

Passport To Revival

Gear up for the trip of a lifetime in a city that's finding its soul again

By Yi-Hwa Hanna

There's no doubt about it — travel is good for the soul. Something about finding yourself in a foreign land, filled with secrets to be unearthed and claimed as your own, is an irresistible natural high and anyone who's ever stood on the precipice of a mountain or high observatory tower overlooking an intriguing new land before them, will tell you that the rush that comes from exploration is one not easily replaced. Experts agree: According to The Travel Effect, a multi-year, multimillion dollar research study by the US Travel Association, workers who take time off to vacation are more productive and motivated when they're at work, students who have travelled abroad are almost twice as likely to have a college degree and earn almost 40% more than those who don't, and a third of all leisure travellers even say they get busier in the bedroom while on vacation. In fact, research has found that 89% of people see significant drops in stress within just a day or two of being on holiday.



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It's not just travellers who benefit, though—an influx of visitors, or the prospect of tourism, can breathe new life into a city. Whether it's the travellers who come first, or some sort of political or infrastructural development that gives a destination a new lease on life attracting hordes of the curious, the ever-shifting dynamic of our modern world means there's always somewhere that's boasting a new identity. We're making it a mission to visit at least one place that's gone through a recent revival before the year is out—check out our top four picks below.



Galle Sri Lanka

With a name that means “resplendent island,” ever since the Sri Lankan armed forces defeated the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in 2009, this teardrop shaped destination has seen a serious rise in popularity with foreign tourists. The end of the war saw the government embark on numerous large infrastructure projects, not least of which was their first motorway leading from the capital of Colombo to Galle in the south. The motorway—the E01 Expressway—replaced the dusty, winding dirt roads of the past (which were often crammed with everything from buses teeming with people and cargo to the odd stray cow out for a wander) and this has made it not only more comfortable, but also considerably faster to get around.

Just 95km away from Colombo, the beachside city of Galle awaits, boasting a 400-year-old fort, quaint streets and buildings that hark back to Colonial times, and pristine palm-fringed beaches where you can do everything from soak up the sun to catch a wave while surfing, jet-skiing, kayaking, fishing and more. History buffs will be delighted to learn more about the oldest known shipwreck in the Indian



Ocean, recently discovered on the sea bed just off the southern coast: Estimated to be some 2,000 years old, the wreck lies 33 metres below the surface. Archaeologists are hoping to discover clues about the trading routes that ran along the maritime Silk Road during the second century AD.

As with most seaside destinations, great seafood is readily available in Galle, along with rich curries and rice doused in light flavours like coconut and pandanus. In the years following the devastating 2004

Indian Ocean Tsunami, Galle has built up a considerable number of cool restaurants, cafes and boutiques. The high vegetarian population means fresh, vegetable-based dishes laced with chillies, fenugreek and chutneys are readily available, making it easy to indulge in healthy yet hearty fare after a long day out and about. With its lush and still mostly untouched landscape full of natural bounty, it's no wonder Sri Lanka is so often referred to as the pearl of the Indian Ocean.

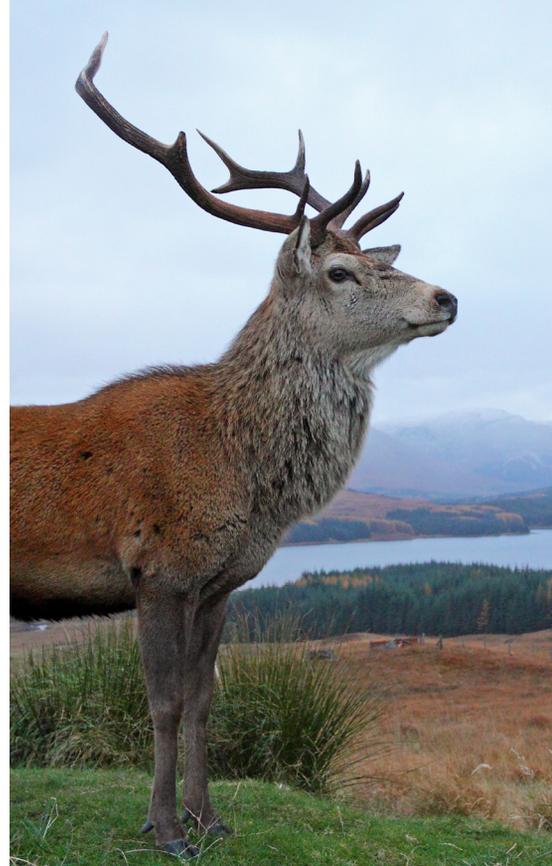


Glasgow Scotland

The Scottish Highlands have always held a certain appeal thanks to their raw, natural beauty, but thanks to their practically playing a supporting role in James Bond's *Skyfall*, the breathtaking landscape is now firmly on our radar. In April this year, the John Muir Way—which runs coast to coast across Scotland—is to expand to 134 miles, covering farmland, forests and everything in between. With Glasgow set to play host to the 2014 Commonwealth Games this year, the city is readying itself for an influx

of visitors from across Britain and beyond, and it's now easier than ever for travellers to continue their Glaswegian journey to the rolling hills and serene lochs beyond.

