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EXPLORE ITS CROWN JEWELS AND HIDDEN GEMS THROUGH
WORLD HERITAGE JOURNEYS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION.



Travel Differently... Travel Deeper

Europe is packed with history and culture and overflows with stories and legends... so much that it's hard to know where to start your European journey or how best to experience and understand its rich heritage.

To help, National Geographic and UNESCO have created a new online guide to inspire you and help you plan your epic European holiday... beyond the bucket lists and selfie shots

VisitEUWorldHeritage.com features rich profiles of iconic and less-known World Heritage sites, including their history and significance and insider tips on what to see and do to truly experience these places of *outstanding universal value*.



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SPECIAL PUBLICATION

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Explore Palaces and Gardens
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Explore European History and Culture



The National Palace of Pena
crowns the Cultural Landscape
of Sintra World Heritage site
near Lisbon, Portugal



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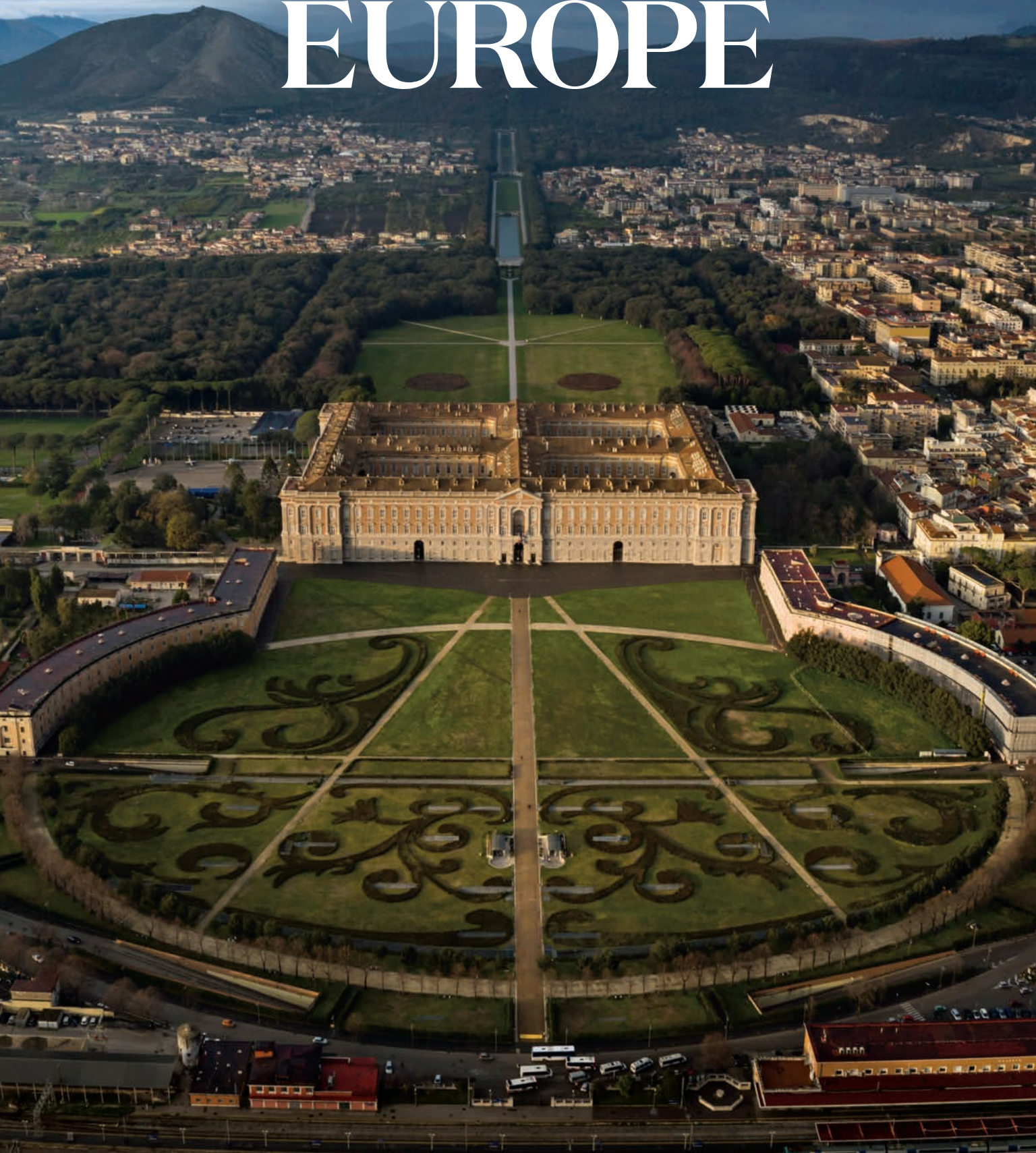


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World Heritage

— JOURNEYS —

EUROPE



This high altar made of gilded bronze is the work of Corneille Van Clève and is one of the treasures of the Palace of Versailles.

Preceding page: The Royal Palace of Caserta was one of the largest buildings erected in Europe during the 18th century.

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Cradle of Western Civilization

European culture has had a profound impact on human history. Its rich heritage has shaped the modern world in countless ways, and much of it is preserved for everyone to see and experience.

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Understandably, Europeans are proud of their heritage—both the tangible heritage in the form of architecture, painting, sculpture, and engineering, and the intangible heritage, expressed as music, dance, literature, gastronomy, and more. These cultural riches and strong efforts to preserve and maintain them have helped Europe become the world’s most popular international tourism destination.

With over 600 million international visitors each year, the countries and cities of Europe are adept at conserving and showcasing their heritage. Europe’s World Heritage sites tell epic stories of illustrious and disastrous pasts, and bolster present-day economies and cultural identities. For visitors, these places are a source of inspiration and wonder. They open doors to the past and open minds to the sensibilities, struggles, and creativity of other ages and cultures.

How can travelers enjoy these treasures sustainably, appreciating their rich cultural heritage without damaging what makes them special? For one, get off the beaten path. This book highlights some of Europe’s lesser-known World Heritage sites and their surrounds, all of which are worthy of a visit. It also explores unique ways of experiencing some of Europe’s most popular heritage sites: why not get away from the crowds inside the Palace of Versailles by focusing on its magnificent gardens—the horticultural blueprint that defined royal gardens across Europe?

These 34 destinations spread across the European Union are some of Europe’s greatest treasures. They represent profound achievements of humanity, from extensive gardens that came to define the notion of beauty to underground mineral labyrinths whose riches built empires. Each themed chapter illuminates a different side of Europe’s heritage, from the ancient to the royal and the romantic to the underground world beneath our feet. We explore ancient paths, shaded lanes, and twisting tunnels that illuminate Europe’s cultural past and present alike. We step off the well-trodden track, unearthing surprising stories and precious sites in a way that also helps preserve them.

Our Shared Heritage

The sites within these pages are special, deemed worthy of preservation and protection for the treasures they offer to the world. But to appreciate the value of Europe’s World Heritage sites, it’s important to understand what heritage is and why it matters.



Olympia’s temple of Hera dates to around 600 B.C.

What is heritage? In essence, it is something of value inherited or handed down from the past. It comes in two guises: first there is tangible heritage, which includes physical objects or properties, from colosseums and aqueducts to royal gardens and underground mines. And then there is intangible heritage: traditions, customs, and practices from the past, from human towers to music and beer making.

Some heritage is cultural, created by people over the centuries—it represents some of our greatest achievements in architecture, art, and design. Others are natural heritage created by Mother Nature. All represent some of history’s finest and most precious work.

The tradition of protecting and conserving heritage goes back to ancient times, when people sought to protect sacred groves and mountains, churches and waterways that mattered to a particular community. In 1972, with the adoption of the World Heritage Convention, the world’s countries came together under the auspices of

UNESCO to formally recognize heritage of value and importance not just to one community, but to all of humanity. It was posited that their loss would constitute an impoverishment of the world’s shared heritage, and thus we must protect these places agreed to have “Outstanding Universal Value.”

But what gives a heritage site such value? It can be a place that represents a masterpiece of human creative genius, like the Pont du Gard aqueduct in France (page 26). It can showcase important innovations in architecture, technology, art or planning, like the romantic medieval streets of Bruges in Belgium (page 36) or the gardens at Versailles (page 101). It can stand as an outstanding example of a settlement or land use, or as a unique testimony to a cultural tradition or civilization living or long gone—the vast network of wine cellars in Champagne, for example (page 78).

Always, a World Heritage property has to meet essential qualifying factors of **integrity** (wholeness and intactness) and **authenticity** (true expression of cultural values), and thus prove itself worthy of special protection against the dangers that continue to threaten it in an ever-more crowded and changing world.

But who will protect these places? The truth is, no one of us can do it alone. It will take all of us: conscientious travelers, local communities and government. It will take experts willing to teach the practices of sustainable tourism and the development of local tourism-based businesses. It will take hotels, tourism companies, and global brands coming together to provide the resources to do it. A weaving together of talents, time, energy, business, and community.



Mont-Saint-Michel and its Bay was one of the first properties in France to be listed as World Heritage.



Ancient

EUROPE



The theater at Epidauros in Greece is considered one of the purest masterpieces of Greek architecture. It now hosts events consistent with its character and cultural significance.



ANCIENT EUROPE

A modern-day journey to these gems of ancient Europe can feel like taking a trip back through time. From the temples at the heart of the first Olympic Games to the birthplace of modern medicine, these remnants of bygone empires scattered across the continent stand as testaments to the incredible ingenuity of the ancient world.

During an era of epic myths and legends, ancient Europe saw huge advances in fields like medicine, mathematics, theater, agriculture, and urban design. There are grand aqueducts that redefined life in the city in ways that still reverberate today; amphitheaters where drama entertained crowds millennia ago; frontier cities where modern-day visitors can explore the same streets centuries once marched along.

Wandering these ancient paths invites us to experience the genius of the classical world. But ultimately, a journey through ancient Europe is not just a trip back through time. It also gives us a connection to the remarkable creations that define our lives today and lets us bask in the rich culture that has grown up around these icons, appreciating the present-day heritage that brings them to life.

Every June, the Pont du Gard is beautifully illuminated during the Les Féeries du Pont pyrotechnics show.



ITALY

Aquileia

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AREA AND THE PATRIARCHAL BASILICA OF AQUILEIA

Though lesser known than nearby Venice, this city was once one of the most important and liveliest hubs of the Roman Empire. Today it is a small, charming town that's also an artistic and historical treasure trove. Most of its ancient wonders lie underfoot, unexcavated, making it one of the greatest archaeological reserves of its kind.

Founded in 181 B.C. and destroyed in A.D. 452 by Attila the Hun, the site's basilica and floor mosaics date to the beginning of the 4th century. The mosaic floor artwork of the Roman period was beautiful, but it was about more than aesthetics. In homes, they were a symbol of wealth and power. In churches, they helped religious leaders tell stories of faith. With more than 1,400 square feet (1,300 m²) of such mosaics, the basilica offers one of the largest and best-preserved examples in the Christian world. A clear, elevated pathway lets you float right over them, seeing these masterpieces in great detail.

You can also see the markets, the Forum where trading once took place, the Sepolchretum (cemetery), and more. The National Archaeological Museum of Villa Cassis is one of the must-see archaeological museums in Northern Italy. Join one of the "open days" and take a behind-the-scenes tour through some of the most significant sites. You may come to marvel at the ancient art underfoot, but you will stay for the region's beauty and deep heritage.

The basilica's collection of floor mosaics (left) is one of the finest in the world. This small, charming town (above) is perfect for exploring on foot.



» **HOW TO VISIT** It is best to visit Aquileia on foot or by bicycle. Start from the tourist info-point, which will provide all the information for a pleasant and rewarding visit. Please keep in mind that there is a dress code in the basilica.

» **DON'T MISS** Walk along the beautiful squares and cobbled streets of nearby Cividale del Friuli, founded by Julius Caesar, and explore its charming medieval houses and workshops.

» **HISTORICAL LAYERS** Recently redeveloped and inaugurated in 2017, the Roman House and Bishop's Palace showcases the layers of three different epochs, providing a journey back in time to discover this ancient city's secrets.

BULGARIA

Nessebar

ANCIENT CITY OF NESSEBAR At the cross-roads of culture, Nessebar was the starting line for many European concepts we take for granted today. Originally a Thracian settlement, it became a Greek colony and trading city at the beginning of the 6th century B.C. and was a part of the Delian League, an alliance of ancient Greek states. During the centuries that followed, it remained a strategic nexus for the cultures and epochs that passed through it.

But the peninsular town possesses more than the remains of an assortment of iconic eras. This hub on the Black Sea changed the world because the very concept of money was pioneered here. As an important trading city, Nessebar was one of the first places in the world to start making coins.

Bronze and silver ones were minted here in the 5th century B.C., while gold coins started appearing in the 3rd century.

Today, you'll find the preserved remains of eras gone by—Roman and medieval walls; Byzantine and Bulgarian churches; and 18th and 19th-century houses. The maze of cobblestone streets encourages aimless wandering through the historic city, contained within a small, rocky peninsula. Once you enter the narrow gate in the ancient fortress wall, you'll find yourself in a remarkable neighborhood with memories from thousands of years of civilization. A lively trading atmosphere lives on, with street vendors selling art and handicrafts. The city is particularly proud of its churches, which offer glimpses into ancient traditions.

