

A FAR

WHERE TO GO IN 2019

WHERE TRAVEL CAN TAKE YOU

AFAR.COM

#TRAVELDEEPER

THE
TOP
25
PLACES
TO
TRAVEL
TO
NEXT

PLUS

Egypt
Is Back:
Book a
Trip Now
p.104

**The Last
Secret
Spot in
Italy,
Revealed**
p.82

**Scotland's
Newest
Must-Drive
Road Trip**
p.94

FLIP THE
ISSUE TO
FIND OUR
TRAVELERS'
CHOICE
WINNERS

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2019

\$6.99US \$7.99CAN

02>



0 74470 08310 8

A half mile or so off the island of São Miguel, Vila Franca do Campo—a nature reserve defined by a circular inlet—is a popular summer destination in the Azores.

THE AZORES

Make this the year you visit Portugal's remote archipelago.

by Sara Button

WHEN TO GO The Azores have a subtropical climate, and the weather, while mild all year long, may cycle through clouds, wind, rain, and sun in a matter of hours. Go in June, when it's most reliably sunny and not too hot.

WHY NOW The Azores, a nine-island volcanic archipelago 900 miles west of Portugal, are home to deep-blue lakes, oceanside

bluffs, and patchwork fields in every imaginable shade of green. Now that travelers can fly from New York City in less than five hours, **the autonomous Portuguese region won't be a secret much longer.** On São Miguel, the biggest island, cobblestones in designs called *calçada portuguesa* cover the plazas of regional capital Ponta Delgada; hiking trails surround the crater lakes of the Sete Cidades area; and the five-star Grand Hotel Açores Atlântico recently emerged from a renovation. On Pico, grapevines grow out of black basalt rock, and on Flores, named for its bountiful flowers, hydrangeas bloom in the summer. The best way to see it all: via a new program from Azores Getaways that allows travelers to design their own island-hopping adventure (airfare included).

HOW TO GET THERE Delta flies nonstop from JFK to Ponta Delgada between May and September. The cruise lines Azamara Club Cruises, Norwegian, and Regent Seven Seas will stop at the islands of São Miguel and/or Faial on their 2019 itineraries.

ELQUI VALLEY

Eclipse chasers have already booked their trips to northern Chile. It's not too late to join them.

