



# *Live Like A Local*

HIDDEN GEMS IN SEATTLE, SYDNEY,  
BEIJING, BANGALORE, CAIRO,  
ST HYACINTHE AND SANTOS

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A photograph of a garden terrace. In the foreground, there are vibrant pink and red flowers. A stone terrace leads to a fountain with water spraying upwards. Several people are sitting at tables on the terrace, some standing and talking. The background is filled with tall, leafy trees.

# *A Taste of New France*

OUTSIDE OF MONTREAL,  
ST HYANCINTHE OFFERS  
A TRADITIONAL LOOK AT FRENCH  
CANADA, WITH ITS FOOD, WINE  
AND THE GREAT OUTDOORS.

Jardin  
Daniel A  
Séguin  
Terrasse.

Outside Le 1555  
Marche Public.



**WHILE MONTREAL THRUMS** with all the energy you would expect from a city famed as a cultural juggernaut, life in its near neighbor tends to move as sedately as the flow of the lazy Yamaska River, which it overlooks.

But that's not to say that St Hyacinthe isn't dynamic in its own unassuming way. Known around Canada as one of the country's leading agri-food centers, it possesses a treasure trove of draws that includes a wealth of outdoor activities, historic buildings and intriguing boutiques.

#### **GOURMAND MORNINGS**

As the fulcrum of a vast agricultural region, meanwhile, the city is deservedly winning kudos for its culinary scene with the abundance of fresh produce from the area showcased at some of Canada's most enticing markets as well as a clutch of excellent dining venues. In fact,

gastronomy in all its many delicious permutations is the theme of arguably the biggest highlight in St Hyacinthe: the historic **Le 1555 Marche Public**, the city's mouthwatering public market. In operation since 1830, the attraction is one of Canada's finest markets. A cornucopia of edibles is available to sample or purchase from merchant food shops that include a fromagerie, fruit expert, butcher shop, fishmonger, artisanal bakery and pastry shop. Be sure to try the freshly made ice cream featuring seasonal fruits and flavors.

While it's possible to spend hours browsing and grazing at the various outlets, many in-the-know locals use the market as a staging post for picking up the makings of an extravagant picnic to take to another of the top stops in St Hyacinthe, **Parc Les Salines**. A haven for outdoor enthusiasts, the park shines in all

seasons. In spring and summer, an expansive picnic area abounds with families taking advantage of the various spots for play. In winter, possibilities include skating, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.

It's not just local gastronomic goodies that can be stowed away in any picnic hamper. Quebec is also known for the quality of its viticulture and there are several excellent wineries in the immediate vicinity of St Hyacinthe. Most of these are open to the public, making them a fine option for a half-day or full-day look at Canadian wine culture. Among the most renowned of these wineries is **Vignoble Chateau Fontaine** ([vignoblechateaufontaine.ca](http://vignoblechateaufontaine.ca)). Founded in 2001, the vineyard produces a variety of award-winning bottles.

#### A BREAK FOR LUNCH

Indeed, in this land of plenty, there are multiple options for indulgence of the culinary variety. And this adage is also applicable to the compact but creative dining scene in St Hyacinthe. While



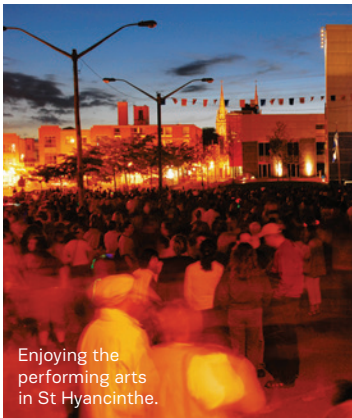
Parc Les Salines in winter.

high-end dining gets short shrift in this redoubtably unpretentious place, St Hyacinthe excels at laid-back casual dining with everything from old-school French bistros to authentic Vietnamese food available. For those who like to push the boat out just a little bit, one of the most elevated culinary gems in town is **L'Escabeche** ([lescabeche.com](http://lescabeche.com)) where a small but daily-changing menu of tapas is accompanied by a formidable selection of wines.

#### ENJOY ARTS AND CULTURE

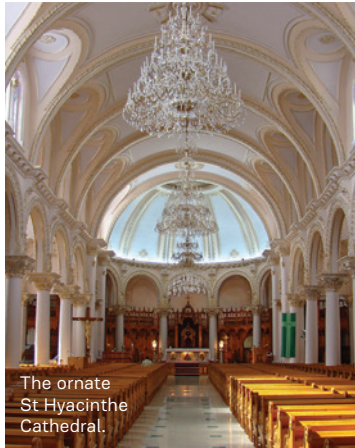
While you could be forgiven for whiling away much of your time in St Hyacinthe in a food coma, there are plenty of other highlights.

