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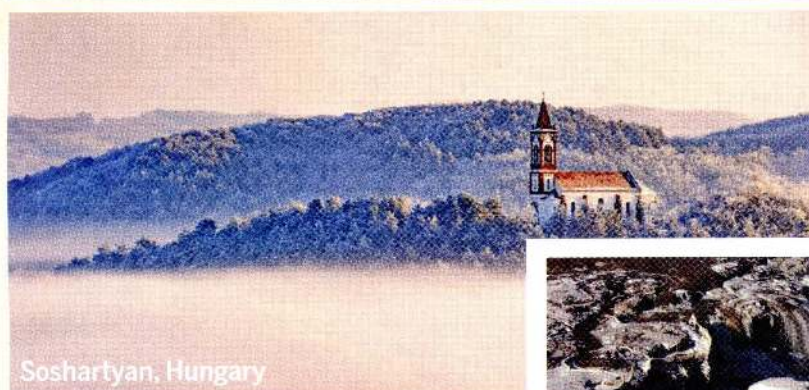


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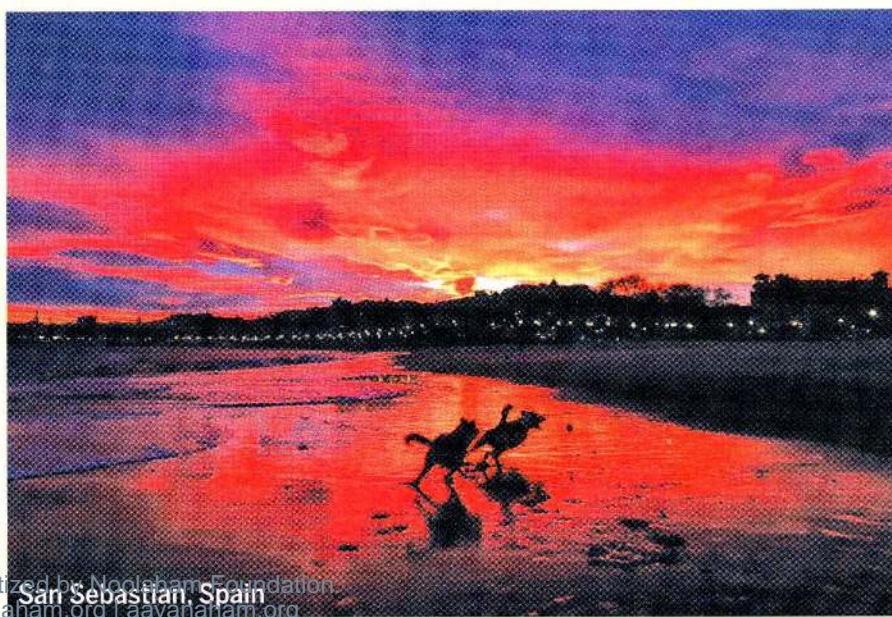
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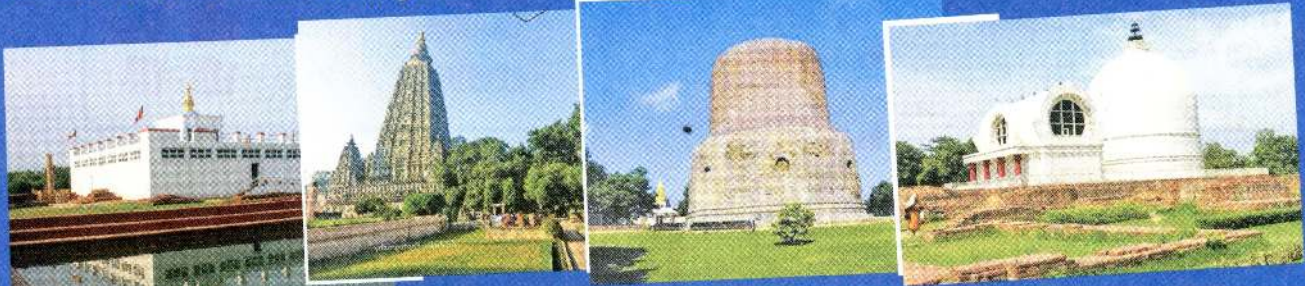


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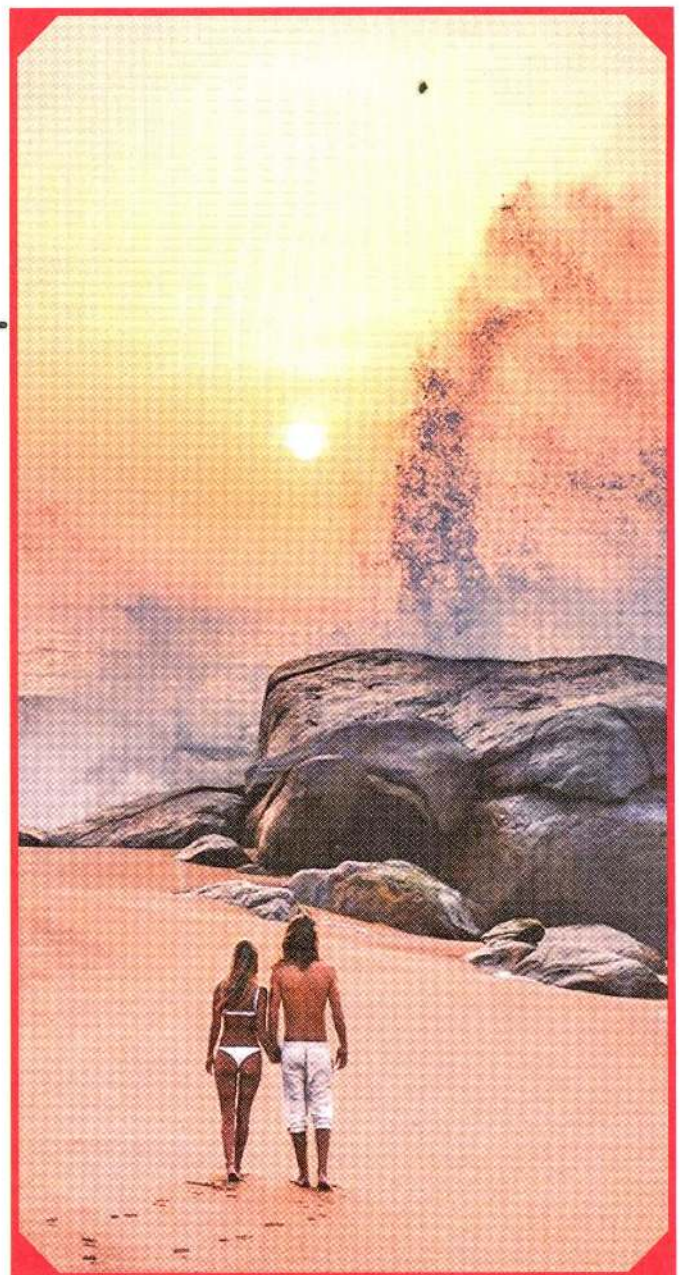
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Balmoral Castle in