The ancient city of Nessebar (right) is contained within a small, rocky peninsula. The beautiful remains of the Hagia Sophia Basilica (above).



» **HOW TO VISIT** Nessebar can get crowded during the high season (June to September). Late autumn provides the best conditions for exploring the Roman ruins and the authentic gabled houses, and winter is an ideal time to experience the various festivals.

» **WANDERING THE RUINS** Take a walk through the Hagia Sophia Basilica, which dates to the 5th century and can be counted as one of the most valuable spots for cultural heritage.

» **VIRGIN COAST** Irakli, a protected area near Cape Emine, is famous for its virgin nature and clean environment: a rare phenomenon on the Black Sea coast. Many of its unique plants are listed in the Red Book of Bulgaria and protected under the global Convention on Biological Diversity.

GERMANY

Trier

ROMAN MONUMENTS, CATHEDRAL OF ST. PETER AND CHURCH OF OUR LADY

It's hard to imagine that beautiful, unassuming Trier was once one of Rome's greatest cities. But two millennia ago it became a capital of the Western Roman Empire, the largest urban center north of the Alps. Emperor Constantine used it as a base as he cemented the spread of Christianity across Europe; testaments to his faith make up some of the most important buildings in Trier today. The number and

quality of the surviving monuments are an outstanding tribute to Roman civilization, and Trier is a singular place to learn about this important part of ancient history.

Start a walk through Trier at Porta Nigra (Black Gate), the largest Roman gate north of

the Alps, which was built around 170 A.D. with some 7,200 stone blocks. A climb to the top offers magnificent views over the city. From there, a short walk leads to the oldest cathedral in Germany, which is open to the public, and the Aula Palatina, where Constantine once sat upon his throne. If it's living history you're after, explore some of Trier's medieval residences: half-timbered houses from the Renaissance, electoral buildings, and Karl Marx's birthplace.

Just because Trier is Germany's oldest city, that doesn't mean it acts old. This is an independent city—as well as a bishop's and a university city—where you can experience a journey through time and a modern night out, reveling in the scenery as its citizens have been doing for 2,000 years.

Porta Nigra (right), or "Black Gate," was built around 170 A.D. The Basilika (above), built in 310 A.D. served as Constantine's imperial throne room.



» **THE TRIER GOLD HOARD** Discovered in a cellar in 1993, nearly 1,800 years after it was hidden, the Hoard was the largest Roman gold hoard ever discovered. Greater inspection revealed that it was not simply someone's personal fortune, but most likely an official treasury, comprising more than 2,500 aurei (gold coins) that weighed in at around 40 pounds (18.5 kg)—about equal to the annual salary of 220 Roman soldiers. The aurei feature 27 emperors, empresses, and members of the imperial family, and some are still considered unique today. You can view them at the Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier, which has around 12,000 coins in its exhibition.



Ancient Innovations

Europe's ancient world was one of invention and progress. Expanding empires and trade across borders pushed the ancients to come up with new ways to travel and communicate, as well as ingenious innovations in architecture and infrastructure that we still use today. These are just a few of many.



The ancients conquered nature and each other with feats of engineering and design that are still in use today.



The theater at Epidauros in Greece



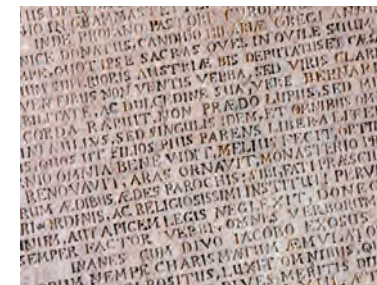
Pont du Gard, the tallest of Rome's iconic aqueducts

AQUEDUCTS

Aqueducts were instrumental in the creation of the Roman Empire. Though such innovations for carrying water from one place to another existed in the Near East long before Rome first constructed them in the 3rd century B.C., the Romans introduced sophisticated features that saw them built on a much grander scale. Roman aqueducts used gravity, not pumps, to usher water into cities, built with a gentle downward slope. Many of them lay underground, only turning into the iconic aboveground archways we know today (see Pont du Gard, page 26) where the terrain demanded it. The channels were kept covered to protect the water's purity, with tanks where impurities were collected and stored. Until relatively modern times, the technology the Romans honed remained unsurpassed.

AMPHITHEATERS

Amphitheaters were at the heart of ancient city life. They were places where drama unfolded: concerts, mock naval battles, and fights between gladiators. We don't know when the first amphitheater was built, but the Romans didn't invent the concept—one of the earliest known examples was found in Pompeii, dating to around 76 B.C. The ancient Greeks favored semi-circular theaters, often built using natural hillsides and embankments,



Rome's Acta Diurna newspaper



An ancient Roman road

but the Romans preferred them fully enclosed. One of the most famous, the Colosseum, was built with an early concrete called *opus caementicium*: another Roman innovation. Opened in 80 A.D., the Colosseum could hold 50,000 spectators. It even had an awning, called a *velarium*, that could be pulled out to provide shade for the crowd.

NEWSPAPERS

Around 131 B.C., something revolutionary appeared in Rome: the ancient world's first newspaper. The Acta Diurna, or "daily acts," were filled with Rome's political and social news: everything from military conquests and gladiatorial bouts to notable births and the price of grain. They were inscribed on stone or metal and displayed in busy spaces where everyone could catch up on the news. The Acta Diurna was published for decades and is considered a precursor to the modern newspaper.

ROADS AND HIGHWAY SYSTEMS

There is history behind the proverb "all roads lead to Rome." At the height of its power, the Roman Empire sprawled across a staggering 1.7 million square miles (4.4 million km²), and to run it they needed an extensive road system. What they created stretched for 50,000 miles (80,000 km) and was the continent's most sophisticated highway system. Ingenious surveyors figured out where to lay the roads, often in unknown terrain, and then engineers built them with dirt, gravel, and bricks. They were strict about their standards: all roads had to be stick straight, except where they had to curve to allow for drainage. Roman legions could travel up to 25 miles (40 km) a day on them. This highway system included many features we recognize—mile markers, a system of signs, and a highway patrol—and some of the roads are still used today.

Olympia

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE OF OLYMPIA

Olympia was the birthplace of the Olympic Games—the ancient world’s most famous and important sporting event—and paid homage to the finest athletes. But Olympia was not just used every four years to laud mortals. It was also a place where remarkable works of art and culture were created to worship Zeus, father of the Greek Olympian gods. It is this melding of history, religion, and the molding of modernity that makes this site so special.

Olympia dates back to the end of the final Neolithic period and is considered one of the most important places to trace the roots of Western society. The Olympic Games, first held here in 776 B.C., were about sport, but also represented peace and the nobility of competition. From the athletic disciplines like running, wrestling, discus and javelin throwing to the olive wreath and the quadrennial regularity of the event, this ancient place has clear influences on the modern Games.

Stepping into the stadium, you imagine the roar of the crowd. This is the same track where athletes raced for glory millennia ago. The remains of dozens of buildings and temples sit among the shade of trees. Here you will find the ruins of temples, altars and stoas (galleries) as well as remnants of the athletic competitions: the stadium, the palaestra and the gymnasium. Take in the many artistic masterpieces that have survived here: large votive archaic bronzes, pedimental sculptures and metopes from the temple of Zeus, and the famous complex of Hermes by Praxiteles.

At Olympia (left), explore tracks once walked by athletes and worshippers. The Olympic Games still begin with the Lighting of the Flame at Olympia (above).



» **HOW TO VISIT** Try to dedicate at least a couple of days and stay in a nearby hotel. Although there are explanatory signs in the galleries and the site, a guided tour (not included in the ticket price) is recommended. From November 1 to March 31, tickets for the site and museums are half price. In the winter, there are typically no lines.

» **DID YOU KNOW?** The ancient tradition of the eternally burning fire on the sacred hearth of goddess Hestia has been rekindled at Olympia with the lighting of the Olympic Flame, which takes place ahead of each Games.

» **CELEBRATIONS** See Olympia come alive with music and culture at its major events—the Ancient Olympia International Festival and the Olympia International Film Festival for children and young people.

Tarragona

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ENSEMBLE OF TARRACO

Call it what you want—the blueprint for Rome’s success or the showcase for historic engineering—Tarraco was a monumental architectural achievement. It was the oldest Roman settlement on the Iberian Peninsula, established in the 3rd century B.C. Located in the port city of Tarragona, south of Barcelona, surrounded by white-sand beaches and coves that remain virtually unaltered since ancient times, a visit to the City of Eternal Spring will immerse you in the ancient world.

As the Romans expanded across Europe, the empire developed new techniques for urban design. In ancient Tarraco, architects took a giant step into modernity when the city started using the area’s natural landscape to their advantage—and altering it where necessary. The defensive system of walls around the ancient city is one of the earliest examples of Roman engineering, which inspired other capitals in the Empire to follow suit.

A walk through the city reveals the area’s wide range of ancient buildings woven around more modern structures. Explore the 2nd-century Amphitheatre of Tarragona, the beachside site of gladiatorial fights and public executions. Or the Roman Circus, a 30,000-capacity entertainment center used for horse and chariot races as early as the 1st century and considered one of the best-preserved circuses in the West. Climb the Praetorium, a Roman-era tower that was transformed in the 12th century into a palace for the monarchs of the Crown of Aragon.

Marvel at the Amphitheatre of Tarragona (left), once the site of gladiatorial battles and executions. Apostles gaze down from the Tarragona Cathedral (above).



» **HOW TO VISIT** You can visit Tarraco by foot, on wheels, or by sea. Be sure to take advantage of guided tours to discover fascinating facts and anecdotes. The tourist train offers visitors a panoramic tour of the city.

» **WHITE SANDS** Wander along the area’s 9-mile (15 km) coastline, full of beaches renowned for their fine golden sand. Two conservation areas, Punta de la Móra Nature Reserve and Gaià River Delta Nature Reserve, offer a glimpse into beautiful wilderness and a cornucopia of bird species.

» **CELEBRATIONS** The city comes alive during its festivals, including the Tarraco Viva (Tarragona’s Roman festival); Santa Tecla (fire festival); Sant Magí (water festival); the Dixieland Festival; the Minipop Festival for families; the DO Tarragona Wine Fair; and the International Fireworks Competition.



Wander the Balcó del Mediterrani and its expansive views of the coastline—according to local legend, touching its singular railing (“tocar ferro”) will bring good luck. A highlight of a stay in Tarragona is the 12th to 14th century Cathedral, built on the highest point of the capital on the site of the former Roman temple, which also houses the impressive Diocesan Museum. The soaring entrance and rose window of its façade are one of the city’s most emblematic images.

The city really comes alive during its festivals and historical reconstructions, which let visitors feel like they are traveling back through time. Castells—the human towers the area is famous for—play a starring role in all of them. Take a guided walking tour to discover fascinating facts and anecdotes about the rich history of Tarragona, and download the Imageen augmented reality app and hold your phone up in places like the Amphitheater to experience the chariot races and gladiatorial fights of old. Make sure to try the city’s UNESCO-recognized Mediterranean cuisine, featuring traditional components like *romesco*, and, above all, fresh seafood and rice dishes.

There are endless ways to enjoy the city’s vibrant culture while walking among the remains of one of the greatest Roman frontier cities in Europe.

New Heights



In Tarragona, castells—the human towers formed by groups of people of all ages that can reach up to ten levels in height—are a deep-rooted tradition closely followed by the locals. The teams practice in the plazas, to the delight of tourists and locals, from June to September. In October of every year ending in an even number, the city plays host to the largest castells competition in the world. These towers have been included among the traditions on UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list.



FRANCE

Pont du Gard

PONT DU GARD Built shortly after the Christian era across the Gard River, the Pont du Gard is an absolute triumph in Roman aqueduct construction and considered among the best-preserved aqueducts today. The architects and hydraulic engineers who designed this bridge, which stands almost 165 feet (50 m) high and consists of three levels, the longest measuring some 900 feet (275 m), created a technical and artistic masterpiece against the rocky backdrop of the Garrigues. The structure is as impressive today as it was nearly 2,000 years ago.

The aqueducts built across Europe are among the most important symbols of the Roman Empire (see page 19), demonstrating masterful engineering prowess and an ability to move and contain the

Earth's most precious resource: water. It may sound like a simple advancement, but controlling the supply of water was a huge part of the expanding Empire's success. It allowed for the colonization of new areas and became a tool to endear themselves to locals by providing easy access to an important resource.

Trails leading up the river and under the aqueduct's arches let you experience the Pont du Gard from different angles, while the museum offers fascinating insights into its history and operation. Better yet, see it while exploring the area's 37 acres (15 ha) of old agrarian plots by taking a stroll down an open-air, almost one-mile (1.4 km) trail. Its vineyards, olive groves, wheat fields, and oak trees tell the story of a landscape shaped by man for thousands of years.

The Pont du Gard (right) is one of the most beautiful surviving examples of ancient Rome's ingenious aqueducts. Visit the charming nearby town of Uzès (above).



» **HOW TO VISIT** Summer offers the chance to swim in the river, but those eager to enjoy the magic of the place in peace should visit during the winter months. There are three kinds of visitor passes, but the Pass Découverte lets you visit by yourself and enjoy the cultural areas.

