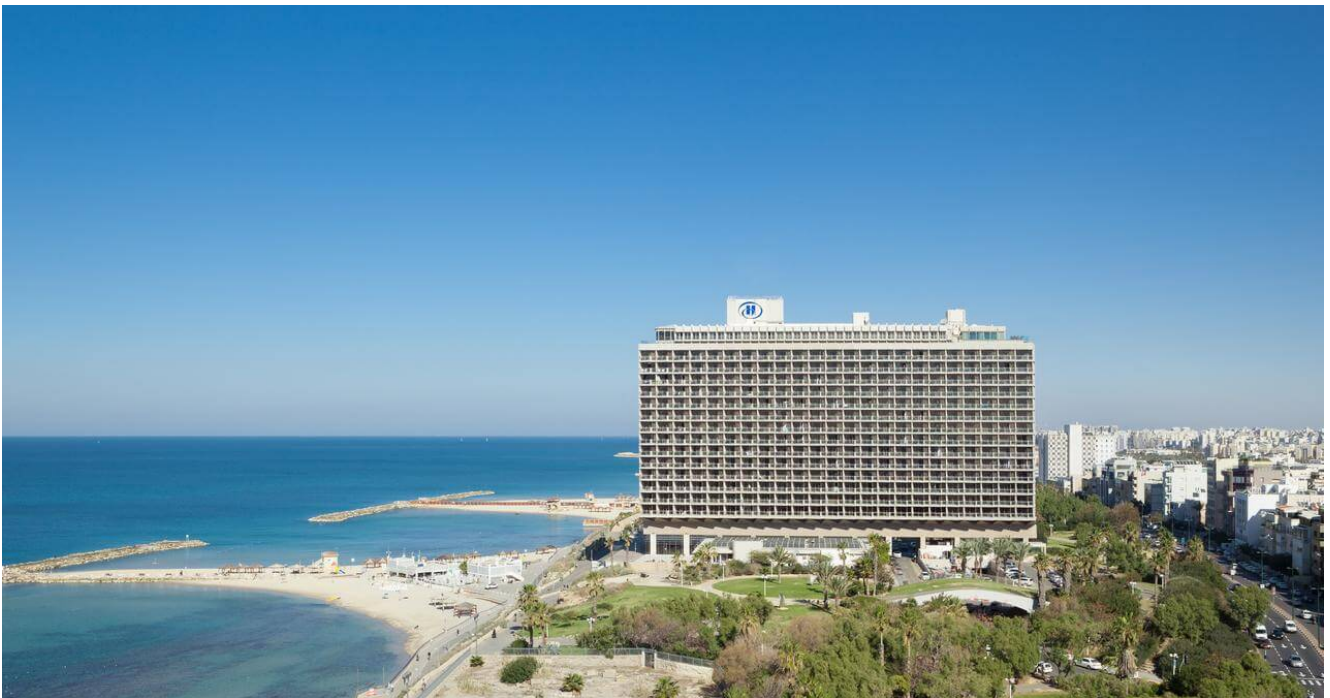


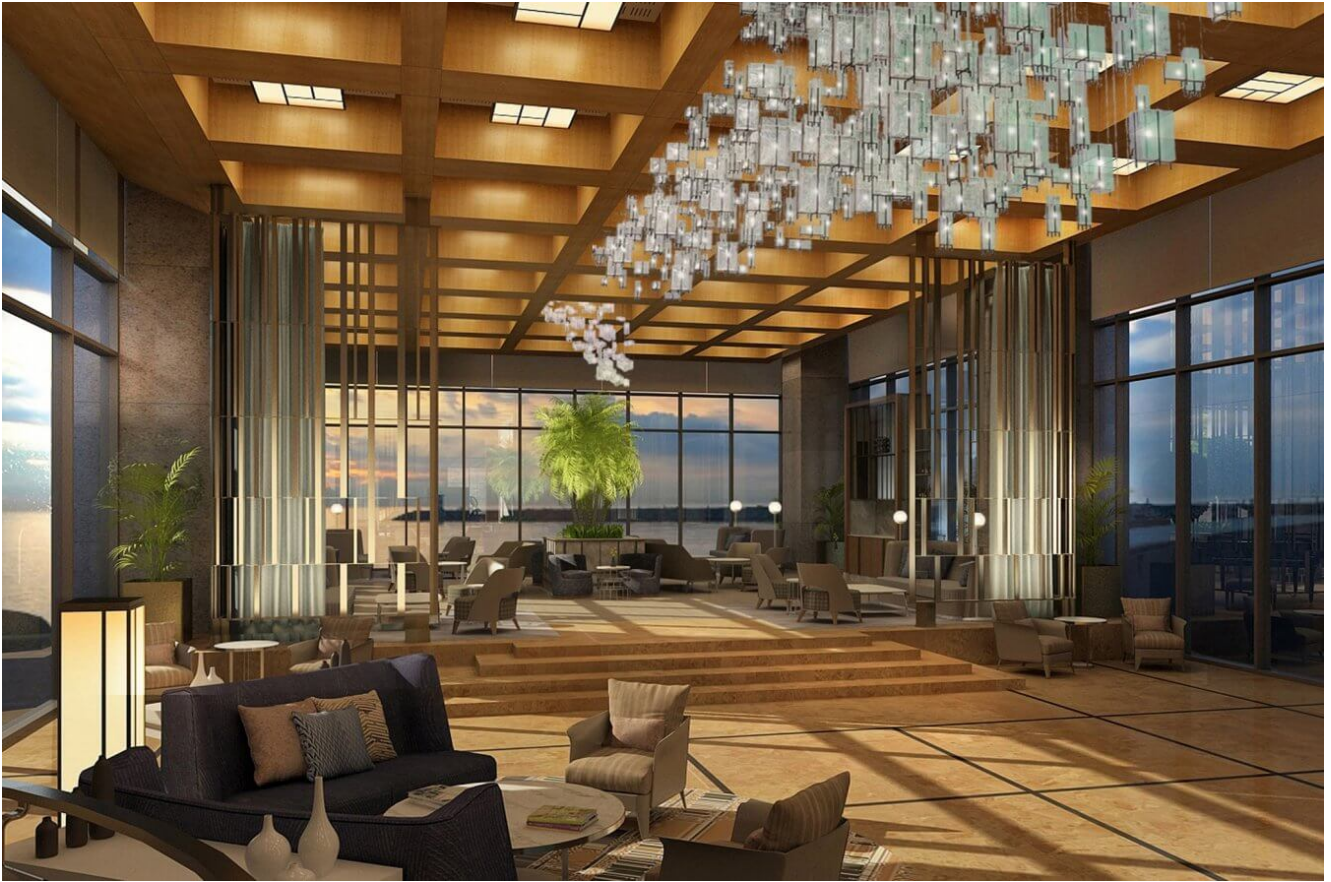
A Perfect Day in Tel Aviv

Tel Aviv is an interesting and unique city on its own. In the 90's and early 2000's Israel was a hotbed and the culture of the people reflects what they have been through – the absolute love of life, the attention to food, and the warm camaraderie is all part of what I experienced when I visited this city for a too-short stay of 2 days.

Oddly enough, Tel Aviv does not have many luxury resorts, and there are no traditional chains here but the Hilton does happen to be one of them. Staying at this grand hotel reminded me of the luxury of Hilton in its heyday. Although the exterior of the building may look slightly weathered once you enter you realize that this property competes with some of the best urban luxury resorts in the world.



By the beach ain't bad...ever



The stunning lobby was peaceful and the perfect spot for a cocktail at sunset

After settling into the hotel in a suite with a view fit for a king and newly remodeled bathrooms with bathtubs and windows that opened to the sea, I decided my first stop was to check out the beach scene.

I opted to ride one of the rideshare bikes that are prevalent all throughout the city and essentially rode the boardwalk South stopping along the way to take pictures and have a beer while enjoying the scenery. What struck me the most about being here was just how full of energy the city felt and how beautiful the ocean was. If you had just dropped me off here I would probably say it reminded me of a combination of Santa Monica California and Venice Beach (also in California).



This is where the cool kids of Tel Aviv hang out

My next stop was Jaffa and Jaffa Heights. At the south end of the beach you arrive at the old port city which put Tel Aviv on the international map. Established 1800 years BCE, this was an incredible sight to walk around and visit given that it was such a juxtaposition from the rest of the urban nature of Tel Aviv.



Jaffa Heights from my Drone's view

After quite a bit of walking and filming I realized that my next stop had to be for more food. After consulting Tripadvisor (which can be hit or miss – but still useful), I decided upon a place called “Ha’Pizza”. I had found based on my past few days in Jerusalem, that oddly enough – the Pizza in Israel was possibly as good or better than some of the best Neapolitan pizza i’ve had in the US in Brooklyn. I was told that this was because of the unique soil in the region and the resulting freshness of the grown tomatoes. As to whether this is true or not I’m not sure, but the pizza was damn good.