Scotland

Balmoral Castle is a large estate house in Royal Deeside, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, near the village of Crathie, 6.2 miles (10 km) west of Ballater and 6.8 miles (11 km) east of Braemar.

Balmoral has been one of the residences of the British royal family since 1852, when the estate and its original castle were purchased privately by Prince Albert, the husband of Queen Victoria. It remains the private property of the royal family and is not part of the Crown Estate.

Soon after the estate was purchased by the royal family, the existing house was found to be too small and the current Balmoral Castle was commissioned. The architect was William Smith of Aberdeen, although his designs were amended by Prince Albert.

The castle is an example of Scottish baronial architecture, and is classified by Historic Scotland as a category A listed building. The new castle was completed in 1856 and the old castle demolished shortly thereafter.

The Balmoral Estate has been added to by successive members of the royal family, and now covers an area of approximately 50,000 acres (20,000 ha). It is a working estate, including grouse moors, forestry, and farmland, as well as managed herds of deer, Highland cattle, and ponies.

History

King Robert II of Scotland (1316–1390) had a hunting lodge in the area. Historical records also indicate that a house at Balmoral was built by Sir William Drummond in 1390. The estate is recorded in 1451 as "Bouchmorale", and later was tenanted by Alexander Gordon, second son of the 1st Earl of Huntly.

tower house was built on the estate by the Gordons.

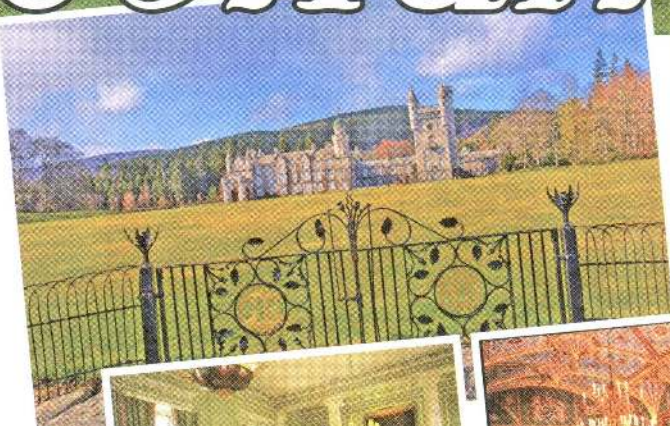
In 1662, the estate passed to Charles Farquharson of Inverey, brother of John Farquharson, the "Black Colonel". The Farquharsons were Jacobite sympathisers, and James Farquharson of Balmoral was involved in both the 1715 and 1745 rebellions. He was wounded at the Battle of Falkirk in 1746. The Farquharson estates were forfeit, and passed to the Farquharsons of Auchendryne. In 1798, James Duff, 2nd Earl Fife, acquired Balmoral and leased the castle. Sir Robert Gordon, a younger brother of the 4th Earl of Aberdeen, acquired the lease in 1830. He made major alterations to the original castle at Balmoral, including baronial-style extensions that were designed by John Smith of Aberdeen.

Royal acquisition

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert first visited Scotland in 1842, five years after her accession to the throne and two years after their marriage.

During this first visit they stayed at Edinburgh, and at Taymouth Castle in Perthshire, the home of the Marquess of Breadalbane.

They returned in 1844 to stay at Blair Castle and, in 1847, when they rented Ardverikie by Loch Laggan. During the latter trip they encountered weather that was extremely rainy, which led Sir James Clark, the queen's doctor, to recommend Deeside instead, for its more healthy climate.



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Japan

Kobe

Kobe is a city on Osaka Bay in central Japan. It is known for its signature marbled beef and scenic setting of mountains framing the harbor. The Ikuta Shrine, dating to the 3rd century, is among Japan's oldest Shinto shrines. Antique cable cars connect Kobe to Mt. Rokko, which offers panoramic views over the port. Beyond the Mount Rokko hills are the outdoor hot springs of Arima Onsen.

December's Kobe Luminarie is an annual festival of lights commemorating a major earthquake that occurred in 1995. Today there's little sign of the destruction. Kobe Port Tower, with its distinctive red steel lattice and hourglass shape, is part of Harborland, a lively, open-air mall with a Ferris wheel. In the hillside Kitano district, rows of 19th-century Western-style houses recall Kobe's history as one of Japan's first cities opened to foreign trade. The restaurant scene includes steakhouses, while bars, pubs and nightclubs populate a neon-lit quarter around Sannomiya Station.