» **SOAK IT IN** In the warmer months, a beach on the riverbank is a glorious place to take a swim while you enjoy this ancient marvel, and if you're there in June you can see the monument beautifully illuminated during the four-day Les Féeries du Pont pyrotechnics show.

» **DID YOU KNOW?** Its dimensions—164 feet (50 m) high and 1,608 feet (490 m) wide (originally)—and its excellent state of preservation make it one of the most valuable relics of antiquity.

» **DID YOU KNOW?** Most lace is made with linen, silk or cotton. But on the island of Hvar, the nuns at the Benedictine Convent have been using the agave plant for their lace for more than a hundred years. If you visit, you can watch them make it.

» **MONASTERY TREASURES** The Dominican Monastery offers visitors a beautiful museum and art collection, which contains the “Mourning of Christ” by the Venetian artist Tintoretto and a large library of manuscripts, including the oldest inscriptions found in Croatia.

» **ANCIENT RESPITE** Though small and rustic, the Chapels of the Stari Grad Plain provided farmers with much-needed rest. Explore the carvings at the chapels of Our Lady, St. Helena, St. Michael or St. Roko.

CROATIA

Stari Grad

STARI GRAD PLAIN Colonized by Ionian Greeks in the 4th century B.C., this Croatian island’s landscape has remained practically intact ever since. Stone houses framed by the Adriatic Sea are nestled in rolling hills of vineyards and olive groves, which are divided in plots constructed by Greek settlers more than 2,400 years ago. A model for European farming, the site provides travelers an opportunity to experience authentic local culture and cuisine, and explore a stunning landscape of ancient farms.

Created after colonization by the Greeks from the Aegean island of Paros in 384 B.C., the plain is as the ancient residents designed it. By separating the land into plots and building tanks and gutters, the fertile farms are able to produce grapes, olives, and vegetables in a sustainable way for the whole community. Today you experience this design along the paths and drystone walls crossing it at right angles. To either side of the paths you’ll find charming country huts, little beehive-shaped buildings used to store tools, and cisterns.

Stari Grad is located on the island of Hvar, one of the jewels of the Adriatic coast. The best way to experience it is along the walking or cycling paths that wind past the fields and farmhouses. In the town—the oldest in Croatia—stone houses line streets that lead to beautiful public squares. During the harvest season, the smell of young grapes fills the air and the autumnal colors of the trees and vines swirl together with the deep blue of the sea.

On the island of Hvar, life in Stari Grad (left) has always been shaped by the crystalline waters around it. Carvings at the Chapel of St. Helena (above).





» **HOW TO VISIT** To get a complete overview of the site and surrounding area, spend at least one full day and night.

» **DID YOU KNOW?** The theater was rediscovered in 1881, and its excellent preservation means it can now host events consistent with its character and cultural significance. Performances are held every summer.

» **MYTHS ALIVE** Nearby, you'll find the kinds of ancient sites that myths are made of: Mycenae, the kingdom of the mythical Agamemnon from Homer's epics, and Tiryns, which boasts walls said to have been constructed by the Cyclops.

GREECE

Epidaurus

SANCTUARY OF ASCLEPIUS AT EPIDAUROS

Epidaurus, considered the birthplace of modern medicine, is a tribute to ancient healing cults and practices across the Greco-Roman world. Dedicated to Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine, it was a sacred place used for ceremonial medical practices as far back as the 2nd millennium B.C. People who traveled here to be blessed by the deity were given herbs and cleansing rituals by holy men, treatments that transformed over time from divine to scientific. For travelers curious about the roots of European culture, a visit here provides insight into an early approach to medicine and a fascinating glimpse into what was the most important therapeutic center of the ancient world.



Epidaurus is a unique archaeological site and a coherent architectural ensemble featuring the remains of one of the most complete ancient Greek sanctuaries. Walk through the foundations of a sanitorium, where worshippers of Asclepius believed his divine powers would heal them. Explore the Temple of Apollo Maleatas, the locus of an ancient cult that goes back to the 3rd millennium B.C. Visit the well-preserved theater, with its miraculous shell-like structure, amazing acoustics, and harmonious architecture, that provided an escape from visitors' everyday problems.

In summer, don't miss the Athens & Epidauros Festival, one of Europe's oldest performing arts festivals, with internationally acclaimed theater, dance, and music artists, which is held in the ancient theater here and in Athens.

The Sanctuary of Asclepius (left), the Greek god of medicine, was a place for healing. Explore the mysteries and myths of ancient Mycenae (above).



Romantic

EUROPE

The Rozenhoedkaai, or Quay of the Rosary, is one of the most beautiful places in the city of Bruges in Belgium, especially when seen during a twilight stroll.



ROMANTIC EUROPE

The beauty of Europe has always inspired love. Whether it's in the hearts of honeymooners or the famous works of art, romance abounds across the continent. It's everywhere you look—in the picturesque towns, grand cities, stunning churches, and even the ancient temples, just waiting to be explored.

Europe was also the birthplace of Romanticism, a movement beginning in the late 18th century that embraced emotion and imagination, influencing literature, music, art, and architecture across the world. These sites showcase a range of architectural styles, artworks, and eras, from ancient to more modern, but they all are filled with a spirit of romance that echoes in their cobblestone streets, soaring towers, and verdant valleys.

Take a romantic journey to the World Heritage sites that have been the locations for some of the most famous love stories and legends of all time. Immerse yourself in places that have inspired people for centuries while creating your own unforgettable love story.

Whether it's a castle perched on a verdant hillside or ancient reminders of the Goddess of Love, these places are sure to inspire you.

The haunting Paphos Castle, perched along Cyprus's coast, is steeped in many layers of history and intrigue just waiting to be explored.



BELGIUM

Bruges

BRUGES HISTORIC CENTER Bruges's golden age may have been from the 12th to 15th century, when it was a busy trading port, but this medieval city has remained one of the world's most picturesque culture hubs. Laden with Gothic architecture, beautiful art, and romantic strolls, this city has captured hearts for centuries.

It's easy to see how water played a crucial role in its development, lending the city a unique sense of charm and beauty. Canals cut

through parts of the city, with grand houses lining the roads along their edges, right next to pathways for walkers or cyclists. Take a boat ride and be rewarded with unexpected views, hidden romantic corners and secret gardens.



There are plenty of charming squares to discover, but the most prominent one is the Markt (Market Square)—the beating heart of Bruges. It contains the Belfry, which for centuries was the city's most prominent tower. Today you can climb its 366 steps and enjoy spectacular city views.

Surrounded by trees in the south part of Bruges, you'll find a small, rectangular lake called Minnewater, or the Lake of Love. The tragic romance of Minna and her warrior love Stromberg has evolved into a local legend: it's said that those who walk together over the lake bridge will experience eternal love.

Several leading artists, including Jan van Eyck, came to live and work in Bruges in the 15th century. You can marvel at the masterpieces of the Flemish primitives in the Groeninge Museum and the St. John's hospital.

The city of Bruges in Belgium (right) is full of beautiful streets and surprises around every corner. Take a boat ride along one of Bruges's picturesque canals (above).



»**HOW TO VISIT** Any time of year is lovely, but the misty months of autumn and winter are ideal for undisturbed visits to the many museums and sites of interest, followed by atmospheric strolls that end in a cozy, cheerful pub.

»**GET OUT OF TOWN** While the picturesque town center is fascinating, don't forget Bruges's city ramparts. The "green lung" encircles almost the entire town, offering a chance to admire the city's four remaining windmills as well as several medieval town gates.

»**LIQUID HERITAGE** With a world-first underground beer pipeline running through the city, Bruges is the perfect place to discover Belgian beer culture, which was awarded UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2016.

CZECHIA

Lednice-Valtice

LEDNICE-VALTICE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Between the 17th and 20th centuries the ruling Dukes of Liechtenstein transformed their domains into one huge park, creating one of the largest artificial landscapes in Europe. Just 2.5 hours by car from Prague, the Lednice-Valtice Cultural Landscape is home to a picturesque village, extensive gardens, and two romantic castles well worth exploring.

The artistry here evolved over several generations as a labor of love from the Dukes of Liechtenstein, who spent hundreds of years creating their own piece of paradise away from the small nation they administered. The two castles at Lednice and Valtice look out at each other like lovers across

a massive garden expanse, with a 4-mile (7 km)-long, lime tree-lined avenue connecting the two. The castle at Lednice is striking for its size and design, especially when seen as a backdrop to the immaculate gardens of flowers and hedges surrounding it. Tour the inside to see its exquisite art and furnishings. Outside, follow the paths through the romantic gardens as you make your way toward Valtice. Explore the expansive parks, carefully landscaped to blend forests with fields and lakes around Valtice Castle, one of the most impressive Baroque residences of Central Europe, which dominates the small village that has grown around it. The region is famous for its wine, and local stores offer tastings and sales that will enrich your visit.

Explore Lednice Palace and garden (right). Beautiful Valtice Castle (above) was built to blend seamlessly with the surrounding landscape.



» **HOW TO VISIT** The district town of Břeclav offers a connection with trains or buses to Valtice or Lednice. Twenty different tours and exhibitions are offered at Lednice and Valtice every season, giving you the opportunity to feel and learn about the refined atmosphere of palace life.

» **DON'T MISS** Expert botanists wandered the tropics to collect the seeds of beautiful exotic plants and placed them in the Palm-house at Lednice, offering visitors a rich plantscape to explore.

» **HAPPY TRAILS** Cycling and hiking excursions on the Liechtenstein Trails are a great way to appreciate this 77-square-mile (200 km²) landscape composition imprinted by several generations of Liechtenstein princes.

ITALY

San Gimignano

HISTORIC CENTRE OF SAN GIMIGNANO

Your first view of San Gimignano is hard to forget. It's nestled in the heart of Tuscany, with rolling hills covered with rows of grapevines, terra cotta roofs, and fortified towers from the 11th and 13th centuries. Its well-preserved feudal atmosphere, from its cobbled streets to its soaring towers, never fails to leave visitors spellbound. Once an important resting point for pilgrims during the Middle Ages, it is today a magical spot to relax with

the rhythm of this glorious landscape and be inspired by a lifestyle that's a millennium in the making.

San Gimignano's lofty towers make it easy to spot amid the surrounding green Tuscan farmland, and simply breathtaking once you enter

the walls. Once inside, the town is easy to navigate with narrow streets leading to large squares dominated by grand churches and palaces, and, of course, the 13 remaining towers. These towers were meant as displays of wealth, but they also represented the power of the families who built them. The taller the tower, the more important the owners appeared to be. This led to conflict, and often families would feud for decades and split the loyalties of the citizens. Legends tell stories of young lovers from quarrelling families meeting in secret in the shadows of the towers like real-life Romeos and Juliets. Two main squares—Piazza della Cisterna and Piazza del Duomo—are the center of life here, around which rise the most important buildings and the tallest towers.

San Gimignano is famous for its soaring towers (right) built by the rich and powerful. This beautiful Italian city holds surprises behind every door (above).



» **HOW TO VISIT** There's no bad season to visit, but we recommend avoiding the summer when the town is crowded and temperatures are high. Make sure to spend the afternoon in the historical center before taking in the sunset atop the 170-foot (52 m) Torre Grossa.

» **CULTURE IN A BOTTLE** In the 13th century, a marvelous white wine called Vernaccia di San Gimignano appeared on the tables of kings, popes, and wealthy merchants throughout Europe. Experience it at the Vernaccia di San Gimignano Wine Experience center.

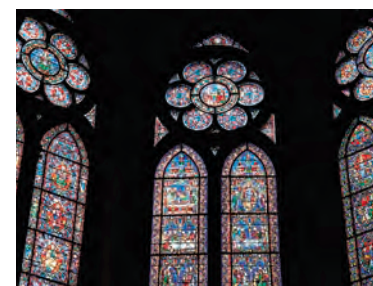
» **GET OUT OF TOWN** This is a marvellous area to explore by car, with cities like Volterra, Monteriggioni, Poggibonsi, Casole d'Elsa, Colle val d'Elsa, Radicondoli, and Pomarance.

Artistic Periods of Europe

Europe's history is embedded in its vaulted arches, rich paintings, and figures etched in marble. To appreciate the beauty of Europe's landscapes, both physical and cultural, it helps to know a few things about its major artistic movements: what inspired them and their key characteristics.



The Portrait of Bindo Altoviti, an Italian Renaissance painting by Raphael completed around 1515.



Gothic windows of Reims Cathedral



Renaissance Frederiksborg Castle



Baroque ceiling of Melk Abbey

GOTHIC (ca 1100–1600)

During the medieval period, this movement attempted to create a heaven on Earth by pushing places of worship to unprecedented heights. Architects experimented with innovations that allowed churches to become wider and higher, such as pointed arches and flying buttresses, to make room for stained-glass windows that awed and inspired. An interest in humanism saw religious figures depicted as more naturalistic, cast in everyday poses infused with emotion.

RENAISSANCE (ca 1300–1600)

Religion continued to inspire culture and art, but the natural world and the individual began to insert themselves. With the advent of moveable type, people had more access to knowledge than ever, including from ancient Rome and Greece. Artists combined a renewed interest in the classical world with contemporary scientific knowledge, and artists such as da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raphael used rich color and realism to create exquisitely detailed portraits.



