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IS IT SAFE TO FLY?

While some of us are still cautious about travelling, some feel ready to board a plane again given the latest news. But just how safe is air travel during the pandemic? Is it safe to fly right now during COVID-19?

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF FLYING?

Airplanes are known to filter air quickly and effectively. These filters are able to capture 99.9% of virus particles, and the air is replaced at a rapid rate. If you filled the aircraft with green smoke for demonstration purposes, it would be all 100% clear within 2 minutes.

Customers sit facing forward and seat backs provide a barrier, while the limited movement of passengers once seated adds to the onboard protection.

However, it's still a closed space. And depending on how long your flight is, you're going to be in proximity of a fixed number of people for a prolonged period of time.

The risk of infection comes mainly from other passengers next to you or within a couple of rows. It's a lot less likely from passengers 10 or 15 rows back.

HOW ARE AIRLINES DEALING?

As the virus spreads primarily through direct person-to-person contact, inanimate objects are much less of a concern.

This would be a time to use your best masks, ideally an N95 mask. Wash your hands often or use a hand sanitiser, steer clear from people who are visibly sick, and avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

Bring your own wipes, and wipe down your tray tables, all your audio, and TV remote knobs. You can also sanitise the seat, armrests, headrests, and sidewalls if you have a window seat.

Eating and drinking on planes may be another possible transmission trigger, so proceed with caution and limit the amount of time your mask is off.

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Have work, will travel

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BY YUKI KOH

CHOO-CHOO!

NEXT STOP: RAILWAY TRAVEL

Whether you're a railfan or train expert or not, it's easy to be intrigued by the beauty that can be found in trains, their sleek architecture, beautiful interior design, and how put-together they are. Today, many fascinating and interesting themed trains continue to pump their engines. Let's take a look at some of the stuff that dreams are made of. (A fair warning to the railfans: This looks at the design and theme of the train, rather than its engines and functions.)

FIRST STOP: JAPAN

Japan's train scene is characterised by its interesting variety ranging from ultra luxurious trains where rooms rival 5-star hotels with their opulence (like Seven Stars in Kyushu or the Twilight Express Mizukaze in western Japan) to quirky trains themed around famous Japanese icons.



One of them is the POKEMON with YOU train, rolled out by the JR East. This train is Pokémon – or more specifically, Pikachu-themed. You'll find yourself greeted with splashes of yellow and brown, with seats and walls decorated with Pikachu shapes all over.

It's split into two carriages. The first is the reserved seating cars with the normal communication seats. The second one is the playroom car; apart from being a pseudo-conductor or engine room worker, passengers can tinker around with the gadgets and playthings.



Another noteworthy train is the SL Ginga ("SL" means Steam Locomotive). Upholstered in quilted seats and plush cushions, this train is decked out with specially-curated Tohoku objects and pictures from the early 20th century. It even has stained glass windows that cast the cabin in a rosy afternoon glow.

The entire train is based on Kenji Miyazawa's novel Night on the Galactic Railroad. It features a one-of-a-kind experience, particularly with its Planetarium (the first-ever in a train) with shows 'dedicated' to the moon. The Kenji Miyazawa galleries, which breathe life into his fantastical worlds and tales, include a variety of exhibits associated with the rail line and the Tohoku area.

NEXT STOP: KOREA. I REPEAT, KOREA.



NEXT STOP: CLASSIC YESTERYEAR LUXURY

Fans of Agatha Christie's Orient Express will love the classic opulence of the Venice-Simplon Orient Express which takes pampered passengers from Paris to Verona or Venice. Closer to home, the parent company also runs the Orient Express between Singapore and Bangkok. You can also find plenty of ultra luxury rail rides that are decked out in the glamour of the golden age of rail in countries like Australia (The Ghan), South Africa (Blue Train), Peru (Andean Explorer), and Canada (Royal Canadian Pacific).



LAST STOP: "AND TO ALL SINGAPOREANS & RESIDENTS, A WARM WELCOME HOME"

Singapore has its fair share of themed trains as well. This includes its year-round decorations for Diwali, National Day, and even for Chinese New Year. Sadly, given that most of these trains are underground, the most that has been done is additional decals.



NEXT STOP: KOREA. I REPEAT, KOREA.

Korea's series of "tourist trains" follow themed routes blessed with beautiful views, including the Sea Train, which chugs along the shore from Gangneung to Samcheok Haebyeon. Unlike the typical back-to-back seatings, some carriages offer a full-frontal view of the sea.

The West Gold Train explores the west coast, boasting an under-floor heating system (ondol) in a seating area that's designed like a traditional hanok home, and a footbath cafe where you can have a soothing soak while indulging in the scenery out the window as you sip your tea.



WHAT DO WE HOPE FOR?

What I miss are quotidian moments; sitting on the Shinkansen for three hours straight, watching snowflakes drift and whizz past my eyes; the silent solitude of Korea's trains; the ding-ding of Hong Kong's trams.

But these are all first-world problems and desires. So I just sit on the Downtown line, guttering along its dark and dingy tunnels as I enjoy these liminal and strange spaces.



By Lydia Tan

Local getaways:

Being a Tourist in Your Own Country

Unfortunately with a global pandemic, travelling is not only almost impossible but also not very safe, there are extra costs and precautions involved. Many Singaporeans would often scoff at the term "domestic travel" in a local context – after all, Singapore is so small, what's there to do? For anyone dying for an escape out of the city life of Singapore, here are some recommendations.

Little Guilin, Bukit Batok Town Park

As its name suggests, Little Guilin bears a close resemblance to Guilin (China), with its majestic rock formations. If you look past the towering HDB blocks in the distance, you might just forget you're still in the heartlands of Singapore.

Created from an abandoned granite quarry, the rugged cliffs surrounded by greenery and a natural lake is almost a rare sight to see in Singapore. This park is a great spot for photos or just as a place to relax and enjoy the view.



Punggol Container Park

If you're missing the hipster night markets in countries like Thailand and Cambodia, the Punggol Container Park is a pretty close local alternative. Most of the restaurants and bistros at the park are housed in colourful containers and offer alfresco dining options that are perfect for a date night meal or a small gathering with friends and family.

The park also has an Uncle Ringo temporary carnival that will be up until the end of 2021 and an archery range (temporarily suspended due to COVID restrictions). For nature lovers, check out the various community gardens.



Mongkok, Quong Point Shopping Mall

Head down to Jurong Point to get a feel of walking down the vibrant shopping streets of Hong Kong. With neon signs and bold signboards, the mall's Mongkok Street almost feels like a separate part of the mall altogether.

Besides the variety of shops available, the street also has a fair share of eateries that serve authentic Chinese/Hong Kong cuisine like noodles and dim sum. Another place worth checking out in Jurong Point is Shokutsu Ten, one of the mall's food streets dedicated to different countries, which looks like a traditional market in Japan.



Pocha in a Forest

This Korean bistro on Prinsep Street boasts green foliage decorations and neon lights, so you can get that instaworthy shot that will almost make your friends believe you're on holiday in Korea!