Pizza in Israel?? Yes.

Of course I couldn't just stop eating there. I had been told by an Israeli friend of mine that the most LOCAL dish I had to try was something called Sabich. A unique dish to this region, it consists of a sauteed or grilled juicy eggplant along with sliced hard boiled egg, generous amounts of creamy hummus, crunchy israeli salad, and Tahini and pickled sweet & sour mango, all on top of a fresh pita – this dish was essentially a to-go explosion of many flavors.

After stuffing myself to max capacity I decided to walk back to my hotel. Sunset was approaching and my solution was to soak in the bathtub with a view at the Hilton while listening to some Audiobooks. Tel Aviv – you have won my heart.



Yes, it's the local dish you want to try



Tub with an ocean view AND an opening window and balcony? This is right next to the word "Relaxation" in the dictionary

Portugal: How to do Lagos |

Lisbon | Sintra | Caiscais

Portugal is one incredible place. A combination of the best parts of Southern Italy and Spain, combined into one beautiful country full of spirit, passion, food, and scenery. This is one of the most asked about spots in my travel and seems to be a very popular place as people start discovering the magic of Portugal.

If it's your first time I recommend visiting two main cities and spending about 3-4 days in each. Those are Lisbon and Lagos, two different towns but both on the ocean. Caiscais and Sintra happen to be two other suburbs/cities that are right next to Lisbon so they're worth visiting for a day while you're in Lisbon and are extremely close.

1. **Lagos:** This is the seaside village with the quaint atmosphere, cobblestone streets, and incredible gastronomic restaurants. It's most known for its beautiful limestone bluffs which seem to consist of a multitude of colors, along with its deep blue and green beaches where you can spot the ocean bottom. The best way to discover Lagos is just to wander. This is essentially true of most of Portugal, but here time stands still and days are best spent having grilled seafood by the water, hanging out at the beach, and finishing the day with some wine and dinner in the city. Lagos is serviced by easily accessible trains that take you to Lisbon so everyone should check out this unique village and seaside town. When you're here do NOT miss out on the croissants. It's an odd suggestion but for some reason this town is known for them and one place in particular named "Croissanteria 29" is probably the best.