Neoclassical Vilnius Cathedral



Romantic Pena Park at Sintra

BAROQUE (ca 1600–1750)

With a name derived from the word *barroco*, a Portuguese term for an irregularly-shaped pearl, it is no surprise that this period was all about extravagance and grandeur. The art was ornate, filled with elaborate touches. Artists created drama through movement, painting subjects in energetic compositions and using elaborate drapery to bring sculptures to life.

NEOCLASSICISM (ca 1750–1850)

As archaeology unearthed ancient ruins in places like Athens, artists developed an interest in resurrecting the past. The period was also informed by the Age of Reason, which strove to control one's destiny and explore the universe's laws. Neoclassicists turned away from the elaborate in favor of rationality, symmetry, and idealism.

ROMANTICISM (1780–1870)

This movement was a reaction to Neoclassical realism—a general disillusionment with reason and order inspired in part by the French Revolution. With a new interest in human psychology, artists wanted to emphasize the senses as valid means of experiencing the world. This movement celebrates the individual, subjective, and sensual, aiming to provoke emotion. Artists returned to nature, finding inspiration in its wildness, and explored subject matter that was exotic and imaginary. A renewed interest in nationalism meant using local traditions, folktales and landscapes to inspire national pride.

GERMANY

Romantic Rhine

UPPER MIDDLE RHINE VALLEY Imbued with the spirit of German Romanticism, the Rhine River has inspired fairy tales, fables, poetry, and paintings for generations. As an important transportation link between the north and south of Europe, the river enabled an exchange of culture and a flow of trade that has helped build small towns, castles, and impressive fortresses along its banks.

Journey through the romantic Rhine Valley and discover the culture, stories, gastronomy, and wine that makes this one of Europe's most renowned romantic landscapes.

The Upper Middle Rhine Valley stretches for 42 miles (67 km) down a gentle, winding stretch of the river. The evocative voyage from Mainz to Koblenz has been a favorite with travelers since the 19th century. Starting at Bingen, you can travel by boat, car, bicycle, or on foot, with panoramic views along the whole route. At the end of the valley, the beautiful city of Koblenz has a cable car that can take you across the water and up to the Ehrenbreitstein Fortress.

The Loreley Valley, a stretch of the Rhine between Koblenz and Rüdesheim/Bingen, is among the most romantic river sections in Europe. There is hardly a hill without a castle atop it: almost 40 between the Mäuseturm (Mouse Tower), near Bingen, and Koblenz. Of these, the impressive Marksburg Castle is the only hilltop castle here that has never been destroyed. Most are open to the public and

The town of Bacharach (left) is one of the many picturesque towns along the Rhine. Perched on a hill, Rheinstein Castle (above) was built around 1316.



» **HOW TO VISIT** Travel by boat, car, railway, bicycle, or on foot, with panoramic views along the whole route. There are six ferries that cross the river, so it's easy to visit both sides. You don't need to hire a car, as the region is well serviced by public transport.

» **ATOP THE ROCK** People come from across the world to see the striking Loreley Rock near the town of Sankt Goarshausen, which is a symbol of Rhine Romanticism and the subject of well-known poems and songs.

» **DID YOU KNOW?** The Rhine River's mythical underwater maidens and their magic gold provided the muse for Wagner's "Ring" opera cycle.

invite you to learn more about life inside their walls. They are the perfect embodiment of Rhine Romanticism—whether it be the melancholic atmosphere of an ancient ruin or the lavish furnishings and works of art in a freshly refurbished landmark.

It is no wonder this natural beauty and historic architecture have fueled artists, writers, and musicians over the past two centuries. At the beginning of the 19th century a new generation of artists discovered a beauty in the Rhine's landscape. English Romantic artists like JMW Turner and writers like Lord Byron brought international fame to the Rhine and breathed new life into the valley. The literary legends are what make this journey particularly rewarding for those who want to be immersed in sagas and romantic tales.

Towns along the Rhine are filled with iconic timber-framed houses that add to the region's beauty.

Toasting to the Rhine



The elegant Riesling wines from the Rhine are treasured the world over.

The best way to truly appreciate them is to visit the local vineyard pubs and restaurants, meeting the producers, and learning more about the culture from which they spring. The Rhine is a relaxed and welcoming landscape where golden-colored wine sparkles, and locals clink glasses to toast romance and good living. Throughout the year there are countless celebrations, festivals, and

fairs paying tribute to Riesling, including the Rhein in Flammen: the "Rhine in Flames" festival that takes place every summer. Come join the celebrations and you will witness sparkling lights, the mysterious Bengal fire, and the longest boat convoy in Europe (made up of 80 vessels), which add to the explosive firework displays.



CYPRUS

Pafos

PAFOS (PAPHOS) DISTRICT Inhabited since the Neolithic period, Pafos offers a chance to connect with the foundations of modern society. “Passion” is the operative descriptor for Pafos: passion for craft, for aesthetic, and, of course, for Aphrodite, the goddess of love and the source of it all. Visitors to this magical place are rewarded with the exceptional ancient remains of Roman villas, theaters and other public buildings, medieval fortresses, mosaics, and tombs of singular value.

Situated at the crossroads of three continents—Europe, Asia, and Africa—the island’s unique geographic position has played an important part in its turbulent story since antiquity. During the Roman period, Pafos was a crucial stop on the trading route between Egypt’s affluent city of Alexandria and Rome, where wealthy citizens built a city full of grand houses. Inside those of the most wealthy, the floors were decorated with remarkable mosaics that remain a highlight of any visit to Pafos.

Walk in the footsteps of a goddess along the Aphrodite cultural route, which covers some of the island’s most sacred sites and natural attractions. As you venture further along the glistening coastline, there are large underground tombs cut into solid rock at a site known as the Tombs of the Kings, used in the 3rd and 4th century B.C. There is also a vibrant modern city to discover, full of fine restaurants, nightlife, and shopping set against the backdrop of the sparkling Mediterranean Sea.

The many ruins at Pafos, like the Tombs of the Kings, (left) speak to an ancient past. The Rock of Aphrodite (above) is a beautiful place to take a swim.



» **HOW TO VISIT** We suggest you visit for at least a week to fully explore all the art, culture, gastronomy, beaches, and natural heritage the region has to offer.

» **BIRTH OF LOVE** The Birthplace of Aphrodite is one of the most beautiful beaches near the city of Pafos, home to the enormous rock where legend says the Goddess of Love was born.

» **APHRODITE’S BATHS** At Akamas Park, beneath an old fig tree shaded from the warm Cyprus sun, is a small natural grotto where the goddess is said to have met her lover Adonis. Enjoy a wander past the pool and along the area’s lush walking trails.

LITHUANIA

Vilnius

VILNIUS HISTORIC CENTRE Vilnius is full of romance and mystery. As the political center of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from the 14th to the end of the 18th century, the historic center includes buildings in many styles that have been well preserved over time, making it one of Europe's most beautiful cities. It is also home to one of the greatest love stories in Baltic history.

At the height of its power in the 15th century, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was the largest country in Europe. Appropriately, its capital of Vilnius became a city of grandeur and harmony. It grew with influences from multiple cultures, religions, and languages, attracting great architects, artists and thinkers from near and far, and in turn it influenced the cultural and architectural development of much of Eastern Europe. Today it's easy to walk the streets and see the stunning collection of Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, and Classical buildings.

Its labyrinthine Old Town, sleek business district, open squares and parks, and historic suburbs all blend together into a seamless whole. Up on a hill near the river, visit Gediminas tower—a reminder of the first castle built here in the 13th century. On the ground below are royal palace buildings and the cathedral where Lithuania's beloved Grand Duchess Barbora Radvilaitė was buried. Wherever you start, you will soon discover that Vilnius is an open and fun-loving place. It is also one of the few European capitals where you can take a hot air balloon ride over the city.

Founded in 1579, Vilnius University (left) is the oldest university in the Baltic states. Vilnius Cathedral (above), as seen from the air.



»FORBIDDEN LOVE Žygimantas Augustas, the King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania, fell in love with Barbora Radvilaitė against the approval of his parents, the parliament, and the Royal Court. Legend has it that Žygimantas Augustas built a tunnel under the city so he could see her in secret. They wed in 1547, but Barbora was only crowned Queen of Poland in 1550. Her reign only lasted five months, and she died amid speculation that she was poisoned. Her body was transported back to Vilnius, and it is said that the grief-stricken king followed on foot for a good portion of the journey.



AUSTRIA

Wachau

WACHAU CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

The Wachau is a stretch of the Danube Valley between Melk and Krems—a remarkably preserved medieval landscape that has inspired romantic legends for centuries. Wachau is considered one of Europe's most enchanting river valleys, and its treasures give travelers a behind-the-scenes look into the past and a blueprint for the future. Explore Wachau's natural paradise through its riverside villages and discover a land of castles, majestic

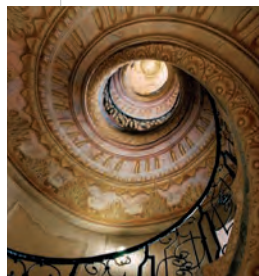
abbey, hiking trails, and stunning wineries.

The castles are full of tales of love and heartbreak, particularly from the medieval days. One story tells of England's King Richard the Lionheart, who was imprisoned in a castle here. His loyal

minstrel wandered the land singing a specific song and was able to find his king when Richard responded by singing back to him from prison. The area here provides a medieval landscape that has continued to change with the times.

The harmony between the region's past and present is reflected in its melding of preservation and innovation—an intertwining of cultural institutions, renowned wine and fruit growers, intact nature, authentic tourism, stunning architecture, and, most importantly, the people of the region. One of the best ways to experience the Wachau is to trace the route of the Danube River as it snakes its way through the countryside. From the river's banks, vineyards reach into the hills, while towns and villages dot the landscape.

The romantic landscape of Wachau (right) looks much as it has for centuries. The spiral staircase in Melk abbey (above) is one of its many beauties.



» **HOW TO VISIT** For a truly unforgettable experience, explore the valley with a boat trip or ride on the Wachau Railway. The World Heritage Trail encourages you to use your own power, walking and hiking to find its secret viewpoints and locales.

» **MELK ABBEY** Take a tour through Melk abbey, where you will see the Imperial Staircase and Corridor, the huge Marble Hall, the library, and the abbey church, a showpiece of high Baroque style.

» **DRINK TO WACHAU** The Romans cultivated wine here. They, like the visitors who flock here, knew there was a magic in the soil. To learn more about the region's wine, take a guided cellar tour.



» **HOW TO VISIT** The best time to come is between early June and late October. The hottest months are July, August, and September. During summer, avoid the crowds by visiting the monument before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.

» **DID YOU KNOW?** The ancient Benedictine abbey offers a panorama of medieval religious architecture, from the Carolingian period to the most elegant forms of Gothic art. But during the French Revolution it was transformed into a prison for political opponents, refractory priests, and common law prisoners.

» **HIGH TIDES** With an exceptional tidal range that can reach 42 feet (15 m) during spring tides, the bay offers a great diversity of natural environments and constitutes the largest expanse of salt meadows and polders in France.

FRANCE

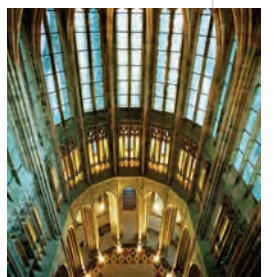
Mont-Saint-Michel

MONT-SAINT-MICHEL AND ITS BAY

Mont-Saint-Michel, with its jaw-dropping natural surroundings and exceptional architectural heritage, was one of France's first properties to be listed as World Heritage. To travel here and be greeted by a magical island topped by a gravity-defying medieval monastery is an inspiring experience.

The legend of Mont-Saint-Michel begins in the year 708 A.D., when the archangel Michael visited the Bishop of Avranches, Saint Aubert, and asked him to build a church in his honor. As the story goes, Saint Aubert initially ignored the request, but complied after Michael burned a hole in his skull with his finger. It was the site's first miracle and would begin more than a thousand years of visits by pilgrims and lovers alike.

The imposing abbey at Mont-Saint-Michel, the stunning Romanesque church on the island's mountain, is a unique example of the incredible building expertise exhibited in the Middle Ages. The building of La Merveille, in particular, is considered a masterpiece of Norman Gothic architecture. The island also became a major place of Christian pilgrimage, a cultural and academic center where important manuscripts were produced and stored. The town below offers a charming French experience, with cafés and local shops, while the expansive Bay of Mont-Saint-Michel serves as one of the most extraordinary tidal theaters in Europe.



From a distance, the medieval hilltop abbey at Mont-Saint-Michel (left) is quite a sight. The windows of the church's flamboyant gothic choir (above).



Underground

EUROPE

Champagne bottles stored in a chalk cellar or "crayère" in Reims, part of a vast network of underground tunnels and chambers in the Champagne region of France.



UNDERGROUND EUROPE

As the wealth and grandeur of Europe grew, generations of workers flocked to the towns that sprang up around mines and toiled underground there to power the unstoppable pace of development. From the gold that decorated the Middle Ages to the wine used to toast revolutions and the coal that fueled the modern era, the world as we know it would never have been possible without the tough and dangerous work taking place deep below the surface. Away from sight and often out of mind, these marvelous tunnels, caverns, mines, and cellars all wait for the curious visitor, full of fascinating stories about the lives and cultures of the miners who helped build Europe.