Another interesting part of the bistro is the red pojangmacha tent that looks just like the ones you would see in Korean street markets. For a more authentic experience, the tents have the same plastic stools and foldable tables so you will almost feel like you're in a Korean market enjoying some hearty street food.



Tudor Court Shopping Gallery

Located in Tanglin, this stretch of shophouses resemble a row of classic Tudor-style buildings. If you're the type that prefers window shopping, this place might be more up your alley as some of the stores might be quite premium and may not be for everyone's budget.

Most of the shops are mostly retail, selling antiques or other handcrafted goods. It's also home to one of Singapore's oldest Japanese barbers, Barber Minami (it moved here when Liang Court closed down). Tudor Court is pretty small, but if you want to admire some historical architecture while on your window shopping spree, this place is worth a visit.



After more than a year of being in a pandemic, it's understandable that many of us are dying to get out and travel again. With more Vaccinated Travel Lanes being opened up between Singapore and other countries, we can finally have an opportunity to go overseas for a holiday. However, if you are still cautious about travelling during a pandemic, why not support the local businesses and find your temporary escape right here in Singapore?



Sang Nila Utama Garden, Fort Canning Park

Modelled after the 14th-century palace gardens at Fort Canning, this garden instantly evokes Bali resort vibes. With reflective pools and distinctive Javanese split gates, this garden creates a calm and meditative place fit for a king.

Not only is this garden aesthetically pleasing, but it is also rich with history. It houses flower species significant to Javanese culture and sculptures of animals that would have roamed the palace gardens.

UPDATED TRAVEL TIPS

GUIDE FOR TRAVELLING IN 2021

While the pandemic isn't over, we're all rejoicing that travel is starting to re-open. This is super exciting, but it's also daunting. Even if you were a seasoned traveller before, it's important to remember that ever since the start of 2020, everything has changed! Here's some quick tips to keep in mind when planning your first trip post-pandemic:

DO SINGLE-COUNTRY TRIPS WHERE POSSIBLE

We've all been cooped up the last two years, but as things reopen, don't be too ambitious! It's best to stick to one or at most two countries per trip. Why? Pre-pandemic it was normal to cram in as many destinations as you could on a single trip. Not anymore. If you do more than one country on a trip, even if both are VTL destinations (eg. France & Switzerland), do your research.

Try to find pairs where both have the pandemic equally under control and closely aligned requirements, otherwise you risk the situation changing while you're travelling. The best way to avoid this is to only visit one country per trip: once you're in, that's it. You don't have to worry about all the logistics (extra transits, connections, layovers, etc.) or the Covid-19 complications (eg. sudden quarantines, changing testing requirements, differing guidelines).



PRE-FILLING AS MANY FORMS AS POSSIBLE

Thanks to the pandemic, it's not abnormal to need to fill in as many as half-a-dozen different forms (or more) for entry into many countries, even those with VTLs. Add to that slower immigration clearance, and you should expect lengthy entry procedures. One of the best (and only) precautions you can take is to make sure you have researched and wherever possible, printed out and pre-filled (in blue or black ink), multiple sets of all necessary forms. This will save you all the hassle.

ADJUST YOUR EXPECTATIONS AND PREPARE FOR DELAYS

Build in buffer times for everything – not just for navigating strange airports or catching connecting trains. Assume everything will be slower. Where you might have done 5 things per day pre-pandemic, assume the worst now, and keep it to 2-3 things per day (eg. one big morning activity, one big afternoon activity, etc.) Also assume all meals will take longer, since in many places like the US, UK, and Western Europe, there are acute labour shortages in the F&B industry.

LET YOUR DOLLARS DO MORE GOOD

We all want to travel more sustainably, but during the pandemic, sustainable has taken on even bigger meaning: sustaining human livelihoods. Where possible, consider picking your destination based on the countries that were most reliant on tourism before the pandemic, and were hardest hit by it.

Obviously, they need to have Covid-19 under control to even be considered, but assuming that they do, a good guideline is countries where tourism makes up at least 10-20% of the economy, like Spain (14.3% of GDP) or Italy (13% of GDP) vs. Canada (6.5% of GDP). In essence, consider spending your dollars where they are needed more.

A SAMPLE ITINERARY

If you're thinking you'd like to travel, you can consider a plan like this:

TIP #1: Visit only Spain, because there's less risk of things going wrong in a single country, and it's got a lot of things to see on the ground

TIP #2: The compliance and paperwork is far more predictable

TIP #3: Once there, get more bang for your buck by travelling slowly within Spain

TIP #4: Head to places like the Canary Islands which experienced a double-whammy this year from Covid and a volcanic eruption which struck just when their tourism industry was starting to rebound. The Canary Islands are dependent on tourism for almost 40% of their economy, meaning your dollars will do a lot of good. You can have the place mostly to yourself where you can enjoy safe views of one of nature's most impressive sites – a simmering volcano – which tourists used to pay a lot of money to experience.



SPAIN

It sounds cliché, but Spain has a little of everything. Starting in the north, on the snow-capped slopes of the Pyrenees, there's chic ski resorts like Baqueira Beret which count the Spanish royal family as regular visitors. Just a few hundred kilometres away in the southern region of Andalusian, you'll find yourself in Europe's largest, hottest deserts.

In between, you can explore everything from medieval towns like Toledo or ancient villages like Las Alpuharras, to the party scenes in cities like Madrid and Barcelona, or on the famous island of Ibiza. If Spain had a soundtrack, it's probably flamenco music. Spain's also known for its passions like football and bullfights.

Spain's also relatively inexpensive compared to much of Western Europe: a budget of €100-120/day allows you to live quite comfortably in most places.

EAT

Spain's famous for its food, from the humble churros (which in Spain is a breakfast food) to the quintessentially "Spanish" tapas, which can be found everywhere. Then there's their lesser-known cousin, pinchos – or pintxos as they're called in their native Basque region – which is basically tapas on toothpicks, and is charged based on how many sticks you've had. Tapas has evolved into a sophisticated evening tradition paired with sangria or sherry in tapas bars that open until late.

Valencia is the home of Spain's original paella (pronounced "pai-ye-ya") – a traditional all-in-one Spanish rice and seafood platter that comes in different forms, including "white" or "black", with rice or even short noodles (fideua).

Spain's also famous for affordable wine – some of the best include white wines from places like Valladolid and reds from vineyards in Rioja, as well as sparkling cava (from Penedes in Catalonia). Spain has 138 designated wine regions, and offers a huge variety of half- to multi-day wine touring options starting from €15-20/person.



PINCHOS



SEE

Spain has developed some of the world's most stunning architecture. Some of the most famous of which are the legendary works of Antonio Gaudi, dotted all over the city of Barcelona including Casa Mila, aptly nicknamed La Pedrera ('the quarry') for its artistically haphazard silhouette, and his masterpiece – the impossibly complex Basilica de la Sagrada Família (Sagrada Família). The modernist church has been under construction continually since 1883, and is expected to only be complete in 2026! This World Heritage Site boasts a honeycomb architecture that's reinterpreted the sacred into something out of a Tim Burton movie.



