



Dream Destinations 2020

As you chart out your travel goals for the year ahead, check out our guide featuring destinations as diverse geographically as they are culturally. Immersive or adventurous, under-the-radar or classic, life-changing or enlightening, which trip of a lifetime will it be next?

words // Punita Malhotra



01

PATAGONIA, ARGENTINA: TAKE A GLACIER HIKE

400,000 square miles of this Andean paradise bordering a tantalisingly long slice of the South American continent is every nature lover's ultimate fantasy. A land of blemish-free beauty, where the silence of turquoise lagoons and icy peaks is broken only by sounds of cracking icebergs and sliding glaciers.

The Argentinean side of Patagonia is worth a trip solely for the pristine UNESCO-listed Los Glaciares National Park, where dozens of milky-white glaciers have a secluded home. The show-stopper here is the Perito Moreno Glacier, a gigantic ice river that stretches for more than 30 kilometres into infinity. A series

of boardwalks allow up-close views of its cobalt-coloured frozen fjord wall, nearly 5-kilometre long and 246-feet high. Other star attractions are the jagged granite peaks of Mount Fitz Roy and Cerro Torre, accessible via the off-grid El Chaltén village. And to fuel the fascination fire further, one can witness gigantic moving icebergs in the ocean, over a 3-4 day cruise to the Magellan Straits along the Beagle Channel, where Charles Darwin once made his momentous voyage.

On the Chilean side, Puerto Natales provides a gateway to the landmark Torres del Paine National Park, for more phenomenal spectacles. The park is sheer delight for trekking enthusiasts. The ultimate thrill is an ice-trek over the gigantic Grey Glacier. Trudging in the Ice Field over sheets of shining ice, is not just an adventure, it's a life-altering event.

Witness gigantic moving icebergs over a 3-4 day cruise to the Magellan Straits along the Beagle Channel.



You can fly to
Buenos Aires
with Vistara's
codeshare partners
British Airways and
interline partner
KLM.

02

GALWAY, IRELAND: 365 DAYS OF FESTIVITIES

This imminently walkable, unabashedly rustic and refreshingly vivacious harbour city perched strategically on the spectacular 2,600-kilometres Wild Atlantic Way of the Emerald Isle, has been designated a European Capital of Culture for 2020 for all the right reasons. The capital of the ancient Irish province of Connaught, synonymous with music and culture, is a delightful smorgasbord of medieval history and contemporary verve. It is also an ideal base to soak in the region's ethereal landscapes, including Cliffs of Moher, Burren, Aran Islands and Connemara. Galway is the hot-new alternative to the Irish capital, Dublin. The 'City of Festivals' has a lively vibe that can be attributed to its large student population. A treasure trove of unexpected discoveries awaits in the cobbled lanes that weave within its medieval town walls, including the modest St Nicholas' Cathedral, where Christopher Columbus is said to have offered homage once. The tranquility of the salmon-loaded River Corrib rushing under several stony arched bridges is a stark contrast to the buzz of the vibrant Shop Street and bohemian Latin Quarter. Here, quaint colourful architecture, handcrafted Claddagh jewellery shops and quirky bronze-cast statues fight for attention,



You can fly to
Dublin with
Vistara's
codeshare partner
British Airways and
interline partners
Air France and
Lufthansa.

while restaurants and cafes lure passionate palates with crunchy fish-and-chips, scrumptious scones and tantalising tarts. Live music spills from innumerable atmospheric and legendary pubs, and enthusiastic buskers hook crowds on street corners. Beyond the 16th century Spanish Arch and modern City Museum, the riverside Long Walk tempts with a row of brightly painted houses

facing the swan-infested waters of the brilliantly blue Galway Bay. And if that is not enough to complete the Irish dream, Galway offers a long, windy, grassy oceanfront promenade to-die-for. Soccer practice, dog-walks and jogging trails, stand sandwiched between brilliant blues and gorgeous greens. A midsummer night's dream? Who wants to wake up now?