FEBRUARY IN AUSTRALIA:

Febbruary is the last month of the Australian summer, so expect it to be crowded with tourists and locals enjoying the warm temperatures and sandy beaches. The country also hosts plenty of festivals, parties, and other events as part of summer celebrations.

Australia Weather in February

While there is a wide temperature range within the continent of Australia itself, summer is generally how it is perceived to be: warm and sunny.

Adelaide, South Australia: 85 degrees Fahrenheit (29 degrees Celsius) high/63 degrees Fahrenheit (17 degrees Celsius) low

Melbourne, Victoria: 80 F (27 C)/61 F (16 C)

Sydney, New South Wales: 80 F (27 C)/67 F (20 C)

Perth, Western Australia: 90 F (32 C)/64 F (18 C)

Brisbane, Queensland: 84 F (29 C)/70 F (21 C)

February might be an ideal time to visit Sydney if you like very hot climates, as it is one of the warmest months of the year in the city. There's also plenty of sunshine in Sydney in February, as you can get about eight hours of sun per day on average and have a 19 percent chance of a sunny day, which allows plenty of time for soaking up the rays on the soft golden sand beaches. At the Top End, February is the middle of the wet season, so expect rains and some flooding in the Northern Territory, particularly in parts of Kakadu National Park where some roads become rivers.

Cyclones and bushfires can occur during the summer months and can cause severe destruction, but these events are mostly isolated to rural or lightly-populated areas.

What to Pack

Expect sunny, hot days and nights that are equally warm. The Australian sun is especially harsh, so combined with temperatures sometimes exceeding 100 degrees Fahrenheit, it's worth packing accordingly. Australia's style is mostly casual and eclectic. Don't feel like you need to pack five-star duds to fit in here. A good start for your packing list will include:

T-shirts made from breathable linen or cotton, Shorts, especially denim cutoffs, Flip-flops, Sunglasses, Swimsuit and cover-up, Maxi-dress or other "dressy" attire, A wide-brimmed hat for sun protection, Jeans, Leather sandals, Breezy blouses or button-downs.

February Events in Australia

There are no Australian public holidays in February, but there are several major events during the month include Sydney's Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, the Asian Lunar New Year celebrations, and the Twilight Taronga Summer Concert Series.

The Taronga Zoo is open every day of the year and is just a 12-minute ferry ride from the city. One of the most famous attractions in Sydney, the award-winning zoo makes a great day out for families and is home to over 4,000 animals from Australian natives to exotic species. Guests can also try their hand at Wild Ropes, a sky-high series of obstacles and suspension bridges in the trees.

February Travel Tips

Being midsummer, February is still popular beach time in Australia, especially in Sydney and Melbourne. Jervis Bay is especially famous, as its white sands are listed in the Guinness Book. But be safe on Australian beaches: The poisonous box jellyfish, including the deadly Irukandji jellyfish, is common along the north Queensland coast past Great Keppel Island.

Heat can be excessive throughout much of Australia. Prepare yourself by drinking plenty of water, seeking shade (or air-conditioning) during the hottest parts of the day, and applying plenty of high-factor sunscreen. Additionally, the wet season in the tropics can cause excessive humidity in some places. Tropical cyclones (aka hurricanes) aren't frequent but do occur on occasion.

-) Weather,
-) What to Pack,
-) What to See,





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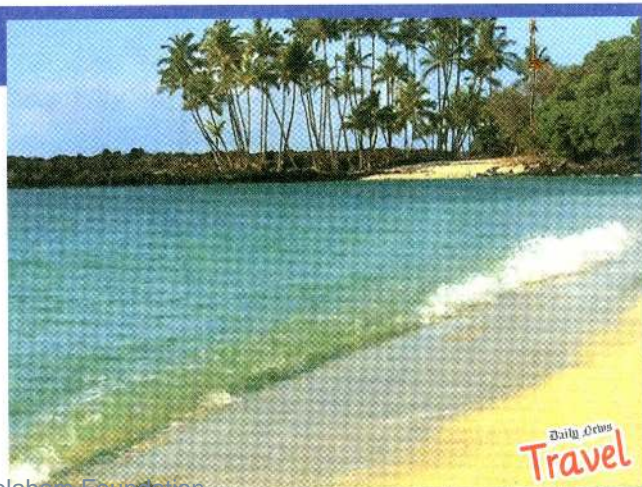
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USA

Hawaii

The Big Island (officially named Hawaii) is the largest island in the United States' Hawaiian archipelago in the Central Pacific. Its diverse terrain spans colored-sand beaches at Papakolea (green) and Punalu'u (black) to lush rainforest. Within Volcanoes National Park, there are 2 active volcanoes, Kilauea and Mauna Loa. Hapuna Beach and Kahalu'u Beach Park in the west are popular snorkeling sites.

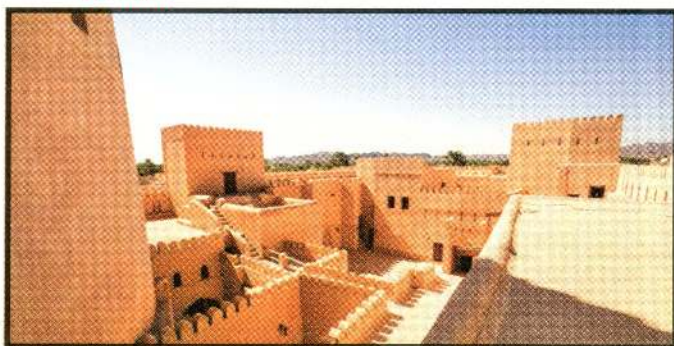
The island's lush, wet eastern side has rainforest, the port town of Hilo, Hawaii Tropical Botanic Garden and Akaka Falls State Park. Western conditions are dry. There, high-end resorts dot the Kohala Coast, and the Kona region is home to coffee plantations. To the north is Waimea cattle country, at the base of massive, dormant Mauna Kea, and remote Waipio Valley is a major hiking spot. Cultural sites include Puako Petroglyph Archaeological Preserve, with lava-rock carvings, and Pu'uhonua o Honaunau, a sacred burial ground and traditional place of refuge.