PARK GUÉLL



ALHAMBRA

As a consequence of the 780-year long Reconquista (711-1492), when Spanish armies "reconquered" Spain from invading Arabs, Spain now has over 2,500 castles. These include the massive La Mota or Coca Castle, and arguably Spain's most stunning "medieval" castle: the fairytale-esque Alcázar de Segovia.

While in Granada in the far south, you'll find the dramatic, Arab-influenced architectural masterpiece: Alhambra, one of Spain's 49 UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Part fortress, part desert oasis, Alhambra dates back over 700 years to the last of the Moorish rulers in Spain, whose defeat by the Catholics brought to an end the Reconquista.

STAY

One of the best ways to experience a Spanish castle is to sleep in classic buildings. Known locally as paradores, there are dozens of historic castles, monasteries, and palaces that have been converted into B&Bs all over Spain, allowing you to literally live like a royal from €60/night.



FUN FACT

El Clasico – the traditional football rivalry between Spain's two largest cities (Barcelona and Madrid) – has carried over to vaccination rates. The cities are unofficially competing to have the highest vaccination rate in the country.



THE NETHERLANDS

Despite being a small country (by European standards), the Netherlands has a lot going on. It has culture and history, from famous art museums to amazing architecture. In the rolling countryside, you'll find quaint villages, windmills, and fields of tulips, all of which are easily explored along its thousands of miles of bike paths. Holland has over 1,000 working windmills which help drain sea water and keep the country from flooding, since one third of the Netherlands is below sea level.



MARKEN, WATERLAND



OUDEMANHUISPOORT



PLAY

The country has the most bikes per capita in the world and is criss-crossed by 37,000km of cycling trails. You can easily travel between towns and even major cities on two wheels via hundreds of **cycling routes** across the country. An easy route is the 34km loop from the heart of Amsterdam in Buiksloterweg to the historic town of Waterland. Boasting fields of tulips along the way, this flat trail makes for a leisurely half-day ride, with lunch in the 17th century village of Broek in Waterland.

Holland's given the world many famous artists, from the Dutch Masters like Rembrandt to the one-eyed Van Gogh and the mind-bending MC Escher. See their works in museums like the small **Rembrandt House Museum**, the staggering **Rijksmuseum** which is home to Rembrandt's *The Night Watch*, and **Mauritshuis** where you'll find Vermeer's *Girl with the Pearl Earring*.

Oudemanshuispoort is a 400-year-old alleyway filled with tiny used-book shops (called "cabinets"), specialising in all kinds of genres. In Spijkenisse, there is **Book Mountain**, a public library where books are displayed in a giant, mountain-like stack of shelves.

If you're into felines, visit the world's only floating cat sanctuary, **Poezenboot**, in a houseboat on Amsterdam's historic Singel canal. Entirely volunteer-run, visitors are free to play with Poezenboot's 50 friendly felines.

FUN FACT

Despite having shrunk slightly in 2020, on average the Dutch are the tallest people in the world at 182.9 cm (for men) and 169.3cm (for women).

While the country's known as either the Netherlands ("low-lands") or Holland ("woodland"), the people are called the Dutch, like their language. They call themselves *Nederlanders* in their own language, which is *Nederlands* (ie. Dutch). Confused yet?

STAY

The Netherlands has some unique overnight experiences, like the **Molen Hunsingo** which is a historic wooden windmill that's converted into a B&B in the canal village of Onderdendam. It includes a private museum and award-winning restaurant for gourmet dinners.

You can also stay in one of Amsterdam's 2,500 traditional **houseboats** which line its 160 historic canals. There's options in every price range, from around \$80/night, with rentals available on popular canals like Herengracht, Prinsengracht, and Keizersgracht.

EAT

Due to its colonial history, Holland has a substantial population of "Indos" (Indonesian-Eurasian), who regularly hold *pasar malam* in most major towns where you can try sate, nasi goreng, and **roasttafel**.

The Dutch eat an amazing 21.6kg of cheese per person annually. They make hundreds of kinds of cheese, the most famous of which is gouda from a region aptly nicknamed "Cheese Valley" in **Gouda**. The best place to try cheese is at the 625-year old cheese market in front of Gouda City Hall, where the main attraction is watching traditionally-dressed men transport giant wheels of cheese on wooden sleds. Several other towns also have their own cheese markets, including Alkmaar and Edam.

Another famous food is **stroopwafel** ("syrup waffle"), a waffle wafer sandwich with caramel filling. They're sold hot right from the waffle iron by street vendors and in cafes, where they're served atop warm drinks.



GOUDA



MOLEN HUNTINGO



HOUSEBOATS

DENMARK

When you think of Scandinavia, maybe you imagine fjords and Vikings (Norway), or Abba and Absolute (Swedish), or maybe Santa Claus (Finland)? What about Denmark?

It's hard to dislike Denmark. After all, the Danes have given the world Legos, and Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid*, and even modernist furniture. The streets are clean, the architecture is a mix of historic and cutting-edge, and tertiary education is free. It's not surprising the Danes themselves have been ranked the second-happiest country on earth, even during the pandemic.

DENMARK ISN'T CHEAP, BUT...

Scandinavia is one of the more expensive regions in the world to visit. While it will never be a budget travel destination, Denmark is arguably the most affordable destination in Scandinavia: a budget of DKK1,200/day (roughly SGD\$250) allows you to eat and sleep comfortably.

Denmark is a small country (by European standards), and with almost 9 in 10 Danes living in major cities, and many great attractions are within easy reach of public transport or bicycle.

EAT

While its national dish is a simple *stegt flæsk* (fried pork and potatoes), Copenhagen has the most Michelin stars per capita in the world, and 2 of the world's top five restaurants, including Noma.

On the more affordable end are food trucks. Copenhagen's food truck scene has recently been blowing up. You can try Asian food or tacos, like *Yuca Taco* that's run by former Noma head chef, or any of the ubiquitous *pølsevogn* - Copenhagen's beloved hot dog stands which are everywhere.



PØLSEVOGN

You can take hot dogs to the next level with toppings like french truffle, or just the classic favourite *ristet* dog, which includes ketchup, mustard, remoulade, fried onions, and pickles - with chocolate milk. It's estimated the city has over 100 *pølsevogn* stands, including popular ones like DØP, Johns Hot Dog Deli, and Pølse Kompagniet. In a country with steep restaurant prices, food trucks are great alternatives for tasty, no-frills food.



THE LITTLE MERMAID

PLAY

A short drive from Copenhagen is the quaint medieval city of Roskilde, home to Denmark's quirkiest museums including the **Ragnarok Museum** (for the history of rock music) and the **Viking Ship Museum**, as well as Northern Europe's largest music festival: Roskilde Festival.