Now open to the public, these incredible World Heritage sites often surprise with an eerie industrial beauty or the opportunity for adventurous exploration. Whether it's a downhill ride in an old mining train, a cathedral carved from salt, or wine barrels held inside volcanic rock, they offer you the chance to venture deep underground—and into history—to experience the life and culture in the dark depths of Europe. But there are also the charming towns and landscapes that evolved above to explore, full of glimpses into a rich and interesting past.

Zollverein was once Europe's largest coal mine, but it has been transformed into an attractive location for culture, leisure activities, and business events.





» **HOW TO VISIT** There are many ways to explore the region. You can hike in the forests of the Zemplén Mountains, kayak along the Bodrog or Tisza rivers, or walk in the vineyards and learn about the local grape varieties, volcanic slopes, and centuries-old cellars.

» **DOWN BELOW** The region’s beautiful cellars can be found standing alone or as part of a winery, in the center of the town or on the outskirts. The charming Swabian village of Herceghút, for instance, has a cellar system situated on four different levels and is more than 2 miles (3 km) long.

» **WHEN TO VISIT** The best time to visit Tokaj is from March to November; harvest begins in September. There are several great festivals throughout the year.

HUNGARY

Tokaj

TOKAJ WINE REGION The Tokaj Wine Region is home to some of Hungary’s most beloved wine varieties. The region is spread over a romantic landscape of vines and slopes nestled at the foothills of the Zemplén Mountains, but it is most famous for its 3,000 wine cellars. Some of the structures are used for winemaking and some for aging wine, while others are used as social centers in the small towns and villages.

There is historic wine, and then there’s Tokaj. Made for more than 1,000 years, Hungarian Tokaj was served at Versailles and a favorite of Louis XV, King of France, who called it “Vinum Regum, Rex Vinorum”: the Wine of Kings, King of Wines. The reason for its success as one of the world’s most celebrated libations? The Tokaj region has a unique microclimate that allows the wine to develop its own distinctive taste. The world’s first vineyard classification system was established here in 1730 by royal decree, followed by the 1757 designation of Tokaj as the world’s first appellation.

The Tokaj Wine Region—one of Europe’s oldest—is a swirl of diverse history, a wide range of architectural styles, a network of wine cellars, and a breathtaking flow of vineyards, farms, villages, and waterways. Consisting of 27 villages, the area is a cultural corridor where generations (and a mix of ethnicities and religions) have contributed to a rich heritage. Stop in at the Tokaji Museum, where you can come to understand the region’s history before you taste its wine.

The cellar row of the Gombos-hegyi Pincesor (left) is part of the World Heritage site. You can’t come to Tokaj without sampling the region’s famed wine (above).



POLAND

Polish Royal Salt Mines

ROYAL SALT MINES IN WIELICZKA AND BOCHNIA

The Wieliczka and Bochnia Royal Salt Mines transport you to a mysterious world beneath the earth's surface. The mines were worked continuously from the 13th century until the late 20th century, constituting one of the earliest and most important European industrial operations. The mines are truly a work of art, which make for a fascinating journey into the past.



Wieliczka is the only mining facility that had been continuously active for 700 years—resulting in an underground kingdom that has 150 miles (240 km) of galleries and 2,350 chambers, reaching a depth of 1,073 feet (327 m)—

a massive feat of human effort and ingenuity. Full of historical machines, tools, salt sculptures, and artworks, it forms a unique and authentic record of the development of mining techniques and a chronicle of mining culture, beliefs, and customs.

Below the surface, you'll enter an underground metropolis that miners built over time. A narrow shaft becomes a winding tunnel that opens onto a lake. Nothing prepares you for the moment you arrive at the Chapel of Saint Kinga, an enormous hall lit by chandeliers that took three men 67 years to carve and decorate. The tourist route and museum galleries go for 2 miles (3.2 km) through 42 chambers—a fraction of the vast underground maze—where you can attend music concerts and parties, or experience salt therapy in the health resort.

The miners carved hundreds of statues and reliefs of saints, miners, and kings (above). A saline pool in Wieliczka mine (right).

» **WHITE GOLD** Why was so much labor, ingenuity, and creativity spent in the salt mines? Prior to industrialization, it was extremely expensive and labor intensive to harvest the mass quantities of salt necessary for food preservation and seasoning. This made salt an extremely valuable commodity. Entire economies were based on salt production and trade, and Poland's medieval capital, Cracow (right), was fortunate to be close to some of the richest salt deposits in the world.



Knowing the strategic significance of salt extraction and trading, Polish princes and kings quickly established their monopoly over the Saltworks in the early Middle Ages. The kings used the "white gold" to maintain their courts, pay clerks, and build magnificent castles and churches.



SLOVAKIA

Banská Štiavnica

HISTORIC TOWN OF BANSKÁ ŠTIAVNICA AND THE TECHNICAL MONUMENTS

IN ITS VICINITY This historic town once glittered with silver and gold, but Banská Štiavnica stands out for more than the metals unearthed here. Once the third-largest city in the Hungarian Empire, it was a center for miners, metallurgists, alchemists, mineralogists, land surveyors, cartographers, designers, and builders. It was here that gunpowder was used to blast rock from the mines for the first time. The region is a trove of natural and cultural riches that tell the story of an important industrial center.

In the Middle Ages, Banská Štiavnica was the main

producer of silver and gold for the Kingdom of Hungary. By the 18th century, it was the biggest mining center in the Habsburg monarchy. Workers risked their lives excavating precious metals, facing the constant threat of floods, collapses, and fires. They were superstitious and careful to follow strict rules (like not whistling) to protect themselves. Above ground, life was opulent for those who made fortunes from the mines—a wealth still evident in the elegant castles and palaces that fill the town's center.

Banská Štiavnica is a lively cultural hub offering stunning views of the surrounding Štiavnica Mountains. Don't miss the chance to explore the remaining mine shafts, where you will descend with your helmet and lantern, and the beautifully preserved city that lies above.

The lovely rooftops of Banská Štiavnica (right). Quartz crystals (above) coated with iridescent limonite from Banská Štiavnica.



» **HOW TO VISIT** Pack comfortable shoes and be prepared to walk—it's the fastest way to get around through the narrow streets. For those inclined to two wheels, there are e-bike rentals.

» **TAKE A DIP** After visiting the mines, go for a swim in a *tajch*. These water reservoirs were built in order to provide energy for the mines and are now popular recreational areas for swimming and ice skating.

» **DON'T MISS** There are plenty of things to see above ground: the beautiful nave of the Evangelical Church; Kammerhof, the seat of Chamber Earls and the royal safe; fifteen Wäldburger houses on the Holy Trinity Square; and Calvary, a beautiful baroque hilltop church that overlooks the town.



GERMANY

Zollverein

ZOLLVEREIN COAL MINE INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

Zollverein was one of the world's largest and most modern coal-mining facilities, and a leading example of the development of heavy industry in Europe. At its peak, 8,000 miners worked day and night in the mines and the buildings above ground. Coal was mined and processed here for 135 years, before the mine was decommissioned in 1986. Today, with its Bauhaus-influenced design, the mine is a triumph of modern

industrial architecture and a center for art and culture.

After World War I, the complex was completely renovated for increased output to help with Germany's rebuilding. But with the renovation, architects took an innovative approach and

designed the buildings for aesthetic appeal, not just practical needs, starting an international movement. After World War II, however, there was an energy shift from coal to oil, and the Zollverein mine eventually closed.

Zollverein gives you the chance to explore history and see how the site has adapted since the mine's closing. A tour through the coking plant and shafts will take you along conveyor belts and past original machinery. Outside, the beautiful, winding tower of Shaft XII rises into the air with its impressive "New Objectivity" style. Other buildings have been reinvented as recreational areas: modern art galleries, restaurants, and exhibition halls, and spaces for concerts and other events. With a swimming pool and an ice skating rink, you can enjoy visiting Zollverein all year round.

The Zollverein Ice Rink (right), surrounded by the forward-thinking architecture, is a winter highlight. The mine today is all about recreation (above).



» **HOW TO VISIT** Start at the Ruhr Visitor Centre Essen at Shaft XII, then take a walk through the idyllic Zollverein Park or a trip by e-bus. If you would like to participate in a guided tour of the Monument Path, we recommend that you reserve places in advance.

» **DON'T MISS** With three levels and more than 6,000 pieces, the Ruhr Museum in the former Coal Washery presents the region's natural and cultural history.

» **GO EXPLORING** Stroll through the densely forested Zollverein Park, jump into the Works swimming pool in summer, or show off your skills on the Zollverein Ice Rink in winter.

SWEDEN

Falun

MINING AREA OF THE GREAT COPPER

MOUNTAIN IN FALUN Falun was once one of the world's most important mining areas. The mine dates back over a thousand years, and at its peak in the 17th century it accounted for 70 percent of the Western world's copper production. As the major producer of copper, Sweden exerted a strong influence on the technological, economic, social, and political development of Europe. Many of the continent's greatest buildings, including the Palace of Versailles, were roofed with Falun copper.

At its peak, 1,000 Swedish workers toiled below the surface. At the end of the day, they would light fires that would burn overnight and help the ore break loose in the morning. That meant the deep

tunnels were usually hot and dirty, creating a challenging environment to work in. They would only move forward about 3 feet (1 m) each month.

As one of Sweden's most important industrial monuments, you can spend a whole day exploring the Falun Mine. Descending into the depths of its underground tunnels with your orange raincoat and hard hat, you will hear captivating stories of the hardships and heroes of the mine's history. On the surface, the enormous "Great Pit" dominates the landscape, which was caused by a cave-in on Midsummer's Day in 1687. The old miners' quarters are located nearby, where you can explore beautiful neighborhoods full of wooden houses painted Falun red—the distinctive red paint comes from the mine's iron ochre.

Explore the signposted Mine Walk around the Great Pit (right), with viewpoints across the unique landscape. Bears rule the Orsa Predator Park (above).



» **HOW TO VISIT** Since there is so much to see and explore in Falun and its surroundings, we recommend car rental. This makes it possible to drive to some of the local activities and sites, such as gardens, food producers, festivals, and museums.

» **DID YOU KNOW?** The well-preserved body of a miner, Fat Mats, was found in the mine in 1719, 42 years after he was killed by a rock fall.

» **THE WILD SIDE** At Orsa Predator Park, guests will experience some of the Northern Hemisphere's largest predators. Siberian tigers, polar bears, leopards, wolves, and Kodiak bears all live in the natural forest within large enclosures.

BELGIUM

Wallonia Mines

MAJOR MINING SITES OF WALLONIA

The four sites in this coal basin stretch across 106 miles (170 km), all emblematic of the industrial revolution that changed the shape of Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries. The sites reflect the influence of architectural and urban trends linked to the utopian view of the industrial and workers' city that arose in the Age of Enlightenment. They also demonstrate the philosophical changes to better the lives of workers and their families, with well-preserved sites that now have fascinating museums that pay homage to the generations of miners who lived, worked, and sometimes died here.



Just steps from the entrance to the coal mines, small towns were built for the workers and their families. These communities created a harmonious social atmosphere above ground. Meanwhile, beneath the surface, the miners worked in dark and dangerous conditions. One particularly tragic example of the dangers occurred in 1956, when a fire broke out and killed 262 workers in Bois du Cazier. But the era also brought changes for workers, and their rights vastly improved.

Each site offers unique experiences to learn about the region's industrial heritage, and the below and above ground components of each bring the coal mining industry to life. Grand-Hornu is an example of a colliery with a neo-classical architecture. Bois-du-Luc has well-preserved above-ground buildings

Former coal mine Le Grand-Hornu (left) is now a museum for modern art and industrial design. Explore the haunting beauty of the Caves of Han (above).

» **UNDERGROUND WONDER** The Caves of Han in the Belgian Ardennes are among the most beautiful and impressive natural caves in the world. You will take a century-old tram up to the entrance of the caves, then wander through a necklace of fabulous galleries and halls.

» **SOAK IT IN** Go to Spa, the eponymous spa town; also called the Pearl of the Ardennes, it has played a precursory role in the recognition of the medical properties of water since the 16th century, contributing the word "spa" to the English language.

» **WATERLOO** History buffs should go beneath the Lion's Mound, where a memorial stands a reminder of one of the most turbulent periods of Belgian history. An interactive tour full of special effects helps bring this battle of 1815 to life.

and provides a good understanding of mining paternalism. Bois du Cazier uses its original structures to house several museums about the region. At Blegny-Mine, guests take “the cage” down almost 200 feet (60 m) to see the extraction process and workers’ conditions. What you’ll ultimately discover is that the mines were built with a unique combination of cutting-edge technology and a melting pot of workers from all over Europe. More importantly, you’ll understand more fully how the Walloon coal mines helped pave the way to change in European mine construction.

There are also natural caves to marvel at: the Caves of Han are among the world’s most impressive. Wander through a necklace of decorated galleries and halls, from the gigantic Hall of the Dome to the reflections of the dripstones in the Hall of Draperies.

Visitors to the Blegny Mine (right) learn about life above and below ground, taking in the view of the mining gallery at 100 feet (30 m) deep.

