

TRAVEL

10 travel destinations you need to visit in 2025 — and what to do when you're there

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- **National Geographic shared a list of best travel destinations for 2025.**
- **Cities like Bangkok, Thailand; Kanazawa, Japan; and Brasov, Romania, made the list.**
- **BI spoke with travel experts who shared their tips on how to best explore each of these spots.**

The best trips are often a result of well-planned itineraries tailored to your tastes.

So when National Geographic published its annual Best Places to Travel report for 2025, unveiling 25 global destinations, we knew the ideal way to explore some of these spots would be to hear from experts.

Business Insider chose 10 places on the list and spoke to destination-specific travel experts to devise the best plan for each place, including what to do, where to stay, and what to eat.

Whether you enjoy exploring the ocean or prefer luxury train tours traversing through tiny towns, the guide incorporates a range of experiences across continents.

Here are some of the top spots to visit in 2025 and the best things to do there.

Antigua, Guatemala

Aerial view from the English Harbour viewpoint in Antigua. Marco Bicci/Shutterstock

With its storied past and vast natural beauty, Antigua offers activities for people of all ages. But the best way to explore the island is to opt for private guided walking tours, says Carolyn Weppler, the senior vice president at Goway Travel, a travel agency that helps curate travel itineraries.

What to do: Visit two 17th-century landmarks, the San José Cathedral Antigua and Convento Santa Clara, says Weppler, or make a photo stop at the yellow-hued Iglesia de La Merced.

For those who prefer to stroll and shop, the streets surrounding Arco de Santa Catalina, the famous archway, are filled with artisan boutiques offering handwoven goods, colorful tableware, and clothing.

Finally, Wepler advises you spend a full day visiting Lake Atitlán and the town of San Juan La Laguna.

"The town is essentially run by women, the weaving industry is thriving, and there is art everywhere—on buildings, in shops, and woven into the landscape," said Wepler.

Where to stay: Villa Bokéh, located on the outskirts of Antigua, is an upscale colonial-era hacienda perfect for families or large groups, says Wepler. However, if you prefer a boutique hotel, Posada Del Angel, which Wepler says is "known for its charm and hospitality," is another option.

Where to eat: The best place to experience local cuisine is at the outdoor food markets, which Wepler says are "thriving, colorful, and a maze worth exploring." Her favorite local dishes to sample at the market include stews like hilachas and pepián, tamales called chuchitos, and sweets like canillitas de leche.

Por Qué No, a small family-run restaurant six blocks from the main square in Antigua, is another one to add to your list. "It's delicious and offers vegan options for travelers with dietary restrictions," said Wepler.

When to go: While the island enjoys tropical weather all year round, the best way to experience it is during late winter and early spring, from December to April, when there's little to no rainfall. For those who enjoy experiencing festivals, the annual Antigua Sailing Week and International Kite Festival both take place in April.

Ocala National Forest, Florida

An aerial view of Silver Glen Springs in Ocala National Forest. Ocala/Marion County Visitors & Convention Bureau

Spanning nearly 385,000 acres, Ocala National Forest highlights a unique side of Florida in contrast to its famous beaches and theme parks.

Jessica Heller, a marketing and communications supervisor at Ocala/Marion County Visitors and Convention Bureau, says the forest's remote location makes it ideal for those looking to skip overcrowded tourist spots next year.

What to do: Swim or snorkel in one of the forest's four natural springs fed by the Florida aquifer that stay at 72°F year-round. Heller recommends checking out each spring — Silver Glen, Juniper,

Alexander, and Salt Springs — to experience their "distinct personalities."

Hiking enthusiasts can take various trails, such as the Florida Trail or the Cross Florida Greenway, which cuts across the forest.

If you visit during the holiday season, between Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Eve, you can cut your own Florida sand pine to take home.

Where to stay: While most people prefer to camp in the forest — Salt and Juniper Springs being the top camping spots — those who prefer hotels to tents and RVs can opt to stay at the Hilton Garden Inn in the downtown square.

For a more upscale experience, The Equestrian Hotel, a 60-minute drive away, offers a great escape and easy access to the World Equestrian Center.