Now in its 50th year, Roskilde attracts huge names, from Cardi B., to Noel Gallagher and Radiohead. It also welcomes 30,000 volunteers annually, and tourists can get involved in a major global event. Tickets for next year's festival (25 June - 2 July), are SGD\$230-480 for full week passes.

Smukfest, which happens annually in the first half of August in the forest outside the town of Skanderborg, features global pop and rock acts like Britney Spears, Eric Clapton, and Rihanna. You can book an on-site accommodation in one of their giant, 2-person luxury beer can rooms.

RAGNAROK MUSEUM



SMUKFEST



FUN FACT

There's no word for "please" in Danish - the Danes just speak to people very politely. The vast majority of Danes (86%) also speak fluent English.

Continental Denmark is roughly 60 times the size of Singapore, but if you include Greenland which is also part of the Kingdom of Denmark, it's 3,070 times.

STAY

Denmark has quirky hotels, including the luxury 12-room hotel-boat **CPH Living**, which floats right in the heart of Copenhagen's downtown waterfront. There's also the tiny **Hotel Central**, the "World's Smallest Luxury Hotel" in Central Copenhagen's chic Vesterbro district, where your room includes breakfast, free bicycle rentals, and a 3-course dinner.

There are also numerous hotels based in haunted castles and prisons, including **Hotel Den Gamle Arrest**, where you can stay in a refurbished former jail cell located in the heart of Ribe, Denmark's oldest town.

CPH LIVING



HOTEL DEN GAMLE ARREST

MORE THAN MOUNTAINS

FUN IN SWITZERLAND

Mention Switzerland, and you'll probably think of mountains: 70% of the country is covered in them, including the famous Matterhorn, Jungfrau, and fierce-looking Eiger. You probably also picture cuckoo clocks and watches, satisfied cows, chocolate, Swiss Army knives, and efficient trains. Switzerland is super outdoorsy, but it's also well incredibly connected: you can take a cable car to the tops of mountains, or hop on their efficient, scenic trains to get almost anywhere.

REGIONS

LAKE GENEVA: CASTLES, JAZZ, AND WINE COUNTRY

Located on the shores of Lake Geneva at the foot of the Alps is the French-speaking region of Vaud. It's home to Montreux, which is famous for the Montreux Jazz Festival and the country's most famous castle, Chillon. Dating back over 900 years, it's the setting for Lord Byron's famous tale of *The Prisoner of Chillon* - you can see the dungeon where the story is set.

The Vaud Riviera is also regarded by many as the world's most beautiful wine region, with its terraced hillside vineyards spilling down to Lake Geneva. Stretching over 30km, this is the UNESCO-listed Lavaux wine region - famous for white wines like Chasselas - boasts vineyards dating back to the Romans.



Explore the vineyards on foot (via hiking routes, such as from Saint-Saphorin to Lutry) or take the lakeside route by bicycle to explore vineyards around Aigle that's known for its fairytale castle and Aigle les Murailles wine. Hop on the famous Train des vignes ('vineyard train') to see the most scenic parts of Lavaux between Vevey and Puidoux-Chexbres.

An hour from Montreux is the St. Bernard Pass, home of the famous rescue dogs. The pass was once a fearsome obstacle for medieval travellers due to avalanches, so local monks bred giant St. Bernard dogs to rescue lost travellers. While the path is no longer treacherous, you can book a 2-hour hike accompanied by St. Bernard dogs or visit the puppy kennels in nearby Martigny!

STAY



With 4 of the top 5 hospitality schools located in Switzerland, it's not surprising it's famous for fancy hotels, like the epic Cambrian in Adelboden, the spas of Grand Resort Bad Ragaz or the Gstaad Palace.

Switzerland's also got a slew of affordable, quirky accommodations. Check out the Hobbit-esque B&B Hofgenuss in a bucolic farm in Ganterschwil, or stay in restored castle like Schloss Wartegg on the shores of Lake Constance or the towering, 900-year old Schloss Hotel Thun with its uber-chic rooms.



CLASSIC SWITZERLAND IN APPENZEL

Combining soaring mountain scenery, cosy Swiss chalets, and yodelers, Appenzell is where you can see them all in one location.

One of Appenzell's most iconic sights is the 170-year old Berggasthaus Aescher-Wildkirchli, an epic guesthouse with cozy guest rooms perched on an impossible cliff-edge, accessible only via cable car plus a 10-minute hike along the cliff face. Sit on Aescher's outdoor terrace and sample traditional Appenzell foods like bratata (polenta), Appenzeller cheese, and air-dried meats. Try the local Appenzell Beer (it's brewed by the same local family for 5 generations) or the bschorle, a drink made with local apples, pears, and malt.

The caves that dot Aescher's remote cliff face are also home to the centuries-old Wildkirchli ('Wild Chapel'), a famous pilgrimage site, as well as the 'Hermit Lodge' - a minimalist escape built into the caves where religious hermits used to dwell (you can stay here too).

PLAY

SKIING IN WINTER

While glamorous ski resorts like Gstaad, St. Moritz, and Davos are some of the poshest in the world, Switzerland also has affordable options.

Stoos-Muotatal in Schwyz, accessible via the world's steepest funicular rail, has easy 'magic carpet' ski lifts and lots of snowshoeing trails and sled runs. Sky by day in Zuoz-Pizol in Graubünden before adjourning to the celebrity-soaked Davos' famous Igloo-Dorf bar, made out of snow.



SCHWINGEN IN SUMMER

In summer, you can experience Schwingfest. Happening every 5 years, it features Switzerland's top Schwingers (traditional Swiss wrestlers) who compete for the coveted title of 'Schwinger King'. The next championship (26-28 August 2022) in Pratteln is where you can get your fill of yodelers, traditional mountain food, and burley men in one place.

QUIRKY UK FACTS

FROM STRANGE LAWS TO QUIRKY FOODS, THE UK IS A GREAT PLACE FOR HUNTERS OF ALL THINGS PECULIAR. HERE ARE SOME WEIRD FACTS, FOODS, AND OTHER FASCINATING ITEMS.

WEIRD FOOD

If you think fish and chips are the only British food, think again. The country has plenty of quirky dishes that never quite made it out of the country.

JELLIED EEL: Originating from London's East End, the dish consists of chopped eels boiled in a spiced stock that is allowed to cool and set, forming a jelly. It is eaten cold, and you can still get them at certain parts of the East End.

STINKING BISHOP: This Gloucestershire specialty is officially the stinkiest cheese in the UK although it has a subtle, nutty flavor. Its aroma actually comes from a 17th century cheese-making technique of washing cheese rinds in pear cider.

SCOTCH EGGS: A standard pub fare and picnic food, it consists of a hard boiled egg that's encased in sausage meat, and then rolled in breadcrumbs before it's deep fried. Some local variants use black or white pudding instead of sausage meat.

PORK PIE: The filling consists of roughly minced pork and pork fat, which is then coated in a layer of jellied pork before being wrapped in a pastry and baked. Interestingly, it's actually served cold - as a snack or with a salad.

