

# National Geographic Traveller (UK) reveals The Cool List: 17 must-see destinations for 2017

Submitted by: APL Media (Absolute Publishing)

Thursday, 1 December 2016

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National Geographic Traveller (UK) has announced its Cool List 2017, highlighting the 17 must-see destinations for the year ahead. Chosen by its team of editors and writers, the hotly anticipated list of countries and cities is revealed in the Jan/Feb 2017 issue of the magazine — on sale today.

Pat Riddell, editor of National Geographic Traveller, said: "Travel piques our curiosity and it's that curiosity that informs our annual Cool List — what's happening in the world, what's interesting and, most importantly, what's in it for you? We aim to answer these questions, and more, with our list of 17 must-visit destinations for 2017.

"From Ireland's forgotten county to the high temple of US hipsterism, from South America's hottest foodie city to Germany's art scene, we've selected the world's best places to see and be seen in the coming year."

[natgeotraveller.co.uk/the-cool-list-2017](http://natgeotraveller.co.uk/the-cool-list-2017) (<http://natgeotraveller.co.uk/the-cool-list-2017/>)

## 1. Donegal

With a weather-nibbled coast spotted with sea stacks, Blue Flag beaches and offshore islands, Donegal is a land that feels undiscovered. Last summer, scenes for Star Wars: Episode VIII were filmed on the Inishowen Peninsula. But this area of Ireland is also expecting 2017 to be a big year; there's an array of reasons to visit, from surfing beaches in Magheroarty and Ballyhiernan Bay to Horn Head — a driving, walking or cycling loop that squeezes the 1,600-mile Wild Atlantic Way into a 4.5-mile nutshell.

## 2. Santiago

British Airways launches flights to Chile's sophisticated capital in January and it's a hive of activity for 2017, with hotels opening in heritage buildings (such as the new Hotel Magnolia in El Centro) and the reopening of one of the city's magnificent palaces, Palacio Cousiño — closed since it was damaged by the 2010 earthquake.

## 3. Helsinki

Done Copenhagen? Seen Stockholm? It's Helsinki's time for travel love. The world's second-most northerly capital does both freezing, fairytale winters and bright, leafy summers — so visitors can choose between two very different trips. Are you a cosy cafe and steamy sauna kind of person, or do you prefer bright nights, waterside vibes and midsummer parties? Whenever you arrive, expect to find cutting-edge design, a lava-hot Nordic food scene (start your day with breakfast in the renovated Old Market Hall), surprising Art Nouveau architecture and good coffee as standard.

## 4. Greenland

Cruises have been dipping into Greenland for a few years now, but the world's largest island is beginning to feel established rather than experimental as more and more companies include it on 2017 itineraries. Covered in vast glaciers and largely uninhabited, Greenland is carving a niche as an adventure destination. But the likes of dog-sledding, snowmobiling and snowshoeing are complemented by

boat tours around towering icebergs, Inuit cultural experiences and some of the best spots in the world to watch the Northern Lights.

#### 5. Peru

British Airways launched direct flights to Lima last summer, where a burgeoning food and culture scene means it's now a standalone city break. Rafael Osterling (of Miraflores' Rafael fame) opened El Mercado recently — a simple farm-to-table restaurant rooted in Peruvian cuisine — and darling of the jet-set Jaime Pesaque will open Mayta in 2017. The capital's hotel scene is blossoming: new openings include Casa Republica in Pacific-edged Barranco, opening in February and the Atemporal 'hotelito' in Miraflores. In May, Belmond's Andean Explorer train will ply its route from Cusco to Arequipa and the 'second Machu Picchu', pre-Incan fortress Kuelap, will get more accessible with the imminent opening of a cable-car. LATAM's new flights from Lima to Jaén, meanwhile, are opening up the north of the country.

#### 6. Aarhus

Aarhus is having a 12-month stint in the spotlight as European Capital of Culture 2017. There'll be performances by the Royal Danish Theatre; performances at the Musikhuset concert hall that include ballet, opera and musical theatre interpretations of three of Oscar-winning Danish director Susanne Bier's movies; and paintings and installations spanning The Garden — a three-mile visual trail that will curve through the centre and along the coast, examining man's relationship with nature. There's also Urban Mediaspace Aarhus, a grand revitalisation of the waterside; Godsbanen, a former railway warehouse reborn as bars and eateries; and Substans, one of three Michelin-starred restaurants in the city.

#### 7. Canada

2017 is a hugely symbolic year for Canada — it's the 150th anniversary of the Confederation, with celebrations including a tall ships fleet sailing along the coast in July, and summer-long events in Charlottetown, where the movement started. But this is a year of openings as well as commemoration — from the zip-line along the gorge edge at Niagara Falls to a 'seafood trail' launching in Nova Scotia, and a new UNESCO World Heritage Site in Labrador, Mistaken Point. Add in free national park entry all year, Montréal's 375th anniversary and the Invictus Games taking place in Toronto in September and it's clear there's never been a better time to go.

