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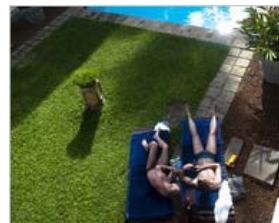


Published: January 10, 2010

1. Sri Lanka

For a quarter century, Sri Lanka seems to have been plagued by misfortune, including a brutal civil war between the Sinhalese-dominated government and a separatist Tamil group. But the conflict finally ended last May, ushering in a more peaceful era for this teardrop-shaped island off [India's](#) coast, rich in natural beauty and cultural splendors.

Enlarge This Image



Keith Bedford for The New York Times
Guests by the pool at the Galle Fort Hotel in Galle, Sri Lanka.

Where Do You Want to Go?

The island, with a population of just 20 million, feels like one big tropical zoo: elephants roam freely, water buffaloes idle in paddy fields and monkeys swing from trees. And then there's the pristine coastline. The miles of sugary white sand flanked by bamboo groves that were off-limits to most visitors until recently are a happy, if unintended byproduct of the war.

Among the most scenic, if difficult stretches to reach, is Nilaveli Beach in the Tamil north. While a few military checkpoints remain, vacationers can lounge on poolside hammocks under palm trees or [snorkel](#) in its crystal-clear waters. Or they can order cocktails at the Nilaveli Beach Hotel (www.tangerinehotels.com/nilavelibeach), a collection of recently renovated bungalows with private terraces.

An international airport in Matara, on the island's southern shore, is under construction, which will make the gorgeous

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[beaches](#) near the seaside village of Galle easier to get to. Decimated by the tsunami in 2004, the surrounding coastline is now teeming with stylish guesthouses and boutique hotels.

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Unawatuna, a crescent-shaped beach a few miles south of Galle, may be furthest along. Higher-end hotels there include Thambapanni Retreat (www.thambapanni.biz), which features four-poster beds, [yoga](#) and an ayurvedic [spa](#). The Sun House (www.thesunhouse.com), in Galle, looks like a place where the Queen of England might stay, with its mango courtyard and colonial décor. One stylish place tucked within Galle's city walls is the Galle Fort Hotel (www.galleforhotel.com), a refurbished gem merchant's house run by a couple of Aussies. — *Lionel Beehner*

2. Patagonia Wine Country

Ten years ago, a group of adventurous winemakers set their sights on an Argentine valley called San Patricio del Chañar, an unusually fertile and eerily beautiful corner of Patagonia. They plowed, planted and waited. The outcome? A blossoming wine country with delicious pinot noirs and malbecs and smartly designed wineries.

One of the area's pioneers, the 2,000-acre Bodega del Fin del Mundo (www.bodegadelfindelmundo.com), which works with the influential wine consultant Michel Rolland, is racking up international medals for its complex merlot, cabernet and malbec blends. And NQN (bodeganqn.com.ar), which is associated with the Argentine oenologist Roberto de la Mota, has seen its 2006 Colección NQN Malbec get 92 points from Wine Enthusiast. Nearby is the new Valle Perdido winery (www.valleperdido.com.ar), which includes an 18-room resort surrounded by vineyards. At the spa, ask for antioxidant wine-infused treatments. — *Paola Singer*

3. Seoul

Forget [Tokyo](#). Design aficionados are now heading to Seoul.

They have been drawn by the Korean capital's glammed-up cafes and restaurants, immaculate [art](#) galleries and monumental fashion palaces like the sprawling outpost of Milan's 10 Corso Como and the widely noted Ann Demeulemeester store — an avant-garde Chia Pet covered in vegetation.

And now Seoul, under its design-obsessed mayor, Oh Se-hoon, is the 2010 World Design Capital. The title, bestowed by a prominent council of industrial designers, means a year's worth of design parties, exhibitions, conferences and other revelries. Most are still being planned (go to wdc2010.seoul.go.kr for updates). A highlight will no doubt be the third annual Seoul Design Fair (Sept. 17 to Oct. 7), the city's answer to the design weeks in [Milan](#) and New York, which last year drew 2.5 million people and featured a cavalcade of events under two enormous inflatable structures set up at the city's Olympic stadium. — *Aric Chen*

4. Mysore

You've completed 200 hours of teacher training, mastered flying crow pose and even spent a week at yoga surf camp. What's next? Yogis seeking transcontinental bliss head these days to Mysore, the City of Palaces, in southern India.