For the culturally inclined, the **Centre des Arts Juliette-Lassonde** ([centredesarts.ca](http://centredesarts.ca)), a must-visit on any itinerary in the city. Each year, the center presents nearly 150 artists or productions from across the spectrum of performing arts disciplines. Everything from theater, dance and music, to popular song, circus arts,



Enjoying the performing arts in St Hyacinthe.





The ornate  
St Hyacinthe  
Cathedral.



Kayaking at  
Centre Nautique.

comedy and variety feature on the annual program.

Another need-to-see sight is the city's spectacular main catholic church, **St Hyacinthe Cathedral**, built in 1880. Its ornate interior underlines the lasting prominence of the church in the daily life of Quebec.

### EXPERIENCE THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Nature lovers and active types too will find a lot to love about St Hyacinthe. The beauty of the outdoors is showcased to full effect at the **Daniel A Seguin Garden** ([jardindas.ca](http://jardindas.ca)), a 4.5-hectare floral oasis by the Yamaska River that is both a teaching garden and as a tourist attraction with a number of themed gardens providing ample scope for a stroll.

More adrenalized diversion is on offer at the city's **Centre Nautique** where visitors can rent kayaks, rowboats and canoes. In fact, there's

no end to the possibilities in the place, which combines all the unassuming charm of a rural idyll with the comforts and convenience of a major city. Montreal may have the global fame, but its near neighbor revels in its status as one of Canada's most appealing under-the-radar revelations.



### Sheraton Saint-Hyacinthe Hotel

Known for its spacious common areas, the hotel caters to families with its large rooms, pet-friendly nature, and access to a shopping mall and movie theater. Do not miss the innovative California fusion menu at ZIBO! Restaurant. 1315 Daniel Johnston Street West.

Seattle's  
towering  
Space Needle.



# *Fish and Microchips*

**THE LAST MAJOR CITY ON THE US WEST COAST BEFORE CANADA TAKES UP THE SLACK, SEATTLE IS ONE HELL OF A NOTE FOR A COUNTRY TO GO OUT ON.**

**NICKNAMED THE** Emerald City due to the eternal greenery of its surroundings, it is sandwiched between ocean, lakes and two major mountain ranges—the Cascades to the east and the Olympics to the west.

Yet while its spectacular setting couldn't help but work in its favor, Seattle is the kind of city that most amply rewards those who like to delve a little beneath the surface. Indeed, with a plethora of eclectic neighborhoods and a multitude of personas that range from thrusting

tech hub to grungy beatnik, Seattle can be as tricky to pinpoint as its famous **Space Needle** ([spaceneedle.com](http://spaceneedle.com)) on one of the city's famously murky winter days.

In fact, it is partly this long-standing diversity—a source of immense civic pride to Seattleites—that make the city such a thrill.

## **EXPLORE BY NEIGHBORHOOD**

And there are few better bases in the city than the **Sheraton Grand Seattle**. Handily situated in the thick of the action, a short walk in any

direction from the hotel takes you to some of the city's most compelling areas. You can strike out northeast to Capitol Hill, a hip, edgy hood that is laden with bars, clubs and restaurants, northwest to affluent Queen Anne, or head directly west to **Pike Place Market** ([pikeplacemarket.org](http://pikeplacemarket.org)), one of the best and oldest farmer's markets in the country.

While many classic markets have lost at least part of their soul due to gentrification, Pike Place has largely retained its bawdy charisma. Vendors clamor for attention amidst a riot of noise and smells that spans nine acres. With everything from fine dining and specialty foods to markets offering fresh seafood from Pacific Northwest and Alaskan waters, many come just for the cuisine.

Just as compelling though are the handcrafted items, small shops where visitors can peruse comics, collectables, vinyl records, books and rare treasures. Special mention to the talented buskers who provide an ever-changing soundtrack along the

historic arcades and winding alleys of the market.

From the market, it's just a short walk north to another of Seattle's most recognizable icons, the unmistakable Space Needle. Built for the 1962 World's Fair, the structure is that rarest of things: something that was built to look futuristic more than 50 years ago that is still otherworldly today.

Indeed, the attraction is even more "space-age" following a two-year \$100-million renovation. The new design offers plenty of bells and whistles. One highlight is a rotating glass floor that offers views of the turning mechanism and, beyond that, the ground below.

#### **DROP SOME BRAND NAMES**

While the Space Needle certainly helped put Seattle on the map back in the 1960s, these days the city is known as the birthplace of some of the world's biggest brands. One of these, Starbucks, was founded here by two teachers and a writer in 1971.



Starbucks  
Reserve  
Roastery.





As of 2018, the company operates nearly 30,000 locations worldwide. The jewel in its crown though is the **Starbucks Reserve Roastery**, which is a magnet for lovers of the brand. As you might imagine, the attraction is far more than just an oversized Starbucks. There's a coffee-centric cocktail bar, multiple food counters and, naturally, a roasting area with tours available.

