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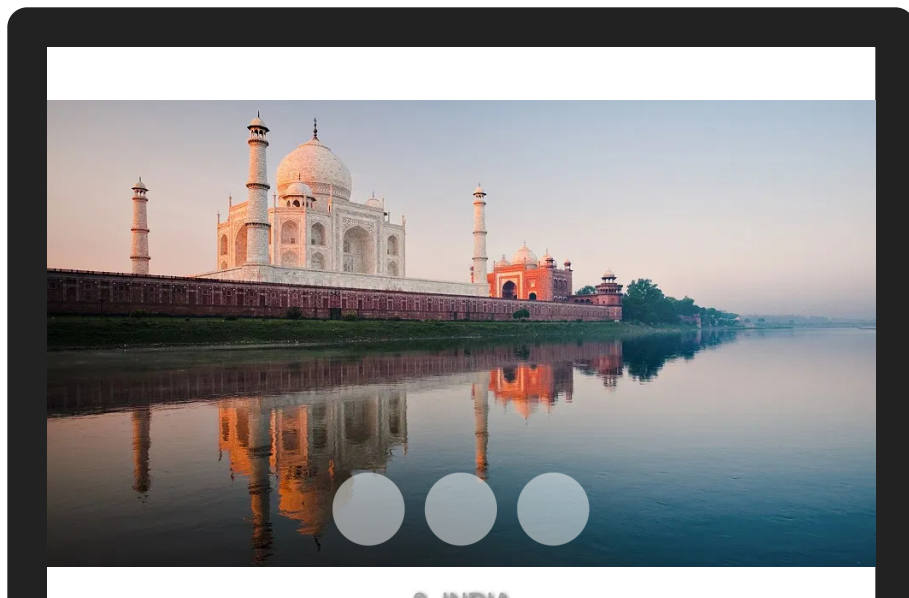
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Culture

If you're tired of lazy holidays, then I suggest you to set off on a journey and discover ancient civilizations that have defined and shaped the world as we know it today. Practically every current day country could have made this list, but for the history buffs and culture freaks amongst you, I present you my 10 favorite cultural destinations in the world.

There is more info below the slideshow. Think I missed one? Share your favorite cultural destination in the **comments section**, or take my **poll** below!



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10. HIDDEN TREASURES IN BHUTAN

The landlocked Himalayan Kingdom Bhutan is perched high on the mighty Himalayan range and remains a hidden paradise, accessible to only a fortunate few. The land of the Thunder Dragon unites its colourful religion with spectacular natural surroundings. The many festivals are rich expressions of Vajrayana Buddhism, when people dress in their finest clothes and jewellery. It is a mystic land of fluttering prayer flags lining high ridges, beautiful monasteries perched precariously on sheer cliffs, and chanting red robed monks, all combining to give the aura of a long forgotten time.

- **Best time to visit:** the best seasons to visit Bhutan are during Spring (March, April & May) and Autumn (September, October & November). The major Bhutanese religious festivals are held during these seasons and fine Spring and Autumn weather makes it an ideal time for trekking in Bhutan and for traveling throughout the country enjoying great views of Himalayan mountains peaks.
- **My selection of luxury hotels:** [Uma by Como](#), [Uma Paro by Como](#), [Amankora](#), [Taj Tashi Thimphu](#).



9. ANCIENT TEMPLES IN CAMBODIA

Cambodia’s landscapes are surprisingly diverse, with tropical beaches, remote jungles, rice paddies, and sugar palm plantations. But most people come here because it is the gateway to

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magnificent ancient temple ruins, such as iconic Angkor Wat, elegant Angkor Thom and the ubiquitous Ta Phrom. Vast, beautiful and beguiling, these temple complexes contain a magic that makes them stand out from the crowd. If time is on your hand, consider combining the ancient temples of Angkor Wat with those of Borobodur in Indonesia and Bagan in Burma.

- **Best time to visit:** like most of Southeast Asia, Cambodia varies from warm to very hot throughout the whole year. There are four annual seasons: cool and dry between November and February; hot and dry between March and May; hot and wet between June and August; and cool and wet between September and early November. The best time to visit is the cool season, when the weather usually benefits from a pleasant dry heat and the countryside is still green from the rains.
- **My selection of luxury hotels in Siem Reap** (near Angkor Wat): [Park Hyatt](#), [Amansara](#), [La Residence d'Angkor](#), [Grand Hotel d'Angkor by Raffles](#), [Anantara](#).



8. MAHARAJAS IN INDIA

Beguiling and glamorous, spectacular yet intimate, the Indian subcontinent crackles with colour, energy and culture. You can explore the capital city Delhi with its vast marketplaces, historical mosques, and ancient tombs. You can also discover the sacred city of Varanasi and Khajuraho, famed for its extraordinary carvings. However, for most visitors, nothing compares to the splendour and romance of Rajasthan, with its many Mughal monuments and ancient temples. A sunrise view of the Taj Mahal – the world's most famous monument to love – is an absolute highlight.

