

Cities to Watch 2023

WGSN's definitive list of the destinations to be inspired by in 2023, from outdoor-driven, liveable cities to culturally vibrant connected hubs

Megan Prives, Maria Pascua, Raeesa Brey, Charlotte Chan & Natacia Lim
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Overview

The social effect of the pandemic has been come to light in many ways – from lifestyle changes to travel patterns. Travel has shifted its core to be more conscious and sustainable, along with a thirst to escape screentime. The idea of digital nomads is also bubbling, owing to the rise of remote working and concern about the cost of living, with Spain and Portugal being the growing hubs to watch.

As a result of the pandemic and rising housing costs, many Americans are moving south and transforming southern cities into work-play headquarters. We are shining a spotlight on New Orleans that provides an #EscapistExperience for visitors. Meanwhile, culturally rich Quito is our pick for South America.

In EMEA, Turin, the smaller, greener and cheaper alternative to Milan, is a growing option for relocation. Ethiopia's Addis Ababa, renowned for its connectivity to various countries, is another to watch.

Across APAC, Jeju, the emerging domestic travel destination in South Korea, and Hanoi, the UNESCO Creative City that blends the old and the new, align with the rise of the conscious travel trend in the region.

Read on for our picks for 2023 that focus on liveable cities in the longer term rather than chasing mass tourism.

North America: New Orleans, Louisiana

New Orleans' (NOLA) people, chefs, musicians, voodoo priestesses, artists, architects and developers are all to thank for allowing the city to be a portal into its unique history and distinct aesthetic which blends seductive French flair, vibrant Afro-Caribbean energy, and welcoming Southern charm. As consumers continue to search for #EscapistExperiences, NOLA's unique, magic-infused culture makes it feel like a city outside of the US... perhaps even outside of reality.

Sustainable efforts to keep the city from experiencing another natural disaster like Hurricane Katrina are currently under way, such as [ORA Estuaries](#), a project founded by two professors from Louisiana University that harvests oyster beds to strengthen barriers with the sea.

“Authentic might be a better word to describe New Orleans than magic. The architecture, food, music, culture and characters, well this city just delights the senses – all you have to do is step outside and wander through the city to live it like a local”

2 – Sean Cummings, local entrepreneur and hotelier



Best for:

- Culturally driven, exploratory food scene
- Adaptive reuse / historic districts
- The occult / voodoo (vodou) culture
- Live music scene / emerging musicians
- Culturally driven art



Top spots



Retail

[Saint Claude Social Club](#): a “New Orleans Lady Parlour” selling an eclectic mix of vibrant apparel.

[Trashy Diva Lingerie](#): a seductive boudoir setting for vintage-inspired lingerie in inclusive sizes. Also see mother brand [Trashy Diva](#) and [vintage market by Trashy Diva](#).

[KREWE Eyewear](#): globally renowned eyewear shop with a funky twist on sophisticated classics.

[Monomin](#): centres its offering around “ultra femme” styles for the modern Southern belle.

[No Rules](#): an ode to NOLA’s rebellious spirit, this year-round costume shop is especially inspiring as festival-wear is on the rise.



[International House Hotel](#)

NOLA’s first boutique hotel brought to you by local entrepreneur and hotelier Sean Cummings resides in a restored historic building that offers a portal into both the city’s history and its current creative culture. At the hotel’s voodoo-inspired cocktail lounge, [LOA Bar](#), visitors can “enjoy the spirits in the room and in the glass”, while the hotel’s lobby doubles as a gallery, holding the world’s largest privately owned [Banksy](#) mural with plans to bring in another rescued mural in spring 2023 plus an eclectic mix of work by local artists.



[N7 / Compère Lapin](#)

Experience the whimsy and magic of NOLA’s culinary scene: N7 is a French restaurant hidden within a garden behind a tall gate, offering natural wines, colourful eats, and a romantic-rustic space complete with French film posters and jazz records... no wonder it looks like a movie set – it’s owned by a filmmaker.

