

**Dream. Plan. Go. Share.**  
Get NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC  
TRAVELER magazine!  
**ONLY \$10!**  
**SUBSCRIBE TODAY!**

- Travel Home
- Top 10
- Destinations A-Z
- Trip Ideas
- Travel Blogs
- Traveler Magazine
- Photos
- Video
- Our Trips
- Our Lodges

National Geographic Traveler

**SUBSCRIBE ►**

## The 2014 Traveler 50: World's Smartest Cities

*Essential places, people, trends, and ideas that have turned the world's most intelligent cities into travelers' hottest tickets.*



*In China, rotating pods atop Guangzhou's Canton Tower overlook one of the world's most populous cities. PHOTOGRAPH BY PAUL LANGROCK, ZENIT/LAIF/REDUX*

## Share

1.1K

8+1 106

Email

More »

By George W. Stone

We all know our world is increasingly urbanized, but what makes a city *smart*? A sense of place, for starters, says Ian MacFarlane, consultant for National Geographic Channel's Smart Cities program. "A city needs a heart and soul—typically the center, where people congregate for work and leisure. Smart cities are well-connected locally and internationally, have a sustainable lifestyle, and are places where people come first," he says. Here's our essential list of things we love in the world's most exciting cities.

### 1 California Dreamers Wanted

"A history book from the 1930s described San Francisco in the 1840s: 'Everything was conceived on a vast scale, and there was always plenty of cash available for any scheme that might be proposed, no matter how impossible or bizarre it seemed.' Nothing has changed: The city is the global epicenter of big 'unrealistic' dreamers. Drop what you're doing and meander through our twisting streets for inspiration, for the excitement of new possibilities." —Tim Ferriss, *early-stage tech investor and author of the best-selling The 4-Hour Workweek*





*Innovation is always in fashion in San Francisco, including wearable tech.* PHOTOGRAPH BY JOSH EDELSON, AFP/GETTY IMAGES

## 2 Pedaling Paris

Bike-share for *les enfants*? But of course! New rental stations in pedestrian zones opened in the city this year, geared toward city cyclists in training. Petits Parisiens—and visitors—ages two to eight can choose from four models equipped with helmets, including balance bikes or training wheels, to ride in parks or along the Seine. Classes also test stability and teach cycling etiquette, since good habits start young.

## 3 Passage to India

Travelers might spot the peacock feather motif throughout terminal 2 of Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji airport. This and other lofty designs were unveiled earlier this year at the Jaye He Museum, now India's largest public art program. Some 7,000 works pack the four-story museum. Considering that 40 million people pass through the airport each year, the exhibit rivals the Louvre in number of visitors.

## 4 Rome: For Time Travelers

"In 2015, the nearly 2,000-year-old Colosseum and the baroque Trevi Fountain in Rome will reopen, following multimillion-dollar restorations. But the past is always present here. In the 12th-century Basilica of San Clemente, stone stairs take you back to a fourth-century church that now lies beneath ground level. From there, dark passages lead down to a first-century temple. In this space, where ancient streets run deep beneath modern Rome, the long history of a great city comes alive." —P. D. Smith, *author of City: A Guidebook for the Urban Age*





*Rome's Parco degli Acquedotti bridges ancient and modern. PHOTOGRAPH BY TONI ANZENBERGER, ANZENBERGER/REDUX*

## 5 Common Threads

Paducah has us in stitches. This small Kentucky town was recently named a UNESCO City of Crafts and Folk Art for its efforts to sew together world-class fiber arts assets (the National Quilt Museum is located here) and to attract creatives (potters, painters, jewelry makers) to its LowerTown Arts District.

## 6 The Wonderful City in Oz

“Melbourne regularly tops quality-of-life rankings worldwide. How did it achieve this enviable position? Just a few decades ago, the city’s downtown was dead, emptied by waves of suburban expansion. Then a new chief architect, Rob Adams, from South Africa,



translated to Melbourne the lesson he had learned at the University of Cape Town during the 1960s. So you have the city we all know today—where density has brought an unprecedented level of urban intensity.” —Carlo Ratti, *director of the MIT Senseable City Lab*



*Sidney Myer Music Bowl lights up for a White Night Melbourne festival concert. PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT MORA, ALAMY*

## **7 Eye in the Sky**

Toss the grapefruit-size Panono Panoramic Ball Camera into the air, and its 36 lenses will simultaneously snap when the ball reaches peak height; software then creates a 360-degree, 108-megapixel image of, say, Times Square or Angkor Wat that you can download and share.

## **8 Up on the Roof**

Urban farming is gaining ground. Fairmont Hotels placed rooftop hives at properties in Toronto, Boston, Seattle, and other cities worldwide. Five years ago, Manhattan's Bell Book & Candle started growing greens in aeroponic rooftop gardens; its similarly high-minded sister restaurant, Bidwell, recently opened in D.C.