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- **Best time to visit:** India is best visited between late October (the end of the monsoon season) and mid-March. April and May can be very hot and humid, with daytime highs of more than 100F/40C regularly recorded on the northern plains, though these are good months to visit the Himalayan foothills and the hill stations of Shimla and Darjeeling. High summer is pleasant in Kashmir and Ladakh. The monsoon rains start in late May in the south, gradually moving north over the following six weeks, though the timing does vary and it certainly doesn't rain all day every day.
- **My selection of luxury hotels in India:**
 - *New Delhi & Agra:* **Oberoi Amarvilas, Oberoi New Delhi, Taj Mahal Hotel, The Lodhi.**
 - *Mumbai:* **Four Seasons, Oberoi, Taj Mahal Palace.**
 - *Rajasthan:* **Amanbagh, Oberoi Udaivilas, Umaid Bhawan Palace by Taj, Taj Lake Palace, Oberoi Rajvilas, Leela Palace Udaipur.**



7. PAINTINGS IN THE LOW COUNTRIES

In Belgium, you can hit the streets of two of the world's best preserved medieval cities, Bruges and Ghent, that both spill over with palaces and cathedrals, packed with paintings of the Flemish Primitives Van Eyck and Memling. Or you can visit the harbour city of Antwerp, where you're never far from a Rubens masterpiece in the Belgian artist's home town. Don't forget to cross the border into the Netherlands, to admire the Nightwatch by Rembrandt, intimate paintings by Vermeer as well as masterpieces of Van Gogh in Amsterdam's top museums.

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- **Best time to visit:** the low countries Belgium & the Netherlands are best visited between April and May (spring) or September through November (autumn), right before or directly after the summertime high tourist season. You'll contend with fewer tourists, you'll enjoy somewhat mild temperatures (the weather is notoriously finicky), and you'll also experience the countries as the locals do, at its laid-back best.
- **My selection of luxury hotels in the Low Countries:**
 - *The Netherlands:* [Sofitel](#), [Andaz](#), [Intercontinental](#), [Conservatorium Hotel](#), [Waldorf Astoria](#), [Hotel de l'Europe](#).
 - *Belgium:* [Hotel de Tuilerieën](#), [Hotel Amigo](#).

Related post: [top 10 things to see and do in Belgium](#).



6. SHRINES IN JAPAN

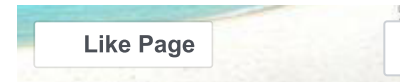
Japan's myriad ancient temples, shrines and traditional geisha districts offer a fascinating glimpse into the country's rich history and heritage. From the temples in the stunning imperial city of Kyoto to the bustling capital of Tokyo with its dizzying dimensions and flashing neon lights, there is no limit to the cracks and crevasses you can explore in the land of the rising sun.

- **Best time to visit:** you can travel in the country virtually any time of year. Winters in southern Kyushu and Okinawa are mild, while summers in northern Hokkaido are cool. Visit during late March or early April to enjoy the glorious cherry blossom season. The period from the end of August to

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September is typhoon season, although the majority of storms stay out at sea and generally vent their fury on land only in thunderstorms. Autumn, lasting through November, is one of the best times to visit Japan: the days are pleasant and slightly cool, and the changing red and scarlet of leaves contrast brilliantly with the deep blue skies.

- **My selection of luxury hotels in Japan:**

- *Tokyo:* Mandarin Oriental, Conrad, Peninsula, Park Hyatt, Four Seasons, Shangri La, Ritz Carlton.
- *Osaka:* St Regis, Ritz Carlton.
- *Other locations:* Hoshinoya Karuizawa, Hoshinoya Kyoto, Gora Kadan, Wanosato, Tenku No Mori, Tobira Onsen Myojinkan, Sankara Hotel & Spa.

Related post: [top 10 things to see and do in Japan.](#)



5. MAYAS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Guatemala's Tikal is arguably the most impressive Mayan site in the world, although it is still only partially excavated from the dark and forbidden jungle. The ruin complex comprises some 3000 ancient buildings, such as tombs, altars, dwellings, palace and an incredible 9-storey pyramid. Other famous Mayan landmarks are found in Belize and Mexico, with Chichen Itza and Tulum being the most famous ones, where temple ruins stand in a background of pristine jungle, exotic wildlife, tumbling waterfalls and tropical beaches.

- **Best time to visit:** in general temperatures in Central America follow the same pattern as Northern Hemisphere: cooler in the winter (December to January) and warmer in the summer

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months (June to August), although the hottest time of year is just before the rains come, between March and May, when it can be very hot and humid. Central America experiences a rainy season which starts in May-June and continues through to September-October. During this period temperatures remain high and although it rains every day, downpours don't tend to be prolonged. There is a chance for hurricanes, especially from July to October.

- **My selection of luxury hotels in Central America:**
 - *Belize & Guatemala:* [Blancaneaus lodge, La Lancha.](#)
 - *Riviera Maya:* [Rosewood Mayakoba, Banyan Tree Mayakoba, Viceroy Riviera Maya, Maroma Resort & Spa, Esencia.](#)



4. ANCIENT CIVILISATION IN GREECE

Home to Athena, Poseidon, Zeus and Aphrodite, ancient Greek culture was the birthplace of Western civilisation about 4000 years ago. Today, you can still trace the fingerprints of Greek history from the Paleolithic Era to the Roman Period in the hundreds of archaeological sites as well as in the museum collections that are scattered throughout the country. Don't stay on the mainland, but visit the islands as well, where ancient Greek architecture intermingles with delicious Mediterranean cuisine and a colourful lifestyle.