The Lagos Coastline and its incredible bluffs

- Lisbon:** Lisbon is a metropolis, but it's certainly walkable. The most well-known part of it is the old Jewish quarter called Alfama, with roots all the way back to the 11th century. There's a LOT to take in here, but my suggestion is to hire one of the tuk-tuk drivers for a small fee and have them drive you around town in an open air vehicle to see all the sights, and then spend the rest of the day getting lost in the Alfama district. Port Wine and Ginginha are the most well-known drinks and they take food seriously in this city so chances are you won't find anything that isn't delicious but be sure to wash it down with the port and Ginginha to get the full Lisbon experience.



The views from the top of the Alfama district are absolutely breathtaking and unreal

3. **Caiscais:** Lisbon is only a short drive (or uber) away from the seaside town of Caiscais. Only 19 miles away, or less than 30-45 minutes, it is a completely different vista, similar to Lagos, but with its own appeal. It is a more rugged coastline, with massive waves and reminds one of the Southern Cape of South Africa. This is a place to take half a day for lunch or dinner and to take in the rugged coastline scenery. The most famous point of Caiscais is the blowhole known as Boca Do Inferno (mouth of fire). Life here is slow and relaxed, so take your time, have some wine, and enjoy the views. Boca Do Inferno in Caiscais



Boca Do Inferno in Caiscais

4. **Sintra:** The Palatial territory of Sintra is less than 10 miles from Lisbon, and once again looks like a completely different place. With an exceptionally mountainous region, fern covered forests, exotic gardens, it is a UNESCO heritage site and home to some of the most beautiful Moorish and Roman compounds - palaces set high up on the hills. You'll feel at awe at the dynamic terrain and the architecture. You could easily spend an entire day just exploring the different mountain peaks and palaces here. Remember to bring warm clothing because it gets cold out here up in the mountains even in the middle of summer. Pena National Palace is probably the most well known site to visit here, but get there early because it can get very packed with tourists.



Palacio De Pena in Caiscais

How to do Tulum Properly: Tips for an Awesome First Trip

It seems that every year Tulum is getting more and more popular as a destination not only for those seeking yoga and vegan food on the beach, but for those looking to discover something other than nearby Cancun and its endless clubs.

This is a quick guide as to what you should (and shouldn't do) while in Tulum so that you can get the most out of this unique spot down in the Riviera Maya.

1. **Where to stay:** Your best bet is actually to stay just a

little bit north of Tulum town, in the area of Riviera Maya. My hotel of preference is the UNICO which is an all inclusive and VERY NEW (as of early 2018) hotel with stunning rooms, some of the most delicious all-inclusive meals you've ever had, and service that is on par with some of the best 5-star resorts in the world. However, if you do choose to stay somewhere else, just know that it's not necessary to stay within the actual town of Tulum as many of the resorts just north of it are within 15 minutes of taxi rides and will often offer better rates and larger accommodations – a win-win in my book.



The Unico 2087, it's every bit as nice as it looks.

- 2. What to Do:** There's three main things to do in Tulum. There's obviously more than that, but the first is to visit the old Mayan ruins. Now, normally I don't like tourist traps, but the Mayan Ruins are certainly worth seeing and so unique to this area of the world and so well preserved that they're definitely worth a visit. Just know that during the middle of the day there is ZERO shade and it gets quite hot. I would recommend using a tour guide from your hotel or a local service as

they know the quickest routes in and out of the place to make the whole experience a bit more fulfilling. The second thing you want to do in Tulum is just browse the actual town of Tulum. The main “row” is essentially a quaint one street town with a road and palm trees overhanging it. On both sides there’s hotels, stores, and a ton of shopping. You could easily spend a few hours just perusing this area and going in and out of spots. Many of the hotels here are worth visiting just for a few hours for a meal or for a day fee to use their “beach clubs”. Of particular note worth visiting is Habitas.



This is the main street. Stroll it.

3. **Cenotes:** The third thing everyone must do is visit a Cenote (or a few). These are essentially natural water sinkholes which double as swimming holes and are specific to this region of Mexico. These are amazing for their crystal clear water and incredible diversity of fish and turtles just hanging out. There are a TON of Cenotes in Tulum but there’s one in

particular that is definitely worth visiting and it is called the “Cenote Dos Ojos”. Now there’s a bit more to this – when you visit Cenote Dos Ojos be sure to take the ride towards the back of the Cenote park and explore the myriad of Cenotes that are beyond just the initial one at the entrance. Most people make the mistake of just going to the first one they see and miss out on exploring the more intricate caves that are deeper into the Cenote Park at Dos Ojos.

4. **Where to Eat:** Tulum is very much a food destination, with some calling it a rival to Mexico City, because of Chef’s like Rene Redzepi and Eric Werner who have created pop up culinary feasts in this beach town. There’s a heavy focus on wood-fired foods, local seafood, and Yucetecan inspired cuisine with Mexican influence. Keep in mind, the food here is NOT truly Mexican, and I say that in a good way, because it has its own unique flavor and style. There are quite a few restaurants that one could argue are worth visiting here in Tulum, but the two which I highly recommend are Hartwood and Kin Toh. Hartwood is an original and known for being one of the original high-end wood-fired restaurants – serving locally sourced ceviche and legendary pork ribs. Kin Toh is the place to go if you want equal parts entertainment to equal parts cuisine. Located in the Azulik hotel, this restaurant is situated in a treehouse, something straight out of Swiss Family Robinson or Tarzan with stunning skybridges, tables nested above the nearby forest, and hammocks to lay around in – all 40 feet in the air. The food itself is gastronomic and seasonal, and should you wish to imbibe they even offer a hookah program with imported tobaccos. You’ll want to spend a few hours here at sunset to lounge, relax, and eat and drink slowly.