The 1956 Disaster



On August 8, 1956, 275 miners headed into the depths of the Bois du Cazier mine. At 8:10 a.m. disaster struck when two high-voltage electric cables ruptured, igniting a fire made worse by broken oil and air pipes. Carbon monoxide and smoke spread along the galleries. A few minutes later, only seven workers managed to escape, surrounded by dense black smoke. For weeks, Belgium and local families banded together, waiting anxiously to see if anyone else would emerge.

Despite many brave rescue attempts, only six survivors were rescued. With victims from 12 different countries, the disaster had one positive effect: it raised awareness about miner safety and workers’ rights, influencing mining practices across Europe.



Life Underground

For centuries, the wealth of Europe was powered by mines. As long as the continent has grown and flourished, there have been generations of people moving to towns and creating cultures around mine sites—and toiling underground to feed the engines of Europe’s progress.



This idealized version of Poland’s Wieliczka Salt Mine and its workers in 1719 wasn’t always the reality.

Mining has a long history in Europe; whoever controlled it held the reins of wealth and power. Its spoils helped create valuable tools, arm soldiers, transport life-giving supplies, and expand empires. The Ancient Greeks, Romans, and Celts opened up marble quarries and salt mines—in ancient times, salt was valuable enough that it was traded for gold. They mined silver and gold to make coins, often excavated by enslaved miners. In the medieval period, the powers of Europe turned to copper and iron.

Many early mines were open, shallow pits, but as demand for mineral resources grew, so did the need for deeper mines that required more energy to dig, ventilate, and extract. At some mines, water mills were used to crush ore and raise it from the shafts. At others, ore was gathered in leather sacks and lifted to the surface in horse-powered contraptions. Mining fueled industry, but it also spawned innovation: in 1627, the Kingdom of Hungary was the first place in Europe to use black powder to start blasting open new mines (Banská Štiavnica, page 64).

Where there was work to be had, miners from all over Europe followed. It wasn’t uncommon to find Germans, French, Italians, Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, and Slovaks all working together in the tunnels, pits, and quarries. Sometimes those workers were young: just children. Though mines brought massive wealth and prosperity to Europe, and offered jobs for those in need of them, a miner’s work was often grueling. They labored long



Historic mines like Sweden’s 500-year-old Sala Silver mine offer tours



A repurposed historic coal mine and spoil heap in the village of Oignies, France

hours in dark, dirty, and often dangerous conditions. Cave-ins weren’t uncommon, particularly as technology advanced and made it possible to dig mines so deep workers needed a cage to get down into them. Coal mines were some of the most dangerous. Some safety practices, such as sending a canary down into a coal mine as a means of testing for carbon monoxide, weren’t introduced until the early 20th century. Because it was tucked away and out of sight, progress in worker safety was slow. But these

underground landscapes hold amazing stories about the lives of the people who worked in and around them. They and their families settled in towns above the surface, shaping cultures and founding townships that continue to exist today.

Though many of these mines have fallen silent, the miners who worked them left their mark below and above ground in a myriad of ways. And now, with freshly opened mine sites to explore, all you have to do is go and find them.

FRANCE

Nord-Pas de Calais

NORD-PAS DE CALAIS MINING BASIN

When you arrive in the Nord-Pas de Calais Mining Basin, you quickly discover a multi-layered place where many worlds merged to become much larger than the sum of its parts. It was a nexus for the exchange of ideas and influences about extraction methods used to mine underground coal seams, the design of worker housing and urban planning, and the international human migration that accompanied the industrialization of Europe.

The coal mining industry here employed hundreds of thousands of workers, and thus the need for communities to support them. In an incredible series of urban development

projects, entire towns were created to make the workers' families as comfortable as possible with the hope of encouraging miners to stay with their employers.

The Mining Basin is at the heart of a trade area—a crossroads of communication between northwestern Europe's largest cities. The breathtaking scenery and deep emotions expressed here will surprise you. At the Mining History Center in Lewarde, you'll immerse yourself in the history of the coal industry. At the Louvre-Lens Museum, you'll uncover an unexpected collection of masterpieces. You'll walk along the former railway lines to explore the unusual vistas and scenic diversity of the mining villages. Above all, you'll meet Mining Basin locals who have inherited this powerful and important history.

The Historic Mining Center (right) at the site of Delloye Pit on museum night. The twin spoil heaps of Loos-en-Gohelle provide breathtaking views (above).



» **HOW TO VISIT** The Mining Basin extends 75 miles (120 km) to the Belgian border, so there is no set itinerary to discover the wealth of its landscapes. Wear comfortable shoes for walking, particularly at the spoil heaps.

» **HILL VIEWS** A sunset hike to the twin spoil heaps of pit No. 6 at Maisnil-lez-Ruitz and Ruitz promises solitude and wonderful panoramas.

» **DON'T MISS** The Delloye Pit and the Mining History Center at Lewarde offers the largest mining museum in France. Three centuries of history are traced there.

FRANCE

Champagne

CHAMPAGNE HILLSIDES, HOUSES, AND

CELLARS Just an hour from Paris, on cool, chalky land, lies the Champagne region—a world of vineyards, rolling hills, quaint villages, and hundreds of underground cellars. The unique method of producing this sparkling wine was developed in the early 17th century and made Champagne a global symbol for celebration, victory, and reconciliation. So step down into the original cellars, raise a glass, and discover the art of making

champagne, one of the world's most iconic beverages.

By the 18th century, Champagne wines were so well established in the popular imagination that they were served at the Fête de la Fédération to toast the outcome of the French

Revolution. Some years later, they played a useful role in defending France's interests at the Congress of Vienna. Visiting the region offers the unique chance to see the whole production process, from vine to glass. Above ground, the vineyards and villages may sparkle in the sun, but the underground cellars where the wine is produced and stored are the hidden side of the process and region. In the tunnels, thousands of bottles line the walls, many of which were roughly cut from chalk and served as quarries during Roman times.

Back above ground, the 'Avenue de Champagne' in Epernay offers the chance to try Champagne as you marvel at an impressive lineup of Renaissance-style mansions and Champagne Houses, which are the cornerstone of the success of Champagne wines.

The cultural wine-growing landscape of Champagne (right) includes 320 towns and villages. You can tour a vast network of chalk cellars in Reims (above).



» **HOW TO VISIT** Remember to bring a jacket as you explore the caves, even in summer, as the temperature in the cellars fluctuates between 50 and 54°F (10 and 12°C).

» **DID YOU KNOW?** The *crayères* (chalk caves) in and around Reims create a special atmosphere that gives Champagne's wine its unique character.

» **CELEBRATIONS** The Avenue de Champagne is lined with magnificent private dwellings lovingly constructed over centuries by the Champagne Houses. Some were originally company headquarters, others the home of the proprietor. All reflect a style that celebrates the brand.



» **HOW TO VISIT** Underground visits are only possible through guided tours. The mine train and tours through the Roeder tunnels take place every 30 minutes daily and require no prior notice.

» **DID YOU KNOW?** The Rammelsberg mines ran continuously for more than 1,000 years. Archaeological finds show that ore was excavated here 3,000 years ago, and the area's mountains held the world's greatest deposits of copper, lead, and zinc.

» **HOLIDAY SPIRIT** Christmas at the Rammelsberg Mine is an unforgettable experience, when the mine gallery Röderstollen radiates in a sea of lights. You can visit this unique Christmas market both above and below ground.

GERMANY

Rammelsberg and Goslar

MINES OF RAMMELSBERG, HISTORIC TOWN OF GOSLAR, AND UPPER HARZ WATER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Rammelsberg Mines, in north-central Germany, is a major site for innovation in the Western world and has been a model for innovative mining practices for a millennium. At the beginning of the 11th century, the mine's wealth shaped the city of Goslar, which remained the residence of German kings and emperors until 1253. Miles of waterways in the Upper Harz mountains make up one of the world's largest pre-industrial hydropower systems, which helped the underground operations expand. An estimated 30 million tons of ore were mined here, helping build Germany into what it is today.

Thousands of men spent much of their lives in the tunnels deep beneath the surface, extending the mines and transporting their riches up to the surface. Before modern machinery helped the process, the miners would break the stone by hand or with rudimentary explosions.

Your journey into the mine starts in an old enclosed mining train. The site has been authentically preserved, making it easy to step into a world where miners lived and died while pulling society into the modern era. Above ground, explore the narrow cobblestone streets of the enchanting medieval village of Goslar—an adventure in its own right.

When visitors ride the yellow train (left), they enter history—and the mine—like miners did in the old days. Goslar (above) is packed with old timber-frame houses.





Royal

EUROPE

Portugal's Pena Palace is a prime example of what happened when Europe's inventive, ambitious royals invested in fine castles and gardens.



ROYAL EUROPE

For the royalty of Europe, power was displayed in many ways. They showed their wealth in grand palaces and their strength in imposing castles, but they also demonstrated their sophistication and prestige through luxurious parks and gardens. Kings and queens found the most talented botanists in the world to design their sprawling parks: places of refuge, the seat of important gatherings, and points of national pride. Emperors and empresses sent experts on missions to exotic lands to find new species to plant. The rivalry between them started a wave of royal gardens created across Europe, each attempting to be bigger and better than the last. It also led to the discovery of rare plants and the protection of threatened ones. What began as a symbol of prestige became a scientific marvel.

For visitors today, the paths through landscaped parks and manicured gardens are the gateway to the world of imperial power and innovation. Around each corner is another example of the royal philosophy of harmony with nature, created by plants that have seen generations of empires rise and fall. Step outside of Europe's impressive palaces and discover their many pleasures.

The blooming magnolias are only one of the beauties on display in the Palace Gardens at Kroměříž in Czechia.



CZECHIA

Kroměříž

GARDENS AND CASTLE AT KROMĚŘÍŽ

The grounds here are among the finest examples of landscape art ever produced in Europe. The first residence was built on the castle site in Kroměříž at the end of the 15th century. It wasn't until almost 200 years later that it was renovated into a Baroque palace with magnificent flower gardens. This crowning work of European landscape art in the 17th century represents a groundbreaking stage of development between the Italian

Renaissance and the French Baroque and Classicist artistry.

The gardens of the Castle of Kroměříž consist of two parts, different in appearance and purpose. The Chateau Garden was designed as a romantic park in harmony with nature, following the English

model. It covers 158 acres (64 ha) and has 200 kinds of rare trees from around the world. The layout is sophisticated, using symmetry and perspective to create the effect of a maze. Although it is carefully landscaped, the park still feels wild. It's easy to get lost among the green walls, rows of statues, and copious flower arrangements.

Make sure to take in the Archbishop's Palace, which still serves as the residence of Olomouc bishops and is where Emperor Franz Joseph I ascended the throne. This 17th-century building hosts guided tours of its well-preserved halls featuring decoration from the Rococo, Empire, and Neo-Baroque periods. There's also the Sala Terrena, full of lavish halls and artificial caves inspired by Ovid's epic poem the *Metamorphoses*.

The Assembly Hall in The Archbishop's Chateau (right) is one of the palace's main attractions. The baroque palace Flower Garden (above).



» **HOW TO VISIT** To properly enjoy the Archbishop's Chateau, Flower Garden, and Chateau Garden, plan to stay in Kroměříž for at least one day and ideally an entire weekend. Visit the Flower Garden with a guide to learn about its history and buildings.

» **IN BLOOM** Every February, large potted camellia plants fill the Great Conservatory with their beauty and delicate scent. It's a tribute to the heritage of Kroměříž, since camellias were grown in the Flower Garden from the second half of the 19th century.

» **DID YOU KNOW?** The painting collection of the Archbishopric of Olomouc is the second most valuable in Czechia after the National Gallery in Prague. The most valuable piece is the Apollo and Marsyas painting by Titian.

PORTUGAL

Sintra

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF SINTRA

Blending the fantastical with the palatial, Sintra—a picturesque retreat perched in the hills near Lisbon—feels like stepping through the pages of a Portuguese fairytale. Topped with a palace that is the epitome of the Romantic movement, these hills are filled with many remarkable monuments and parks, including the National Palace of Sintra—the summer destination of choice for the nobility and bourgeois since the 15th century.



In the 19th century, Sintra became the first center of European Romantic architecture. King Ferdinand II turned a ruined monastery into a castle, combining Gothic, Moorish, and Renaissance elements, with an accompanying park.

The result was a unique combination of gardens that influenced the development of landscape architecture across Europe.

Greenery thrives in this microclimate, with local species coexisting with exotic additions. King Ferdinand II restored the area's forests, planting thousands of trees to supplement the native oaks, hazels, hollies, laurels, box and umbrella pines. But it was his singular approach to the mood in the parks that make Sintra so different. They are presented as stages, spotlighting small ponds, nooks, caves, and hidden paths. Escape to a spiral staircase down into a deep well. Discover ancient hermitages and meditation retreats where people sought the wisdom of Nature. These parks and gardens make for an incredible, romantic journey.

The courtyard of the National Palace of Pena (right). The National Palace of Sintra (above) or "Town Palace" is the only remaining medieval Portuguese palace.



» NATIONAL PALACE OF PENA The colorful palace perched on a hill was the creative genius of Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, a German prince who became the king consort of Queen Maria II of Portugal. The park and palace are Portugal's greatest example of 19th-century Romanticism. Seen from a distance, it looks every bit a dream. The palace incorporates Moorish architecture and the park expresses a search for exoticism through long, winding paths and interesting structures framed by tree species from every continent. Of visiting Pena, composer Richard Strauss wrote: "It's the most beautiful thing I've seen. This is the true Garden of Klingsor—and there, up on high, is the Castle of the Holy Grail."

