

52 PLACES TO GO | 2019



TZACHI OSTROVSKY FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

6 The Underwater Observatory Marine Park in Eilat, Israel.



ANDREAS MEICHNER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

8 The Musikkens Hus concert hall along Aalborg's waterfront in Denmark.



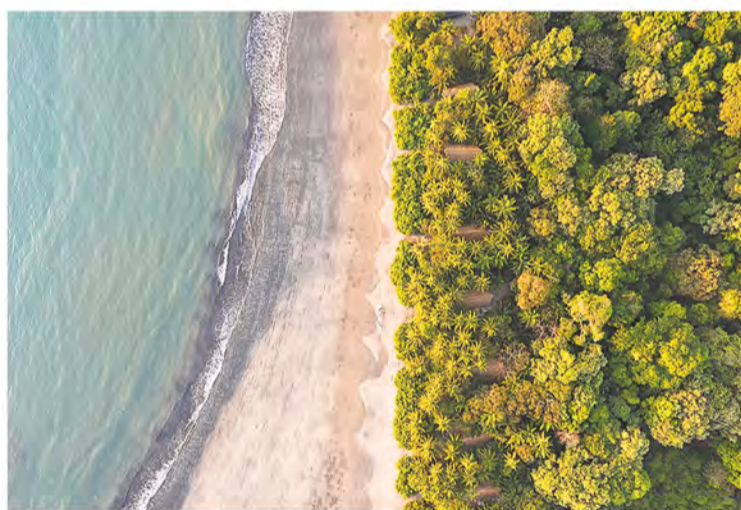
ANDREAS MEICHNER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

5 Before a performance at the Bavarian State Opera House in Munich.

7 The view from Mount Shiude over the Seto Inland Sea in Japan.



MITOYO TOURISM & EXCHANGE AUTHORITY



MATTHEW FLYNN

4 The Isla Palenque resort has eight casitas and a villa on a 400-acre island in Panama.

4 PANAMA

New eco-friendly resorts open on the country's Pacific coast

Two new Pacific island resorts are expanding Panama's west coast appeal, not far from the marine preserve around Isla Coiba. Cayuga Hospitality recently opened Isla Palenque in the Gulf of Chiriqui, with eight casitas and one villa on a lush 400-acre island. Besides offering access to seven beaches, mangrove kayaking and whale-watching, the resort grows some of its own food, has furniture made from fallen trees and maintains a no-plastics policy, including subbing papaya shoots for straws. In the Gulf of Chiriqui, Islas Secas Reserve & Panama Lodge will open in January on a 14-island archipelago. The solar-powered, nine-bungalow lodge will offer sport fishing and scuba diving, and will compost food waste and will recycle water for irrigation. A Ritz-Carlton Reserve property is also under construction in the Pearl Islands. *ELAINE GLUSAC*

5 MUNICH

Theater. Art. Opera. What more do you want?

As far as cultural triple threats go, it's hard to beat Munich, the capital of Germany's Bavaria region. Its theaters are considered among the most creative and ambitious in Europe, with its two main companies, the Münchner Kammerspiele and the Residenztheater (the latter entering its final year under the acclaimed artistic director Martin Kusej) producing more than 30 premieres between January and May 2019. And its museums are decidedly world class, especially since the renovation and reopening of the Lenbachhaus Museum in 2017, with its unmatched collection of the German artists known as the Blue Rider school. But perhaps the best argument for visiting Munich right now is the Bavarian State Opera, which has emerged as one of the most exciting opera houses in Europe. The reason? In the words of a New York Times classical music critic, "the miracle of Kirill Petrenko." Mr. Petrenko has just two more years remaining on his contract as music director at the Opera. This summer, he will conduct a new production of Richard Strauss's "Salome," with the opening night performance on June 27. *STUART EMMRICH*

6 EILAT, ISRAEL

A newly accessible Red Sea paradise

Beneath the prismatic waters of this Red Sea resort on Israel's southern tip lies a coral reef with hundreds of varieties of neon fish, sharks and stingrays. To get there, visitors used to have to catch a charter flight from Tel Aviv or brave the dusty drive through the Negev Desert. But with the opening early this year of Ramon Airport, set in the Timna Valley and capable of handling four million international transit passengers a year, the world will finally get a direct route — with nonstops from Munich and Frankfurt on Lufthansa, and budget carriers flying in from Prague, London and across Europe. New hotels, including the luxurious Six Senses Shaharut, opening just in time for Israel's turn at hosting the Eurovision 2019 song contest, are ready for the crowds. *DEBRA KAMIN*

7 SETOUCHI, JAPAN

Art and nature harmonize in Japan's inland sea

The Setouchi region, which includes the Seto Inland Sea's islands and coastal areas, will host the Setouchi Triennale 2019, a major art fair held in three seasonal installments. One hour south of the "art islands" via ferry or the Shinkansen bullet train, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum reopens this spring after an eight-year refurbishment. Setouchi is also looking to draw a fresh crop of cyclists, with new trails and a dedicated Shimanami bike ferry that opened in October connecting Japan's main island of Honshu to the region's lesser-visited island of Shikoku. For those seeking more sybaritic forms of transport, 2017 had the maiden voyage of Guntu — more a minimalist floating ryokan than a cruise ship — with 19 walnut-clad rooms and open-air cypress soaking baths. In 2019, Setouchi Sea Planes, Japan's only sea plane company, will expand its scenic flights to several smaller islands and towns via Kodiak 100s. And a Japanese start-up, Ale, launched — literally — the Shooting Star Challenge, a microsatellite that will create the world's first artificial meteor shower, aiming to fill Setouchi's skies in spring 2020, a taste of the high-tech one-upmanship to come in Tokyo's 2020 Olympics. *ADAM H. GRAHAM*

8 AALBORG, DENMARK

Architecture revitalizes the waterfront

Viking long ships once glided through Aalborg's mighty Limfjord. Today, the city is turning its most famous natural asset into an artistic one. Wildly innovative buildings have sprouted on Aalborg's shores, including the Utzon Center, designed by Jorn Utzon, the architect of the Sydney Opera House — check out its new exhibition series on inspiring Nordic architects, with a first show that runs through May. The curvilinear concert hall Musikkens Hus was recently followed by the vibrant Aalborg Street Food market; the pedestrian and cycling Culture Bridge; and the undulating Vestre Fjordpark, with an open-air swimming pool that meets the sea. The pioneering Nordkraft, a power plant that was converted into a cultural hub, is celebrating its 10th anniversary with special events in September. The historic Aalborg Akvavit distillery, which produced the potent Scandinavian spirit, is being transformed into a new creative district over the next two years, presided over by a soaring glass polygonal sculpture by the Argentine artist Tomás Saraceno, Harbour Gate from the Danish superstar architect Bjarke Ingels, a hotel and more. *ANNELISE SORENSEN*