THE TOP 8 DESTINATIONS

You've decided you want to travel more this year (good on you), but you're struggling to choose your next destination. Surely there's an easier way than trawling through endless travel mags and guidebooks for the answers, right? That's where our ultimate month-by-month travel guide comes in: your easily digestible list of places to visit, things to experience, and amazing weather to chase around the world. Now, let's take a closer look at February. As we finally bid goodbye to those January blues, you might start thinking about a weekend, week or couple of weeks away. Whether you're after Zanzibar's beautiful beaches, music and dancing at Rio Carnival, whale spotting along the coast of Mexico, or discovering the origins of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Here's your guide for where to travel in February.

1. Oman



Remaining relatively untouched, even by the most seasoned of travellers, Oman still doesn't top as many bucket lists as it should. Not as concerned with opulence as its closest neighbours, it boasts an incredibly rich history instead, and is chock-full of culture, out-of-this-world scenery and curious locals. But when to go? Omani winter ends in February, and brings an ideal sightseeing climate with it.

Explore everything from ancient Portuguese forts, perched like proud sandcastles, to elaborately decorated mosques, with their sky-touching minarets. And if you can't resist a local market, prepare for a real assault on the senses in Muttrah, as you stroll around the fishing harbour and find your way into the smoky souq.

2. Sri Lanka



So much more than blue skies and white-sand beaches, this teardrop isle has a lot to offer travellers. Colonised by the English, Dutch and Portuguese, Sri Lanka is an intriguing melting pot of different cultural influences. And the further forward it moves in its history, the more its own identity starts to shine through.

With the monsoon season behind us, February is a great time

to cycle amongst the ruins of ancient Anuradhapura. Pay a visit to the sacred old Bo Tree, which harks back to the spiritual beginnings of Buddhism. Clamber to the top of Sigiriya, a rock fortress originally guarded by a huge stone lion. Hike through the picturesque tea plantations, and get a window into local Tamil life in Haputale.

3. Philippines



Looking for a slice of authentic Asia? The Philippines are the answer.

This stunning archipelago, made up of close to 7,000 islands, are slap-bang in the middle of the dry season in February (and you'll have missed the January crowds too). Whether you love trekking, snorkelling or sightseeing – there's something for everyone here!

Experience the overwhelming chaos of the capital, Manila, with its museums, art galleries and Spanish colonial architecture. Unwind with a dip or kayak in the turquoise lagoons that pepper Palawan. Climb to the summit of Mount Pinatubo, a volcano with an emerald-coloured lake in its crater, and witness the unique hanging coffins in Echo Valley, a fascinating local tradition like no other.

4. Brazil



Colourful and vivacious, there's no disputing Brazil and its people know how to live life to the fullest, and nothing confirms that more than Rio Carnival.

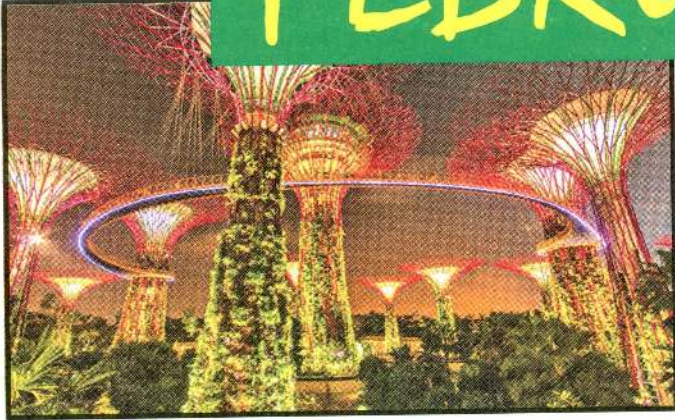
Thought to be the biggest on the planet, attracting millions of revellers every year, it's a whirlwind of sequins, floats and a lotta, lotta of fun.

As you're in Brazil anyway, you might as well see what else this South American giant has going for it.

After visiting Sugarloaf Mountain and Cristo Redentor. Why not travel to Paraty? Meander down its cobbled streets, taking in the colonial architecture that makes it one of the Costa Verde's most charming towns. Or catch the ferry to Ilha Grande and spend a day or two relaxing in sun, swimming and sailing your way around the island.

S FOR TRAVEL IN FEBRUARY 2019

5. Singapore



Not only is Singapore at its least rainy, least humid and most sunny in February, than at any other time of the year, but it also marks the celebration of Chinese (Lunar) New Year. Marina Bay becomes filled with stilt-walkers and lion dancers, and the streets are lined with brightly coloured paper lanterns.

Whilst still being a fairly new nation, this hasn't stopped Singapore establishing itself as a cultural icon that travellers flock to.

Learn how this city-state came to be in the mind-blowing Singapore History Gallery at the national museum. Go for a treetop walk through Supertree Grove at Gardens by the Bay. Don't forget to dig into a traditional Indian thali or indulge in a spot of late night shopping at the 24-hour Mustafa Centre in Little India too.

6. Zanzibar



If it's a bit of well-deserved R&R (rest and relaxation) you're after, head for the sun, sea and sands of paradisiacal Zanzibar. In February the days are warm, and the water is at its clearest, making it the perfect spot for keen snorkelers and divers. Unearth pristine coral reefs that are home to hawksbill turtles, rays, parrotfish, cuttlefish and more. You may even be lucky enough to spot dolphins too.