Where to eat: Downtown Ocala has many dining options, but Heller recommends trying out La Cuisine for French-inspired fine dining or District Bar & Kitchen if you prefer a more relaxed vibe.

Closer to the forest, Lena's, located on the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway (open from October to June), is a local favorite for seafood.

When to go: According to Heller, January through March is the best time to visit if you'd like to watch horse shows. However, that's also when hotels are most expensive.

But if you're looking to bike, hike, or enjoy any water activities, Heller suggests planning your trip around wintertime. The end of summer —

when it's not too hot — is most popular for springs.

"We even have a tubing season," said Heller, adding that their natural version of lazy river tubing is open from April through September.

Bangkok, Thailand

Wat Arun, a popular tourist spot, is a Buddhist temple in Bangkok. Pinglabel/Shutterstock

From floating markets and temples to food tours, Bangkok offers a range of exciting activities.

Jack Tydeman, a Southeast Asia specialist at Audley, a travel agency, has visited Thailand over 20 times and has firsthand experience living and working there. He told BI that his suggestions for visitors usually

include a mix of cultural and outdoor activities focusing on sustainability and support for local businesses wherever possible.

What to do: Most people prefer hopping on tuk-tuks to navigate the city, but for an off-beat experience, Tydeman recommends taking an eco-friendly Khlong tour. He says the boat tour will make you "feel like you're suddenly in rural Bangkok even though you're in the heart of the city" as you cruise past wooden shops, temples, and floating street food vendors.

The tour with Audley begins after breakfast and lasts about six hours, ending with lunch at Poomjai Garden, a 100-year-old family-run restaurant.

For street food enthusiasts, Tydeman suggests exploring Banthat Thong Road, where you can try everything from spicy soup and Thai-style castellas to fluffy omelets.

But if outdoor adventure appeals to you, Tydeman suggests driving out of town to the Khao Yai National Park, where, apart from trekking, wildlife spotting, and jungle hiking, you could also spend the day at a nearby local vineyard or mango farm.

Where to stay: The Siam Hotel, designed by landscape architect Bill Bensley, is set on the banks of the Chao Phraya River and offers private pool villas as well as curated workshops such as sak yant tattoo — a traditional Thai tattoo design — or wet plate photography for its guests. It's a standout alternative to the typical 5-star properties, says Tydeman.

For a beachfront escape, consider The Six Senses Yao Noi, which Tydeman described as "a destination experience." Guests on-site can

enjoy cinema screenings on the beach, private yacht charters, and a holistic spa with personalized wellness plans.

Another unique option is the transparent Jungle Bubbles experience at Anantara Golden Triangle, where guests can stargaze among elephants at night from their bubbles.

Where to eat: From a 10-course Michelin tasting menu at Sra Bua by Kiin Kiin to a touring local establishment for pad Thai and other specialties, there's no shortage of food options in this city.

Tydeman recommends Ann Guay Tiew Kua Gai for its egg noodles and Pad Thai Fai Talu for its standout pad Thai. To end your evening, he suggests soaking in city views with Thai beer at the Above Riva bar.

For something adventurous, consider reserving a table at Dine in the Dark, where you'll enjoy local and international food items in — you guessed it — complete darkness.

When to go: November to February is the best time to visit the city.

Raja Ampat, Indonesia

Raja Ampat is home to a vibrant and diverse marine life ecosystem, where visitors can witness everything from colorful coral reefs and whales to sea turtles. kkshxt/Shutterstock

If your idea of a holiday is to escape the daily hustle and explore life underwater, then Raja Ampat offers the most diverse aquatic experience.

"The waters around Raja Ampat are like no other," said Ellie Khoury, a senior travel designer for Asia Pacific at Jacada Travel.

What to do: Raja Ampat is home to vibrant coral reefs, jellyfish lakes, majestic manta rays, and various other colorful sea animals. The best way to explore this rich habitat, says Khoury, is by deep-sea diving or snorkeling.