STARGAZY PIE: This Cornish pie's filling consists of whole pilchards (a type of fish), eggs, and potatoes. The dish is named after the fish heads - their mouths stuffed with herb - that poke out of the crust so they literally gaze at diners.

SPOTTED DICK: While it has a funny name, this popular dish is actually a dessert. It's a sponge pudding made with suet (hard fat from the loins or kidneys of beef or mutton) that's dotted with dried fruit, and served with custard.

BRITAIN IS OBSESSED WITH BIRDS

Birds are a big part of British culture - some are even associated with royalty.

1. Wild unmarked mute swans belong to the Crown, so it's illegal to take or kill/injure them - people have been prosecuted in recent years for both offences!
2. Feeding pigeons in Trafalgar Square has been banned since 2003, and to prevent the birds from returning, they've used a hawk to patrol the area.
3. The Tower of London is protected by six ravens by order of Charles II. Today, the ravens have to remain there at all times due to superstition. Each raven has its wing clipped, and there's even a spare raven handy in case one flies away.
4. There are more chickens than humans in England (870 million chickens vs 64 million people in 2013).



QUIRKY TRAILS

The UK has plenty of interesting trails to explore, from historic sites to foodie trails that excite the palate. Here are some modern quirky trails that are worth exploring.

SEVEN NOSES OF SOHO: There are several plaster noses hidden in plain sight in London's Soho neighbourhood, which were placed there in 1997 by artist Rick Buckley. He initially made 35 plaster casts of his own nose and affixed them to buildings around London. Most of them were discovered and quickly removed, and for those that remained, he only claimed responsibility in 2011. However, the 14 years have allowed for interesting origin stories. One such 'legend' states that if you find all seven noses, you will become fabulously wealthy. Others revolve around the nose stuck to the Admiralty Arch - one story claims that it was there to mock Napoleon, and another claimed that it was a spare for the statue of Admiral Lord Nelson. There is a nose tour which starts from Admiralty Arch.

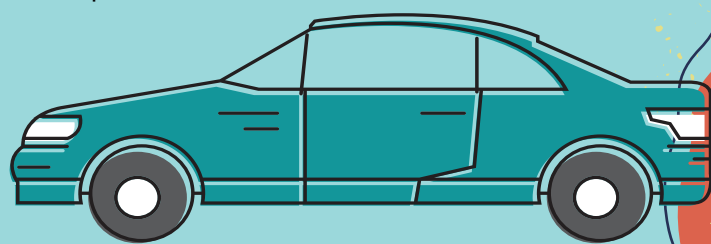
CAT STATUES OF YORK: The city has been celebrating felines with their cat statues for over a century. Scattered on eaves, rooftops and chimneys around town, the original pair of metal felines were thought to have been designed to scare rats from the nearby river. In the 1980s, artist Johnathan Newdick was commissioned to create new sculptures for an architect, and soon other building owners followed suit, creating a cottage industry of cat-related tourist shops. There are now 22 cat sculptures throughout the city which you can explore via the York Cat Walk map; however, due to constant theft and new additions, many of the cats on the maps prove as elusive as any real cat.

Stinking Bishop

ROAD TRIP

Arguably, there's no experience more American than the road trip, which has been romanticised in countless films and books – from "Little Miss Sunshine" to Jack Kerouac's "On the Road". There are plenty of famous road trip routes to consider, but perhaps the most iconic is Route 66, which runs from Santa Monica (California) to Chicago (Illinois).

The roughly two-week long road trip along Route 66 will take you on a rural adventure through small town America, where you'll get to meet unforgettable people and see beautifully diverse landscapes. You'll also get to visit quirky and interesting cafes, motels and shops along the way – sometimes in the most desolate and unexpected of places!



PARTY TIME!

Among students studying in America, no other school holiday brings out more excitement than spring break, a week-long holiday that typically takes place in March or April. You're probably familiar with spring break's reputation as a time when students from all over the U.S. flock to the sunny beaches of California, Texas or Florida for a week of clubbing, partying, and performances. If that's how you want to unwind, then Daytona Beach (Florida), Panama City Beach (Florida), South Padre Island (Texas) or Santa Monica (California) are the places to visit.

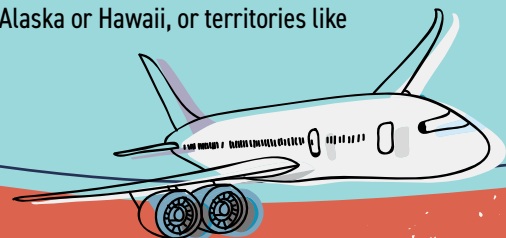


If partying is not your thing, there are plenty of alternative destinations that are more peaceful, such as the Red Rocks in Sedona (Arizona), Olympic National Park in Seattle (Washington) or the Blue Ridge Mountains (North Carolina). If you're looking for urban destinations with lots of history, shopping, and musical entertainment, you won't regret visiting Nashville (Tennessee), New Orleans (Louisiana), Austin (Texas), Charleston (South Carolina) or Santa Barbara (California).

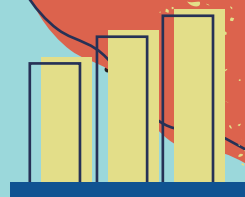
TRAVEL ACROSS AMERICA

Don't drive? No problem. You can also experience many of these road trip routes by bus through companies like Greyhound, or even by train with Amtrak.

The U.S. may be vast – it's about the size of Europe! – but you can travel around the country easily – there are plenty of budget airlines that take you to various cities across the U.S. Plus, it's only a domestic flight to far flung states like Alaska or Hawaii, or territories like Puerto Rico.



TRAVELLING IN THE UNITED STATES



AMERICAN CULTURE

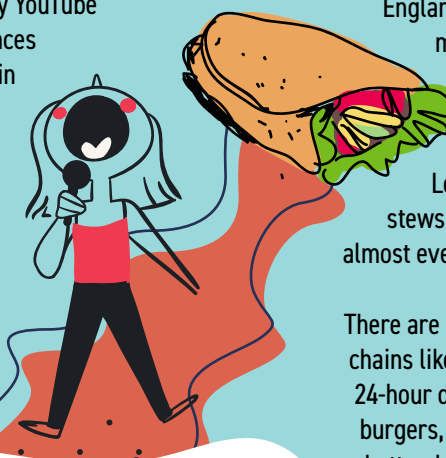
Diversity is its strength: in big cities like Los Angeles or Atlanta, you will be exposed to a wide range of ethnicities, lifestyles, values, and religious beliefs as you'll find people with roots from all over the world, from Africa and Europe to the Middle East and South America. In addition, there are also many ethnic neighbourhoods – like Japantown or Little Italy – that have been part of the American social fabric for over a century.

Americans in general are quite friendly, and may happily invite you to some cultural activities, from holidays (Thanksgiving, Independence Day, etc.) to social gatherings (bbqs, sport events, etc.).

