpose-built international conference venue, The CCD offers delegates and clients a unique event experience with exceptional service. In addition to offering clients world-class event facilities, our customer satisfaction rates rank consistently above 95%.

We pride ourselves on offering first-class service with a high level of professionalism and expertise, coupled with a sense of Irish warmth and hospitality. Every event is assigned a core team of an Event Manager, a Technical Production Manager, a Hospitality Manager and an IT Manager, supported by a full range of in-house services, such as hosts, furniture, cleaning and security. By allocating an experienced and dedicated team to every event, we ensure that the client's experience is at the heart of our approach.

In addition, at The CCD flexibility is the key. Clients can not only avail of a range of fully inclusive packages, but they also have the opportunity to take advantage of our 'blank-canvas' approach and

full in-house production capabilities. Whatever the event, be it a conference, meeting, exhibition, or banquet, we have the production equipment and expertise to bring that event to life, and deliver a memorable experience for guests. Furthermore, the fact that all equipment and expertise is on-site can also greatly aid clients on a budget, as it eliminates the need to outsource and manage the logistics of third party suppliers.

In a wider sense, sustaining delegate numbers in today's economic climate can be a challenge, and it is therefore essential that an event's location appeals to the business tourist. The success of The CCD can therefore also be attributed to Dublin's suitability as an international conference destination. In recent years, Dublin has become known as the business hub of Europe, and with the European headquarters of many of the world's leading organisations located in the vicinity of The CCD, we are ideally positioned to entice this market.



Q: Can you tell us more about the city of Dublin?

A: Dublin is more than just a great conference location. Combining a solid reputation for education and innovation, with great accessibility, it is no coincidence that Dublin is now the European headquarters of many of the world's leading corporations, and a centre for academic research and innovation. As the home to many of the world's top ICT, Financial and Pharmaceutical corporations, it is a serious place to do business.

Yet, Dublin has not forgotten its roots and is steeped in a rich cultural heritage that begs to be explored. All year round, the city is alive with music, art and theatre of all kinds and, of course, art galleries and museums abound. All complemented by an impressive range of restaurants, cafés and shops, where delegates are often surprised by the city's competitiveness and value for money. ➤

(Source: travelandtourworld)

Today's Prague: A Romance in Europe

“ While the Czech Republic as a whole is just now recovering from a multiyear recession, the city of Prague still feels like the good times never left. ”



Today's Prague is constantly beautifying itself. Deep down Prague must have some kind of inferiority complex. What else could explain the perpetual need to make a beautiful city even more beautiful? A few years ago, city officials closed Charles Bridge for a two-year makeover, and then they worked on Prague Castle's Golden Lane. Now, they've set their targets on the very emblem of the city atop Wenceslas Square: the National Museum. The grande dame of city museums has been shuttered until at least 2015 (and probably longer) to make way for a thorough renovation inside and out. And just down the road from the museum, the main train station (Hlavní nádraží) remains in the throes of a multiyear rehab that will hopefully restore some beauty and dignity to the station, that for years, truth be told, has been something of an eyesore.

Today's Prague is feverishly building for the future. For city planners, it seems, there's no rest for the weary. After spending the first decade post-Velvet Revolution apparently pondering what capital improvements might be needed, planners have seemingly embarked on everything—at the same time. So while metro builders are busy extending metro Line A (eventually) to the airport (and ripping up the main access road, Evropská třída, in the process), highway construction crews are tearing up even more roads to make way for the massive Blanka Tunnel. This is just one component of a road system that will eventually relieve traffic (or so they say). Most visitors to the center won't notice

much of this, but for residents it all adds up to one big bordel (literally "bordello"—Czech slang for "big mess").

Today's Prague is recovering from "the crisis." One way to deal with a crisis is to pretend it's not happening. That seems to be the response by city leaders to the euro crisis that struck Europe in 2009 and only now, at this writing, seems to be abating. So while much of Europe went into austerity mode, Prague went nuts on big-time capital and rebuilding projects. For visitors, the results are undeniably positive. While the Czech Republic as a whole is just now recovering from a multiyear recession, the city of Prague still feels like the good times never left. Standing amid the revelry on Old Town Square, you too might wonder, "crisis, what crisis?"