This is Kin Toh. You'll want to spend a lot of time here.

My Three Favorite Things to Do in London

London is one of the metropolitan melting pots in the world, and in my opinion, the European version of New York City.

With its cobblestone lined streets and modern skyline, it is a mixture of old and new. Having survived 2000 years, it is a resilient and beautiful city with enough history and culture to woo even the most picky of travelers. There are definitely far more than three things to do in London, but when I visit, these are the three that I try to do time and again.

1. **Have a drink at the Shard at Sunset:** There's a few restaurants and bars in the Shard, which is Western Europe's tallest building, but my favorite is Gong, which on the 52nd floor – offers better views than the other establishments in the same tower. My favorite time to come is during sunset, and it's the perfect place to have a cocktail and relax. It almost feels as if you are on your own cloud above the city – the view is that expansive. This place does fill up, so I recommend making reservations ahead of time.



Highly recommend coming up here!!

2. **Have a Proper Afternoon Tea at Claridges in Mayfair:** There really is only ONE place to have a proper afternoon English tea time without the touristy nonsense, and it's at Claridges. This place has a 150 year tradition of serving the best tea in England, with a tea-melier who travels the globe procuring the best

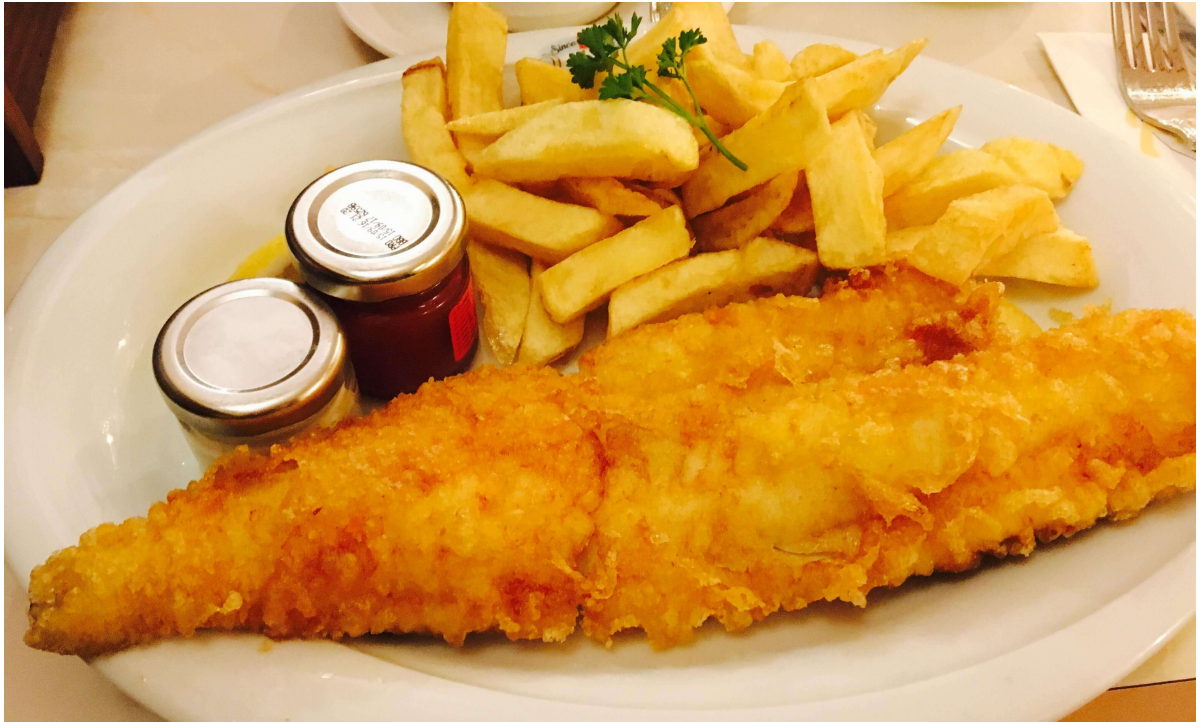
leaves from all corners of the globe. You can make reservations up to 90 days in advance, and be sure to dress up because this place takes their dress code very seriously!



This is a serious place, with some serious tea.

- 3. Grab Fish & Chips at my favorite spot:** Ok, so all three of these things involve food or drink. Sorry for adding to your waistline here! London is home to some of the best fish & chips (and mushy peas) the world has ever known. You can't visit this city without having some, and my favorite place to do it is a simple hole in the wall spot – Poppies Fish & Chips in Spitalfields is a place with 1950's memorabilia (sort of like the English version of Johnny Rockets), and some of the best fish & chips I've had anywhere. They're over 70 years old, so they know what they're doing and the beer battered sole here is so good it'll fill your stomach and your soul.

Trust me.



Look at that beautiful batter job, not too thick, not too thin, crispy and textured for just the right bite!

THREE Must Do's in Buenos Aires!