- **Best time to visit:** Greece is best visited during spring and early summer (mid-April to mid-June) or autumn (September to mid-October). This way, you'll avoid the summer high season, with its inflated prices, hordes of tourists and high temperatures (heat waves are the norm).
- **My selection of luxury hotels in Greece:**

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- *Athens & Greece mainland: King George Palace by the Luxury Collection, Amanzoe.*
- *Greek Islands: Mystique by the Luxury Collection, Perivolos, Canaves Oia, Andronis Suites, Iconic Santorini, Grace Santorini, Mykonos Belvedere, Blue Palace by the Luxury Collection, Elounda Beach Hotel, Elounda Gulf Villas.*



3. PHARAOHS AND TEMPLES IN EGYPT

From the Aswan temple near Lake Nasser in the south to the mediterranean shores in the north, a holiday in Egypt will unveil the rich tapestry of its glorious past. Most visitors will start their journey in the bustling capital city of Cairo, with the world-famous pyramids of Giza and the fascinating Museum of Antiquities. But for the greatest cultural experience of all, one needs to travel south to Luxor, also known as the ancient city of Thebes, where you can visit the Valley of the Kings (with the tombs of the Pharaohs) and the majestic temples of Ramses and Karnak.

- **Best time to visit:** Egypt is best visited in the fall (September to November) and spring (February to April). The weather is relatively chilly December through January, except in the south, where the winter is very pleasant. The summer is the only time to be avoided for climatic reasons: Cairo is hot, muggy, and filthy for most of June through August, and the rest of Egypt and even the Red Sea coast can also be uncomfortably hot.
- **My selection of luxury hotels & cruise ships:** *Four Seasons Sharm El Sheikh, Four Seasons Cairo, Conrad Cairo, Oberoi Zahra cruise ship, Sanctuary Sun Boat III, Sanctuary Sun Boat*

IV.



2. INCA TRAIL TO MACHU PICCHU

Without doubt, Peru's greatest attraction is the mist-shrouded Inca citadel of Machu Picchu, which was only discovered in 1911 and is believed to have been used by the Incas as a secret ceremonial city. No matter how many times you have seen a photograph of the iconic Inca ruins, nothing prepares you for sense of awe that this magical place elicits in its Andes mountain setting, clinging as it does to rock and jungle. And there's nothing like the satisfaction of approaching Machu Picchu on one's own two feet, which is why the incredibly scenic, 5-day Inca Trail should be on every one's bucket list.

- **Best time to visit:** the best time to visit Machu Picchu is from April to October. Rain and fog is possible, but you have the best chance to appreciate all its beauty at the fullest. From June to August, crowds of tourists take over the place, destroying the serene atmosphere of this magical site . The rainy season is from November to March, and at this time, it rains almost a minimum of 3 days a week, and the Inca trail path is closed.
- **My selection of luxury hotels:** [Sanctuary Lodge](#), [Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo hotel](#).

Related post: [top 10 most epic treks in the world](#).



1. LA DOLCE VITA IN ITALY

Rich in art and architecture with a heritage stretching back to antiquity, Italy could easily fill up all top 10 spots in this list by its own. A cultural trip to Italy gives you a chance to discover the breathtaking monuments of the Roman Empire in Italy's bustling capital, to be awestruck by the wealth of Renaissance architecture in Venice and Florence, to visit the ancient remains of Pompeii near the magnificent Sorrento Peninsula, and to immerse yourself in 'la dolce vita' on the shores of sun-baked Sicily.

- **Best time to visit:** spring (April to June) and autumn (late September to October) are the best months for visiting Italy: temperatures are mild, the days sunny and the crowds not quite so intense yet. In summer, the city teems with visitors and the weather is uncomfortably hot. The winters can be a surprisingly cold, wet and grey affair in the North.
- **My selection of luxury hotels in Italy:**
 - Rome: *St Regis, Cavalieri by Waldorf Astoria, Hotel de Russie, Hotel Hassler.*
 - Venice: *Aman Canal Grande, Gritti Palace.*
 - Florence & Tuscany: *St Regis Florence, Four Seasons, Villa Cora, Castiglion Del Bosco, Castel Monastero, Il Pellicano, Castello Del Nero.*
 - Milan & Lake Como: *Park Hyatt, Four Seasons, Armani, Bulgari, Villa d'Este, Casta Diva Resort.*
 - Naples & Amalfi coast: *Casa Angelina, Hotel Caruso, J.K. Place Capri.*



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My favorite cultural trip takes me to:

- Central America**
- Bhutan**
- India**
- Belgium & the Netherlands**
- Italy**
- Cambodia**
- Greece**
- Japan**
- Egypt**
- Machu Picchu**
- Other:**

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