ITALY

Caserta

CASERTA ROYAL PALACE AND PARK

Combining the influences of Versailles, Rome, and Tuscany, the Caserta Royal Palace and Park is one of the last great European gardens. Designed by Luigi Vanvitelli, one of the greatest Italian architects of the 18th century, this Italian masterpiece took the successes of previous designs and created a world unlike anywhere else.

A respect for, and “improvement upon,” nature became the Caserta Palace’s calling card, but the grounds also drew from the trends spreading across Europe at the time—namely, providing leisure to the royals and accommodating botanical research. Hundreds of rare plants from around the world were brought to Caserta and still grow there today. Its English Garden is one of the most important picturesque spaces ever created in Europe.

The design also shows a singular change in approach in the relationship between royals and the community. A silk factory and associated workers’ homes were included in the layout, and the natural forests were incorporated into the design. Caserta is an eloquent expression of the Enlightenment, integrated into, rather than imposed upon, its natural setting.

Discover the gardens of Caserta, which stretch for almost 300 acres (120 ha). The garden’s pools, fountains, and cascades alone spread across 11 acres (4.5 ha), aligned through a telescope effect. Explore this vast space on foot, bike, or horse and cart.

The Fountain of Ceres (left) is one of many impressive fountains at Caserta. Marble sculptures and grand stairs also grace the inside of the palace (above).



» **HOW TO VISIT** The Royal Palace of Caserta is a year-round destination, but its extensive gardens are at their best in spring and summer. The complex is closed on Tuesdays and the Court Theatre is open only on weekends. Some days are busier than others, including the first Sunday of every month.

» **DID YOU KNOW?** The grounds are so impressive that they have served as a set for major films such as *Star Wars* and *Mission Impossible*.

» **DON'T MISS** The nearby town of Santa Maria Capua Vetere is a medieval descendant of Ancient Capua, one of the largest and most important cities of the ancient world—famous for its Amphitheater Campano, second only in size to the Colosseum of Rome.

DENMARK

Par Force

PAR FORCE HUNTING LANDSCAPE OF

NORTH SEALAND North Sealand is more than a locale where travelers, historians, animals, streams, rolling hills, and forests meet. To be sure, any visitor will revel in the wonder and serenity of its vistas, but this is also a place to understand how this particular swath of Denmark represents a zenith in the world of hunting landscapes.

The nobility of Europe displayed their power through the domination of nature.



While some preferred beautiful garden arrangements, others enjoyed hunting. In North Sealand, the two are combined. In the 1670s and 80s, King Christian V created rides (manicured dirt lanes), laid out in star shapes and grid patterns based on the latest discoveries

in mathematics and geometry. Inspired by the Palace of Versailles, the king shaped the royal hunting grounds to fit the par force hunting system in which riders and dogs hunt a royal stag down long lanes to its exhaustion, whereupon the king or his distinguished guest have the honor of killing it by sword or spear. The architects numbered a series of stone posts, enclosures, and lodges to help nobles navigate the landscape.

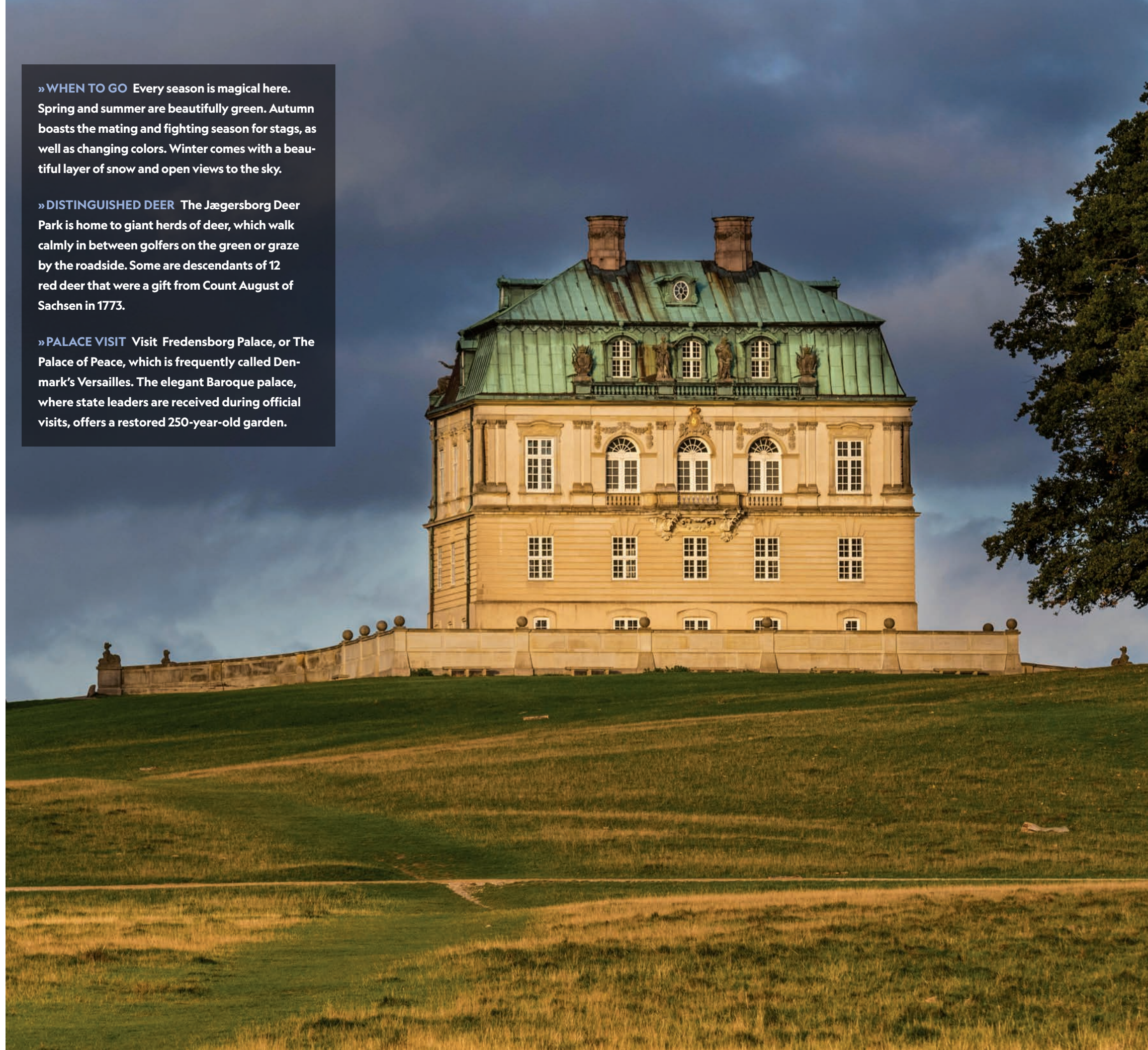
The miles of old rides that crisscross Gribskov Forest, the Great Deer Park, and Jægersborg Deer Park and Enclosure don't see much hunting anymore, but they're perfect for exploration by bike, foot, or on horseback. Located 19 miles (30 km) from Copenhagen, this beautiful site is a popular place for locals and visitors to relax and exercise.

The Hermitage Royal Hunting Lodge where kings would rest after a par force hunt (right). This landscape still supports an abundant deer population (above).

» **WHEN TO GO** Every season is magical here. Spring and summer are beautifully green. Autumn boasts the mating and fighting season for stags, as well as changing colors. Winter comes with a beautiful layer of snow and open views to the sky.

» **DISTINGUISHED DEER** The Jægersborg Deer Park is home to giant herds of deer, which walk calmly in between golfers on the green or graze by the roadside. Some are descendants of 12 red deer that were a gift from Count August of Sachsen in 1773.

» **PALACE VISIT** Visit Fredensborg Palace, or The Palace of Peace, which is frequently called Denmark's Versailles. The elegant Baroque palace, where state leaders are received during official visits, offers a restored 250-year-old garden.



SPAIN

Aranjuez

ARANJUEZ CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

For centuries, Spanish royalty spent their spring months in a fertile valley formed by the Tajo and Jarama river basins. They came for the stunning gardens, which became Europe's most important collection of cultivated trees. The site became an incubator for the evolution of ideas about humanism and political centralization; the development of 18th-century French-style Baroque gardens; and urban lifestyle, which developed alongside the sciences during the Age of Enlightenment.

At the end of the 15th century, Aranjuez was designated a Royal Site by the Catholic Kings who came here to hunt, but it was the kings of the House of Austria who constructed palaces and

gardens. They avoided any unnecessary destruction; instead, they conserved and enriched the environment. Trees were imported from America and Asia until they became the most important European collection from those continents.

The Tajo River cuts through the Aranjuez landscape, creating different areas with distinct features. Wind through La Isla Garden, where you will find fountains, waterfalls, and sculptures of mythological creatures in the orchard where Queen Isabel II once walked. El Parterre Garden has marble vases and colorful flowers sprinkled amongst hedges and crisscrossing paths. El Príncipe Garden is styled like an 18th-century English garden, with large areas and wide paths for hunting and isolated pavilions and groves for solitude.

The dining room of the Royal Palace of Aranjuez (right) exhibits a blend of Rococo and Neoclassical styles. A fountain in the Parterre Garden near the palace (above).



» **HOW TO VISIT** If you have two days, devote one to the Royal Palace and Island Garden—ending the day with a visit to the city center. Spend the second day at the Prince Garden, the Casa del Labrador, and take a tour of the historical groves and orchards around the Tagus River.

» **STEAM POWER** Between May and October, you can make your journey even more memorable by riding the 19th-century steam-driven Strawberry Train that runs from Madrid to Aranjuez.

» **DID YOU KNOW?** Famous figures such as Federico García Lorca, Rafael Alberti, Francisco de Goya, Joaquín Rodrigo, and Santiago Rusiñol all spent time at Aranjuez.

GERMANY

Potsdam

PALACES AND PARKS OF POTSDAM

With over 1,236 acres (500 ha) of parks and 150 buildings constructed between 1730 and 1916, Potsdam's complex of palaces and parks embodies the biggest legacy project of the Prussian reign. Prussian rulers transformed Potsdam into one of the world's finest collections of palaces and gardens by bringing together the era's most significant architects and landscapers from Northern Germany. Within the different elements, the

work of imaginative sculptors, painters, craftsmen, builders, and gardeners has been beautifully preserved.

Potsdam's palaces and gardens date back to the 17th century, when Johann Moritz von Nassau-Siegen wrote to the Great Elector Frederick

William: "The entire Eyland has to become a paradise." Before then, the area was an uncultivated district, and not yet the one the Hohenzollern family fantasized about developing. They turned to Greece, Rome, Paris, the ancient world in Asia, and the era of Tudor-era England for inspiration.

Each ruler set a different tone for Potsdam's magnificent grounds, and thus contributed to the overall work of art: churches, palaces, mansions, stately homes, extraordinary parks, and gardens. All of this, and the Brandenburg capital, is tucked along the Havel River, creating an island town on the outskirts of Berlin. Here, life is savored. Whether you're walking through the parks or strolling through the weekly market, Potsdam is a feast for the senses.

The beautiful New Palace (right) at dawn. The Potsdam Conference, where Germany's fate was decided after WWII (above), at Cecilienhof palace.



» **HOW TO VISIT** The parks and gardens are best in spring, summer, and autumn. Most palaces are closed in winter, but the New Palace, Sanssouci Palace, and the Cecilienhof Palace remain open.

» **CREATING ALLIES** History was written here at the Cecilienhof Palace in 1945. Following the end of fighting in Europe, World War II's three main Allies met here to discuss the continent's reorganization and Germany's future.

» **ON HIGH** Visit the twin-towered Belvedere building complex on the Pfingstberg, created for Frederick William IV, and enjoy the highest elevation in Potsdam.



Europe's Royal Gardens

Royal gardens are intimate expressions of the royals who created them—a display of wealth, style, and status; a means of highlighting cultural heritage and national pride. And like Europe's artistic periods, these monarchs helped foster different garden styles that resonated throughout the continent.



Versailles's Feasting Chamber Grove entertained Louis XIV and his guests with its multitude of water jets.

ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

Medieval gardens were practical places around monasteries where medicinal herbs and food were grown, and where one could walk for meditation and prayer. But the formal gardens that arose in Italy and France during the late-15th century made them more about beauty than function. Italian Renaissance gardens were inspired by the ancient Romans—their classical ideals of beauty, symmetry, and order. They weren't meant to be seen only through a window, but appreciated from within, and so were designed with long tunnels of greenery and shade trees, along with porticos, structures for climbing vines, impressive fountains, classical statues, and grottoes. A growing understanding of hydrology meant that water features were coveted, with spectacular fountains powered by gravity and controlled by pipes.

BAROQUE

Though Baroque gardens were still designed with symmetry in mind, they were grander and more elaborate than Renaissance gardens, laid out with geometric precision and filled with tightly trimmed trees. Broad avenues wove around parterres: level spaces filled with low, trimmed hedges filled with flowerbeds and laid out in ornamental patterns. They were bordered by *allées*, or walks, dotted with fountains and statues. This style was all about conquering nature—the more manicured the garden, the better. Enormous in scale and complex in layout, these gardens were meant to impress, but also to serve as meeting places for open-air concerts and functions. The gardens of Versailles (page 96) are a great example: one that many European royals were quick to follow.