Diving not your thing? Not a problem, there's plenty more to explore on this Tanzanian archipelago.

Take a trip to the heady Spice Islands, visiting the clove farms that reside here.

Hike through the Ngezi Rainforest in search of vervet monkeys, or take a trip to the secluded village of Mkia Ya Ngombe for a glimpse of local life.

7. Mexico



There's no denying Mexico is massive! Its size means temperatures and weather vary across the country throughout the year, making it tricky to pinpoint the best time to travel. Whilst February marks the middle of winter here, it's still mild and (more importantly) dry – perfect for taking in the sights and enjoying time on the beach.

Aside from all the usual amazing highlights i.e. uncovering quaint San Cristobal de las Casas, heading to Mexico City's museums and discovering its many Mayan ruins. February also offers the chance to witness two incredible wild events. The monarch butterfly migration as they make the journey to Canada, and the arrival of humpback, blue and grey whales for breeding off Mexico's Pacific coast.

8. Myanmar



From the bustling streets of Yangon, to the serenity of Inle Lake – it's easy to see why diverse Myanmar is fast becoming one of the world's most sought-after travel destinations. And as it happens, February has sightseeing-friendly temperatures and lower chances of monsoon-style downpours too.

Not sure what this mysterious country has to offer? Allow us to give you a taster... Get ready to be blown away by sunsets over the temple-studded plains of Bagan and be wowed by the beauty of the golden Shwedagon Paya. Meet Buddhist monks on top of Mandalay Hill, stroll through vibrant green rice paddies in Shan State, sample deliciously spicy local cuisine and boat to the floating markets (to name but a few of Myanmar's delights).

Kee these tips in mind for your next trip and you'll travel more smoothly, spend more time enjoying your destination, and maybe even relax a little more.

I travel a lot. I spend months every year living and working around the world. I've also fine-tuned my process so that I feel as comfortable on the road as I do at home.

But it wasn't always this way. Like most people, I used to take once-a-year vacations, with a massive suitcase and a rigid itinerary, hopping from hotel to hotel stressed about train connections and tour reservations.

It was all unnecessary stress on the two weeks a year I was supposed to be relaxing. So while working for years as a digital nomad, I've figured out a few ways to minimize that stress. Here are a few of them.

Pack less

I've spent 4 and a half months away from home with a backpack barely larger than a carry-on suitcase. I've met men and women that pack far less (most of my luggage bulk is work related). If you're gone for more than a week, budget a few hours to do laundry, or a

few dollars to pay for a laundry service. Being more mobile is wonderfully freeing. If you're not sure what to leave behind, we have some suggestions.

Plan less

This is another seemingly counterintuitive tip, but if you plan less you'll be less stressed. Sure, having a per-second itinerary may seem like a gift for your future vacation self, but once there you're going to feel rushed and anxious about

making your next stop.

Sure, keep a list of things you want to do, but allow for lots of flexibility. You're not going to see everything, so enjoy what you can and don't rush. Less planning allows you to stay longer in spots you like, and leave early from places you don't.

Slow down

This is a hard one. It may come across preachy and I'm sorry, but cramming 15 cities into 14 days is going to make you miserable. I try to spend at least three days in each place. That gives you enough time to get the feel and decide if you want to stay, or go somewhere else. Everyone has their own best pace, but if you're changing accommodations every other day, you're going to be exhausted.

Keep your phone working

Turn off your work email and notifications, but keep your internet access. Google Maps, Google Translate, travel booking sites, plus messenger apps to keep in touch with people at home will all be at your fingertips.

If you have Sprint, T-Mobile, or Google Fi, your phone will probably work outside the US much as it does at home.

AT&T and Verizon may not, and can be expensive to use outside the US. For tips to make the transition seamless, check out this guide to using your phone overseas at Wirecutter.