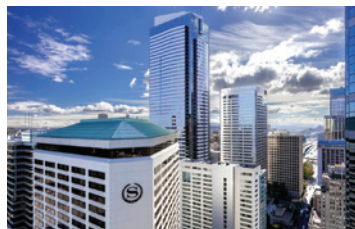
#### FEEL THE CREATIVE BUZZ

Starbucks may have long since traded in its roots in the counter-culture for globe-straddling success, but Seattle is still known as a place that thrums with creative energy.

This vitality can be easily tapped at a number of spots around the city, one of which is the **Seattle Art Museum** ([seattleartmuseum.org](http://seattleartmuseum.org)). Worth a visit for its exhibitions alone, the museum also offers film screenings and periodic parties called SAM Remix that turn the museum into a nightclub.

Another area in which Seattle shines is the culinary arts. For those with limited time, there are few better ways to experience one of the best food scenes in the US than on a tour run by acclaimed operator **Savor Seattle** ([savorseattletours.com](http://savorseattletours.com)). Foodie expeditions run the gamut from an insider's guide to Pike Place Market to a gourmet itinerary that takes in tastings six of the city's hotspots paired with Washington State wines and craft beers.

For a more prolonged culinary experience, secure a table at one of the city's plethora of fine dining spots. With Puget Sound lapping on one side of the city and Lake Washington on the other, it's almost impossible to go wrong with fish and seafood. Nevertheless, few venues nail things quite as impeccably as **Rock Creek** ([rockcreekseattle.com](http://rockcreekseattle.com)) where chef Eric Donnelly's expertly seasoned and prepared dishes sing with the siren song of the sea and killer cocktails deliver a knock-out blow.



#### Sheraton Grand Seattle

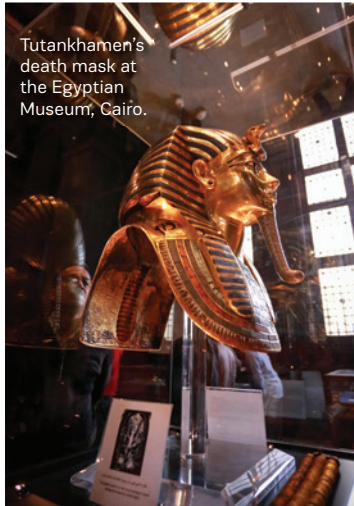
Located in the heart of the city, the hotel is a gateway to the diverse Pacific Northwest. A private art collection adorns its lobby, while celebrity chef Thierry Rautureau is busy at the Loulay Kitchen & Bar. 1400 6th Avenue

# *Captured by Cairo's Charms*

HOME TO A WEALTH OF HISTORIC RICHES,  
THE EGYPTIAN CAPITAL IS ALSO WHERE YOU'LL  
UNCOVER A MODERN METROPOLIS.



The Great Sphinx  
of Giza with the  
Pyramid of Khafre.



Tutankhamen's death mask at the Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

**AFRICA IS NOT SHORT** on places that evoke the romance of travel. From Marrakesh to Mombasa, the continent abounds with destinations that major in assaulting the senses while delivering transformative journeys for the soul.

Yet, few cities cast quite as potent a spell as Cairo. Known to Egyptians as *Umm Ad Dunya*—the

Mother of the World—the sprawling capital on the River Nile has a multi-level persona that has evolved layer upon layer for millennia.

A walk around the old walled city and citadel will reveal ancient bazaars such as Khan el Khalili as well as one of the greatest concentrations of historical monuments of Islamic architecture in the world. It's even possible to catch a glimpse even further back in time to Roman times when present-day Cairo was occupied by the legendary fortress of Babylon.

#### **PYRAMID POWER**

Just outside the city, meanwhile, the visceral impact of the **Great Pyramid of Giza** remains undimmed by its global fame.

Cairo, though, is not a destination that constantly dines out on former glories. Sleek contemporary dining and drinking spots embody the modern face of Cairo. Take the **Sheraton Cairo Hotel & Casino** for instance, which stands proud on the mighty river within easy striking distance of attractions such as the Cairo Opera House, the Egyptian



Along the street in the Islamic Quarter.





At the center,  
Khan el Khalili.

Museum and the city's best shopping options.

### **STREET-LEVEL EXPLORING**

Sample the city at rush hour when a battalion of honking cars chokes the business districts, drowning out the muezzins' call to prayer, and you'll get an idea of why it is regarded as one of the most important economic engines in North Africa.

In this place of often-stark contrasts, it pays to start with the familiar. Whether you are a return visitor or someone who has never set foot in Egypt, nowhere is more recognizable than the pyramids.

The last remaining wonder of the ancient world—and a seemingly eternal tribute to the might and organization of the Egyptian Empire—the pyramids are a short hop (around 18 kilometers) across the Nile from downtown Cairo.

For those with time to spare, the desert plateau is littered with tombs, temple ruins and smaller satellite pyramids. There's no doubt, however, that the main draw for most visitors are the four most famous sights: the Great Pyramid of Khufu, the Pyramid of Khafre, the Pyramid of Menkaure and the Sphinx.