Above the surface, Khoury says you can enjoy spotting "rare birds of paradise," hike up to viewpoints for panoramic views of the archipelago,

swim in the turquoise waters of river Kali Biru — home to monkeys, birds, and butterflies — and visit the oyster pearl farm in Aljui Bay to see how pearls are cultivated.

Where to stay: For the most immersive experience, Khoury recommends chartering a luxury boat, which allows you to customize your itinerary.

"One of my favorite private charters," said Khoury, "is the Alexa Luxury Yacht, an old Phinisi-style sailing boat that was once a vessel shipping spice between the Indonesian Islands." It is a good option for couples and honeymooners.

For those who prefer to join a small shared yacht, Khoury recommends the AquaBlu, a former British Naval Explorer transformed into an intimate 15-cabin vessel.

Where to eat: From traditional Indonesian cuisine to seafood staples, the archipelago offers a variety of options to choose from; the most popular dishes include fried fish, satay (grilled meat skewers), and fried banana.

When to go: The best time to sail is between November and early April, says Khoury, but for peak marine encounters, including whales and manta rays, she recommends planning your visit between December and February.

Cenobitic monasteries, Italy

The Sacra di San Michele, one of Italy's leading centers of Benedictine spirituality, is in the lower Susa Valley. Andrea Frazzetta for National Geographic

Italy is a top tourist spot known for its beaches, architectural splendor, and fresh food.

But in 2025, the year of the jubilee in Rome — a religious event that happens once every 25 years in which all four of its papal Basilicas open their doors — it's also set to become popular for its spiritual activations.

"It's a massive year for pilgrimage," said Grace Harrex, the lead travel writer at Monasteries.com, adding that the city will host around 40 million pilgrims.

What to do: Cenobitic monasteries are religious communities where monks or nuns live together, focusing on prayer, work, and spiritual growth.

"You can join in morning prayers, help with daily chores, and share meals with the community," said Harrex, emphasizing that these visits are often treated as spiritual experiences rather than vacations.

Other noteworthy sites include Monte Cassino Abbey, a key pilgrimage site founded by St. Benedict, just two hours from Rome, and the Abbey of San Paolo Fuori le Mura in Rome, one of the city's most important religious sites.

If you prefer a coastal city to Rome, the Foresteria Monastero Santissimo in Agrigento is a cenobitic community known for its architecture and proximity to the sea. "It's a bit more flexible than some other monastic stays but still offers an authentic spiritual experience," said Harrex.

Where to stay: Whether you're on tour to explore the spiritual side of Italy or prefer the more popular touristy spots, Harrex recommends checking into monastic guesthouses run by nuns for a new experience. If you're looking for affordable stays, the Casa Il Rosario, located in the center of Rome, is a great option, as is the San Giuseppe House, which offers easy access to major religious sites.

Where to eat: According to Harrex, cenobitic monasteries in Agrigento, Sicily, are known for their local produce and sweets like cannoli and granita. They also offer communal meals, which include simple, farm-sourced dishes representing their lifestyle.

When to go: Spring and fall — March through May or early September through November — are the best times to escape the scorching summer heat, said Harrex, adding that it is best to avoid summer and especially August since that's when most people in Italy take time off, and many local businesses remain closed.

Los Angeles, California

Destination Crenshaw is the country's largest public/private Black art project — showcased here is the mural, "Hey Young World," made outside a local business in Crenshaw. Dareon Grace/Destination Crenshaw/National Geographic

Fashion designer Isabel Marant once said, "In Los Angeles, you can have the city life and feel like you're on holiday at the same time."

Kelly Miller, the president and CEO of Visit Huntington Beach, attests to the city's laidback yet outgoing lifestyle.

What to do: Whether you enjoy surfing, shopping, or just strolling past streets, LA has something for everyone.

Explore the iconic Rodeo Drive, lined with luxury shops, public art, and upscale restaurants, or relax at one of the city's many beaches.

If you prefer to immerse yourself in art and culture, the Miracle Mile, home to several well known museums, is worth a day trip.