Compère Lapin (French for ‘brother rabbit’, a character from a Caribbean folklore story) is a French-Caribbean restaurant by local legend chef Nina Compton who makes it her mission to celebrate the Indigenous ingredients and rich culinary heritage of New Orleans in a playful yet sophisticated way with bunny motifs throughout the space.



[Studio BE/ Kingsway Studio](#)

Established in 2016, this massive restored warehouse space run by artist and activist [Brandan “BMIKE” Odums](#) explores themes of social justice and local empowerment through murals and installations that fill both the inside and outside and is open from 2–8pm Wednesday to Sunday. Studio Be works with non-profit [Eternal Seeds](#), which preserves the city’s Black history and culture. Also see [Kingsway Studio](#), a bohemian recording studio that has been transformed into an exhibition space due to hold a showcase of Basquiat’s New Orleans works in spring 23.



[Haus of Hoodoo/ Island of Salvation Botanica](#)

This beautiful apothecary-style shop by ‘vodou priestess’ Jessyka Winston provides an authentic lens into the culture and practices of vodou – an essence that’s felt throughout the city. You’ll find conjuring candles and ritual baths, as well as the opportunity for spiritual consultation. Also see art-filled shop [Island of Salvation Botanica](#) by vodou priestess Sally Ann Glassman, who famously published the [New Orleans Voodoo Tarot](#) card set in the 1990s which depicted Black people, an element of design that was rare at the time.



South America: Quito, Ecuador

Ecuador's fashion industry has been developing at a rapid pace since fast-fashion retailers started to grow in the country; Zara launched its e-commerce earlier this year and H&M opened its first store in November. Major malls such as Super Exito, De Prati and Alby Store are go-to, whereas local brands are developing an aesthetic and identity of their own. Creative minds like Daniel Cornejo, Nessa Teran and Dani Schulz are also must-know names for the industry.

Quito was the first city in the world, along with Krakow, to be declared as World Heritage, in 1978, by UNESCO. The city has been growing over the past few years as a relevant city within Latin America, being ranked as a beta city by GaWC, a think-tank that ranks cities based on their global connectivity. Ecuador has become a hot destination for international travellers as well as tourists due to its tropical climate, coastal location and its more stable inflation-buffered economy, which uses USD as its official currency.

Quito was founded over the ruins of an Inca city, which makes its cultural heritage even richer.



Best for:



Colonial architecture

Indigenous heritage

Up-and-coming fashion industry

Latin food with local ingredients

Top spots



Centro Histórico (Quito Old Town)

Quito's old town has been given World Heritage status due to its historical importance and architecture, as well as cultural value. It is regarded as one of Latin America's architectural gems, where Indigenous and Spanish cultures converged during the colonial period.



La Mariscal

La Mariscal, also known as Mariscal Sucre, is considered the touristic, gastronomic and nightlife centre of Quito. It is a key spot to experience local cuisine, nightlife and local shops.



La Floresta

This is the artsy neighbourhood in Quito; due to its creative nature it is also a key area to experience local restaurants, cafes and get inspired by its art galleries, mansions, jazz clubs and Ocho y Medio movie theatre.



Local brands

Bubbling brands in Quito are worth noting, from fashion brands like Florencia Dávalos and Lolilolita, as well as Niftymark, the fashion reseller, personal care brand Naobay and food brand Sisters That Cook, which has a nicely curated brand image. Casa Kiki, a cultural, fashion and art house that has its own sustainable lifestyle brand, Kiki, is also a must-visit.



La Tejedora Distrito Creativo

A creative area within two former textile and yarn factories. Opened in 2014, this has become a key creative spot for Quito, located in one of its surrounding rural but up-and-coming districts, Cumbayá. It is a space dedicated to art, creativity and sustainability.

EMEA: Turin, Italy

Located just 45 minutes from Milan by train, Turin has long been a cultural destination, but is now gaining traction as a relocation option – for those looking for a smaller, greener and cheaper alternative to the capital – made even more accessible with post-pandemic home-working patterns.