by Sarah Feldberg

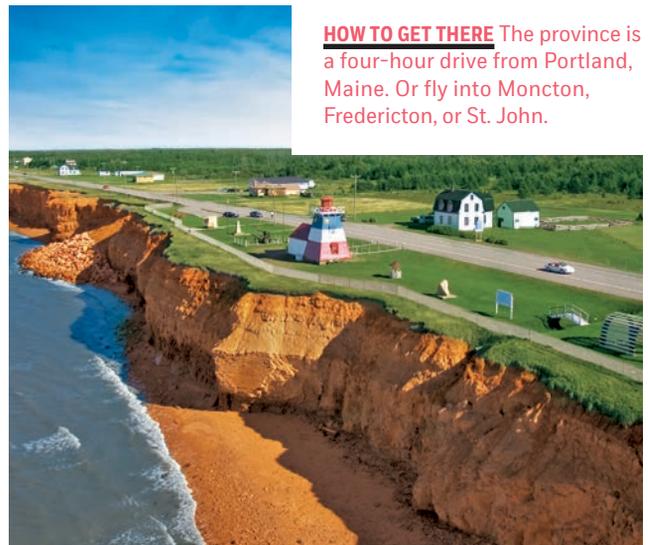
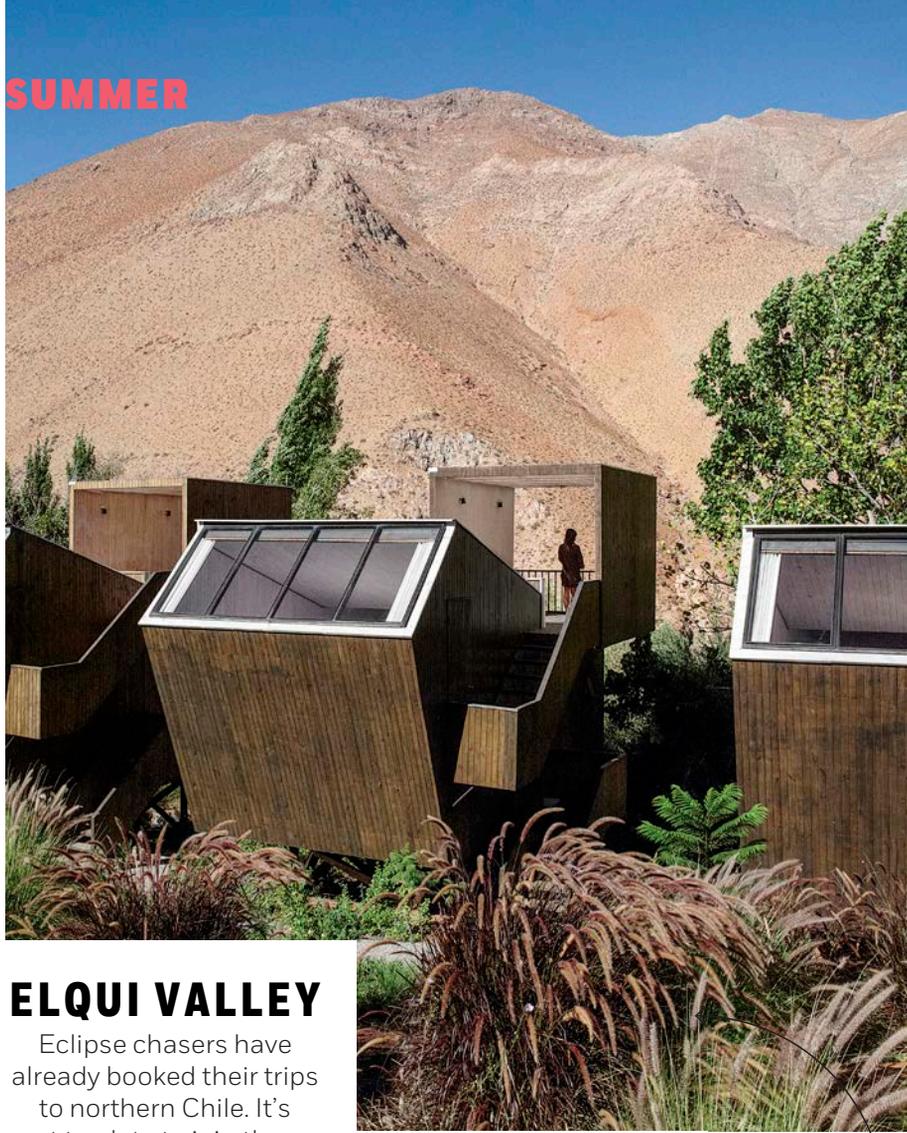
WHEN TO GO The Chilean winter, from June to August, is usually the slow season in this high-altitude valley. Not this year. The 90-mile-wide region will be in the path of totality—the swath in which the moon completely blocks the sun—for the next solar eclipse on July 2, and more than 500,000 people are expected to gather to watch the action.

WHY NOW With 300 sunny days a year and minimal light pollution, the arid **Elqui Valley offers some of the best stargazing in the world.** More than a dozen observatories stand along the valley's 65-mile Ruta de las Estrellas, or Route of Stars, which begins in the coastal town of La Serena and ends in the Andean village of Alcohauáz. Vicuña, the largest town, is the best jumping-off point for eclipse-related activities. Take in the celestial spectacle with astronomers from the Mamalluca

or Pangué observatories or set up camp in one of several temporary observation spots. While larger hotels throughout the valley are already booked, some campsites, private homes, and smaller *hostales* (inns) are still available, as are hotel rooms in La Serena and other towns on the coast. An alternative: Time your visit for the days following totality, when crowds are expected to disperse and a new moon means skies will remain dark enough to see the Milky Way. Book a stay at Elqui Domos, where you can stargaze from your own bed, either in a geodesic dome with a zippered viewing panel or in a cabin with a panel of skylights.

HOW TO GET THERE La Serena, the gateway to Elqui Valley, is a one-hour flight or 5.5-hour drive north of Santiago. Officials recommend arriving at least two days before the eclipse to beat traffic: Highway 41 is the only route into and out of the valley.

Each of the four wood cabins at the Elqui Domos hotel in Chile's Elqui Valley has a deck and a skylight roof that's positioned for optimal stargazing.



NEW BRUNSWICK

This eastern province—part of the Canadian Maritimes—remains blissfully uncrowded.

by Barbara Peck

WHEN TO GO June into September is the stretch to enjoy New Brunswick's outdoor wonders and explore the culture of the Acadian people (descendants of the region's French settlers). The city of Moncton will celebrate the World Acadian Congress August 16–23 with music, dancing, and food.