ATTEND CONCERTS

Many of the world's top musicians strike it big in the U.S., and as such, it'll be easier to attend a concert with your favourite performers since they usually tour the U.S. before going on world tours (if at all).

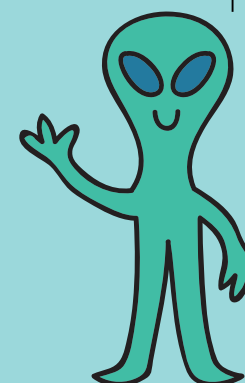
Whether you're a fan of Ariana Grande, Imagine Dragons, Chainsmokers, or one of the many YouTube stars and even K-pop artists like BTS, chances are you'll get to see them live somewhere in the U.S. before your friends will back home in Singapore.



From road trips to iconic destinations, travelling around the USA is all about experiencing the fun and unusual aspects of American culture. Here are several uniquely American experiences that you can only have in a country with four different time zones (excluding Hawaii and Alaska).

CONVENTIONS & EVENTS

If music isn't your jam, then you'll find plenty of pop culture conventions that happen in many cities across the U.S. that no self-professed nerd should miss, whether it's the New York Comic Con, Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) in Los Angeles, or PAX WEST, a game culture festival in Seattle.



EATING OUT IN THE US

The U.S. is home to fast food chains that we all know and love; in fact, there are over 250,000 fast food establishments across the U.S. – many of them offer drive-through service.

Depending on where you live, local specialties include Buffalo Wings (Buffalo, NY), clam chowder (New England), Philly Cheese Steak (Philadelphia, PA), mission burritos (San Francisco), Coney Dog (NYC), Burgoo (Kentucky), and more. Texas, Tennessee, and Missouri are known for their barbecues, while Louisiana has a Creole influence with spicy stews. Chicago has an old-timey donut shop in almost every neighbourhood.

There are plenty of places to hang out, from coffee chains like Caribou and Dunkin' Donuts to one of many 24-hour diners which serve up comfort foods like burgers, fries, pancakes, milkshakes, and bottomless coffee – perfect for a study break.

Let's not forget that you can also easily get your hands on some favourite American snacks like GORP, SunChips, Wheat Thins, and more.



BIZZARE FESTIVALS

In the U.S., there's no shortage of interesting events to attend. You can find film and music festivals, state and county fairs, and sporting events just about anywhere. There's also no shortage of weird events either!

Bugfest (North Carolina) in September brings together bug lovers from all over the country and includes exhibits, talks from bug experts, and yes – even bug cuisine.

The **UFO Festival** in Roswell (New Mexico) in July is an event dedicated to all things E.T., where you can dress up as your favourite alien (or predator), watch a parade, and take part in a 5K run.

The **Wisconsin State Cow Chip Throw and Festival** in September is an interesting event centred around throwing cow dung "chips". The event includes a parade, music, and an arts and crafts fair.

Planning to travel the world? You have two options: buy flights as you go or plan your route in advance. With the latter, round-the-world (RTW) tickets are convenient because they take the hassle out of planning your trip, allowing you to travel without having to worry about onward flights. If you plan well, RTW tickets will save you some money.

Cheat Sheet

#74 Round the World tickets

WHAT ARE RTW TICKETS?

RTW tickets are actually airline alliance flight passes, so for example, if you book with Singapore Airlines (Star Alliance), your ticket is only good for airlines that SQ partners with within that alliance. This means the cities you fly to are limited to where airlines within that alliance services.

To get a RTW ticket, you have to input the destinations and dates to get the final fare. Generally, it's free to change the dates/times of the flights, but not the destinations. There are 3 alliances available: Star Alliance, Oneworld, and SkyTeam (although it's too small to be viable).

Generally, a RTW ticket is valid for a year from the start date. Rules for RTW include:

- Start and end in the same country
- Journeys go in one direction: east-west or west-east
- You need to cross the Atlantic and Pacific oceans
- You can only cross once, no doubling back

STAR ALLIANCE

Comprising 26 different airlines, the Star Alliance RTW ticket gives you access to 1,250 destinations in 175 countries.



The RTW flight package consists of 16 flights and covers up to 39,000 miles, with free rebooking. You also have 5 "surface", or "overland", sections in your itinerary. This means you can travel from one destination to another without taking their flight - eg. land in Rome and fly out of London (by land or budget airline). However, the trip will count towards your total mileage.

Airlines include Singapore Airlines, Air Canada, ANA, Swiss, Thai Airways, United Airlines, Turkish Airways, etc.

ONE WORLD

Oneworld comprises 14 different airlines, serving almost 1,000 destinations in more than 170 territories. They have 2 kinds of RTW tickets: a continent-based ticket (Oneworld Explorer) and a mileage-based one (Global Explorer).



Oneworld Explorer is a segment-based pass, focusing on 3, 4, or 6 continents. The plan includes 16 segments but without overland penalties, and no maximum mileage limit. Their Global Explorer plan is the mileage-based pass, with 4 options: 26,000, 29,000, 34,000, and 39,000 miles, which roughly translate to 3, 4, 5, and 6 continents.

Airlines include Cathay Pacific, Japan Airlines, British Airways, Finnair, Qatar Airways, etc.

THE CIRCLE PACIFIC

Both Star Alliance and Oneworld have a variation of the RTW called Circle Pacific, which lets you travel in a circle around all of the countries that border the Pacific Ocean. Good for up to 6 months, destinations include Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Japan, Southeast Asia, USA, and Canada.



COST

Most economy-class RTW tickets start from \$5,000 depending on your mileage, route, and dates. The minimum is 3 flights, although using fewer flights doesn't reduce costs.

Is an RTW ticket cheaper? Use either Star Alliance or Oneworld's booking platform and compare the prices against flight aggregators like Airtreks.

THINGS TO CONSIDER FOR RTW TICKET

FLEXIBILITY: RTW tickets lock you into a firm route, so your flights have no extra cost. If you book as you go, prices might rise as you travel but you have flexibility.

COMFORT: You'll fly with major airlines on a RTW ticket, with perks like free baggage and inflight entertainment. Booking as you go means you'll likely fly with more budget, no-frills airlines.

PLANNING STRESS: Your RTW tickets are all pre-booked so there's no stress trying to scramble for last-minute flights on busy dates. RTWs are ideal for those with set itineraries, while book-as-you-go is better for those who don't have a plan.

COST COMPARISON: It all depends on your travel route and preference for flexibility and comfort. If you plan your trip up front, you may save 15-25% off point-to-point tickets.

LONG-HAUL FLIGHTS: RTW tickets are great for long-haul flights, as there are usually more options than budget airlines.

TIPS

- Some countries require that you have an outbound ticket before you can board a flight or enter the country.
- Science says flying eastward is harder on your body and produces more jet lag.



BY LINDSAY WONG

Studying Overseas:

STOLEN EXPERIENCES DURING COVID-19



SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

Being overseas when the pandemic hit involves a lot of panicking and worrying, since international students were essentially left stranded in the foreign country they were studying in.