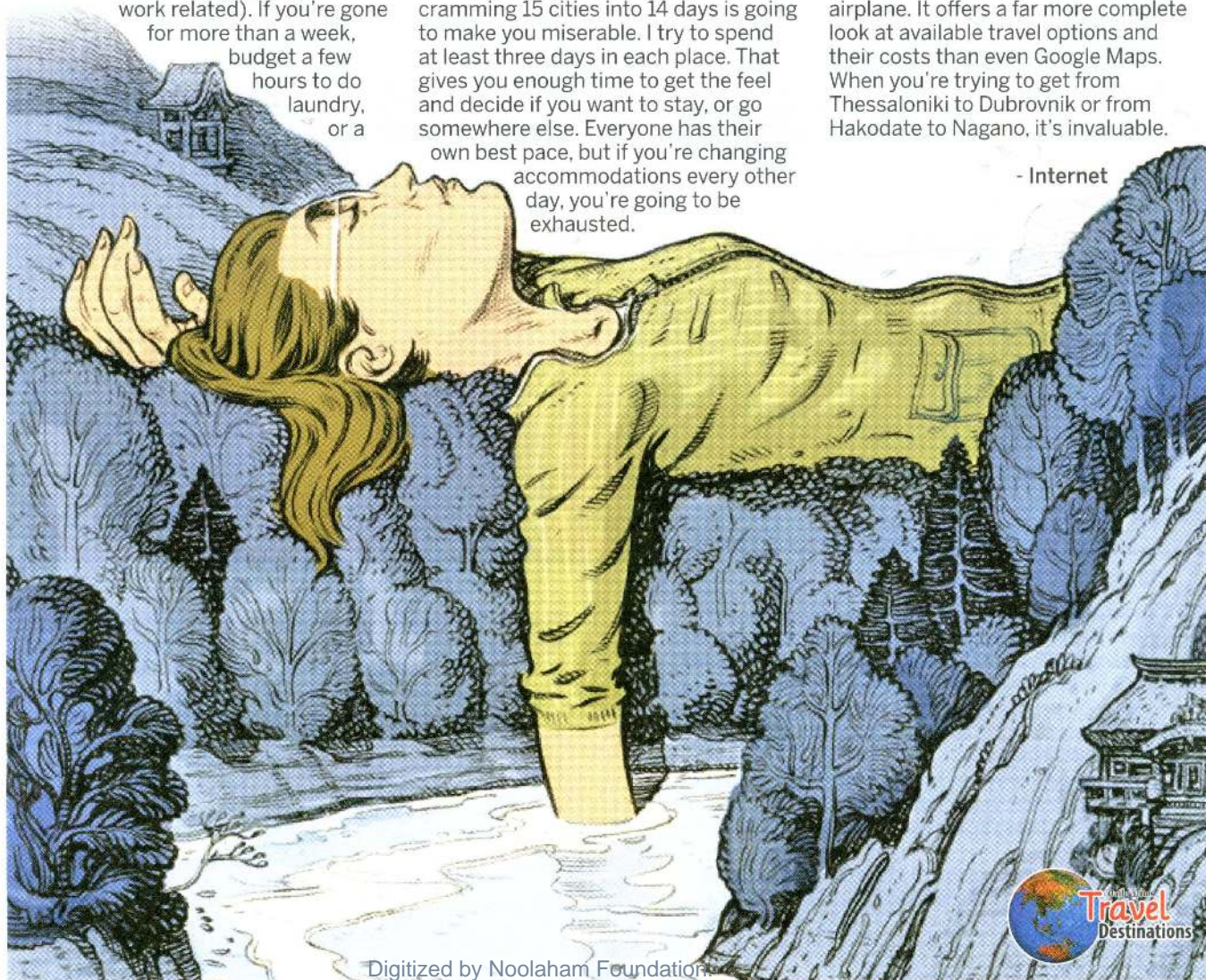
Install the right apps

I only have a handful of what I would call "travel" apps that I can't do without. Google Maps and Translate are obvious ones. Both also largely work offline, if you download certain content ahead of time.

Booking apps like Booking, Orbitz, Hostelworld, and so on are handy too. One very useful service is Rome2Rio. The app can help you get virtually anywhere from anywhere, by whatever means available: Bus, ferry, train or airplane. It offers a far more complete look at available travel options and their costs than even Google Maps. When you're trying to get from Thessaloniki to Dubrovnik or from Hakodate to Nagano, it's invaluable.

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Five Strategies for Stress-Free Travel





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Among other superlatives, Magic was the world's first vessel with a ropes course at sea. Guests also have access to other entertainment and activities including mini-golf, a casino, an arcade, live shows, the Punchliner Comedy Club and the WaterWorks onboard waterpark. Those just looking to relax can book a treatment at the spa or soak in the whirlpools at the Serenity Adult-Only Retreat.

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According to the Sri Lankan folklore, Yahangala is the place where the great king Ravana is sleeping until he wakes up again. The god "Gal Bandara" is also believed to be protecting this place. This is a place travelers have to come with good intention, because there were enough incidents that the environment or some spiritual powers has been punished travelers who came with bad intension. (elephant attack, wasp, all kinds of venomous snake bites and getting lost). As long as you love the flora and fauna and leave only foot prints behind, you are good to go.

It's better to ask local help to choose the path because the popular (and easier) trail is Yahangala. Even some local people are not aware of Kehelpathdoruwa. They might direct you to the Yahangala directly, so be careful. We decided on Kehelpathdoruwa, since it has better scenery and its elevation is higher than that of Yahangala (1300m approx.). So yeah, we chose the hard way.

It's always better to start as early as possible, because mist is so thick in this area. It is very difficult to predict the next step, as trails get blurred in seconds. I'd advise you to stay where are, if you got lost in this kind of a thick fog, specially on peaks. There are no man-made

trails to Kehelpathdoruwa you can follow, except for game trails. You will possibly be your own; a GPS tracking device and a compass will come in handy because the complete landscape is misty 2/3 of the day.

Morning is so silent, because we were on top of the mountain and it's misty too. Still, our vicinity was so blissful. If you're lucky enough, you can observe the whole area from top of the mountain range.

We started our journey in the next morning. We had to reach our final destination and to clamber up Yahangala as well. Getting to Yahangala from here is comparatively easy, but still there is a slim chance of getting lost your way. Therefore, confirm your location with GPS in every 500m.

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Yahangala via Kehelpathdoruwa



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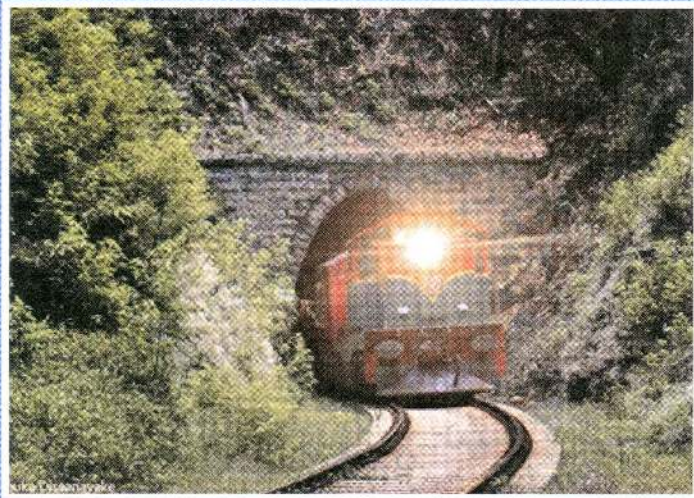
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Idalgashinna - Ohiya Railway Trek

Just over 190 km from Colombo, nestled a little way off Haputale, is Idalgashinna a small and sleepy village tucked in the hills. When we say 'small and sleepy', we mean it, because stepping off the train leaves you with nothing but views of a few scattered buildings, lots of pine trees, and rolling hills and valleys.