Before you pack your bags for the hills, Glasgow's got its fair share of places to see too: Not only are the Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum's exhibits typically captivating, the building that houses them is pretty impressive too. If science is more your arena, the Glasgow Science Museum is a fascinating modern wonderland filled with interactive exhibits to keep both young and old entertained (and get your grey matter humming), while the Glasgow



Cathedral is a timeless slice of history and a stunning display of Gothic architecture.

No trip to Scotland would be complete without a taste of the more unique local fare, but while haggis is an unavoidable taste to test, we'd recommend keeping your mouthfuls to a minimum thanks to its high fat and salt content. Instead, opt for some grilled Scottish salmon, Aberdeen Angus beef and smoked fish—and we won't judge if you indulge in some scones too.



Christchurch New Zealand

Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, the once quake-ravaged city of Christchurch, New Zealand—which was badly damaged by earthquakes in 2010 and 2011—has emerged as a city reborn. While ongoing construction of the areas once reduced to little more than rubble serves as a constant reminder of the violent natural disasters that rendered many homeless (or worse), the city has plucked up a positive outlook and is trying to use this as an opportunity to rebuild and come back stronger.

Rather than just rebuild what was once lost, though, the city is now forging a path to becoming a greener and more resilient place. While the changes have been met with mixed reactions, Christchurch's new thoughtfully-planned active urban edge holds undeniable appeal: Plans for more environmentally-friendly transport, an ecological and recreational reserve and height restrictions that will open up the

landscape, so to speak. There's even a bar built out of shipping containers called Revival, inspired by the rejuvenation of the city, designed to radiate "a heady mix of innovation and nostalgia."

New Zealand's sporty reputation still holds in its second-largest city, with surfing, biking, fishing, swimming, punting, canoeing, climbing, dolphin watching, golf, horse riding, boating, paragliding and rafting possible either within Christchurch or just a hop and a skip away, not to mention beautiful beaches for you to spread out on once you're ready to kick back and relax.

Visitors to New Zealand shouldn't leave without a pot or two of Manuka Honey in their suitcases—the renowned natural remedy is used for everything from skincare to healing scars—while golden kiwi fruit is another must-try. This juicy, sweeter version of our favourite zesty green fruit is not only more aromatic, it's also packed with Vitamin C.



Dubai UAE

Even on our home turf, we're seeing something of a revival—Dubai's win of the World Expo 2020 hosting bid has already seen the economy begin to resurge, the new tram system is finally to be completed this year, and the city continues to flourish with more record-breaking hotels, a new airport, theme parks and more.

Yet despite the fact that hundreds more tourists are expected to flock to the UAE in the next several years—the country's tourism revenue is predicted to hit Dhs27.5 billion by 2016—few of us living in the region ever really go out and enjoy the city the way our far-flung visitors do. Which is why we're determined to appreciate Dubai through a tourist's eyes during the year ahead: Heading to the beach for a day in the sun (many hotels and beach clubs, including the Jumeirah Beach Hotel, Atlantis The Palm and RIVA Beach Club offer relatively affordable day access to their beach and pool area), camping in the desert or heading to one of the many wadis or hiking trails is a great way to get active while feeling like you're out of the inner city, and they're just a quick jaunt away (particularly if you have a 4x4 vehicle). Meanwhile, the many art galleries and independent restaurants of Al Quoz are a delicious escape for culture vultures.

If you've never been up the Burj Khalifa's At The Top observation deck or for tea at the Burj Al Arab, it's time to put it on your list pronto—combine that with a visit to the Dubai Fountains, Ski Dubai, the Gold Souk



and the Spice Market, and you're almost done with the tourist circuit. A visit to old Dubai's Bastakiya area and the creek—complete with dhow trip and a pitstop at the Dubai Museum for a touch of history—will round things off nicely, and you might even go home with a few souvenirs. Who says staycations have to be boring? ■