With its proximity to the Alps and outdoor sports, alongside its buzzy design scene, Turin is proving itself a truly liveable city. Many start-ups are also moving to the city, with a growing entrepreneurial scene boasting sustainable-focused concepts such as WayCap, which pioneers waste reduction by creating compatible coffee capsules that can be used multiple times.

Renowned for its cultural institutions, visit Turin for its art museums and galleries that cater to both classical and contemporary aficionados as well as hosting the annual Artissima Fair. Shop fashion and homeware brands along the buzzing Via Roma or live like a local and visit Porta Palazzo in Piazza della Repubblica for the finest fresh produce. The city's vintage scene is led by youthful stores such as Sin Control or the weekly Balon flea market. The city offers food and wine lovers a plethora of options that reflect its cosmopolitan vibe, from vegan to traditional *trattorie*.



Best for:



Commutable to Milan

Design and culture

Winter sports, mountains, nature

Emerging start-up ecosystems

Innovative food and wine

Niche museums

Top spots and top trends



La Pista 500

Nestled on top of the contemporary art space [Pinacoteca Agnelli](#) and former FIAT factory, the Italian car-maker's test track recently got converted into Europe's largest rooftop garden that spans over 7,000 square metres and features art sculptures, light shows and sound works with a stunning backdrop of the city.



Ristorante Consorzio

Consorzio is a laidback restaurant that serves classic dishes from the area using local produce and spotlighting underestimated ingredients and cuts of meat. Known for its expertly curated wine list, expect to sample natural wines from the region that pairs back to the menu as well as a selection of cheese from the pastures on the Piedmontese hills.



Retail highlights

Explore Via Garibaldi, one of the longest pedestrian streets in Europe that is lined with retail stores from Piazza Castello to Piazza Statuto. Visit local designer stores like [Kristina Ti](#), who specialises in womenswear, or get niche streetwear at [Cream](#), and see [Hannibal](#), which seamlessly mixes art, fashion and culture into its three retail spaces.



Castello di Rivoli

Located in a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the former residence of the Royal House of Savoy, [Castello di Rivoli](#) is a contemporary art museum that encourages education and research for local and international audiences. The space welcomes digital artists like Beeple and experimental works such as that by Olafur Eliasson.



Homewares inspiration

Renowned for its vintage finds, Turin is filled with homeware treasures from prior decades that can be found at markets such as [Balon](#), or stores like [Fané](#) on Via Gaudenzio Ferrari. For a more contemporary aesthetic or gifting inspiration, shop at [Oh!](#) on Via Porta Palatina.



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EMEA: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Renowned for its connectivity to various countries through its award-winning national air carrier and coffee culture exemplified by roasters [Tomoca Coffee](#), Ethiopia's capital city is a hub steeped in history and welcoming tourists that travel through the city.

Perched next to the Great Rift Valley, the city offers majestic views from Mount Entoto, informative cultural attractions, as well as local cuisine that includes various vegan-friendly options that have been a part of the country's heritage for centuries.

Be inspired by Addis Ababa's experimental music scene, like artist [Iri Di](#), and fashion designers that proudly pay homage to the rich traditions of Ethiopia while modernising designs for landmark events, such as Africa Sourcing Fashion Week. Visit local marketplaces like Mercato to experience Africa's largest open-air market, or smaller stores such as [Salem's](#) that focus on regional handwork and craftsmanship.



Hyatt

Best for:



Vibrant coffee culture

Easily accessible vegan food

Rich cultural heritage

Lush landscapes

Top spots



Cascara

Enjoy a sundowner at Cascara in Addis Ababa with cocktails inspired by the local coffee scene. Unwind from the buzzing streets in its tranquil setting while grabbing a light bite to eat, or head to the neighbouring restaurants The Oriental for Thai cuisine or The Kitchen for dinner.