There's a small petti-kadey (a small road-side shop) a small walk off, and it's stocked with your everyday biscuits, murukku and bites. The Idalgashinna mountain looms in the distance and has a wall of fog continually curling up against it. Apparently it looks beyond stunning if you reach its peak in time for day break.

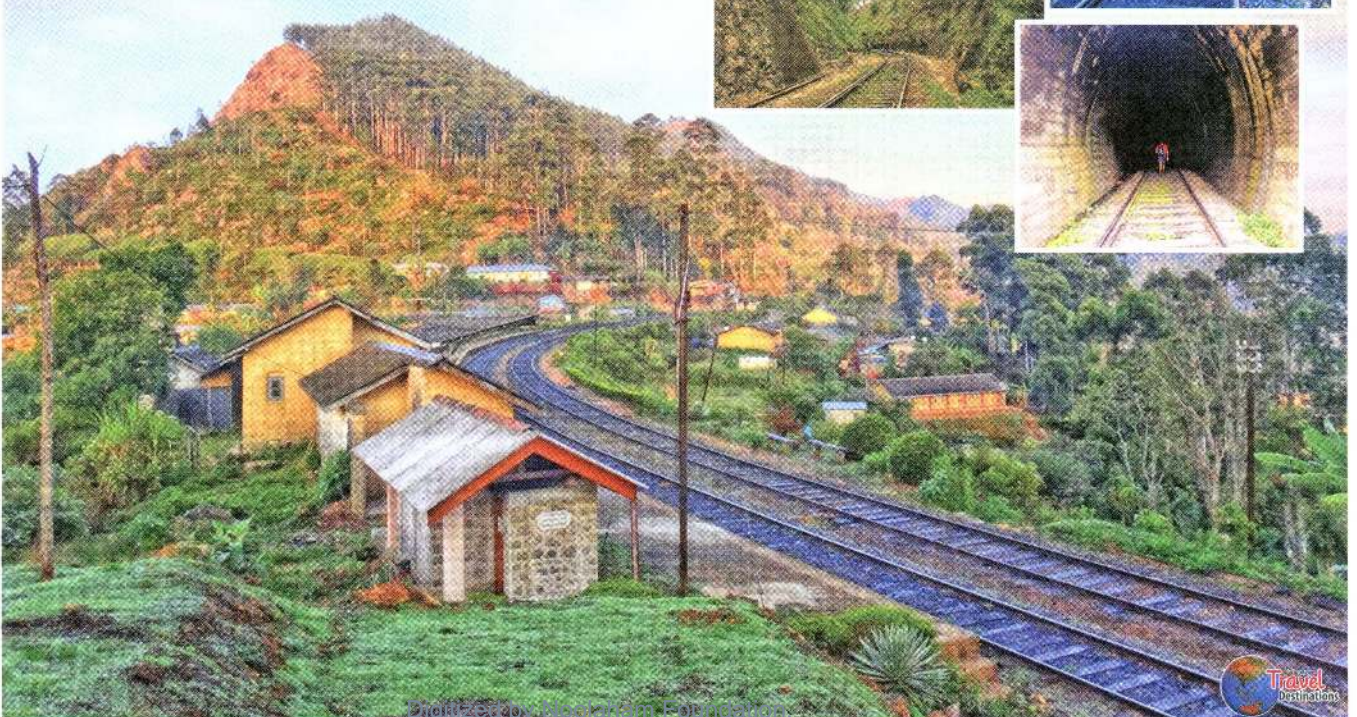
The hike's incredibly straight forward, really. Nothing to climb or stumble over, just follow the rail tracks until you hit the Ohiya Station some 8 kms away. Yes, that's a bit of a long walk, and yes, it takes all of three hours.

You also get the excitement of walking through 13 (or 14, I lost count, sorry) tunnels, in which you can hear the bats clickety-clacketting above you, and where the walls are slimy and damp and moist. You need to keep an ear out for incoming trains, because if you're caught in the tunnel when one's coming you need to scoot into one of the manholes in the walls of the tunnel (if you can find one), or turn around and run as fast as you can back out.

Because seriously, most of the tunnels didn't look like they had enough space to hold a person and a train both, without a layer of skin (in the very least) being skimmed off the former.

When you finally reach the Ohiya Station, you're accosted by friendly greetings from literally the only two kadeys in the area. They can make you a nice cup of tea or coffee, which you can have with the milk biscuits you purchase from the aforementioned kadey.

