

I adore international travel and learning about foreign cities, architecture, language, food, customs and culture. International travel takes more time and planning (and usually money) but it's worth the experience. I've visited 46 countries on all continents except Antarctica. Out of 195 recognized countries, I've barely scratched the surface, but I wanted to compile a list of my favorite international cities. There are other amazing cities (see #11) which should appear here, but this may help you to begin planning your international adventures. Soon!

London – A stop in London is practically a must to get to any other European, Middle Eastern, or African destination from the USA which makes it easy to tack onto any other trip you may be planning. There is perhaps no other city where history has been so well preserved over the past 1500 years and it's very walkable (or ride the easy-to-navigate Tube). Check out Big Ben, the Tower of London, the Houses of Parliament, the Tower Bridge, St. Paul's Cathedral, Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, The London Eye, Trafalgar Square, Hyde Park . . . the list goes on. Famous sites in London are, perhaps, more bountiful even than New York, Paris or even Rome.

Paris – The City of Light. The City of Love. I must admit that Paris had to grow on me but with each visit I love it more. The Tour Eiffel makes an amazing backdrop from almost everywhere in the city. There are numerous amazing sites in Paris but here it's more the feel, the vibe, the atmosphere which sets this place apart. Picturesque streets, beautiful gardens, endless quaint cafes and strolling along the banks of the Seine River . . . all of these simply exude romance. Paris has long been considered the fashion capital of the world. Strolling from the Arc de Triomphe along the Champs-Élysées you can browse the multitude of high-end boutiques. Bring your wallet!

Sydney – In 2004 the Aussie dollar hit an all-time low against the US dollar and I was there for it, shopping for real estate near 'The Bridge.' Not following through was one of the worst mistakes I've ever made. I simply love Sydney and could live there. It's hard to explain why; I just feel good when I'm there - always. The air is clean, the sun is shining, and the water is sparkling. Many writers have said that Sydney is all about the water. Finding real estate with a view of the water is a life-long goal for many. Icons like the Harbor Bridge, the Opera House and the famous beaches (Bondi and Manly) make this more contemporary city feel young, modern and active.

Moscow – Most of my friends who have visited didn't enjoy it as much so take this entry with a grain of salt. Moscow is not for the faint of heart. It's dark. In many ways. Yes, it's far north but more than that. Clothing styles are dark. People (reminiscent of Stalin era paranoia) walk with their heads down and don't talk to anyone . . . but . . . take a moment ask directions and they will light up to tell you all about their city and their family and invite you to dinner. Slow to warm, the Russians heat up like no other culture I've ever experienced. It's different, exciting, spectacularly beautiful and the most 'foreign' place I've ever visited.

Istanbul – The only city on the list in which I've been robbed. But that's on me - just being careless. What an amazing surprise this and I can't wait to return. So much history here where Asia meets Europe and where many different nations have conquered and brought a mix of culture over the millennia. The Grand Bazaar is one of the most amazing outdoor markets I've ever experienced but do yourself a favor . . . hire a local guide to visit the market. They are cheap

and will save you headaches once you head into the narrow corridors of shops and spices and flavors and sights and smells. My one regret is not having toured the Hagia Sofia – next time!

Edinburgh – “Och Aye” (Oh Yes), put Edinburgh on this list! Perhaps it’s my own Scottish heritage, but the people and the history – OMG, the Edinburgh Castle alone is worth the visit. Scotland is the only other place (besides Sydney) that I ever thought of moving to. And the city is a great hub from which to rent a car and drive north through the fascinating Scottish Highlands and on to the northern Lochs and Isles. Edinburgh (Edinburragh) is ancient and historical and amazing like London . . . but sooo much friendlier. You will leave your heart in Edinburgh for certain (and maybe a little spit! – look up the Heart of Midlothian).

Singapore – This amazing, clean, safe and architecturally thrilling town is one of the most visited cities in Asia. And for good reason. It is a financial hub of Asia and most people will like it because it is modern (in western terms) with all the luxuries and comforts of your own city. But it is also filled with cultural diversity. Chinatown, Little India, Kampong Glam . . . these and other areas are settings for safe and comfortable exploration and experiencing the city night life. The city-nation is also home to natural wonders like the Singapore Botanic gardens (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) as well as the Singapore Zoo and Night Safari.

Shanghai – I was touring for hours when suddenly a piece of paper fluttered past. I was shocked to realize that in this city of 30 million people (remember that NYC is 8 million), that was the first trash I had seen. It made me realize that we have a long way to go here in the states with our respect for the environment. Shanghai’s skyline possesses architecturally diverse skyscrapers (again, we aren’t so creative here in the states). Nightlife is bustling but the streets are safe and respectful. Shanghai opened my eyes to the fact that most countries are more up to date and technologically and economically more advanced (and safe for travel) than we think in the states.

Hamburg – Germany still has stereotypes of how serious and stoic and unemotional the Germans are (and yes, the trains do run on time). This is funny and the Germans laugh about it. They are proud of their strict timeliness, but they are also some of the funniest and happiest and kindest people I’ve ever met. Hamburg is where the Beatles honed their skills and der Reeperbahn is still a major center of the city’s nightlife. One of the largest ports in Europe, also known as the Gateway to the World, Hamburg still has much of its personality built around the river with beach bars all along the Elbe River where locals and tourists alike while away the summer.