The yogi pilgrimage was sparked by Ashtanga yoga, a rigorous sweat-producing, breath-synchronized regimen of poses popularized by the beloved Krishna Pattabhi Jois, who died at 94 in 2009. Mr. Jois's grandson is now director of the Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute (www.kpjayi.org). First month's tuition is 27,530 rupees, or \$600 at 46 rupees to the dollar. Classes generally require a one-month commitment.

Too much time or money? Mysore's yoga boom now has shalas catering to every need. Off the mat, the yoga tribe hobnobs at Anu's Bamboo Hut or the Regaalis Hotel pool, studies Sanskrit, gets an ayurveda treatment or tours the maharaja's palace. — *Mary Billard*

5. Copenhagen

As thousands of environmentalists heckled world leaders in Copenhagen last month for the climate summit, a solitary unifying note could be heard amid the cacophony of discord: the Danish capital has already emerged as one of the world's greenest — and maybe coolest —

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cities.

Copenhagengers don't simply preach the "progressive city" ethos, they live it. Long, flat urban thoroughfares are hemmed with bicycle paths where locals glide around the city, tourists saddle up on the free [bikes](#) that dot the city center, and fashion bloggers take notes on the latest cycle chic (see [copenhagencyclechic.com](#)). Over in the harbor district, a public bath at Osterbro, due to open in 2010, will complement the two swimming areas set off on Copenhagen's inner harbor, a formerly polluted waterway recently transformed into the city's summertime hub.

Away from all the modernism and the happy cyclists, cultural thrill-seekers are being coaxed to the once dangerous district of Norrebro, which has arguably become Copenhagen's edgiest hub. A heady mix of hipsters, students and immigrants mingle in the cafes and galleries around the district's focal square, Sankt Hans Torv, and the city's young and excitable night owls can be found dancing in local clubs until the early hours. — *Benji Lanyado*

WAITING IN THE WINGS

6. Koh Kood

Is this the next Koh Samui? The Trat islands are emerging as [Thailand's](#) new luxury outpost. Inaccessible for many years because of tensions with neighboring [Cambodia](#) and a poor transportation infrastructure, islands like Koh Kood are starting to draw venturesome paradise seekers, thanks in part to new direct flights to the port city of Trat. The recent opening of Soneva Kiri, a 42-villa suite retreat by the Six Senses brand ([www.sixsenses.com/Soneva-Kiri](#)), definitely ratchets up the high-end quotient on this [Robinson Crusoe](#)-like island. Coming soon: X2 Koh Kood ([www.x2resorts.com](#)), a designer eco-resort with 14 pool villas. — *Gisela Williams*

7. Damascus

The next [Marrakesh](#)? Perhaps mindful of the way that renovations of historic riads have drawn upscale travelers to Marrakesh, Damascus hoteliers are trying to mine tourism gold in the rundown buildings of the Syrian capital's Old City. These 18th-century homes — many with inviting courtyards and rooftop terraces — are now boutique hotels, like the nine-room Old Vine ([www.oldvinehotel.com](#)) and the Hanania ([www.hananiahotel.com](#)), which doubles as a hotel and a small museum. — *Don Duncan*

8. Cesme

The next [Bodrum](#)? While revelers continue to descend upon that seaside retreat, another corner of [Turkey's](#) Aegean coastline has begun to emerge as a stylish alternative: the once-sleepy villages of the Cesme Peninsula. The main draw is Alacati, a sheltered beach town that last summer was the site of the Professional Windsurfers Association Slalom World Cup. Scheduled to open in the spring, the seven-room Hotel Nars Alacati ([www.nars.com.tr](#)), set in a converted 19th-century mansion, promises to become the popular weekend gathering spot for [Istanbul's](#) smart set, along with the adjoining [garden](#) restaurant, [Mesa Luna](#). — *Andrew Ferren*

9. Antarctica

This may be the last year that Antarctica is open to mass tourism — not because the ice is melting too fast (though it is), but because of restrictions that would severely curtail travel around the fragile continent.