WHY NOW New Brunswick has **always been known for nature**—it's home to the Bay of Fundy, the site of the world's highest tides—but thanks to a handful of new additions, it's easier than ever to experience it. Explore the bay from the town of St. Andrews, where the Huntsman Marine Science Centre will be running new boat tours. Help gather specimens, then lunch on scallops. Cielo Glamping Maritime recently built five geodesic domes on the Acadian Peninsula, at the province's northeast tip, where you can gather your own oysters by day and watch the sunset from a wood-fired hot tub in the evening. To really get away from it all, head inland to hike a portion of the newly completed Nepisiguit Mi'gmaq Trail—87 miles along the Nepisiguit River, with spectacular views of Mount Carleton, the Maritimes' highest peak.

HOW TO GET THERE The province is a four-hour drive from Portland, Maine. Or fly into Moncton, Fredericton, or St. John.

SANTA BARBARA

The American Riviera gets a modern makeover.

by Kirsten Whatley

WHEN TO GO The annual California Wine Festival (July 19–20) celebrates some of the best wines in the state, including those from the nearby Santa Ynez Valley, with two days of tastings and food-and-wine pairings.

WHY NOW A year after devastating wildfires and massive mudslides in neighboring Montecito, **Santa Barbara is back in full swing.** The Hotel Californian (pictured), with its original 1920s Spanish colonial revival facade, has introduced elegance and energy to the city's historic waterfront. Celebrity designer Martyn Lawrence Bullard dreamed up the interiors,

infusing the 121 rooms and suites with Moroccan elements such as geometric patterns, arched entryways, and gilded sconces. Exit the hotel, and the best of the city is within walking distance. West Beach is just steps away, as is the innovative new MOXI discovery museum, where kids can play with 3-D printers and create their own movie sound effects. Also close: the tasting rooms of the Funk Zone and several new restaurants that round out the city's maturing food scene. There's Blackbird, a Mediterranean restaurant led by a French Laundry and Per Se alum who uses locally sourced, seasonal ingredients, and three new spots—including the Vietnamese restaurant Tyger Tyger—from the prolific Acme Hospitality group. Early 2019 will bring more hotel news, when the Rosewood Miramar Beach opens with 124 rooms and 37 suites on a secluded beach 10 minutes south of downtown.

HOW TO GET THERE From Los Angeles, it's a 50-minute flight or a three-hour Amtrak ride to Santa Barbara.





A stay at the newly renovated Tourists lodge in Massachusetts puts travelers in the midst of the natural beauty of the Berkshires.

WHERE TO GO IN 2019



JOHN DOLAN (7) ANICO LEFRANZEN (5)

TOURISTS



THE BERKSHIRES

In western Massachusetts, creative entrepreneurs are bringing a new vibe to the classic summer destination.

by Lyndsey Matthews

WHEN TO GO Summer is the best time of year to experience the hiking trails and swimming holes of the Berkshires. Solid Sound, a biennial music festival at MASS MoCA, returns June 28–30.

WHY NOW In 1999, a 19th-century factory mill complex in the bucolic Berkshires region was transformed into a world-class center for contemporary visual and performing arts: the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA).

Momentum has been building ever since. Last year, John Stirratt, the bassist with the alternative rock group Wilco, reopened the rundown Redwood Motel in the city of North Adams as Tourists, a sleek 48-room lodge; and A-OK Berkshire Barbeque set up on the MASS MoCA campus. In spring 2019, Tourists will open Loom, a restaurant that lured San Francisco chef Cortney Burns away from her post at Bar Tartine. Twenty miles south in Pittsfield, the Museum of Dog, a canine-themed art collection, is slated to re-open in late spring. And in Lenox, 10 miles farther south, Tanglewood, home to the Boston Symphony Orchestra in the summer, will open its new Center for Music and Learning, offering year-round concerts and events.

HOW TO GET THERE Most towns in the Berkshires are about a three-hour drive from Boston and New York City. The closest major airport is in Albany, New York, an hour's drive northwest of the Berkshires. And 2019 could be the year that Amtrak initiates the Berkshire Flyer, seasonal train service between Pittsfield and New York City and Albany.





Gorillas, such as this one from the Muhoza group, are still Rwanda's main attractions for travelers. But the evolving capital of Kigali, as well as new luxury safari camps, are offering even more reasons to visit.

RWANDA

Go for the gorilla trekking. Stay for the rhinos, the art, and the luxurious new lodges.

by Sarah Khan

WHEN TO GO Rwanda has a pleasant semi-tropical climate due to the country's high elevation, but that means lots of rain, too. Your best bet is the dry spell from June through September.