Today's Prague is still paying for everything with korunas. The Czech Republic was among the first of the former Eastern Bloc nations to be admitted into the European Union, in 2004. At the time, it was the shining star of the former communist countries (in yearbook terms, the country would have been voted "most likely to succeed"). The Czechs, however, have yet to adopt the EU's common currency—the euro—despite innumerable promises and passed deadlines. Politicos now say adoption won't come until 2017 (and the governor of the Czech National Bank is on record as saying he thinks 2019 is more realistic). So what gives? Well, mostly, the euro crisis of the past few years greatly dented the euro's prestige. With the

Czechs only now slowly digging themselves out of the economic crisis, there's no great push to join the common currency. And truth be told, they probably don't need to. Prices are stable and the country's accounts are still solid.

What's Hot in Prague

Fresh food, slow food, locally grown, organic... Call it what you want, Praguers have fully embraced the notion that food should be healthy, tasty, and sustainable. Weekend farmers' markets are all over town, bringing fresh, locally sourced fruits, vegetables, meats, and cheeses to the urban masses. Restaurateurs have gotten in on the act too, rewriting menus to embrace domestic ingredients and old-fashioned Czech cooking.

Watch out for that bike! Prague residents are taking to cycling in greater and greater numbers. For years, Czechs have enjoyed pedaling through their lush countryside, but more cyclists than ever are turning to bikes for everyday commuting. Credit Berlin and Vienna for showing how cycling can work as a viable urban transport model in Central Europe. But maybe it's just all that road construction around town. The cocktail craze has washed up on the city's shores. Across town, a new generation of cocktail bars has opened up, and gone are those glitzy, ultra-posh places of yesteryear. The new places emphasize civility and feature virtuoso drinks fashioned from artisan spirits and classic recipes. Along with the cocktail

craze comes a caffeine cornucopia. Since the fall of communism, coffee in Prague has evolved from a cup of low-quality grind doused with hot water, to Italian imports like Illy and Lavazza, to Starbucks, and now to local roasters, fancy French presses, and vacuum pots. It's not quite Brooklyn, but we love it.

Top Experiences

ROCK ME AMADEUS

Mozart is a civic obsession, so you can't leave Prague without hearing his music. The obvious choice is to attend an opera at the opulent Estates Theatre, where Don Giovanni (personally conducted by the maestro) premiered to an appreciative audience in 1787. Anyone who fears that opera may be a bit uppity can enjoy a more accessible performance—albeit with some strings attached—at the National Marionette Theatre. Tickets will cost anywhere from 290 Kč to 1,100 Kč at the former, about 590 Kč at the latter.

Word of Mouth: "We saw the puppet show at the National Marionette Theatre in/near Old Town Square. The show is Don Giovanni and we LOVED it. A highlight of our trip! Enjoy!" —Kwoo

Raising the Bar

The king of beers in this part of the globe isn't Budweiser—though Czech Budvar runs a close second—but Plzeňský Prazdroj (aka Pilsner Urquell). The word "prazdroj" translates as "source," and you can go straight to that source by visiting the legendary brewery complex and adjacent brewery-themed museum in Plzeň, 55 miles southwest of Prague. The world-renowned pale lager was invented here in 1842. One taste and you'll understand why Czechs have an old proverb that says "Where beer is brewed, life is good."

Wonder Water

A different kind of beverage is the drink du jour in Karlovy Vary. Accidentally discovered by Emperor Charles IV in the 1300s, the hot springs here provide water for sipping as well as spa-ing—which explains why most folks tote porcelain cups that they fill for free at thermal fountains. You can buy your own for a few bucks (the unique little handle that doubles as a straw makes it a fun spa souvenir). Even without one, though, you will remember the experience. The curative water's sulfuric taste is unforgettably awful.

A Touch of Glass

The Czech Republic is synonymous with fine cut crystal, and purists contend that the very best is created by Moser, a glassmaker that has been operating in Karlovy Vary since 1857. Moser also has two Prague locations: the

flagship store at Na Příkopě 12 (itself a work of art) and a second shop on Old Town Square. Looking for something more modern? Function coupled with contemporary form makes Artěl, also in Old Town, a Fodor's Choice. Wherever you shop, be sure that pieces bear an official "Bohemia Crystal" sticker.

Novel Excursions

Paging all literature lovers! Czech-born author and existentialist poster boy Franz Kafka lived out his life in Prague, and retracing his footsteps offers a surprisingly comprehensive city tour. Former homes, for example, include buildings on Old Town Square and in Prague Castle (Dům U Minuty and 22 Golden Lane respectively). A suitably surreal bronze statue of him stands in the Jewish Quarter, where he worshipped; plus, there's a whole Kafka museum in Malá Strana. Organized Kafka walks are also broadly touted.