### **STROLL THROUGH HISTORY**

While nowhere in Cairo itself is quite as venerable as the pyramids, which are reckoned to be at least 4,500 years old, if not much older, the modern traveler can take an evocative step back through the centuries at a variety of sites. One of these is the **Khan el Khalili**, the historic center of Islamic Cairo and still one of the most atmospheric bazaars in the Arab world. While the mercantile bustle has been slightly sanitized due to tourist footfall, there is still plenty of quality in the stalls and shops that line the narrow passageways of the souk, with glassware, old antiques, handcrafts and other Egyptian souvenirs among the bounty. The bazaar is also notable for fantastic old cafés such as El-Fishawi and array of street snacks such as fresh-cooked falafel or hummus with hot flatbreads.

### **A LUNCHTIME FEAST**

Indeed, food is as central to life in Cairo as it has been since ancient times. The dining scene in the city has evolved as rapidly as any in Africa, with hip hideaways and blowout venues on the banks of the Nile catering to a discerning audience. Sometimes though it pays to go back to basics. And in Cairo,



Al Azhar Mosque.

few places do the simple things better than **Abou Tarek**, which has been serving up an exemplary version of the local classic *koshary*—al-dente macaroni, rice and lentils topped with tomato sauce and crispy fried onions—since the 1950s.

Replenished with ballast to re-enter the fray, lunch should be a precursor to visits to more of the city's compelling historic sights. In a place where incredible Islamic architecture is almost as abundant as cars, the **Al Azhar Mosque** stands out from a crowded field.

The complex houses a university, one of the oldest institutions in the world with roots dating back to 970AD. But the main lure is the graceful mosque—Cairo's oldest—whose architecture has been shaped over time Egyptian history including rule by the Turkish Ottoman Empire and the slave-warrior Mamluks.

A fitting place to round off a tour of Cairo's often byzantine history is at

its **Museum of Islamic Art** (*miaegypt.org*). The institution is one of the best-curated museums in the Middle East, its collection numbering more than 80,000 objects from across the Islamic world. It's another unmissable experience in a city that is replete with them.



### Sheraton Cairo Hotel & Casino

Perched on the west bank of the River Nile, one of Cairo's greatest landmarks, and with the pyramids at Giza only 20 minutes away, the hotel is one of the best locations to stay in this teeming metropolis. *Galae Square*.

Tranquil  
Hyde Park.



## *Down by the Water*

**ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST SCENIC CITIES, SYDNEY DEMANDS YOU TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ITS AMENITIES, BOTH NATURAL AND MAN-MADE, ON ANY VISIT.**

**SOME DESTINATIONS** are growers. Others barely even break sweat in stating their case to visitors. And despite sizzling summer temperatures that keep the buffed bodies on Bondi Beach bronzed, Sydney is very much in the latter category.

Draped around one of the world's finest natural harbors and a string of gilded stretches of golden sand, Australia's largest city is nothing if not a looker. Indeed, a compelling case could be made for it as one of the world's most aesthetically appealing places.

### **WAKE TO A VISUAL FEAST**

The Harbour City is full of eye candy. It's there when you stroll along the coastline on a trail that links its eastern beaches. It's there when you explore leafy enclaves such as Glebe, Balmain, Vaucluse and Rose Bay. And when you walk north from **Hyde Park** through the Royal Botanical Gardens to be greeted by the sight of **Sydney Opera House** ([sydneyoperahouse.com](http://sydneyoperahouse.com)) and Sydney Harbour Bridge vying for attention.

There's plenty of substance to this thoroughbred show-pony though.



Historic neighborhoods thrum with energy, while a generous selection of lush green spaces offer scope for a stroll, a casual kick-about or even an interlude of blissful reflection.

#### **A CITY OF LANDMARKS**

Sydney's modern history though began on the harbor with the arrival of a first fleet of British ships in 1788: the precursor to the establishment of Australia as a far-flung penal colony.

And it is down by the same body of water—just a short walk from the **Sheraton Grand Sydney Hyde Park**—that many visitors choose to start an exploration of Sydney. There are few better places to begin than at the city's iconic opera house. Now rightly considered a cornerstone of 20th century architecture, the structure—designed by Dane Jorn Utzon to visually represent the sails of a yacht—was beset by delays during its construction. There's no ambiguity though about the finished structure, which is a soaring



A taste of Darling Harbour.

presence. It hosts theater, dance, concerts and opera. But if you can't catch a show, guided tours uncover the stories, history and magic of Australia's most famous landmark.

#### **TAKE TO THE WATER**

The opera house is as much a hit when viewed from the water as it is



Inside the Sydney Opera House.

from land. In fact, many of Sydney's chief attributes can be witnessed in a different light observed from the deck of a luxury sailing vessel. Of the companies that offer sailing tours around these waters, **Harbour Days** ([harbourdays.com.au](http://harbourdays.com.au)) is one of the most respected. It offers a range of water-bound options from one-day tours to personalised sailing and luxury itineraries. The boats begin and end their odyssey at Darling Harbour with highlights including the chance to observe the city's exclusive harborside suburbs and their beaches, passing the harbor heads and sailing out onto the open sea, enjoying lunch accompanied by Aussie wines and craft beers.