03 ESSAOUIRA, MOROCCO: COLOURS OF HISTORY

Narrow passageways, spice-scented souqs, palm-lined avenues and Moorish tile-clad riads. A vibrant port, dancing waves and a moon-shaped golden beach. The canvas of an offbeat Morocco unveils itself in Essaouira. This small seaside town is just a three-hour drive from the thronging capital, Marrakech. Exotic meets soothing effortlessly and effectively in this 'Wind City of Africa'.

Morocco's prime port in the 19th century, the city was once perennially crammed with caravan-loaded gold and spices ready to be shipped to Europe and the Americas. But legacy still peeks through the cracking paint of hundreds of Phoenician-purple fishing boats that speckle the soft beach sands. The colour, harvested from the

shells found on the nearby Purple Islands, reflects a 3000-year old history of murex production.

The wispy whiteness of the floating clouds and cerulean blues of the endless skies seems mirrored in the whitewashed walls and blue-shuttered windows of the UNESCO World Heritage medina (inner walled city). A pleasantly intriguing mix of Moroccan and European styles encourages more aimless wandering than time allows. Blissful days flit by sipping steaming mint tea, devouring endless flavourful tagines, swaying to the rhythmic waves of the local trance-like Gnawa music and picking up spices, Berber lotions and handmade jewellery and colourful pottery.



04 SERENGETI, AFRICA: WITNESS THE RACE FOR LIFE

This vast ecosystem in east-central Africa, spanning 30,000 square kilometres from North Tanzania to southwestern Kenya, lives up to its Masai name, meaning endless plains. Expansiveness is the keyword here, from massive mountains, vast grasslands, watercolour skies and swampy savannah to an infinity of granite kopjes and the active volcano Ol Doinyo Lengai. Wild and free, proclaims every inch of Serengeti, home and hearth to varied species such as wildebeest, zebra, lion, leopard, cheetah, giraffe and elephant among others.

Serengeti's claim to fame is the greatest show on earth...

completely unchoreographed and unrehearsed, yet predictable to clockwork-perfection. This annual event takes place across 1000 kilometres of woodlands, hills and open plains, across Serengeti National Park and Kenya's Maasai Mara game reserve and beyond. It involves the largest terrestrial mammal movement of animals on earth, the Great Migration.

In this behemoth of an odyssey, the travellers happen to be two million wildebeest and 200,000 zebras. An endless journey chasing the rains turns out to be a race for life and survival. The biggest action sequence ever imagined bursts with raw energy, rising clouds of dust and the unharnessed thundering of millions of hooves. The swarm of four-legged beasts is unstoppable in their hunt for lush grazing grounds and life-giving water. Post-Serengeti, survival takes on a new meaning.

Serengeti is home and hearth to varied species such as wildebeest, zebra, lion, leopard, cheetah, giraffe and elephant among others.



05 KYOTO, JAPAN: SOAK IN THE ANCIENT CULTURE

Firmly upholding its 8th century legacy as the former imperial capital of Japan, this enigmatic Asian city is a living testimony to the grace and fame of its country's past. Willow-shaded townhouses, mysterious white-faced geisha, immaculate rock gardens and ancient pagoda temples define its distinctive allure. Its snow-clad Golden Pavilion, cherry blossom laden streets, and vibrant red maples are as emblematic as are its samurai swords, feudal ninjas and ryokan inns. Kyoto promises to shine even brighter as the Olympic Games Host 2020.

Dilemmas abound with as many as 2,000 shrines and Buddhist temples, and Fushimi Inari-taisha is unmissable for its 10,000 crimson gates, which wind up to

Inari Mountain in a blazing trail. A deep dive into zen, a forest bathing experience in Arashiyama, comes highly recommended. Walking trails snake through thousands of slim stalks of bright green bamboo soaring up to 1,000 feet in height.

Wooden teahouses sporting glowing paper lanterns offer a peek into traditional tea ceremonies, Chado. The fine art of Japanese gastronomy is celebrated in private *tatami-mat* rooms, and epicureanism reaches new levels as one tunes into the delicacy of local specialties like sushi, tempura, soba, udon, ramen, unagi and okonomiyaki. From origami art and elegant kimono outfits to stylised classical performances, the richness and variety of cultural experiences have no boundaries in Kyoto. ✿



You can fly to
Osaka with
Vistara's
codeshare
partner Japan
Airlines.