Where to stay: Miller says the Hyatt Regency Huntington Beach Resort and Spa is ideal for couples and families. If you prefer something closer to downtown or the heart of the city, The Hoxton is just a few miles away from key travel hubs and attractions.

Where to eat: One perk of visiting LA is being able to sample a multitude of cuisines all in one place. You could begin with Italian staples at Dan Tana's or enjoy a plate of tacos at Mírate.

For couples looking to escape the city, Miller recommends the newly launched Lōrea restaurant in Huntington Beach. Here, diners can enjoy a meal while taking in views of the Pacific.

When to go: September through November is the best time to visit, per Miller. This way, visitors can avoid peak season but still experience amazing weather.

Greenland

A small village featuring traditionally color-coded homes on the coast of Tasiilaq, East Greenland.
muratart/Shutterstock

"This year, we've seen Greenland and Scandinavia become some of the most popular destinations for what we're calling 'cool-cations,'" Duncan Greenfield-Turk, CEO of Global Travel Moments, told BI.

Now, with United offering direct flights from Newark to Nuuk, Greenland, starting June 2025, it is predicted to amass the same popularity as some of its neighboring destinations, like Spain and Iceland, The Wall Street Journal reported.

What to do: The Ilulissat ice fjord, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, offers some of the country's most beautiful views. Visitors can travel to it by boat or helicopter.

Those who enjoy outdoor activities can hike to Sermermiut Valley, where you can see ancient Inuit settlements and views of the ice fjord's edge.

Traveling to see the northern lights? Take a Kangerlussuaq northern lights Safari tour for the best viewing chance. Greenfield-Turk says it is an ideal spot for viewing the Aurora Borealis, especially from October to April.

But amid the array of nature experiences, don't forget to explore the country's capital city, Nuuk, which, according to Greenfield-Turk, "offers a unique glimpse into modern Greenlandic life." Nuuk is also home to a rising tech and innovation scene focused on sustainability.

Where to stay: Would you enjoy living in igloo-style cabins? Hotel Arctic, an upscale hotel based in Ilulissat, offers this experience alongside incredible views of Disko Bay and the ice fjord.

For those who prefer budget-friendly finds, the HHE Express in Nuuk offers a clean and minimalist space and is steps away from the National Museum and several local cafés.

Another pocket-friendly alternative is to stay at community-run guesthouses, which allow visitors to interact with locals.

Where to eat: Ulo at the Hotel Arctic serves dishes such as Arctic burgers made using reindeer meat, Arctic char, and musk ox, highlighting regional ingredients and culinary traditions with a contemporary twist.

But if you prefer to sample some of the street food, then Greenfield-Turk suggests heading to Kalaaliaraq Market, where you can try everything from dried fish and whale meat to seal blubber.

When to go: According to Greenfield-Turk, summer (between June and September) is perfect for outdoor activities like hiking, sailing, and exploring ice fjords. However, October to April is ideal for seeing the northern lights or experiencing winter activities like dog sledding.

Kanazawa, Japan

Higashi Chaya district in Kanazawa during winter. Sean Pavone/Shutterstock

What to do: Start at the renowned Kenroku-en Garden and nearby Kanazawa Castle, a quintessential Japanese feudal fortress, or, if you're

an art enthusiast, watch the ancient art of Yuzen silk painting at Kaga Yuzen Kaikan, ending the day with a visit to Nagamachi Samurai District.

Travel experts at [Enchanting Travels](#) recommend stopping by the Nomura Samurai House, a historic home that features a traditional Kanazawa-style tea room, courtyard garden, and Edo-period artifacts.

In the Higashi Chaya District, Kanazawa's [geisha quarter](#), explore cafés and shops, especially those that sell gold leaf products, a specialty of Kanazawa. End the day with green tea at the Shima Teahouse or experience a traditional tea ceremony hosted by a sado expert in a tearoom.

Where to stay: Kanazawa Chaya Ryokan, located five minutes from JR Kanazawa Station, offers a luxurious spin on traditional Japanese-style inns. During your stay, you'll be provided a yukata — a cotton kimono — slippers, access to a relaxing onsen (hot springs), and kaiseki meals made from fresh local ingredients.