Rio de Janeiro – Well, I can’t talk much about Rio de Janeiro. I don’t remember much but my friends told me it was one of my favorites. Haha. We were there for Carnival (Mardi Gras) and it was just booming. Visiting the Sambadrome to see the floats, costumes, and choreography was fantastic but that spilled out into all areas of the city. Beaches? Best in the world but with the mountains rising right out of the sea, you will never experience beaches with such amazing views like that of Sugarloaf Mountain and Christ the Redeemer anywhere else. They just know how to do it right in Brazil. The laid-back attitude pervades every aspect of the city.

Rome, Venice, Athens, Bangkok, Zurich, Marrakech, Prague, Budapest, Krakow, Havana, Copenhagen, Bogota, Kyiv, Stockholm, Oslo. Any of these could easily be on this list. My only thoughts are to get out and travel and see them all as soon as you can. And let me know if you have thoughts on visiting any of these. I would love to help you research and book your travel.

Want to plan that trip abroad? I am a certified travel advisor with Fora Travel. Contact me for details and ideas to help you plan your next adventure.

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As of July of 2024, 40% of US Citizens have a valid international passport. This has jumped tremendously since 1989 when that figure was only 3%. Still, Americans are one of the least internationally traveled peoples in the world, which isn't surprising. It's a big country and there are amazing beaches, amusement parks, small towns and incredible cities with famous sites, music and cuisine. However, I believe that the thing America does better than any other country is to establish and organize our natural wonders, making some of the most amazing parts of earth accessible to all. City and State parks abound and National monuments, recreation areas, seashores, preserves, wildlife refuges, etc. are amazing. But nothing defines America better than our 65 National Parks. Below are my ten favorite (and some of the most popular) National Parks.

Yosemite National Park in California is celebrated for its awe-inspiring granite cliffs, such as El Capitan and Half Dome, and the towering Bridal veil and Yosemite Falls, along with its ancient giant sequoias.

Yellowstone National Park, spanning Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho, is a geothermal wonderland with the iconic Old Faithful geyser, colorful hot springs like the Grand Prismatic Spring, and diverse wildlife, including bison and grizzly bears.

Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona offers unparalleled views of the immense and colorful Grand Canyon, carved by the Colorado River, with numerous hiking trails and viewpoints.

Zion National Park in Utah is known for its towering red sandstone cliffs, deep canyons, and the popular hike through The Narrows.

Glacier National Park in Montana boasts rugged mountains, pristine glacial lakes, and over 700 miles of trails, providing stunning vistas and a haven for wildlife.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park, straddling North Carolina and Tennessee, features mist-covered mountains, lush forests, and a rich variety of plant and animal life, along with Appalachian cultural history.

Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado is renowned for its breathtaking alpine scenery, crystal-clear lakes, and abundant wildlife, including elk and bighorn sheep.

Acadia National Park in Maine offers dramatic coastal beauty with rocky shorelines, forested trails, and panoramic views from Cadillac Mountain.

Arches National Park in Utah is famous for its over 2,000 natural stone arches, including the iconic Delicate Arch, set against a backdrop of red rock formations and desert landscapes. Finally,

Bryce Canyon National Park in Utah captivates visitors with its unique hoodoos, spire-shaped rock formations that create a surreal landscape of red, orange, and white, best viewed from viewpoints like Sunrise and Sunset Points.

BONUS: Top Ten Underrated National Parks

Great Basin National Park (Nevada) - Known for its ancient bristlecone pines, Lehman Caves, and stargazing opportunities in one of the darkest night skies in the U.S.

North Cascades National Park (Washington) - Offers dramatic mountain scenery, alpine lakes, and a wide variety of glaciers with fewer crowds than nearby parks.

Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park (Colorado) - Features steep, narrow canyons with impressive cliffs and rock formations, perfect for rock climbing and scenic drives.

Guadalupe Mountains National Park (Texas) - Home to the highest peak in Texas, Guadalupe Peak, and offers diverse desert landscapes, canyons, and rich fossil history.

Congaree National Park (South Carolina) - Preserves the largest tract of old-growth bottomland hardwood forest in the U.S., with towering trees, diverse wildlife, and excellent kayaking.

Voyageurs National Park (Minnesota) - Known for its interconnected waterways, making it a paradise for boating, fishing, and exploring remote islands.

Channel Islands National Park (California) - Consists of five unique islands with rich marine life, rugged cliffs, sea caves, and opportunities for kayaking, snorkeling, and wildlife viewing.

Capitol Reef National Park (Utah) - Offers stunning geological formations, including the Waterpocket Fold, colorful cliffs, canyons, and historic orchards.

Isle Royale National Park (Michigan) - An isolated island in Lake Superior, ideal for wilderness hiking, boating, and spotting wolves and moose.

Lassen Volcanic National Park (California) - Features geothermal wonders, including fumaroles, boiling springs, and the Lassen Peak volcano, along with beautiful alpine lakes and meadows.

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