So you're in Buenos Aires, and you are obviously overwhelmed by this city so full of life and passion, food and wine, and don't know where to start. Well after spending a week here (which was not enough btw), I would like to suggest a few things which stood out to me and which I believe every traveller to BA needs to check out:

1. **Steak & Wine:** This is a pairing that is made in heaven (and if you're vegan/vegetarian/pescetarian substitute

fish or veggies for the red meat but don't skip the wine). South America has regions renowned for their grapes and Argentina is especially known for its Malbecs. With its inky dark colors, and heavy tannin flavoring, Malbecs are perfect for rich foods, and for ridiculously low prices I had some of the best wines (comparable to the best that Napa Valley has to offer) down here in Buenos Aires. You're selling yourself short if you don't try out a wine tour or a nice steakhouse down here, I recommend Don Julio for steaks (they're cooked over a wood fire to perfection), and "Wine Tasting Buenos Aires" for your wine tours. You can't go wrong with that pairing ☐



Wine is everywhere in Argentina. Don't miss out on it!

- 2. Go to Uruguay:** So this might seem a bit odd, you're in Buenos Aires and I've told you to visit Uruguay. Well, its only a short 1 hour fairy ride away, and worth a day trip. This was one of the coolest things I did when I was in Buenos Aires. It's so close, and its another

country with its own feel. There's cobblestone streets, quaint little restaurants, and you can rent a golf car to putt putt around town in. You won't be short of things to do if you come here and the exchange rate is even better than that of Argentina, and you can use the same currency here. I particularly liked having lunch at Charco Bistro which is located inside the Charco Hotel.



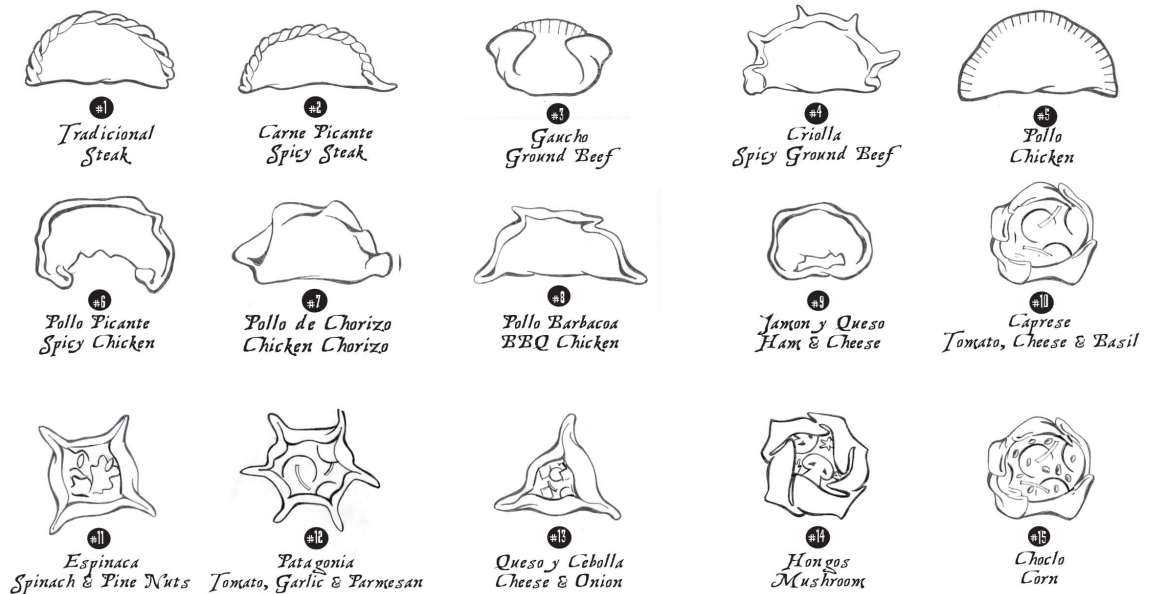
The food was superb, the view was phenomenal, and the wine..well I forgot about that :)

3. Eat Lots of Empanadas: Argentinians LOVE their Empanadas

here, and for good reason, they're exquisite. They come in all shapes/sizes/flavors (check the chart below for reference). Just like other parts of the world where there's a common cuisine and everyone has an opinion on which establishment serves the best version of it, you won't get a single answer if you were to ask the locals which place serves the best empanada, but i'd recommend you start at these places: Punto y Banca, El Sanjuanino, 1810 Cocina Regional, and Gourmet.

REPULGUES

A guide to what's inside your empanada before you take a bite!



You know when your mom told you it wasn't what's on the outside that counts? Well that's wrong for empanadas.

FIVE Sights in Marrakech

worth seeing!

So you're in Morocco and you want to see a million different things. After spending a few weeks there, including about a week in Marrakech, time in Fez, Chefchaouen, Rabat, and Casablanca, I was able to check out most of the top sights in this beautiful North African country. Out of all the cities, I believe Marrakech offers the most sights, and is the only one worth spending more than 2 days in. After taking part in about 20 of the top Tripadvisor suggestions, I've listed the top attractions in Marrakech below and tell you why you should visit them! Keep in mind that many of these sights are incredibly close to each other and you can actually visit the Medina, the Ben Youssef Madrasa, Jemaa Al Fnaa, and Le Jardin Secret all in one full day.

1. **The Medina:** Every city with a history has an old walled city center, cobble-stone walkways, skinny corridors, and the smells/sights/sounds of locals going about their day. The Medina in Marrakech is the same way, and walking through the Medina makes you feel as if you were spun back in time to 1000 years AD. This is a place you can spend quite a few hours in, wandering and checking out the various wares and tasting local cuisine. This is also close to a few major sights which I have as must-do's listed below.