Closer to Omicho Market, there's Hotel Nikko Kanazawa, which has a more modern appearance but offers spacious rooms with incredible city views.

Where to eat: Enchanting Travels experts say Tsubajin, which was established in 1752, is a "legend in Kanazawa," most popular for its refined Kaga cuisine. Another top spot they recommended is Kagura, which they said serves excellent ramen.

When to go: To enjoy [cherry blossoms in full bloom](#) at Kenroku-en Garden and around Ishikawa Gate, a picturesque corner of Kanazawa

Castle, mid-April is the best time to visit, per experts at Enchanting Travels. Late December to March is ideal for a visit to Shirakawa-go, a village that's about an hour from Kanazawa and, in winter, is home to several snow-covered gassho-zukuri farmhouses.

Eastern and Oriental Express, Malaysia

Belmond's Eastern & Oriental Express briefly shut down during the COVID-19 pandemic but is now back on track. Nicolas Quiniou/Belmond

Angela Walker, the vice president of operations at The Society of International Railway Travelers, first experienced Belmond's Eastern & Oriental Express in 2019, just before the COVID-19 pandemic. Back then, the train began its journey in Bangkok and ended in Singapore. Then, its services were shut down during the pandemic.

But since its reintroduction earlier this year, the luxury train's itinerary has been updated. Its round trips from Singapore travels through

Malaysia. Recalling her experience from 2019, Walker told BI that she had an exceptional experience all around.

What to do: During the four-day journey, passengers can participate in excursions, from arts-focused tours to cooking classes, or, if you prefer, relax in the open-air observation car at the back of the train. "Sitting there with a cocktail, watching the scenery go by," was Walker's favorite part of her trip.

The train also features a luxury spa suite in collaboration with Dior, an experience Walker said only a few trains in the world offer.

Where to stay: You can select from three types of cabins, depending on your preferences and budget.

Walker said the state cabins are best for couples. They feature twin beds that convert into sofas during the day, an ensuite bathroom, and ample storage.

If you're celebrating a special occasion or prefer a more upscale experience, the presidential suites offer free-flowing Champagne and caviar and a 24-hour butler service, among other luxury amenities. The rooms and bathrooms are also much more spacious.

The most budget-friendly option is the Pullman cabin, which fits two people in one room on upper and lower berths. While they're cozy, Walker does not recommend them for travelers with mobility restrictions.

Where to eat: Two restaurant cars are on board, serving regionally inspired dishes with a modern twist as part of a menu created by chef

André Chiang.

When to go: Walker recommends visiting between November and April, when the weather is more likely to be dry and slightly less humid.

Brasov, Romania

The old town and Tampa mountain in Brasov during winter. SCStock/Shutterstock

Corina Leslie, a PR manager at email-services company ZeroBounce, is a native of Vulcan, a village 20 minutes from Brasov. Although she lives in the US now, she grew up in Romania and has personal, off-beat recommendations for those planning to visit this European nation.

What to do: Stroll through the streets of Republicii and Mureșenilor to explore the city's local shops and cafés, especially Piața Sfatului, which Leslie described as the "vibrant heart" of the old town.

Next, visit one of Romania's largest Gothic churches, the Black Church. For a scenic, relaxing spot, head to Piața George Enescu.

Vulcan, a quaint village, and Holbav, which is a 10-minute drive away, make for a perfect half-day outing, offering an authentic taste of Transylvania.

Where to eat: Leslie recommends trying the "Deliciu" cake, homemade fudge bars, and cookies at Vatra Ardealului bakery, opposite the Black Church.

For lunch or dinner, she recommends the Domeniul Valea Merilor in Râșnov, which serves local dishes and offers great views of the town.

When to go: For a cozy, snow-covered experience, Leslie recommends planning your trip around wintertime, between December and February. If you prefer milder weather, then May to September is ideal.

Correction — December 19, 2024: An earlier version of this story misstated the route taken by Belmond's Eastern & Oriental Express. It starts and ends in Singapore and travels through Malaysia; it does not start in Malaysia and end in Singapore.