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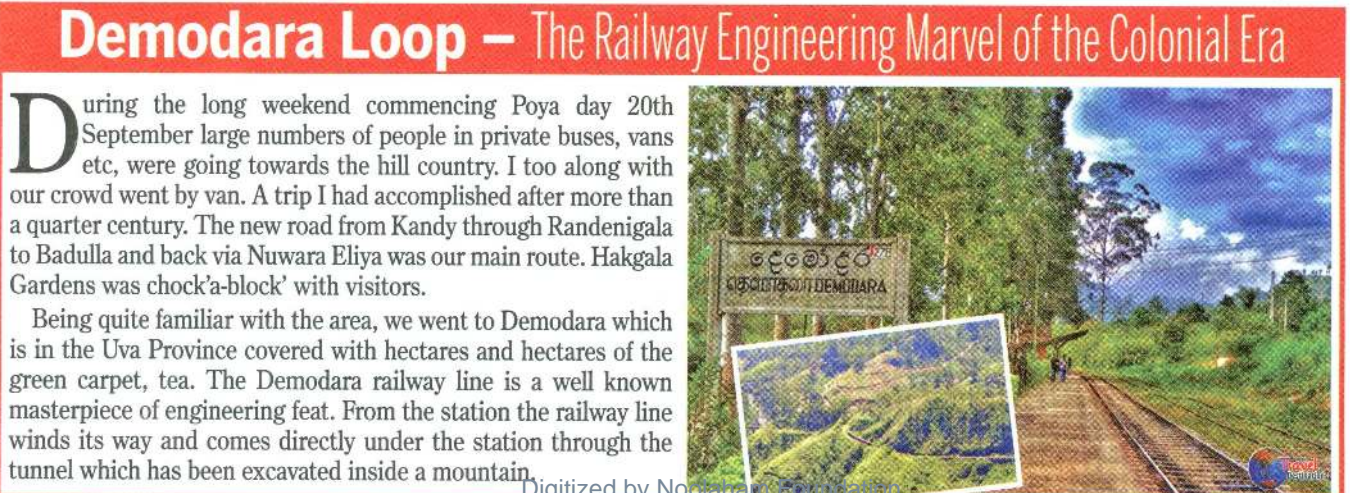
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Demodara Loop – The Railway Engineering Marvel of the Colonial Era

During the long weekend commencing Poya day 20th September large numbers of people in private buses, vans etc, were going towards the hill country. I too along with our crowd went by van. A trip I had accomplished after more than a quarter century. The new road from Kandy through Randenigala to Badulla and back via Nuwara Eliya was our main route. Hakgala Gardens was chock'a-block' with visitors.

Being quite familiar with the area, we went to Demodara which is in the Uva Province covered with hectares and hectares of the green carpet, tea. The Demodara railway line is a well known masterpiece of engineering feat. From the station the railway line winds its way and comes directly under the station through the tunnel which has been excavated inside a mountain.



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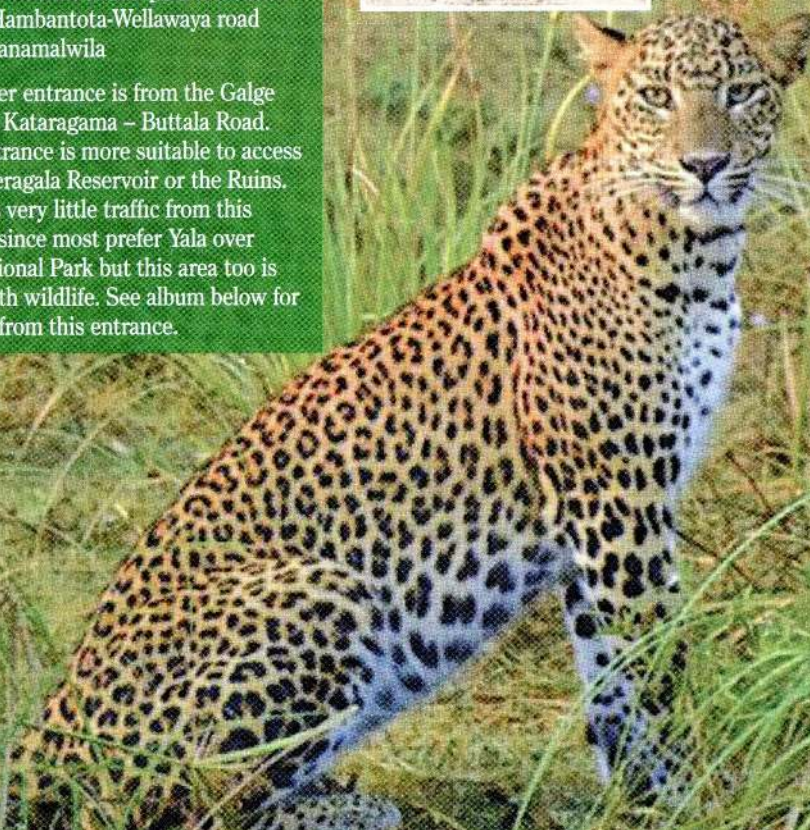
The Lunugamvehera National Park was established for protection as a corridor for elephant migration from the Yala National Park to the Uda Walawe National Park's Western region and for the protection of the catchment areas of the Lunugamvehera Reservoir. Even though the Lunugamvehera National Park covering an extent of 23,498.8 ha. was established on December 08, 1995, it had not been opened to the public. The Lunugamvehera Reservoir within the park covers 3,283 ha.

Located in the Moneragala District of the Uva Province, Lunugamvehera extends to Thanamalwila, Wellawaya, Kataragama, Buttala and to the Hambantota District in the South. Rich in biodiversity the park is a habitat for a large number of wild elephants and wild buffaloes. In addition other species of animals such as Fishing Cat, Grey Mongoose, Bear, Wild Boar, Spotted Deer and Mouse Deer are found here. Being a dry-mixed evergreen forest, Lunugamvehera Park has a variety of tree and plant species which provide ample food-stocks for vegetarian animals.

The Yala Rock Entrance of Lunugamvehera National Park provides access to Yala blocks III, IV and V. The Lunugamvehera National Park has two access roads while the headquarters and the entrance to the park is located on the Hambantota-Wellawaya road near Thanamalwila

The other entrance is from the Galge on Sella Kataragama - Buttala Road. This entrance is more suitable to access the Veheragala Reservoir or the Ruins. There is very little traffic from this entrance since most prefer Yala over this National Park but this area too is filled with wildlife. See album below for wildlife from this entrance.

LUNUGAMVEHERA NATIONAL PARK



10 January 2019

Daily News Travel



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