The spiderweb of corridors in the Medina is a place you'll spend hours exploring

2. **Jemaa Al Fnaa:** This is the square of the Medina, and if you haven't seen enough in the Souk's of the Medina you'll also spend some time here, this is also where the famous snake shows are along with numerous other vendors selling almost anything you can think of that's local to Morocco. You won't need much time here, but it's worth looking at. In the summer's I'd recommend coming here at night because during the day time it is ridiculously hot and not many vendors will be around.



The center of the Medina is a marketplace that is an all day attraction

3. **Ben Youssef Madrasa:** This was one of the first Islamic College's constructed over 1000 years ago. It's an interesting place to visit as architecturally everything is built geometrically symmetrical, and the ornate work done by the builders is evident as the place looks as pristine as if it were built yesterday. This is right next to the Medina and doesn't take more than 10-15 minutes to look at so I wouldn't allocate too much time but I would certainly drop by.



The architecture here is worth the visit.

4. **Le Jardin Secret:** This garden is similar to Jardin Majorelle, but in my opinion is a better visit because it's less crowded and has a really cool belltower that is worth going to the top of to get a view of the Medina and surrounding neighborhood. The garden is composed of two large courtyards lined with beautiful foliage and a few spaces with artwork and other rotating exhibits.



The larger of the two courtyards in Le Jardin Secret

5. **La Mamounia Spa:** This is the famous spa and hotel that everyone in Morocco takes pictures at when they're visiting Marrakech. I got spa services for myself, and can't say they were really that great, but the spa and property boast some really intricate moorish interior design and architecture. You can pay for a cheap day pass here to use the pools (indoor and outdoor), and I highly recommend it.



This is probably the most popular image of Morocco on Social Media

TWO THINGS YOU MUST DO IN TOKYO, AND A THIRD THAT MOST PEOPLE DONT KNOW ABOUT!

Tokyo, a city always on the move, and a city of the future. Nowhere else on Earth will you find such modernity and culture shock. The Japanese people have figured out how to enjoy modern life, from Cat Cafes, to Michelin star restaurants, there's something for everyone in Tokyo. Here's my quick guide of must see's that I find to be uniquely original to this amazing city:

1. **Harajuku:** You've heard the name before. This is where people from around the world come to consume. I'm not a mall person, but Harajuku is so full of sights and sounds that you won't feel like you're trapped in a strip mall looking at the same shops you'd find anywhere else. To be fair, Japan is a consumer nation and Tokyo has many places to shop, but Harajuku dethrones them all. There's stores dedicated to "Kawaii" or cute items, there's fetish shops, there's stores that are dedicated to Lady Gaga outfits. If you want different and special, this is the place to go. On top of that, you can't go wrong with the numerous restaurants in Harajuku. This really is a place to wander and get lost in, think of it as a modern Souk.



Your head will spin with all the stuff to look/buy/eat in Harajuku

- 2. Have some Ramen:** I'll refer over to the Eater guide for the full list, but if you come to Tokyo, you have to try the Ramen. There's national competitions here for this stuff, it's the national dish and akin to Chili in the US – each region has something different to offer. Even if your connotation of Ramen is Top-Ramen noodle microwaved in a dorm room, you should get over it and check out some of the concoctions made in Japan. My personal favorite is Tanaka Second, where they serve a soup made with abalone. You'll be having Ramen more than once if you're a foodie, and Tokyo is the place to do it!



This is the Abalone soup Ramen at Tanaka Second. My personal favorite. However YMMV.

3. **Golden Gai:** This is something that just shouldn't be missed. Looking like a shantytown tucked away in a little corner of Shinjuku, Golden Gai is a cluster of small buildings leftover from old Tokyo, with merely six streets and alleyways so small they can only fit people walking through them. A magnet area for celebrities and artist types, this is the "cool spot" of Tokyo. Bars are hidden upstairs and are just a quick ladder climb away. Most of them are so small that they only seat 6-7 people, and many only serve regulars, but be nice, make some friends, and you'll be sure to have an awesome night bar hopping in this area.



You can't miss this secretive bar area. Believe me.

3 Things to do in Dubai & Abu Dhabi on a layover

So you are spanning the globe, either to the African continent, or from Asia to Europe, or somewhere else in the Middle East. Whatever it is, you probably have a stopover in Dubai or Abu Dhabi, and you should extend your stay for a little bit if you haven't checked out these desert locales.

The best way to describe the UAE is a mecca of modernity that rises out of what seems like extraterrestrial conditions.

Here are the spots I recommend you check out while you're in Dubai:

1. **The Sheikh Zayad Mosque:** Singlehandedly one of the most beautiful architectural sights i've ever witnessed, this is probably on the same level as the Taj Mahal. Built to be the most incredible mosque in the world, I think

the builders reached their goal. Gorgeous and stunning from every angle, you could stay here for a few hours and still be mesmerized. This is a must see.



In all its gloriousness, 180 degrees of beauty

- 2. The Dubai Mall & Fountains:** I usually shy away from places I can find elsewhere when i'm traveling, and the malls usually fall into this category, especially if they don't carry goods only found locally (this is tough nowadays with the internet and easy shipping). However, the Dubai Mall is a very cool place, with water fountain shows every hour, and an indoor aquarium that looks like a who's who of sea creatures. It's worth visiting this place for these two spots alone.



Not your average mall. I guarantee it.

- 3. Hang out at Jumeirah Beach:** The Burj Al Arab is here, the sail looking hotel, but what I found more interesting was just spending some time at the beach. The gulf waters are warm and saltier than most other oceans, and the sand is incredibly nice. It's a unique experience being at the beach in the middle of a desert, and something that is quite different from spending beach time on a tropical island per se. For that fact alone, I think it's worth checking out Jumeirah Beach.



