

Peace and tranquility permeate Kyoto, with stays and landscapes exuding a rejuvenating calm.



CITY OF ZEN

Sometimes, peace is what you need to shake off apathy. For that, there's no place better than Kyoto with its multitude of landmarks, both natural and man-made, that are stunning in every season. Experience the healing power of nature deep in the calming Arashiyama Bamboo Grove; soak up the serenity of the ancient shrines and temples at just about every turn; or spend a leisurely day exploring Gion, which exudes the quiet magic of old Japan with its stone-paved streets and traditional wooden houses. Adding to its rich heritage of traditional arts and crafts are the artisanal coffee joints made for chilling—Angel Library, which requires a code for entry, is a must-visit. To fully reap the benefits of the serene city, opt for a ryokan-style, nostalgic yet new stay at the Suiran (marriott.com/hotels/travel/ukylc-suiran-a-luxury-collection-hotel-kyoto) or Sowaka (sowaka.com).

RELIGHT MY FIRE

Feeling a little worse for wear after the long hunker-down? Rediscover that zest for life with these cities that belong on any globally curious traveller's bucket list. #dreamnowtravellater

There are photo ops aplenty in Amsterdam, from canal houses on Amstel river (right) to funky stays (below)



UNCHARTED TERRITORY

Inject some excitement back into your life by venturing into the unexplored. Amsterdam, the cosmopolitan capital of the Netherlands, proves an eye-opener for those bored with the same old, same old. Its vibrant cultural scene takes you beyond the usual art- and history-oriented museums to include those that cover a range of eclectic topics—think microbes (Micropia), medical abnormalities (Museum Vrolijk; not for the faint-hearted!) and bags (Museum of Bags and Purses). For a refreshing change of pace, take a bicycle ride and soak in the sights of historic step-garbled dwellings and 17th-century canals with Unesco status—both of which provide plenty of photo ops. And for the ultimate thrill, check into the 50m-high Crane Hotel Faralda (faralda.com), where any of its three two-storey suites—shipping-containers-turned-luxurious-rooms stacked atop one another inside the body of an old loading crane—makes for an unforgettable stay.

HOT, HIP & NOW

There's nothing like a sunshiny getaway to get your mojo back, and Lisbon is just that. Blessed with good weather year-round, value-for-money stays and eats, and sweeping vistas, it hits the trifecta of accessibility, affordability and Insta-worthiness. No doubt adding to the charm are the adorable yellow trams taking you along the picturesque streets and squares. There's something for everyone here: Ancient fortresses, monasteries and castles for culture buffs; a throbbing nightlife for the party crowd; a burgeoning food scene for foodies. Options are aplenty, too, when it comes to chic stays: Live like a local in a stylish B&B such as Casa do Principe (casadoprincipe.com) or go upscale with luxe abodes like those under the Altis Hotels group (altishotels.com).



From above: The cute trams of Lisbon. The indoor pool at the posh Altis Belém Hotel & Spa

BY STEPHANIE YEONG, PHOTOGRAPHY: 123RF; COURTESY OF SOWAKA, SUIRAN KYOTO, CRANE HOTEL FARALDA & ALTIS BELÉM HOTEL & SPA