Renaissance garden at Aranjuez



Temperate House at Kew



Baroque Fredericksborg castle garden



English Garden at Versailles

ENGLISH

In England, Charles II was keen to follow in his cousin Louis XIV's footsteps, but couldn't afford to build his own Versailles, so he made due with cutting avenues through Hampton Court Palace. Later, William II of Orange and Mary Stuart took things farther, introducing a Dutch twist on the Baroque style: it was more contained than the French version, less costly, and better suited to England's weather. But the true beauty of what became the English garden was a shift in the early 18th century to looser, less formal designs. Instead of asserting control over nature, the art of the English garden was in creating works that blended seamlessly with it. That meant meandering paths, irregularly shaped ponds, grass in place of parterres, and clumps of trees allowed to grow in natural shapes. These "landscape gardens"

helped connect a great house with the fields and woods around it—a bridge to the rest of the world rather than simply a refuge from it.

GREENHOUSES

As royal gardens were turned into showcases for exotic flora and fauna, greenhouses became all the rage. Though they were used in ancient Rome, many give French botanist Charles Lucien Bonaparte credit for creating the first practical modern version in Holland in the 19th century. They were built in response to a growing interest in botany, with travelers bringing back exotic plants from distant places. In France, such greenhouses were originally called *orangeries* because they were used to keep orange trees from freezing in winter. But the golden era of such greenhouses came in Victorian England, where greenhouses at places like Kew (page 104) became much more elaborate.

Versailles

PALACE AND PARK OF VERSAILLES

Versailles is one of the greatest achievements of French 17th-century art. In 1661, Louis XIV commissioned André Le Nôtre to design and lay out the intricate grounds—a project that took 40 years to complete. The result was certainly worth the wait. His vision became a blueprint for excellence—one that pushed royal gardens to new levels of grandeur.

In 1631, Versailles started as a hunting lodge for Louis XIII. His son, Louis XIV, built the palace and moved the nation's government and court here in 1682. It remained the epicenter of French royal power—home to government offices and courtiers alike—until the Revolution in 1789. Including the palace, gardens, park, Trianon, and several buildings in town, the Versailles estate spreads over almost 2,000 acres (800 ha). Visitors can walk through a storied series of rooms, cross the king's and queen's apartments, and the most famous room at Versailles: the Hall of Mirrors. From there, you can see the Grande Perspective from the Water Parterre all the way to the horizon.

But you don't need to ever set foot in the palace to appreciate the artful gardens. The wonder of the Versailles gardens is in the details, and the way they combine to create a coherent vista across the entire estate. Some of the finest artists in France worked together to design the statues and fountains, all of which were submitted to King Louis XIV for approval. Thousands of men were enlisted to work on the construction of the gardens over

Versailles's flower gardens (left) inspired many European royals to create their own. Louis XIV greets visitors at the main entrance of Versailles (above).



» **HOW TO VISIT** The gardens are at their best in spring and summer. The buildings are closed on Mondays, but the gardens and park remain accessible. More than seven million people visit Versailles each year, so arrive at off-peak hours. Sundays and Tuesdays tend to be busy, as that's when many Paris museums are closed.

» **SINGING FOUNTAINS** At the Musical Fountains Show you can enjoy the extraordinary beauty of the water features, synchronized to the tune of period music.

» **DID YOU KNOW?** In the Hall of Mirrors, the vaulted ceiling by Le Brun depicts the glorious history of Louis XIV during the first 18 years of his reign.

four decades, and trees were brought in from different regions of France. The final result was the envy of aristocracy everywhere and was imitated for centuries.

Follow the paths past hedges and colorful flower beds, exquisite fountains, and patterns cut into the lawns. The Park at Versailles extends the gardens seamlessly thanks to two large water features: the Grand Canal and the Lake of the Swiss Guards. Deeper into the expanse, visit Marie Antoinette's idyllic private hamlet where the queen sought privacy. Wandering through the parterres or the 15 groves of the gardens, there is always something magical to discover.

The magnificent Hall of Mirrors was constructed by Jules Hardouin-Mansart in 1678 and its vaulted ceiling was painted by Charles Le Brun.

The Trianons



In an attempt to gain respite from courtly etiquette, the kings of Versailles built themselves more intimate spaces close to the main palace. Heavily influenced by Italian architecture,

the Grand Trianon is set over a single story, erected by Jules Hardouin-Mansart in 1687 and commissioned by Louis XIV to get away from the arduous pomp of court and to pursue his affair with Madame de Montespan. In 1758, Louis XV decided to build a new château in the middle of his

gardens, which he had been working on for more than a decade. He commissioned royal architect Ange-Jacques Gabriel to build a royal residence large enough to house the king and some of his entourage. A few years later, Louis XVI was brought to the throne and gave the Petit Trianon and its estate to his young bride, Marie Antoinette, who rapidly made it her own and set about redecorating the exteriors in the style of Anglo-Oriental gardens.



UNITED KINGDOM

Kew

ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, KEW Founded by Princess Augusta in 1759, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew showcase the world's largest collection of living plants and fungi. The site has made a significant contribution to human knowledge and understanding of botanical diversity and how it can be harnessed for the benefit of future generations. Set on 326 acres (132 ha) of beautiful grounds on the site of the former summer residence of George III, it offers visitors access to Britain's most intimate

royal palace and a stunning place to learn about history, art, and science.

The Gardens were founded during a period of colonial exploration. The Empire's botanists saw the value of collecting species and keeping them safe in one location.

Samples from the collection were later used to create new botanic gardens in British colonies like Australia, Singapore, and Sri Lanka. Today it contains more than 33,000 species of native and exotic plants. It was also the setting for the documentary "Kingdom of Plants," which was presented by David Attenborough.

The Gardens' glasshouses provide hours of fascinating discovery and a slew of inventive settings: a tropical rainforest in the iconic Palm House or giant lily pads in Waterlily House. The Temperate House has retained its Victorian splendor and is home to 10,000 plants from four continents, many of which are rare and threatened. A soaring Treetop Walkway offers a bird's-eye view of the Gardens, and two galleries dedicated to botanical art show the beauty of flora from around the world.

The Temperate House (right) features 1,500 species from five continents and 16 islands. The Georgian Palace (above) is less than 30 minutes from London.



» **HOW TO VISIT** Spring and fall offer ever-changing colors, be it from burgeoning bulbs or the autumnal hues of red, orange, and yellow. Summer provides heady scents and flowers in full bloom, while winter allows you to appreciate the glasshouses and stunning winter berries.

» **CLIMATE CHANGE** Check out The Princess of Wales Conservatory, where you can experience ten of the world's climatic zones under one roof.

» **DID YOU KNOW?** Built in 1863, Temperate House is the world's largest Victorian glasshouse. During its restoration from 2013 to 2018, 69,000 items were removed and cleaned, repaired or replaced.

SWEDEN

Drottningholm

ROYAL DOMAIN OF DROTTNINGHOLM

This magnificent homage to Swedish history and prosperity is a European treasure and one of the best-preserved royal residences in Sweden. It was built in the 1600s by architect Nicodemus Tessin the Elder by commission from Queen Hedvig, influenced by the grandeur at Versailles. The palace and park may be near the center of Stockholm, but the overwhelming sense here is of serenity and seclusion.



This royal residence has changed according to the tastes of monarchs over the centuries. The parterre garden stretches out from the palace, lined by rows of trees. Fountains in the middle lead to ten pools and cascades and four carefully sculpted hedge groves. Paths wind their way through three historical gardens, each expressing different artistic ideals.

The brightly painted Chinese Pavilion is a sight to behold, built for Queen Lovisa Ulrika in 1753 as a birthday present and filled with hand-painted paper and silk wall hangings. The Palace Theatre is particularly unique and worthy of a visit. Shows there sweep visitors up in Swedish cultural life of the 18th century, and it is one of the few theaters built in that century that is still used to stage shows with its original wooden stage machinery.

The Swedish Royal Family still resides in Drottningholm, but you are free to enter some of the most important parts of the building. Make sure to take a guided tour to immerse yourself in the site's rich history.

Sweden's Drottningholm Palace (right) is among the best-preserved royal residences in Europe. Guards pass through the royal gate (above).



» **HOW TO VISIT** The gardens are always open and free of charge. The Drottningholm Palace is open daily from May to September, Tuesday to Sunday in April and October, and weekends during the rest of the year.

» **GO ROWING** A boat ride is one of the best ways to experience the palace and expansive views of the grounds.

» **DON'T MISS** Lovö Nature Reserve, just beside the Drottningholm Palace, is a destination in and of itself. Hike, bike, camp, fish, swim, or simply enjoy the relaxed surroundings in this deep Swedish forest. There are several trails to choose from.

Travel Differently, Travel Deeper

Tourism at World Heritage sites can help support heritage management and local economic development, but it can also erode or destroy a site’s outstanding universal value. With tourism and the number of heritage properties growing, it is important to understand how to enjoy a trip to these places without damaging the awe-inspiring sites you are exploring. These tips will help you do just that.

PLAN AHEAD

■ **Start Online** Get leads on traditional food, handicrafts, or little-known archaeological sites. Read tips and blogs from other travelers and people who live in the destination.

■ **Think Out of the Box** Choose destinations off the beaten path. Stay at historic hotels or those with traditional architectural styles and furnishings. Is Venice too crowded? Try Caserta or Aquileia. Similarly, avoiding the high season will mean less competition for accommodation, fewer jostling crowds, and more chances to interact with locals. In these pages, we have highlighted the best off-peak times to go and some off-the-beaten path experiences you might like to explore.

■ **Go Sustainable** Before you book a room, get the management to answer a few eco-savvy questions: Does the hotel recycle and buy local food? How does it deal with waste water? What has it done to help local people or protect the environment? Does it employ local people in positions of responsibility or provide training?

■ **Words and Phrases** A few sessions with a phrase book or online tutorial will help make you a part of the place you’re visiting. Language skills will also boost your confidence to bargain at a market stall or order at a neighborhood restaurant. Stick to basic phrases, but learn them well enough to use them with confidence.

■ **Get a Good Book** Dig deeper into your destination’s land and culture by reading up on its history.

Then pack a piece of fiction that’s set in the area you’re visiting. A book about a place is like salt to a cook: it enhances the flavor.

ON THE MOVE

■ **Archaeological Sites** Ancient art and buildings are fragile. The fingers’ natural oils can destroy pictographs, and the touch of thousands of hands can erode petroglyphs and rock carvings. Climbing monuments can abrade building stones and sometimes dislodge them. Treat these sites as the museums they are and don’t touch.

■ **Sacred Places** Visit sacred sites by invitation or in the company of a responsible guide. Wear modest clothing, talk softly, and keep your camera tucked away. This is a time for quiet reflection.

■ **Traditional Communities** Explore a traditional village and maybe meet local residents, but be discreet and respectful of people’s privacy as they go about their lives. Don’t peer into houses or take photos of residents without their permission. Don’t pat children on the head.

■ **Visit a Farm** Check to see if local farms offer accommodations for visitors. Get a firsthand taste of rural life and real home cooking.

■ **Think Small** Big experiences often come in small packages. If a hotel has only six rooms, you will probably meet the owner and maybe even the owner’s family. If a restaurant has only eight tables, the food on your plate probably came from a neighborhood market.



While exploring sites like Sintra in Portugal, be mindful of what traces you leave behind.

■ **Dress Appropriately** The latest fashion back home may be inappropriate or even blasphemous in other cultures. Take your cue from the local people, but don’t fake native either. Save the lederhosen for admiring friends and family when you return home.

■ **Lunch Break** Little neighborhood restaurants crowded with families usually means good food and prices, and a true taste of the locale. If you can’t understand the menu, or if there is no menu, look around at what others are eating, smile at the server, and discreetly point.

■ **Slow Down** Yes, you can get to that must-see site and be back at your hotel for dinner. But why rush? Stay another day and search out treasures that others pass by. Any extra money you spend will end up in the local community.

THINK LOCAL

■ **Shopping** Look for crafts and souvenirs in small shops, marketplaces, and cooperatives. If the

proprietor is embroidering a blouse as you enter, so much the better. The shorter the distance between you and the producer, the more of what you pay ends up in the pocket of the artisan.

■ **Insist on Quality** A handicraft may be locally produced, but is it authentic? Is it a genuine expression of the culture, or an endlessly repeated copy? Did the artisan use natural materials or imported synthetics? Natural or chemical dyes? Gladly pay more for quality.

■ **Get the Inside Scoop** Inquire about local guides. They’ll have lots to tell about how community members live and how they interact with their heritage and each other. Your patronage supports their passion for heritage and the community’s commitment to conservation and stewardship.

■ **Celebrations** Be on the lookout for parades, fairs, and festivals of any kind. A community that dresses up for festivities is eager to show its pride to admiring guests. Benefits multiply when you buy local handicrafts, food, and lodging.

EUROPE SOUTH

- Featured properties
- Ancient
 - Romantic
 - Royal
 - Underground
- Other World Heritage properties
- Cultural property
 - Natural property
 - Cultural and natural property



EUROPE NORTH

Featured properties

- Ancient
- Romantic
- Royal
- Underground

Other World Heritage properties

- Cultural property
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