#### THE CITY ON FOOT

A brisk stroll away from Darling Harbour, is **The Rocks** ([therocks.com](http://therocks.com)). The strip of land where the first European settlers stepped ashore,

this concentration of cobbled laneways and sandstone buildings swiftly established a bawdy reputation that remained in place from the establishment of the colony until as recently as the 1970s. Gentrification and redevelopment as a tourism and commercial area has cleaned up the area. And today the area is one of Sydney's most tourist friendly enclaves. Markets, museums, galleries, restaurants and heritage buildings all reward exploration by foot. Many visitors come especially for the area's historic pubs, which include the Glenmore Hotel where patrons can enjoy 180-degree views of the harbor while supping an ice-cold beer.

Another of Sydney's legendary suburbs is, of course, Bondi. The jewel of Sydney's laid-back beach culture, the sweeping crescent of sand that fronts the ocean is a great place to bake in the sun or indulge in



High tea at the Sheraton Grand Sydney Hyde Park.



The one and only Bondi Icebergs.

some people-watching. For serious swimmers though, the place to make for is **Bondi Icebergs** ([icebergs.com.au](http://icebergs.com.au)). The ocean pool at the southern end of Bondi beach is always crowded with swimmers cramming in the lengths. At A\$7 per dip, it's one of the city's best bargains.

More genteel pursuits can be enjoyed in the city as well. Afternoon tea, for instance, at the Sheraton Grand Sydney Hyde Park, is famous for its combination of refinement and sophistication. Here, guests can enjoy delicious pastries and savoury items served up on luxurious three-tiered Anna Vasily high tea stands. Accompanying the edibles are selections of Vittoria coffee, Dilmah teas and Lindt drinking chocolate.

After an indulgent afternoon tea, there is no better place to work off some calories than across the road from the hotel in Hyde Park. Australia's oldest park has provided green refuge for more than two

centuries. An avenue of majestic Hill's Figs that line a pedestrian avenue provides the park's centerpiece, but just as alluring are the various shady nooks found tucked away beneath over 580 mature, exotic and native trees.



## Sheraton Grand Sydney Hyde Park

The hotel is in a great location for exploring Sydney, with views of Hyde Park, St. Mary's Cathedral and the middle harbor. Be sure to take advantage of a Club Floor stay that comes with access to Sydney's premier lounge, the Sheraton Club Lounge. 161 Elizabeth Street.





# Brazil in Free Flow

**A SUN-SOAKED PARADISE, THE CITY OF SANTOS IS KNOWN FOR ITS FOOTBALL PEDIGREE, AS WELL AS THE SEA, SAND AND SAMBA.**

**IT'S SOMEHOW** fitting that the young Edson Arantes do Nascimento got his big break in Santos. Pele, for it was he, signed his first professional contract with the city's biggest football club at the age of 15 and spent an incredible 19 seasons at the Estadio Vila Belmiro. Throughout this period, the forward built his reputation as one of the world's greatest players, starring for both club and country.

Pele did more than build his own legend in the beachside city. He also helped promote the concept of *o jogo bonito* (the beautiful game) during an era when Brazil's free-flowing performances in international competition seemed to effortlessly

channel the carefree spirit of sun, sea, sand and samba.

It's no surprise that this dynamic style of football was nurtured in Santos. A sun-soaked paradise with passion and soul, the city exudes charisma. Although it is only an hour or so from Sao Paulo, Brazil's vibrant commercial center, Santos has more in common with Rio de Janeiro, 500 kilometers to the northeast.

## **HEAD TO THE SEASIDE**

As in Rio, life in Santos is very much built around the ocean. One of the oldest settlements in Brazil, Santos was founded in 1546. Its fame grew, and by the turn of the 20th century it was established as one of the

nation's most important and wealthiest ports, cargo ships laden with export goods, notably coffee, spearing out of its canals and harbor to markets all over the world.

Even today, this port is the largest in Latin America. Visitors though come more for the city's rich heritage and architecture, its picture postcard setting and—most of all—the incredible beach culture. In Santos, the golden, surf-pounded sand serves as a multi-purpose social hub.

It's a catwalk for beautiful people, a gathering spot for families and friends and a testing ground for volleyball players and football stars, eager to follow in the footsteps of the city's favorite adopted son.

With around 17 kilometers of sand to play with, it's easy to find a choice spot. Even better, the **Sheraton Santos Hotel** is about two blocks from Embare Beach, a popular stretch of coastline.