It's not the prettiest beach, but its unique. You're in the middle of the desert, but you're also at the beach. Think about that.

3 Things to Do in the Walled City of Cartagena, Colombia

The walled city of Cartagena is one of the most stunning historic UNESCO cities i've visited. It has its own culture and flair and the colorful alleyways and constant buzz make this city always comes to the top of my list when i'm asked where I would recommend to go in the world. This is where you should stay if you're visiting, and you might not ever want to leave. Here are a few reasons why:

1. **You can have some of the best Ceviche in the world:** La Cevicheria is home to what Anthony Bourdain calls some of the best Ceviche he's had. Now, I would say it's

pretty damn good, but I would also say you can get some pretty incredible ceviche in Panama as well. However, what makes this place one of my favorites is their hot sauce that they make and bottle themselves! Anyone that knows me knows i'm a hot sauce aficionado, and the combination of fresh seafood and some spicy sauce makes me about as happy as a kid on Christmas. Check this place out when you're here.



Eat here. I beg of you.

- 2. You can get lost, and enjoy it too:** The streets are meandering here, the street signs are hard to see, and for the most part, there's no way to figure out from a faraway waypoint where you are. But this is all ok here in Cartagena. Much like other older cities around the world (Marrakech in Morocco, The Old City in Barcelona, Casco Viejo in Panama) you tend to walk down a meandering road and not know where you're going, but there's something fun and interesting happening around every corner here and you won't ever get bored or

actually feel lost. The walls are colorful, there's a million smells, and this is a place where time slows down and you can enjoy just getting lost.



How can you not want to get lost in this? (Rhetorical)

- 3. You can Enjoy Sunsets with a Cocktail in the Streets:** Everyone loves this, the romantical gesture of having a cocktail on a patio on the street, watching the locals

stroll by. You can't beat Cartagena if this is one of your favorite leisurely activities. I would check out Demente, El Baron, and Donde Fidel.



It might be 85 at night, but it's perfect for a drink and some people watching

Three Things You Have to Do While in Seattle (From a former native)

I've been to Seattle quite a few times, being that I used to own a small wine & beer company in said town. Even so,

whenever I come back to visit old friends, I always end up going to the same places because they're so unique to this city. Here they are listed below:

1. **Waterfront Market:** Home to a few things, the first Starbucks, the fish market, and one of my favorite clam chowder spots in the US – Pikes Place Chowder. I mostly go here just for a leisurely stroll, coffee in hand, and people watch. It's beautiful, owing to the fact that the waterfront is sloped and as you walk towards the market you have incredible views of Elliotts Bay just beyond.



The all famous Seattle Waterfront market

2. **Spend some time at South Lake Union:** This area of town has grown considerably since I lived in Seattle, but it still retains its relaxed atmosphere and feel. The Lake itself is enormously huge, and seaplanes are constantly departing and arriving from it. It's a beautiful place to either picnic, stroll around leisurely, or have a nice meal on the waterfront. It's also close to the Space Needle, which is worth seeing but only on a clear

day (for the views of course).



It's beautiful isn't it? South Lake Union is yet another place to kill a few hours relaxing with a beer and picnicking

- 3. Definitely Eat Seafood:** You have to check out the seafood offerings in Seattle. Being a town in the Pacific Northwest, it has access to some of the best fresh oysters and salmon you will find anywhere in the US. My favorite is Elliotts where they serve Oysters during a progressive happy hour from 3PM on. One of my first meals in Seattle is usually spent at Elliotts. That should tell you something.



Elliotts is the place to go for fresh seafood and a great view.

4. **If you love coffee the Starbucks Reserve:** Even if you don't it's worth visiting the Starbucks Reserve. This is one of the most awesome coffee institutions in the world, even if you're a snob. It's a massive warehouse-turned-coffee-mecca where they roast the coffee in front of you in beautiful 2 story copper roasters and serve caffeinated concoctions that can only be found at this location. The other Starbucks at the waterfront might be the first one, but this is BY FAR the best coffee shop i've seen the world over. You HAVE to visit this spot if you're ever in Seattle and even mildly appreciate coffee.



This is THE coffee mecca

The Young Traveler Guide to New Orleans

New Orleans, the city of soul, the city of food, and a city where you're likely to not remember much, is one of my favorite places in the US. Follow my quick guide below on must-sees while you're here!

- 1. Eat a Beignet:** There's only one real place to eat a beignet, and it's at the famous Cafe Du Monde. If you're not familiar with the beignet, it's a close cousin to the doughnut. It's basically a fried pillow of dough dipped in some white sugar and served piping hot. Cafe Du Monde has been at its main location on Decatur street for over 150 years and it's a unique experience. You get into line to sit down, then the minute your butt hits the seat a menu is handed to you with the expectation that orders be placed with haste. Don't worry, once you get your order in relax and soak in the scene. Be sure to order a coffee with hickory from this joint, and enjoy every savory bite of your

beignets here because there's nowhere else in the world you can get one like it! (I know, i've tried looking)



Its soft, chewy, sweet, but not overly so, and with coffee – you don't get many moments more perfect than this

- 2. Get a Alligator Airboat Tour:** It's no secret that New Orleans is below sea level. It has been devastated by more than one hurricane, but the tenacity of its residents allows it to get back onto its feet every time. There is one positive note to its geographic location – it's that the local area has been endowed with swampland that is not only uniquely beautiful, but full of life. Airboats are the way to get around, and the ride out to swampland is usually only 45 minutes. If you've never been on an airboat, it's an awesome time! Cruising (more like sliding around) on water only inches deep at 45+ mph, the beauty of the land rushing by you, you get a sense of just how much countryside there is around the bustling city of New Orleans. In

the summer months you'll definitely see alligators, but even if you don't, it's worth going out on the water just for the sheer joy and beauty of it.