With borders closing and fewer flights available, many international students had to make difficult decisions on whether to return home to their families or continue living alone. Returning home guaranteed them safety as they would be with their family but they would not be able to go back to university overseas for an undetermined amount of time.

There are many benefits to studying overseas - being immersed in a different culture, gaining independence while living alone, exploring new places and activities, and more. However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 made it physically impossible for international students to reap the full benefits of studying overseas.

One by one, university campuses around the world shut down and initiated online learning. While there are some benefits to online learning, many international students - especially those in their first year - are missing out on unforgettable university experiences that they should have.

A VERY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

The pandemic hit in the final year of my bachelor's degree. Although most of my friends returned home, I decided to stay in Australia and enjoy my last year with my roommates. I don't want to do online learning at home where I could easily be distracted by my family, especially if I had to conduct presentations for class. And frankly, I wasn't ready to say goodbye to Australia yet.

Around March 2020, everyone started panicking about the pandemic and the "new normal". For the first time in more than 2 years, I was scared to go out on the streets. I opted for doing my groceries online and using food delivery apps.

For around three months, my roommates and I enjoyed weekly UberEATS and movie nights as a way to destress and relax from a busy semester. We also started exercising at home regularly and going out for walks or coffee runs together.

Although I missed a lot of my friends who had returned to their home countries, I appreciated having loved ones around. I did miss home - my family and I worried about each other, but kept each other updated regularly. Being independent during the pandemic was different, especially amidst all the panic-buying and paranoia but I felt like I had matured a lot during such a crisis without my family.

AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT'S WOE

All students were in a similar situation when educational institutions started to adopt online learning to comply with new lockdown measures and restrictions. My classes had quite a few international students, so a lot of them tuned in from their home countries.

They had to calculate the time differences before every class and adjust their timetables to accommodate the new online classes. This involved waking up much earlier to make it to their 9am lectures and/or tutorials and taking into account time differences when it came to online assessments, which were only open for a certain amount of time. Luckily, because I chose to stay in Australia, I didn't have to worry about this.

Every international student in 2020 definitely missed out on a holistic university experience because of the pandemic. It's much harder to make friends in university when physical meetings are not possible - virtual events are still somewhat awkward because it's so easy to hide behind the camera. People are more hesitant to speak up, so it's harder to interact with other people.

While I was sad about the fact that I couldn't experience an in-person graduation ceremony wearing the regalia, I'm thankful I still had two years of in-person university. If international students are willing to put themselves out there, virtually, they could also have a worthwhile university experience despite being in the unusual circumstances we're in right now. With borders to many more countries opening up these days - like Australia, UK and the US - it's hoped that we can slowly move towards a "normal" university experience.



THE LIST

JAPAN'S LUXURIOUS OVERNIGHT CRUISE TRAINS

TRAIN SUITE SHIKI-SHIMA

Northeast Japan

Travel to the Tohoku and Hokkaido region in this sumptuous, 10-car champagne-gold carriages that promise unsurpassed luxury thanks to its futuristic yet elegant design boasting large windows. It has a piano lounge and 2 luxurious viewing carriages on both ends of the train. Of its 17 luxury suites (two with cypress bathtubs), the Deluxe Suite is spread across 2 floors!

FARE: from ¥370,000 (2D1N) to ¥1,000,000 (4D3N)

Japan is more than just convenient Tokyo subways, long-distance trains or superfast shinkansen bullet trains. Any traveller willing to spend big bucks can also look into its fleet of ultra luxury trains, some boasting suites with private bathtubs and interior decor befitting royalty, taking you on overnight, all-inclusive cruises around some of Japan's most scenic spots. You can also expect 5-star hospitality and fine dining on these journeys.



TWILIGHT EXPRESS MIZUKAZE

Western Japan

Explore the breathtaking scenery on five different routes around the San'in and Sanyo regions with a touch of Art Deco nostalgia boasting floor-to-ceiling windows in the observation car. This 10-car luxury train has 16 lavish guest rooms. The Suite occupies an entire car, complete with living/dining room, clawfoot bathtub, skylight, and even a private balcony.

FARE: from ¥325,000 (2D1N) to ¥610,000 (3D2N)



CRUISE TRAIN SEVEN STARS

Kyushu

This OG of luxury trains takes you around Kyushu. The interior is a magnificent sight to behold, combining Western and Japanese influences it boasts exquisite woodwork from the floors, to the ceilings, to the furniture. It has 14 luxurious en-suite rooms, and its lounge car has swivelling chairs where you can sit and enjoy live performances.

FARE: from ¥402,000 (2D1N) to ¥855,000 (4D3N)



THE ROYAL EXPRESS

Izu Peninsula

More of a luxury sightseeing train than a cruise train with accommodations, The Royal Express runs between Yokohama Station and Izukyu Shinoda Station on the Izu Peninsula. The interior boasts luxurious fittings that conjure up a nostalgia of a bygone era, and overnight guests are accommodated at Izu's luxurious hot spring hotels.

FARE: from ¥155,000 (2D1N)



Thanks to their popularity, you will need advance reservation to secure a place in one of the three cruise trains (Train Suite Shiki-Shima, Twilight Express Mizukaze, and Cruise Train Seven Stars) - sometimes up to a year in advance. Applicants are chosen using a lottery system.

LUXURY SIGHTSEEING TRAINS

Japan also has a whole fleet of luxury trains that are geared towards day trips where you get to experience local sights, cuisines, and activities.



36+3

This is an all-Green Car service in Kyushu that runs on different short routes around different parts of Kyushu each day, like Oita to Hakata. The interior boasts the same woodwork as Seven Stars, and those who have meal plans can use the luxurious compartments.

AONIYOSHI

Beginning next year, this luxury sightseeing train connects Osaka, Nara, and Kyoto (the entire journey is only 80 minutes). The train boasts 'salon seats' and a retro bar area serving drinks and light meals. No details have been announced yet, but the trip seems to be ¥2,000 per person.



While most of us dream of flying around the world, few even think of doing it solo, and even less think of doing it in a microlight. This is what Belgian-British teen Zara Rutherford wants to achieve - at 19 years old, she intends to smash the current world records. If she succeeds, she will be the youngest woman ever to fly solo around the world.

The current record is set by a then 30-year old American Shaestra Wai, and the current record for youngest person to fly solo around the world belongs to 18-year-old Mason Andrews.

ZARA'S JOURNEY

Starting from Belgium on August 18, Zara aims to cover 52 countries, flying over 51,000 kilometres and hugging the coastlines as much as possible since she'll be flying in a Shark Aero ultralight plane. The high performance plane, which can reach speeds of up to 300km/h, has been specially modified to accommodate an extra fuel tank for the long distances.

Her route includes the UK and Greenland before hitting the Canadian and American east coast before reaching Colombia. She'll then fly north towards Alaska and Russia before making her way along the coast down to Korea and then to Indonesia. At the time of writing, she's halfway through her mission.