This cozy relationship with the sea is further consummated in a

dining scene that goes big on delicious fresh seafood. For stunning marine fare in a deceptively simple setting, head for **Porta do Sol** in the historic center. Wash down a *moqueca* (Brazilian seafood stew) with lashings of fruity sangria.

The tang of the Atlantic hangs tantalizingly in the air at an enviable selection of outdoor bars and venues where live bands and DJs major in everything from rollicking baile funk to sensuous samba.

Some of the best entertainment options can be found just in front of **Santos Shore and Gardens**, which at around seven kilometers long, ranks as one of the largest of its kind in the world. While nearby venues come alive at night, the garden—with its 815 flower beds and extensive cycle paths—is best enjoyed when the sun is golden in the sky.

Offshore, things are equally spellbinding at the **Laje de Santos State Marine Park** ([lajedesantos.com/site/](http://lajedesantos.com/site/)). Located some 45





Kicking about at the Pele Museum.

kilometers from the mainland, the marine park, which is centered around the barren islet of Laje de Santos, offers some of the best underwater action in the state of Sao Paulo. Turtles, manta rays and dolphins are plentiful with visibility of up to 35 meters on good days.

#### BACK ON DRY LAND

Equally stunning and more accessible for landlubbers is the funicular ride to the church of **Montserrat**. While the church itself is not particularly special, the views over the city and its shimmering bay are worth making the journey for.

Another unmissable ride is the one offered on the city's famous **Tourist Streetcars**. Departing from Valongo station—built in 1867 for the first railroad in Sao Paulo state—the streetcars travel for five kilometers through the historic center. The route passes by top heritage sites such as the **Carmo Covent Complex**, two conjoined churches considered two of the

oldest examples of Brazilian baroque, the **Andrada Pantheon**, the resting place of the ashes of Brazil's "father of independence" Jose Bonifacio de Andrada e Silva, and **Santos Cathedral**.

If you don't manage to hitch a ride on the special Pele streetcar—a 1920s tram adorned with imagery of the star painted by local artists Leandro Shesko—the best place to pay homage to the player (and Brazilian soccer in general) is at the **Pele Museum**.

In addition to audio-visual footage of some of his greatest moments, the impressive museum has a collection of more than 2,400 items amassed during the player's lifetime. These range from a shoe-shine box he used to collect money during his impoverished childhood to his player of the tournament award from the 1970 World Cup in Mexico, regarded by many as a high-water mark in the sport that is yet to be surpassed.



#### Sheraton Santos Hotel

Close to the city's famous beachfront and its aquarium, the hotel also has quick access to the Pele Museum, the city's convention center and its port. For extreme ease of access, there's a rooftop helipad and a skyway to an adjacent shopping mall. 70 Rua Guaiaio



Bangalore  
Palace.



## *A Still Green Getaway*

**BENGALURU REMAINS A BREATHE OF FRESH AIR WITH ITS ABUNDANT GREEN SPACES AND NODS TO HISTORY. REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR APPETITE ALONG AS WELL.**

**IN MANY WAYS** Bengaluru defies preconceptions of major Indian cities. While few would deny the innate charisma of centers such as Mumbai, New Delhi and Kolkata, even their most ardent defenders admit they often veer towards the chaotic. Bengaluru, or Bangalore as it is often still referred to, is different.

It may be India's third-largest city, but an enviable infrastructure and array of creature comforts that encompass a burgeoning drinking, dining and shopping scene make it visitor-friendly.

Once called the "Garden City of India" thanks to its lakes and green spaces, Bengaluru has become

increasingly urbanized, becoming a center for innovative entrepreneurs and start-ups. Nevertheless, the city is blessed with charming parks and striking Victorian-era architecture. Its modern metro makes it simple to buzz between hipster enclaves studded with craft-beer bars, music venues and coffee roasters to atmospheric Hindu shrines.

### **PALACES AND PARKS**

A perfect and easily identifiable landmark to start your wanderings in the city is the sprawling Tudor-inspired estate of **Bangalore Palace**. The private residence of the Wodeyars, erstwhile maharajas of



Chime Bar.



Bannerghatta Biological Park.

Karnataka, the palace was built in 1887 by King Chamaraj Wadiyar. The late monarch apparently took inspiration for the palace from Windsor Castle in England and other grandiose structures in Scotland and the north of France. While the exterior is inspired by the stolid architecture of northern Europe, Indian traditions really move to the fore inside the palace. Highlights include ornate cornices and patterned walls as well as elephant hunting trophies and an art collection featuring works by Raja Ravi Varma, one of India's most famous painters.

More venerable still than the palace is **Lal Bagh**, which is arguably Bengaluru's most beloved idyll. Laid out in 1760 by famous ruler Hyder Ali, the expansive botanical gardens are at least partly responsible for the city's reputation as India's greenest metropolis. Spread across 98 hectares of landscaped terrain, Lal Bagh was inspired by the great gardens that were being cultivated by the Mughal rulers in the north of India. For their own slice of Eden though, Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan—who oversaw the building of the garden—looked further afield,

importing different species of trees and plants from around the world.