National Museum of Ethiopia

Founded in 1944, this museum houses some of the most important artefacts in sub-Saharan Africa. Ranging from palaeontology to ethnography and modern art, the space is also home to a fossilised skeleton named Lucy who lived more than 3 million years ago.



Addis Fine Art

Addis Fine Art is the first white-cube gallery space for modern and contemporary art in Ethiopia and showcases local talent to an international audience. The gallery recently opened a second location in London to encourage growth for its artists in the global ecosystem and should be visited to discover emerging talent.



African Mosaïque

Founded by Anna Getaneh, African Mosaïque is focused on nurturing sourcing practices, manufacturing and mentoring design talent in Ethiopia. Hosting fashion shows and promoting local craftsmanship, its visitors can experience the various stages of development at African Mosaïque's design centre and manufacturing hub.



Yod Abyssinia

Explore Ethiopia's local cuisine, such as vegan or meat curries served with naturally gluten-free injera flatbread made from teff at Yod Abyssinia. To round off the authentic experience, the restaurant also hosts traditional folkloric musicians and dancers that entertain diners throughout the dinner service.

APAC: Jeju, South Korea

Approximately an hour's flight from Seoul, Jeju is the largest island in South Korea and the only self-governing province in the country. Two major cities on the island are Jeju-si and Seogwipo-si, and the latter is recommended for learning about the island in depth.

Contrasting with the *ppalli ppalli* (hurry, hurry) culture that runs deep in Korean society, Jeju stands apart with its nature and slow-living focus and has emerged as a popular destination for domestic travel. It has pivoted from catering to Chinese tourists to appealing to youthful South Koreans – now a location for a Millennial form of conscious travel that favours aesthetics and gentility.

Beloved for its natural beauty, it boasts all the visitor-friendly hotel resorts and conference facilities alongside multiple attractions, including 30 golf courses, yet it has played host to a burgeoning number of smaller, lower-key and hipper spots. Cafes, boutique guesthouses and contemporary art galleries are the new norm on the island, mostly found along the coastline.



WGSN Original Image / Innisfree Jeju House



WGSN Original Image / Bonte Museum



WGSN Original Image / Glass House

Best for:



Golfwear

Slow living destination

Youth-targeted cafe culture

Domestic travel destination for South Korea

Lifestyle stores

Emerging art scenes

Top spots and top trends



WGSN Original Image



WGSN Original Image

Golfing retail in Chilseong-ro

Golf has always been a thing in South Korea since Pak Se-ri became the youngest-ever winner of the US Women's Open in 1998, and it has gained popularity further amid the pandemic due to social distancing rules. With 30 golf courses on the island, it is no surprise to see that Chilseong-ro shopping street, a go-to shopping area filled with activewear brands, has dedicated golf sections in most shops.

Innisfree Jeju House

Originating from Jeju, Innisfree, the Korean beauty brand, has long used Jeju's famous ingredients, including green tea and tangerine. Innisfree Jeju House, which spotlights these ingredients, is a must-visit. Adjacent to a green tea plantation, the space showcases its products and has a cafe serving meals made with fresh harvests. Interactive soap-making classes with Jeju-only ingredients are also available. The [Osulloc Tea Museum](#) nearby is also a great stop to learn more about the famed green teas from the island.



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Orrrn cafe

Sharing the pronunciation of the word "oreum", a Jeju dialect that refers to gentle hills created by volcanic activity, and the word "climb", cafe Orrrn proposes a tranquil way to look at Jeju's natural beauty. Created by space design studio ATMOROUND and landscape design office DEWSONG PLACE, the cafe is inspired by Jeju's nature, from the colour palette to the various panoramas. The views, exterior and interior seamlessly merge, as if it has always been there.



WGSN Original Image

Supul

Among many hidden shops in residential areas, Supul is nestled in a single apartment building in a quiet residential area – one of the go-to places for young people to shop lifestyle items. With its 'lab' inside the store, the brand/retail space creates unique ceramics and other handcrafted products for everyday life on-site, including journals and cutlery.