To qualify for the Guinness World Record, people circumnavigating the globe to pass through two approximate antipodal points (ie. two locations on opposite geographical sides of the Earth). Zara chose Tumaco, Colombia and Jambi, Indonesia as the two points, but changed them to Quidó and Jakarta due to bad weather.

She is due to touch down in Singapore (target is late November) before making her journey back to Belgium via India and the Middle East. She expects to arrive back in Belgium by early December.

Since her only backup is her support crew in Belgium, the journey was planned carefully, including setting up the necessary authorisations to fly into many different national airspaces in advance. Her aerial odyssey can be followed on a live tracker on Zara's website, FlyZolo.com, and on her TikTok page.



BUMPY MOMENTS

Zara has been enjoying the scenery from above, which includes everything from glaciers to volcanoes. Apart from a satellite telephone and a radio to communicate with air traffic control, she only has her music and her podcasts to keep her company.

She flew over an erupting volcano in Iceland, adding that the flight did become "very bumpy" at one point. She also felt Mexico's 7.1 earthquake. During her journey from Iceland to Greenland, she lost radio contact 20 minutes into her flight, and had to resort to texting her father for the weather report. "Because after a certain point, you have to keep going - you don't have enough fuel to get back," she says.

At New Mexico, her airspeed indicator was not functioning properly, but she managed to arrive in Los Angeles safely. Being in a small aircraft, weather is a big factor, especially at the equator where she had close calls with thunderstorms. While in Quidó - the world's rainiest city - she was grounded for two days due to rain. It may also be tricky weather-wise around Indonesia and Singapore. She was also grounded for nearly a month in Alaska before making her way safely across the Bering Straits to Russia.



ABOUT ZARA

Zara began training for her pilot licence at the age of 14, having acquired her passion for flying from her British father who is a former RAF pilot stationed in Belgium. She holds private pilot and microlight licences, but as she isn't instrument-rated, she has to do the entire flight using visual flight rules.

Zara hopes that her record attempt will encourage more girls and young women to become interested in aviation and STEM. "Only 5% of commercial pilots and 15% of computer scientists are women. In both areas - aviation and STEM - the gender gap is huge," says Zara, and she hopes to change that perception.

She embarked on her flight just after completing her A-Levels in Mathematics, Economics, and Physics and hopes to pursue computer science or electrical engineering at university to fulfill her dream of becoming an astronaut. After all, why reach for the sky when you can shoot for the stars?

RECORD-BREAKING IN A MICROLIGHT

TEEN ON A SOLO ROUND-THE-WORLD FLIGHT

HAVE WORK, WILL TRAVEL

DIGITAL NOMAD VISAS

BY NINA GAN

The pandemic has shaped the world of travel and work, and economic losses continue to mount in tourism-dependent countries as people remain reluctant to travel, as work-from-home remains the norm. However, some nations have a new way to combine a vacation destination and work: the digital nomad visa.

Available to workers, students, and freelancers (requirements and costs vary), digital nomad visas allow travellers to legally live and work in another country. Most regions offering digital nomad visas already have infrastructure like strong wifi, and due to the remote nature of some island destinations, they're safe havens from the COVID-19 virus.

WHO HAS DIGITAL NOMAD VISAS?

According to Investopedia, there were 24 regions offering the visas as of July 2021, but not all are suitable for those without an existing employment. Some countries require applicants to have an annual income of up to US\$100,000. A prerequisite for most is travel insurance and some form of income. Here are some plausible options:

BALI (5 YEARS)

Bali has delayed its launch of the anticipated nomad visa which would enable you to work there for up to 5 years. Those earning income outside of Indonesia won't need to pay income tax.

BERMUDA (1 YEAR)

The "Work From Bermuda Certificate" is unique in that students can apply – just provide proof of enrollment in an undergraduate, graduate, doctoral, or research programme. Those planning to work remotely here (no income tax payable) will need to provide proof of employment or ownership of a business. All applicants will need to provide proof of sufficient income to support themselves. The certificate permit is valid for 1 year, renewable on a case-by-case basis.

COSTA RICA (2 YEARS)

For their temporary residency visa, "Rentista", prospective visitors need to have a monthly income of US\$2,500 (guaranteed for two years) or make a US\$60,000 deposit at a local bank. You'll need to pay a social security fund and voluntary insurance, which is around 9-10% of your stated monthly income. The 2-year permit is renewable as long as all requirements are met.

CURAÇAO (6-12 MONTHS)

This Dutch Caribbean island's "@HOME in Curaçao" programme lets you work remotely, and you don't need to be employed if you're a freelancer with proper contracts. To be eligible, you must prove that you can work location-independently. No income tax is payable. The 6 month residency is renewable for another 6 months.

GEORGIA (1 YEAR)

The "Remotely From Georgia" program enables digital nomads from up to 95 countries, including Singapore, to work within the former Soviet state. You only need to submit an online application form and provide financial proof for the duration of your stay, which is 1 year.

GERMANY (3 MONTHS - 3 YEARS)

Germany's "Freiberufler" residence permit is for freelancers and self-employed workers in the Liberal sector (healthcare, law, business counselling, science/technical, linguistic & information transmitting). They must obtain German health insurance and be registered with the tax office. The 3-month permit is extendable by up to 3 years, or converted into a residence permit.



MAURITIUS (6 MONTHS-)

For the "Premium Travel Visa" you'll need to prove you have the minimum funds to meet the cost of stay in Mauritius, which is US\$1,500 a month; you'll also have to pay tax if staying beyond 180 days. The visa is valid for 1 year (a tourist visa is 180 days), with the potential for renewal.

PORTUGAL (1-5 YEARS)

Portugal offers a residence visa for independent workers who can provide proof of sufficient means to cover your entire stay or a term of responsibility signed by a Portuguese citizen. You'll have to show contracts for providing services or proof of business ownership. The 1-year visa can be renewed twice, each time for an additional 2 years.

TAIWAN (1-3 YEARS)

The "Taiwan Employment Gold Card" is a four-in-one card, combining an open-ended work permit, resident visa, alien resident certificate, and re-entry permit – you can reside in Taiwan to seek employment, work remotely, and freely change jobs. It applies to certain industries, including STEM, education, culture & arts, law, architecture, and finance. The card is valid for 1-3 years, based on the assessment of your skills.



STRESS

RELIEF

Travel is restarting, thanks to the VTL. While it covers plenty of countries we'd like to go to, some of us may want to explore more countries beyond that list. While there are no guaranteed lanes open to some places on your bucket list, you can simply pretend you're there with a simple selfie! Let your thumbs do the travelling – we've prepared some iconic photos for you to pose with your travel mascot (your thumb).

DIRECTIONS

How to travel with your thumb:
Step 1: Draw a face on your thumb
Step 2: Choose your destination
Step 3: Position your thumb in front of your destination
Step 4: Use your other thumb to snap a pic for your socials
Step 5: Hashtag it (e.g. #Blessed, #YOLO, #AllThumbs, etc.)



like this

let your fingers do the travelling



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TRAVEL ISSUE