Riding around the swamps on an airboat is one of the most incredible things you can do when visiting New Orleans!

- 3. Get Involved in the Cuisine:** This city is known for food, and there's a lot of it to eat here so make sure you came hungry, or brought your stretchy pants! There's a multitude of places to eat here, and many are staples that have been around for a while, check out The Ruby Slipper Cafe for some of the most gluttonous and delicious southern breakfasts you'll ever have, grab a famous Muffuletta sandwich (A version of an Italian sub) for lunch, and then have dinner at Commander's Palace where everything is served with class and elegance. The mixture of Southern and French influences in New Orleans means everything has butter in it, or is friend (or is a combo of both), so although your health

might suffer a bit, your stomach will always be happy and full.



Breakfast at the Ruby Slipper is nothing short of spectacular. If you like benedicts, they have plenty of choices!

- 4. Catch a Jazz Show in the French Quarter:** So you have heard of the French Quarter, it's rowdy, it's the center of the city, and it's a lot of fun. However, if you're no longer looking to just get black out drunk and would like to combine your imbibing with some class, check out the numerous Jazz Clubs that line this part of town. I prefer Cafe Beignet because of its open air atmosphere. They do serve beignets, which are great, but of course still don't compare to Cafe Du Monde's.



Cafe Beignet. Check it out. Have a drink, have a beignet, and enjoy the jazz.

The FIVE things you have to do in Hong Kong during a layover!

Hong Kong is a conflux of ancient and modern, the intersection of East and West, and one of the most lively and exciting cities one can experience. Whether it's indulging in gourmet dim sum, shopping for electronics or random gifts in the Ladies Market, or just sightseeing from Victoria's Peak – I can't stress enough that there's something for everyone in this city-state. Having been to HK over a dozen times, I still choose to drop by here for layovers and without further

delay, here are all the spots I recommend you checking out while you're here for a short period of time!

1. Victorias Peak: This is usually at the top of everyone's list of tourist spots, mostly because it has incredible views of Hong Kong harbor, along with views of mainland China on just the other side of the peak. You can take a cab up here, the tram, or go for a hike! There's also a mall on top and lots of shops, so expect to spend a little bit of time taking in the view, and having a snack. If it's cloudy, avoid Victoria's Peak because you really won't be able to see much up here.



The view from here doesn't get much better as you can see out over both Hong Kong, and into Mainland China

2. Eat Dim Sum: This is where it all started. Dim Sum, or small snack in cantonese, means small dishes meant to be shared. Ask for opinions on which restaurant in Hong Kong serves the best Dim Sum, and you'll be hard pressed to find

one answer. However, I will recommend **Tim Ho Wan** as one of the top Dim Sum restaurants in Hong Kong. It's a hole in the wall joint, and it doesn't have the traditional Dim Sum carts rolling around for you to choose dishes. There is also usually a wait, but it goes by very quickly as the service is incredibly fast at this spot. If you're looking for something fancier, I suggest checking out **One Dim Sum**. Either way, if you're in Hong Kong, you **HAVE** to have Dim Sum! My favorite dish, which is tough to replicate almost anywhere else in the world is "Har Gao", which is steamed shrimp with chives inside a delicate doughy shell. The mark of a good Har Gao is a soft relatively thin glutinous shell that isn't too chewy yet doesn't break apart the minute you bite into it.



Tim Ho Wan. It's not the fanciest, but damn its good

3. Tian Tan Buddha: So i'd place this one in the tourist category, but definitely one of the tourist sites worth seeing. Located outside of Hong Kong city itself, it isn't a terribly far journey, but definitely will take a few hours out of your day to visit. The Buddha itself is massive, and the area its located in (Ngong Ping) on Lantau Island, is green and lush, and feels a world away from the bustle of the city.

The cable car ride up is worth doing, and remember to bring your hiking shoes because it's a few hundred steps up to the top of the Buddha!



Come for the Buddha, stay for the relaxing atmosphere. (Pic Courtesy Artelounge – because they took a better one than mine!)

4. Walk Tsim sha Tsui Promenade: I'm going to preface this by saying, there's not a lot going on at just the promenade, but spend a little bit of time and just wander the area, because

whether it's getting lost in Mong Kok (the nearby shopping area), sightseeing the Skyline of Hong Kong across the harbor, or just leisurely exploring the dozen or so museums in this area, you're sure to find something to do by taking some time and just meandering. You might feel like you're lost, but I guarantee you'll be excited by this very walkable neighborhood of Hong Kong.



TST, or Tsim Sha Tsui, is one of the most interesting places in Hong Kong to get lost in.

5. Eat on a floating restaurant: There are quite a few of these “junk boats” in the harbor and each one boasts to possess the best cuisine. My favorite is the original – Jumbo. However, depending on capacity and how early you book you really can't go wrong because the experience of eating in

the harbor on one of these boats, where you can choose fresh seafood brought live to your table, is something that is very uniquely Hong Kong. The menu constantly changes, but since you're at a seafood restaurant, I would suggest ordering some seafood ☐



Great food, views on the water, how can you go wrong?

Whatever you do, you'll have fun, because Hong Kong is a city of lights and a city of life, and everything about it is vibrant and unique!