## **9 Beyond Bier**

After years of resting on its hops, Germany is embracing the microbrewery trend. Berlin brewmasters lead the charge by tweaking the *reinheitsgebot*, the Bavarian “purity law” dating to 1487. Floral Belgian-style beers and chocolaty British stouts now froth up at Berlin bars such as Heidenpeters.



## 10 Data Streams

Techies call Chattanooga “Gig City” for its lightning-fast Internet. But what do locals do when not digitizing? They bike and hike along the revitalized Riverwalk path, part of a \$250 million reinvention along the banks of the Tennessee.

## 11 Swedish Synergy

By 2030, the in-development Stockholm Royal Seaport plans to be free of fossil fuels and a showcase for sustainable city design.

## 12 Into the Wild

For travelers who like their town with a bit of country, Ontario’s Parkbus connects Toronto and Ottawa to provincial and national parks. The goal: Make campgrounds and trailheads accessible to car-less urbanites.

## 13 When Old Buildings Go Out of Style

“London has always welcomed and encouraged a tremendous degree of experimentation, and my own work developed entirely because I live here. Often, the more radical a proposal, the more appropriate it is for the city. That’s why I like the brutalist post-1960s buildings on London’s South Bank. But it has fallen out of favor, and most of it is being demolished—though these are actually some of the best examples of architecture in London.” —Zaha Hadid, *Pritzker Prize-winning architect*



London's Royal National Theatre, on the South Bank PHOTOGRAPH BY B. PÉROUSSE

## 14 Tot Tracker



Has your kid gotten lost in Lisbon? FiLip is a watchlike two-way communicator that taps into GPS, cell towers, and Wi-Fi networks to locate your wandering companion. An emergency button triggers a location beacon and alarm, then dials five contact numbers.

## **15 Look Book**

Want to talk to more than a billion people? Chineasy is an educational immersion into China's language and culture. Traditional figures are artfully embellished to create pictograms of words, which then become the building blocks for phrases.

## **16 Lima: World's Most Edible Burg**

"As a chef, I've always been fascinated to see not only how food can be a bridge between cultures but also its connection with history and politics. Lima shows how Peru embraces the world through culinary influences from Africa, Spain, France, Italy, and Asia—especially Japan and China. Everyone should taste Lima's innovative food, visit markets like El Surquillo, and meet its people, like Gastón Acurio. One of the world's great chefs, he's also adored in Peru for turning food into an agent of social change." —José Andrés, *chef and restaurateur*





*The bar at Gastón Acurio's La Mar in Lima, Peru* PHOTOGRAPH BY ENRICO FANTONI, REDUX

## **17 Inn and Out**

Where'd the front desk go? At the Sound Garden Hotel in Warsaw, a kiosk spits out a key after guests select their room and swipe their credit card. Starwood is developing a system that enables smartphones to unlock doors in Silicon Valley. And room service is just a text message away at the Four Seasons in Philadelphia.



## 18 Fast Track

The East Coast's congested business corridor—the 438 miles from Boston via New York to Washington, D.C.—could see the first U.S. tryout of Japan's electromagnetically propelled high-speed railway. Tested at 310 miles an hour, aerodynamic Super-Maglev trains could dash from Baltimore to Washington in 15 minutes.

## 19 Locavores Unite

Traveling Spoon, EatWith, and Feastly—and destination-specific sites such as Eat With Locals Prague ([www.eatwithlocals.eu](http://www.eatwithlocals.eu))—are just some of the start-ups that connect travelers in Paris, Budapest, Bangalore, and beyond with foodies who cook and serve meals in their homes.

## 20 Droning On

A Detroit company is designing lightweight autonomous aircraft capable of carrying 12 pounds of goods—capacity enough for a Chicago pizza party or a Brooklyn bagel breakfast.

## 21-32 A Dozen Smart Cities to Visit

**21** Harbin, China: *population 10 million*: Harbin Cultural Center isn't centrally located. Instead, its hypermodern design, inspired by the area's snowy mountain landscape, attracts lovers of both traditional opera and contemporary theater to the outskirts of this northern China city.

**22** Tallinn, Estonia: *population 400,000*: Skype was born here, and it's hardly the only innovation to come from this UNESCO World Heritage city. Public bus and tram transit is free, bikes abound, and the old Hanseatic trading center brims with business, turning a medieval city into a digital-age exemplar.

**23** Halifax, Nova Scotia: *population 375,000*: One coastal Canadian city is betting on books. A \$57.6 million central library will act as hub to 14 branches—an investment in words and indoorsy charms in a town with a famously outdoorsy outlook.

**24** Lexington, Kentucky: *population 305,000*: When completed, the ambitious serpentine urban park Town Branch Commons will channel a bluegrass vibe with concerts and social spaces, while the city's downtown will soon see an angular new sports arena anchor a reinvented arts district.