Until recently, most vessels passing through Antarctica were limited to scientific expeditions, but an exploding number of tourists now flock to what is arguably the world's last great wilderness. The tourism boom, scientists argue, poses a major environmental threat. Indeed, several passenger ships have run aground in recent years.

Countries that manage Antarctica are calling for limits on the number of tourist ships, for fortified hulls that can withstand sea ice and for a ban on the use of so-called heavy oils. A ban on heavy oil, which is expected to be adopted by the International Maritime Organization later this year, would effectively block big [cruise](#) ships.

With the new rules taking effect within two years, tour operators are promoting 2010 as the last year to visit Antarctica, while, at the same time, procuring lighter vessels that would be permitted. Abercrombie & Kent, for example, is introducing a new ship, *Le Boreal* ([www.abercrombiekent.com](#)), which its public relations firm argues "meets all the

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environmental regulations, so access to Antarctica via A&K will not be affected.”

Launching this year, the compact luxury ship holds 199 passengers and features an outdoor heated pool, steam rooms and private balconies that offer intimate views of some of the world's remaining glaciers. — *Denny Lee*

10. Leipzig

In 2010, Leipzig, a small industrial city in the former East Germany with an illustrious past, will be marking the 325th anniversary of the birth of its former resident [Johann Sebastian Bach](#) and the 200th birthday of [Robert Schumann](#) with concerts, festivals and a reopened Bach Museum (www.bach-leipzig.de).

But the city's cultural high note is likely to be the Neo Rauch retrospective opening in April at the Leipzig [Museum of Fine Arts](#) (www.mdbk.de), a show devoted to the father of the New Leipzig School of artists, a scene that for the past decade has been the toast of the contemporary art world. The art cognoscenti will also make their way to the Spinnerei (www.spinnerei.de), a former cotton mill that is home to 11 galleries, a cafe and a quirky new pension called the Meisterzimmer (www.meisterzimmer.de), with rooms starting at 50 euros, or \$70 at \$1.40 to the euro.

The city is also making a splash on the musical front. Moon Harbour Recordings and Kann Records, two indie labels producing innovative electronica from D.J.'s, are based here. Sevensol and Matthias Tanzmann will undoubtedly be lugging their laptops to Leipzig Pop Up (www.leipzig-popup.de), a trade fair and [music](#) festival taking place in May. Otherwise, gigs can be heard year-round in the city's underbelly of abandoned factories and squats that look a lot like [Berlin](#) — maybe 10 years ago. — *Gisela Williams*

11. Los Angeles

Visitors love to bemoan the lack of an old-fashioned cultural neighborhood in Los Angeles. In truth, the city has as many thriving art spots as it does ZIP codes. Last October, the pioneering Culver City gallery Blum & Poe (2727 South La Cienega [Boulevard](#); 310-836-2062; www.blumandpoe.com) inaugurated an airy 21,000-square-foot space; in July, the veteran local dealer Thomas Solomon (427 Bernard Street; 323-427-1687; www.thomassolomongallery.com) opened a space in Chinatown. And the powerhouse New York galleries L&M Arts and Matthew Marks are scheduled to open prominent spaces in 2010.

Local museums, many of which struggled financially in recent years, are back afloat. The Museum of Contemporary Art (www.moca.org) is celebrating its 30th birthday with a huge exhibition of 500 highlights from its outstanding collection of postwar art. In October, the vast [Los Angeles County Museum of Art](#) (www.lacma.org) will get even bigger when it unveils a [Renzo Piano](#)-designed addition to its multiacre mid-Wilshire campus. And the billionaire collector [Eli Broad](#), who has been both savior and villain to just about every major museum in town, is now looking to plant his own museum in Beverly Hills, [Santa Monica](#) or a third unnamed location. — *Andrew Ferren*

12. Shanghai

To many, the idea of a World Expo might seem like a dated, superfluous throwback from some preglobalized age. (Remember the one in Aichi, [Japan](#)? Enough said.) But tell that to the 70 million who are expected to attend Expo 2010 in Shanghai.