WGSN Original Image

Art spaces

Six art venues on the island are currently hosting the third edition of Jeju Biennale until February 12 2023, taking place at the two main venues, [Jeju Museum of Art](#) and [Jeju Museum of Contemporary Art](#). Private art museums, such as the [Bonte Museum](#) and the [PODO Museum](#), are also worth visiting. The former is designed by Tadao Ando and explores the beauty of Korean traditional and contemporary craft objects, whereas the latter serves as a cultural space that respects diversity and aims to draw attention to underprivileged groups.

Best for:



Creative and cultural communes

Hole-in-the-wall restaurant and cafe culture

Traditional craft and textiles

Eclectic slow fashion retail



APAC: Hanoi, Vietnam

By blending the old and the new, the UNESCO Creative City's multifaceted culture continues to deepen with creativity at its heart.

Throughout the city, traditional design vernacular is being met with a burgeoning contemporary wave. Key spaces to watch include sustainable clothing line [Kilomet 109](#), ceramics store and gallery [Hiên Vân Ceramics](#), and artisanal boutique and cafe [Vui Studio](#).

Home to the Vietnam Festival of Media and Design and Hanoi International Film Festival, Hanoi has been expanding its portfolio of creative spaces and communes, including galleries and living spaces like [Manzi](#), [Vincom Center for Contemporary Art](#), and [Dao Anh Khanh Studio & Treehouse](#).

From hidden local haunts such as [Pho Hang Trong](#) to eclectic youth-facing cafes like [Nirvana Space](#), Hanoi's vibrant food and drink scene sprawls across both local and global cultures.

Top spots and top trends



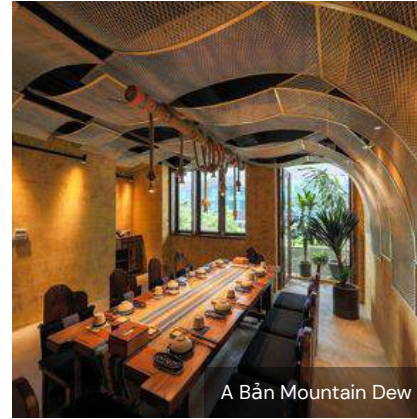
Tadioto

Founded by Nguyễn Quý Đức, a driving force of the contemporary art scene in Hanoi, Tadioto is simultaneously an art gallery, a cafe and a bar. First conceived as a space for his friends to get together, it has become an informal but organic creative commune where artists, writers, poets and musicians gather for readings, exhibitions and live music.



Kilomet 109

As Hanoi's leading slow fashion label, Kilomet 109 has been creating sustainable clothing from the ground up, with a mission to define a new type of ready-to-wear couture. It collaborates with several teams of local craft artisans around Vietnam to grow, spin, weave, print and naturally dye fabrics before they are hand-stitched in its design studio.



A Bản Mountain Dew

For a foray into the world of ethnic Vietnamese cuisine, A Bản Mountain Dew is the place to go. Its menu is committed to preserving the Indigenous cuisine of mountainous communities, with sections dedicated to each ethnic group: from the Tai cuisine of complex flavors and the balanced palette of the Moung, to delicate Tay dishes and the vital culture of Mong.



Bat Trang Ceramic Village

Home to countless artisans, Bat Trang's ceramics cover the whole pottery spectrum from traditional dinner sets to contemporary pieces. As a self-contained ecosystem, the village comprises craftsmen, factories and village stores that supply clay, glaze and ceramics to each other. Look out for the pottery museum and try your hand at the potter's wheel by taking classes with local experts.



Diverse Coffee Scene

From traditional Vietnamese egg coffee at Cafe Giảng or Cafe Đinh to artisanal and specialty coffee haunts like Blackbird Coffee, Atelier Coffee Roaster and ACID8, Hanoi's coffee culture continues to expand and thrive. For a more immersive experience, visit the Old Quarter for a wide array of shops selling local and regional coffee beans.