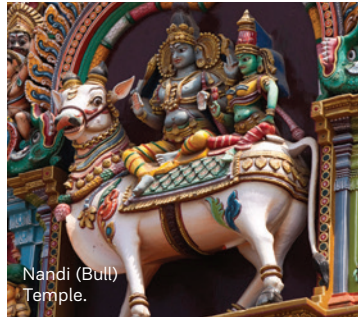
While Lal Bagh is as genteel a green haven as you will find in India, a much rarer visitor experience is just outside the city at **Bannerghatta Biological Park**. Although it's little more than a stone's throw away, the 104-square-kilometer dense forest and scrub is as wild as it gets in the vicinity of a major population center. Tigers, bison, leopards and wild boar all roam here while the park is a main corridor for wild elephants migrating between the Eastern and Western Ghats—the mountain ranges that frame the Deccan Plateau in the interior of South India. There's a host of wildlife-themed activities for visitors at the park ranging from big cat safaris to a snake park where it is possible to get up close and personal with an impressive if daunting collection of slithery creatures.

#### TEMPTED BY THE TEMPLES

Given Bengaluru's plethora of green spaces, well-preserved colonial-era architecture and its many manifestations of contemporary consumer culture, it can sometimes be easy to forget that the city is the



Food galore  
at VV Puram.



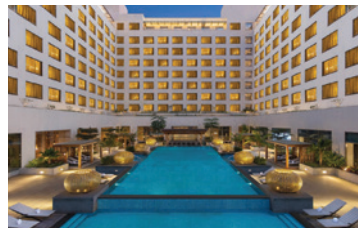
Nandi (Bull)  
Temple.

capital of staunchly Hindu Karnataka, where an estimated 84 percent of the state's population practice the religion. Closer inspection though reveals a place that is studded with numerous colorful temples and shrines. Few are more atmospheric than the **Dodda Basavana Gudi**, better known as the **Nandi (Bull) Temple**. Set in a small park, the temple is accessed via a shady path. While the 16th-century temple, built in a Dravidian style prevalent in South India, is striking in its own right, many come here to view the huge stone monolith of Nandi, the gate-guardian deity of Kailasa, the abode of Lord Shiva. The giant bull is embellished with lavish flower garlands.

For locals, the unifier is food. Bengaluru abounds with options ranging from the fine Italian cuisine at Le Cirque Signature to a multi-course extravaganza at Grasshopper. At the **Sheraton Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center**, be sure to order a gin tonic which features the house-infused gin, botanical blends of nut meg, awadi spices, star anise and more.

Don't miss dining along **VV Puram**, the city's famous food street.

Located in the center of town at Sajjan Rao Circle, close to Lal Bagh, this *thindi beedi* (eat street) runs the gamut of vegetarian delicacies from across India. Must-tries here include crispy *masala dosas* (lentil crepes stuffed with spiced potato) served with groundnut chutney and sambhar (a thin tamarind-based curry) and *gulkand*, a sweet preserve of rose petals that makes an ideal sinful coup de grace to any day in South India.



### Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center

Located in the heart of India's Silicon Valley, the hotel is the city's largest premium meeting and conference destination. As an added bonus, its highly rated food and beverage outlets include Chime Bar, Feast and InAzia. *Prestige Shantiniketan.*

# Beijing Beckons

**RICH WITH HISTORY, THE CHINESE CAPITAL ALSO BRIMS WITH MODERN OFFERINGS FROM CUISINE THROUGH TO ARTS AND DESIGN.**

**BEIJING IS A CITY** that is rich in gravitas. And the blend of charismatic history and contemporary trappings on offer in the metropolis supplies plentiful grist for willing investigators.

There are few better bases to strike out from than the soon-to-open Sheraton Beijing Lize Hotel. Located within walking distance of the city's Lize financial district, the sleek bolthole is also handily situated for some of the main tourist attractions in the city, making it ideal for business and leisure travelers alike.

## **IMPERIAL ATTRACTIONS**

Although the skyscraper-lined streets close to the hotel are indicative of China's status as a global financial powerhouse, it's the older, imperial, sights that hold most fascination for the majority of visitors. Near the very top of this list is the massive **Forbidden City**. Former premier Zhou Enlai stepped in to ensure that the site remained unscathed during the iconoclastic Cultural Revolution and his intervention means the city's most important palace is also its best preserved piece of the past.



The  
Forbidden  
City.



The complex—once home to two dynasties of imperial rule—rewards diligent investigation. The three great halls at the heart of the city—the Hall of Supreme Harmony, Hall of Middle Harmony and Hall of Preserving Harmony—are the headline attractions but of equal interest are somewhat more dilapidated, some say more authentic, structures.