WHY NOW More than two decades after a violent civil war, Rwanda is peaceful again, attracting visitors with its coveted gorilla trekking experiences—by far the country's biggest draw. **But Rwanda offers even more than the chance to encounter the majestic apes.** The capital of Kigali, treated by most travelers as a quick stop-over before their safari, is home to a thriving arts scene and new restaurants that reward an extended stay. The year-old Heaven Retreat, with its teak furnishings and private patios, offers a central base. A 2.5-hour drive to the east, 433-square-mile Akagera National Park is home to 18 black rhinos, reintroduced in 2017, which means you can see the Big Five in Rwanda. Wilderness Safaris is bringing luxury to the park for the first time with the debut in March of Magashi Camp, which will feature six tents facing Lake Rwanyakazinga. In the southwestern reaches of the country, the new One&Only Nyungwe House offers hikes that track chimpanzees and colobus monkeys. And for those set on gorilla trekking, two anticipated lodges are slated to open in 2019: One&Only Gorilla's Nest and Singita Kwitonda.

HOW TO GET THERE Travelers can fly to Kigali with Kenya Airways on a new 15-hour flight from JFK. Or they can take a connecting flight from JFK or LAX to Kigali via Addis Ababa on Ethiopian Airlines, via Istanbul on Turkish Airlines, or via Amsterdam on KLM.

WARSAW

The Polish capital is undergoing a renaissance fueled by gourmet food—and vodka.

by Tim Johnson

WHEN TO GO Winters are gloomy and spring can be muddy, so visit in the summer, when tables spill out onto the sunny sidewalks.

WHY NOW As Poland continues to emerge from the shadow of Communism, a creative wave is energizing Warsaw. It includes a vodka revival. In Praga, once one of the roughest neighborhoods in the city, the new Polish Vodka Museum tells the 600-year story of the national spirit. In this former vodka factory, visitors can taste potato-, wheat-, and rye-based vodkas, then head out to the new crop of vodka bars. At WuWu, chef Adriana Marczevska puts an upscale twist on classic Polish pub dishes and pairs them with a list of dozens of vodkas. She even transforms a Communist

standard, the “pork luncheon”—a Spam-like concoction served in its own tin—into a tasty, salty wonder. The Roots, a snug bar across from the national opera house, distills its own spirits. Woda Ognista (its name taken from the old Polish words for vodka) celebrates the interwar years in Poland, a time of freedom and intellectual ferment; a recent, seasonal “cocktail melodies” menu was based on famous songs from that era. Travelers can make the five-star Raffles Europejski (pictured) home base. Once the most stylish address on the rail line between Paris and St. Petersburg, it reopened last June with 106 rooms and a carefully curated collection of Polish art.

HOW TO GET THERE European carriers such as British Airways, KLM, and Lufthansa fly into the Warsaw Chopin Airport. LOT, the Polish national airline, offers a nonstop flight from JFK.



VEVEY

Head to the banks of Switzerland’s Lake Geneva for a once-in-a-generation wine festival.

by Billie Cohen

WHEN TO GO From July 18 to August 11, the Fête des Vignerons returns to Vevey, the gateway city to the lauded Lavaux wine region.

WHY NOW The Lavaux region’s winemaking history dates to the 11th century; its 1,000-year-old terraced vineyards have landed it on the UNESCO World Heritage list, and its famous chasselas white wine has landed it in the hearts of oenophiles everywhere. In tribute to that long history, the Fête des Vignerons is staged in Vevey once every generation, up to five times a century. The festival dates to 1797, when the Brotherhood of Winegrowers launched a small parade to mark the end of its annual meeting. Today it mounts a much bigger spectacle, featuring three weeks of ornate parades, pop-up restaurants, and cultural activities. The main event is an elaborate music-filled pageant that follows a young girl as she works

and feasts with her grandfather during the harvest, learning about the winegrower’s life and the bounty of the vineyards. (This year, spectators can watch from a new 20,000-seat arena constructed specially for the festival.) Of course, there will also be wine. Sample one of two wines made specifically for the fête—one red and one white—at the many caveaux (open cellars). In between tastings and other activities, don’t forget to drink in the beauty of Vevey. Stroll the palm-lined lakeside promenade, bike and hike Les Pléiades and the nearby Alps, or hop on the Lavaux Express or the Lavaux Panoramic, trains that loop through the vineyards.

HOW TO GET THERE Vevey is an hour from Geneva and 15 minutes from Lausanne by train. Buy a Swiss Travel Pass—which includes rail, water, and bus routes—for discounted rides.