Cruise Control

The Vltava River (this country's longest) slices through Prague, offering ample on-the-water opportunities in the process. That's a good thing, because some people like standard-issue outings on big sightseeing vessels and some prefer a bit more quirkiness. Those who fall into the second category may sign on with Prague-Venice Cruises and tool around in a little 19th-century-style canal boat. If you're eager to break free entirely and paddle your own rowboat, there are several waterfront rental companies that can set you up.

Hrad Choices

Bordering Germany and the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, Southern Bohemia long held a strategically important position that needed to be defended with a series of fortifications. Today that makes it a popular locale among castle connoisseurs. If you can see only one, make it Hrad Krumlov, which, in Czech terms, is second only in size to Pražský Hrad in Prague. Positioned high above the fairy-tale town of Český Krumlov, this fanciful castle comes complete with a tower, a dungeon, and a moat.

Market Research

Christmas markets, which generally start four Saturdays before Christmas Eve and run daily until New Year's, are hugely popular in Prague. A well-stocked one sets up on Wenceslas Square (named for the "good king" of carol fame). But Old Town Square's wins the "most festive" prize, because St. Nick appears on the afternoon of December 5 to separate the naughty children from the nice. After stocking up on crafts, carp, and cups of mulled wine,

revellers return to the square December 24 for a candlelit evening mass.

Word of Mouth: "European cities are always known for their beauty, but the charm of the cities reaches its peak during Christmas season specially Prague...Last year I was there to witness that and wouldn't want to miss the fun again."

A Well-Orchestrated Event

Since 1946 the Prague Spring International Music Festival has been the most noteworthy event on the Czech cultural calendar. Opening with a tribute to native composer Bedřich Smetana on May 12 (the anniversary of his death), it features three weeks of A-list performances. Musicians gather in concert halls and churches to play from the entire classical repertoire; hence the demand for tickets is high. So, too, are some of the ticket prices. The upside is that others are affordable and, on occasion, available the day-of.

Make Way for Dumplings

This country's old-school comfort food is notoriously rich. On cool evenings, however, it's hard to beat sustaining, stick-to-your-ribs dishes like vepřo-knedlo-zelo (a fatty roast pork and cabbage concoction served with dumplings) or vepřový řízek (a variation on schnitzel) with crisp deep-fried potato pancakes on the side. Cap your meal with a crepe-style palačinky or fruit-filled ovocné knedlíky. If you're concerned about packing on pounds, just remind yourself that eating heavy food here is all part of the cultural experience.

When to Go

Beautiful year-round, Prague is busiest over the Christmas and Easter holidays and during the summer months. Spring generally offers good weather, with a more relaxed level of tourism: flowers are blossoming, historic sites are open for business, and the Prague Spring International Music Festival is in full swing. Once fall arrives the trees are decked out with gold and scarlet leaves, and Czechs head to the woods in search of mushrooms (picking fungi is a time-honored pursuit here). In winter, crowd sizes and hotel costs drop along with the temperatures. You'll get a chance to see the photogenic capital blanketed in snow—the drawback is that some castles and museums (especially those outside of town) do close for the season. January and February usually bring the best skiing to Bohemian slopes, and finding a room at area ski resorts can be difficult. If you're not a skier, try visiting the mountains in late spring (April or May) or in fall, when the countryside is ablaze with brilliant colors and you have hotels and restaurants pretty much to yourself. 🍷

(Source: fodors)

St Petersburg Won World Travel Awards Success

The secretary-general of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, Taleb Rifai, has congratulated St Petersburg on its recent success at the World Travel Awards. The Russian cultural hotspot was recognised with the title of World's Leading Cultural City Destination by voters at the World Travel Awards during the



Grand Final Gala Ceremony in the Maldives earlier this month. The title is in addition to that of Europe's Leading Destination, which St Petersburg won for the second year in succession in September. Commenting on the awards, Rifai said: "I believe St Petersburg deserves both awards; the European award and the international award, particularly when it is connect to culture. "Cultural assets are one of the most powerful advantages of St Petersburg. "I believe these awards are well deserved and that St Petersburg should take pride in them."