Another imperial highlight that is an absolute essential must stop on any Beijing itinerary is the **Temple of Heaven**. The Imperial Chinese emperors were known as the “sons of heaven” and it was here they came to perform solemn rites such as praying for good harvests. The building retains an aura of spirituality providing an oasis in the urban sprawl that is south Beijing. The temple halls are unusual in that their tops are round but their bases square. This reflects a notion—prevalent in Chinese mythology—that heaven is round and Earth is square.

### LIVE LIKE A LOCAL

While the big-hitting heritage sites are rarely anything less than jaw-dropping, a less extravagant



Wangfujing Shopping Street



Temple of Heaven.

form of local history is found along the narrow hutongs that snake their way through some of the capital's older quarters.

These laneways emerged during the Yuan Dynasty in the 13th century and have been a focal point for local life in the city ever since. Some of China's greatest thinkers and literary figures have emerged from these warren-like lanes, which have fostered a wealth of folklore and colorful traditions of their own.

There are many ways to explore these fascinating alleys. Take a pedicab ride through the narrow streets, sign up for lessons in Chinese calligraphy and visits to selected local houses where guests can learn more about the rich history of this offbeat aspect of Beijing life.

Modern Beijing though is a place that is defined as much by its present and future as it is by its epic past. No one would deny the grand scale of the Forbidden City or Tiananmen Square. But the modern city is impressive in a different way with world-class shopping, sleek restaurants and hotels, and shimmering skyscrapers.



Colorful  
Peking Opera.

A must for visitors is **Wangfujing Shopping Street**, one the city's more famous retail hubs and is home to long-stayers like Beijing Department Store as well as global luxury brands such as Apple, Prada, Cartier and many more. Hungry shoppers should check out Wangfujing Snack Street, a side alley off the main drag, where it is possible to fill up on everything from dumplings to roast duck.

#### CHINESE ARTS

Beijing's art scene is forever in flux, so it's a small comfort to realize that **Plastered 8 T-shirts** ([plasteredtshirts.com](http://plasteredtshirts.com)) is still around. Founded in 2005 by Dominic Johnson-Hill, the offbeat design shop takes full advantage of Beijing icons, reproducing them in wonderful graphic form on T-shirts, toques, hoodies and tote bags. The colorful riffs take on neon signs, selfie culture and the city's rich past.

More traditional entertainment can be sampled via **Peking Opera**. While not everyone can appreciate the niceties (not to mention the shrill tones) of a performance, nobody can deny the dramatic qualities of the

medium. A breathless rush of colorful costumes and intricate choreography, it's a visual spectacular that ranks as one of Beijing's cultural peaks.

Authentic performances tend to drag on a bit, three hours-plus is the norm, but the uninitiated can enjoy truncated shows at tourist-friendly venues such as the 800-year-old Imperial Granary (on Fridays and Saturdays), which cuts the original from nine hours to one.

At night, thoughts generally turn towards matters gastronomic, no surprise in one of the world's major food capitals. Beijing's most iconic dish is, of course, roast duck and there are myriad places to get a fix in the city. One of the most innovative is **Sheng Yong Xing**. The exemplary duck is a stand out. Caviar topped slivers of crispy duck served on canapé-sized bites of toast makes for an outstanding start to any meal. But recommended too are other Chinese dishes that deploy fresh local produce and creative cooking.

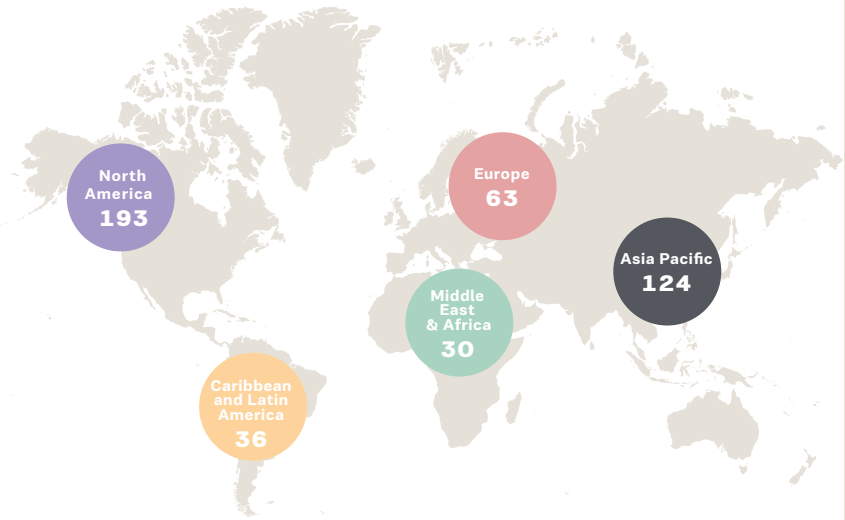


#### Sheraton Beijing Lize Hotel

Located in the financial district of Lize, this opening soon hotel is easily accessible from the international airport and Beijing West Railway Station. Also close by are Tiananmen Square, Temple of Heaven and The Forbidden City. *Corner of Fenghuangzui North and Jinzhongdu West roads.*

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