#### 8. Portland, Oregon

The high temple of American hipsterism has long been the most appealing US city without a direct flight from the UK. That changes in May, when Delta launches a direct route to Portland from Heathrow. It's a city that has encouraged small-scale enterprise to flourish, leading to a scene where virtually everyone seems to run a food truck, roast their own coffee, brew craft beer or dabble in small-batch distilling. As a result, it's a far better city for grazing than sightseeing — although it's the gateway to Oregon, perhaps the most underrated state in the Union.

#### 9. India

With 2017 sandwiched between the release of two Jungle Book films, now's the time to really get to know India's wildlife, particularly its tiger. Earlier this year, a global census revealed tiger numbers had grown for the first time in over a century, with over half of these living in India — what's more,

Indian Railways and IRCTC have just launched the Tiger Express train to help visitors to Madhya Pradesh glimpse their own Shere Khan.

#### 10. South Africa

South Africa is great value for money, with the rand keeping prices on the ground remarkably low. Wildlife is the obvious reason for going, particularly its accessible Big Five game parks. It's also possible to go swimming with seals at Plettenberg Bay, observe meerkats in Oudtshoorn, and coo at penguins on the beach in Cape Town. There's been a much-needed increase in airlift, with British Airways and Thomas Cook launching seasonal flights from Gatwick. Meanwhile, Johannesburg's downtown renewal projects have had a startlingly positive effect. The likes of the Apartheid Museum tell the horrors of the 20th century, but modern Soweto tells a grand, post-Mandela, poverty-to-prosperity tale, where the black middle-classes have stayed in their townships rather than fleeing to wealthy neighbourhoods.

#### 11. Iran

Thawing of relations with Iran has put the country back on the travel map. The ruling regime is still deeply conservative, but the tour operators that have made tentative steps there are expanding their programmes. Virtually no one comes back from Iran without remarking on the friendliness and hospitality of the Iranian people. The country is also dotted with stellar cultural sites, including the archaeological ruins at Persepolis and Pasargadae. The historic cities of Isfahan and Shiraz, meanwhile, show off present-day culture in ancient settings.

#### 12. New Zealand

With the 150th anniversary of the Maori Representation Act next year, New Zealand is turning the spotlight on its roots — a new museum at the Waitangi Treaty Grounds (where the Maori's land ownership was recognised in 1840) opened earlier this year. The British and Irish Lions return in 2017 — their first visit to New Zealand in 12 years and the biggest sporting event in NZ since the Rugby World Cup in 2011. With 10 matches over June and July across seven host cities — from Whangarei to Dunedin — you can see the sights while cheering on your team.

#### 13. Seoul

While South Korea will spend much of the next 12 months preparing for the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, it will get an early boost before then with the opening in late 2017 of the Seoul Skygarden — a former bypass converted into a half-mile stretch of raised urban garden, replete with cafes, performance spaces and shops. Seoul's answer to New York's High Line is the latest of several high-profile projects to have transformed the Korean capital into one of Asia's greenest cities.

#### 14. Sudan

While Egypt's tourism is still suffering, its neighbour to the south is stealing the limelight. January sees Cox & Kings launch Treasures of Ancient Nubia, a tour of Sudan, which will proffer a pyramid substitute for those missing Giza — the ancient monuments at Meroe and Karima are arguably a match for anything in Cairo.

#### 15. Düsseldorf

Düsseldorf is among the best short-range weekend break destinations, with deep historical roots in the

art world. A 2016 newcomer, the Philara Collection opened in a former glass factory. Exhibits focus on contemporary art gathered by collector Gil Bronner over a couple of decades, with a new rooftop sculpture terrace coming in 2017. The nearby Flingern neighbourhood has several smaller galleries. Major exhibitions for 2017 include Lucas Cranach the Elder at the Kunstpalast (8 April to 30 July). Meanwhile, one of Europe's coolest art spaces, Kunst im Tunnel is a single elliptical gallery in a former traffic underpass below the pedestrianised Rhine promenade. Summer dates for the 2017 diary include the Tour de France's Grand Départ (1–2 July) and the biggest funfair on the Rhine (14–23 July).

#### 16. Sicily

After a long refurbishment, Sicily's oldest museum, Palermo's Museo Salinas, has reopened. Its archaeological treasures feature on all Martin Randall cultural itineraries for 2017. In May, Thomas Cook Airlines launch the first UK flight from Birmingham to Comiso in southwest Sicily. Also in May, a new Sentido resort opens nearby in Marina di Ragusa.

#### 17. USA

With the growth of budget flights to the US, 2017 will see a host of new non-Heathrow direct routes. Virgin Atlantic will start flying to Boston, New York and San Francisco from Manchester, for example. But it's not the big cities that will get the best view of 2017's main event. On 21 August, a full solar eclipse passes across the country, from Oregon to South Carolina. The biggest settlements in the path are Kansas City and St Louis, Missouri, but it's a far better bet to build the event into a road trip and head off the beaten track.

National Geographic Traveller (UK) has a cover price of £3.95, via subscription and on newsstands, and is published 10 times a year. Visit [natgeotraveller.co.uk](http://natgeotraveller.co.uk) (<http://natgeotraveller.co.uk>) for more information.

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#### Notes

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