Tate Britain Kicks off Winter Festivities by Suspending Upside Down Christmas Tree from Ceiling

London's Tate Britain is celebrating the festive period in a curious way – by hanging a gold-rooted Christmas tree upside down through December. Hanging inside the gallery's Millbank building, the piece by artist Shirazeh Houshiary reimagines a 1993 work focusing on the natural qualities of the tree itself such as texture, colour, smell and shape. The artist has suspended the tree, exposing its roots and "creating the impression of floating in air with the roots free from their earthly constraints", drawing attention to what is usually hidden. The 2016 tree is placed down the centre of a staircase, offering three viewing perspectives from multiple levels – the tree's tip on the lower floor, the main body from the ground, and the gold leaf-covered roots on the upper floor. The work by Houshiary marks the start of a festive series of works through December, beside a display of work by prominent British artists including Antony Gormley, Anish Kapoor and Alison Wilding. "This unveiling marks a pivotal moment for the festive season at Tate Britain by looking to the past in order to look to the future," said Tate Britain director,



Alex Farquharson. "This tree fits the new space perfectly, allowing a different generation to experience the majesty of Houshiary's work and signals the beginning of an exciting era of annual Christmas artist commissions at Tate Britain."

Hong Kong Airlines Soars to YVR in 2017

Hong Kong Airlines announced non-stop daily service between Hong Kong International Airport (HKG) and Vancouver International Airport (YVR) starting on June 30, 2017. This year-round service marks the airline's North American debut and will offer increased access from Vancouver to Hong Kong, a global hub for commerce, culture and cuisine.

"Hong Kong Airlines is a well-known, family-friendly airline based in a world class city, and we are thrilled to be able to offer the public even more options to travel between Vancouver and Hong Kong," said Craig Richmond, President and CEO, Vancouver Airport Authority. "Every new airline that chooses to fly to YVR means more jobs for the local economy and creates new opportunities for British Columbians."



Hong Kong Airlines (HX) will initially operate the route using an Airbus 330-200 with 283 seats. The airline operates one of the youngest fleets in the world, with an average aircraft age of 4.1 years. The fleet consists of 34 aircraft which include nine Airbus 330-300, nine Airbus 330-200, 11 Airbus 320 and five cargo planes. Hong Kong Airlines has 15 next-generation Airbus 350-900s on order with the first delivery set for the third quarter of 2017.

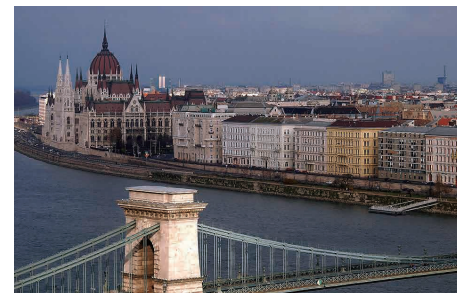
Hong Kong Airlines started operations in 2002 under the name CR Airlines and was purchased by Hainan Airlines in 2006. After the purchase, HX became part of the HNA Group, a conglomerate with divisions in aviation, tourism, logistics and EcoTech. Based

in the Hainan province, the group generates revenues of more than US\$29 billion annually and has nearly 200,000 employees worldwide.

The new daily service will generate approximately 431 jobs in British Columbia both at the airport and in the tourism industry, \$15.5 million in wages, \$8.6 million in taxes and \$24.4 million in Gross Domestic Product. The flight will also create more options for BC businesses to reach customers, suppliers and investors in Hong Kong, while also helping families travel home to see loved ones and create exciting connection possibilities for adventure and leisure travellers.

Budapest's Thermal Baths Drawing Huge International Tourists

Budapest is gradually getting into the domain of the favourite destination amongst the tourists and corporate travellers since it joined the European Union in 2004. What adds to the gravitas of this imperial capital's status are the century old tangible heritage which are now serving as a respite factor amongst the business



trips. An escape to one of the city's seven public thermal baths is bound to provide a soothing glimpse into that history while being just a quick subway ride away from the city center. In addition, this historic baths have become a premier tourist attraction for global tourists. The Romans were the first to harness the area's hot springs, setting up a regional capital here partly because of the steamy mineral water burbling below ground. The remains of the grand temples are still preserved in the northern part of the city. More than 1,000 years later, the Ottomans established the city as a trading post during their 150-year rule and built two baths that still operate. The oldest, the Rudas Baths, have an interesting feature with an octagonal room which dates back to 1550. Four smaller ones of varying temperatures encircle the main pool. The sulfuric water is believed to have curative properties. The Szechenyi Baths are known for their grandeur and were built in stages in the early 1900s. It has the gilded neo-Baroque facility and is one of the largest thermal spas in Europe. Ornate, blazing yellow buildings form a courtyard that encloses three huge naturally heated pools. The pools have water with 78 and 100 degrees Fahrenheit and give the pleasure of soaking in the world's fanciest hot tub.

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