This is [China](#), after all. And following up on [Beijing's](#) spectacular Olympics, Shanghai is pulling out all the stops. From May 1 to Oct. 31, more than 200 national and other pavilions will straddle the city's Huangpu River, turning a two-square-mile site into an architectural playground: [Switzerland](#) will be represented by a building shaped like a map of that country, complete with a rooftop chairlift, while England is in the celebrated hands of the designer Thomas Heatherwick, who is fashioning what looks like a big, hairy marshmallow. Other attention grabbers include [Macao](#), taking the form of a walk-through bunny, and the [United Arab Emirates](#), which hired Foster + Partners to build a “sand dune.” (By contrast, the [United States](#) pavilion might be mistaken for a suburban office park.)

In the run-up to the Expo, Shanghai seems to have taken this year's theme, “Better City, Better Life,” to heart, spending tens of billions of dollars to upgrade the city. The riverfront Bund promenade is getting a makeover with parks and pedestrian-friendly sidewalks, while the subway is being dramatically expanded — including several new stations serving the

World Expo site. — *Aric Chen*

13. Mumbai

On the one-year anniversary of the 2008 Mumbai attacks, citizens painted a one-kilometer stretch of wall in South Mumbai with murals to show their love and hope for the city. The initiative, by a group of organizations that included the Mumbai Arts Project (MAP), which is dedicated to creating public art projects, is just one sign that Mumbai's art scene is on the rebound.

A walk through the newly dubbed Colaba Art District yields no fewer than five contemporary art galleries. In the second half of 2009, two contemporary galleries opened: Gallery BMB (www.gallerybmb.com), which brought in big-name artists from around the globe for its first show (look for an exhibition focusing on new Indian women artists, starting on Feb. 8), and Volte (www.volte.in), a gallery, cafe and bookstore. Just down the street is Project 88 (www.project88.in), an outpost of Gallery 88 in [Calcutta](#), focused on up-and-coming Indian and South Asian artists. The large, simple one-room space will show the artist Hemali Bhuta with an installation on the ceiling and archival prints on the walls, starting Jan. 18. Also nearby is Gallery Maskara (www.gallerymaskara.com), in a converted cotton storehouse; starting March 15, the space will host paintings, sculpture and watercolors by T. Venkanna, a popular artist based in nearby Vadodara. — *Lindsay Clinton*

14. Minorca

While the beat of disco pounds in [Ibiza](#) and [Majorca](#), their quiet sister Minorca offers a tranquil contrast to the glitz next door. The entire island is a Unesco Biosphere Reserve, so the Spanish megahotel development frenzy of the last decade has largely skipped over this patch of the Mediterranean. That means miles of beaches — some 120 of them, in fact, like the northern sweep of crystal-clear swimming waters in the coves called Cala d'Algaiarens, with fine sand and rolling dunes. And Minorca's eco-diversity extends well beyond the coasts: forests, deep gorges, wetlands, salt marshes and hillsides covered in lush greenery that sometimes look more New England than Mediterranean. Even the island's sun-bleached towns — Mahón and Ciutadella, each combining elements of their British colonial heritage, Moorish roots and modern Spanish identity — are more peaceful than their Majorcan equivalents.

The ideal visit to Minorca celebrates islanders' emphasis on agritourism — sleeping in rural establishments like Ca Na Xini (www.canaxini.com), a dairy farm that offers an eight-room temple to modernism inside the shell of a century-old manor home. It's like spring break for eco-conscious adults. — *Sarah Wildman*

15. Costa Rica

Costa Rica has been on any eco-minded traveler's radar for years, but with a new [birding](#) route in the northeast region of the country, there's a new reason to pay the country a visit. Opened in early 2009, the Costa Rican Bird Route (www.costaricanbirdroute.com) encompasses 13 far-flung nature reserves with phenomenal avian diversity — the sites are home to more than 500 bird species. Travelers can explore the route on their own with a map (\$12.95 when ordered online) or hire a local guide to lead the way. The most popular leg of the route centers on the Sarapiquí-San Carlos region, one of the last remaining habitats of the endangered and prized great green macaw. The landscape along the route runs from wetlands and river explorations to high [rain forest](#) canopies and waterfalls; birders can visit renowned tropical biological research stations, stay in newly built eco-lodges and [hike](#) or [canoe](#) through local family-run reserves in search of rare raptors, herons and kingfishers. — *Bonnie Tsui*

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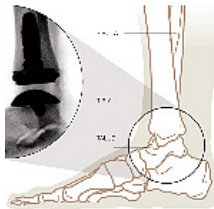
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