**25** Groningen, Netherlands: *population 192,000*: Pedal-friendly policies from the late 1970s have turned this university city into one of the world's most bike-obsessed places. Half of all trips here are done by bike, making locals among the world's busiest cyclists. Travelers also find biking here a breeze.

**26** Detroit, Michigan: *population 689,000*: A start-up culture powers Motown's struggle to rise from the ashes of economic disaster. Artists fill any open spaces with color. The creative class gathers in Corktown, and the tech set dines near downtown's M@dison office building.

**27** Vancouver, British Columbia: *population 580,000*: This Pacific Northwest gateway follows an ambitious plan to become the planet's greenest city by 2020. Goals include switching to renewable energy, reducing waste, and increasing green space so that anyone will be within a five-minute walk of a park.





Vancouver's thousand-acre playground, Stanley Park includes lakes and beaches. PHOTOGRAPH BY PAUL LANGROCK, ZENIT/LAIF/REDUX

**28** Buenos Aires, Argentina: *population 3 million*: Public Wi-Fi, bike-share programs, and pedestrian- and bike-friendly urban restructuring efforts are under way—and Porteños love it. In this literary city, a million people visit the ornate El Ateneo Grand Splendid bookstore each year.

**29** Bogotá, Colombia: *population 6.8 million*: Latin American art is ascendant—and it's getting a lot of play in Colombia's cleaned-up and calmed-down capital, where galleries, exhibitions, and art schools show off their goods, especially in October during the annual ArtBO festival.

**30** Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: *population 600,000*: This once workaday city has transformed 7.5 miles of dry riverbed into an urban park (Oklahoma River Trails) and Olympic-caliber rowing center. Bricktown has emerged as an entertainment district. And the list of capital improvements keeps growing; new features include streetcars and bike lanes.

**31** Santander, Spain: *population 180,000*: This Cantabrian port city takes tech seriously; 10,000 scattered sensors monitor lights, temperature, traffic, water usage, pollutant levels, and more to produce a nonstop data flow that locals and tourists access by smartphone to track buses and taxis, flag down cops, or report problems.

**32** Haifa, Israel: *population 267,000*: Like many old ports, Haifa is a seaside city with limited public access to its coast. A new waterfront plan aims to change all that by building a wide promenade and repurposing existing port warehouses to create a scenic waterside public space that bridges the city's historic core with its shipping heritage.

### **33** Cities by the Numbers



The sheer scale and complexity of cities make them a feast for data crunchers. Below, some illuminating stats for the urban traveler:



Photograph of Vatican Museum by Hans Madej, laif/Redux

#### **Most Populous Megacities**

1. Tokyo 34.8 million
2. Guangzhou 31.7 million
3. Shanghai 28.9 million
4. Jakarta 26.4 million
5. Seoul 25.8 million

#### **U.S. Cities With the Cleanest Air\***

1. Cheyenne, Wyoming
2. St. George, Utah
3. Santa Fe, New Mexico
4. Prescott, Arizona
5. \*Particle Pollution

#### **Cities With the Best Bike-Share Systems**

1. Barcelona, Spain
2. Lyon, France
3. Mexico City, Mexico

#### **U.S. Cities With Highest Percentage of Bike Commuters**

1. Portland, Oregon
2. Minneapolis, Minnesota
3. Washington, D.C.
4. Seattle, Washington
5. San Francisco, California

#### **Most Instagrammed City Places of 2013**

1. Siam Paragon shopping mall in Bangkok, Thailand
2. Times Square, New York City



### 34 Arty Amsterdam

“Until recently, cities were always ready to invest major money in sports stadiums, but investing in art may be the smarter move. The recent comeback kid, among European cities, is Amsterdam, which renovated and reopened all three of its major cultural institutions—Rijksmuseum, Van Gogh Museum, and the Stedelijk—in the past couple of years. The galleries frame a refreshed square, the Museumplein, that now hosts regular music performances. When the cold sweeps in, the square becomes one elegant little skating rink.”  
—Raphael Kadushin, *Traveler contributing editor*



Amsterdam's wintry Museumplein square PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER DEJONG, AP IMAGES

### 35 Pasta Park

Global grocer Eataly, with 27 outposts, has fed a worldwide passion for Italian food. When the \$55 million Fico Eataly World opens in Bologna, Italy, in 2015, it will feature restaurants, food shops, and plots of land for agricultural studies.

### 36 Desert Rose

Famous for its frenzied consumption, Dubai plans to be the world's most sustainable city by 2020. Green building technology and energy-efficient urban lighting will drive the savings. The eco-initiative will be partly funded through a tax added to hotel room tabs.

### 37 What's Up, Docs?

Medical tourism is big business. Travelers are following their noses to Rio for low-price rhinoplasty, and all eyes are on Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok for affordable cataract surgery.



### 38 Where Smart Gets Its Start

“Cities have long been crucibles of ideas. They can bring together a critical mass of diverse minds and offer refuge to mavericks. The age of reason and the Enlightenment were also an age of urbanization. London, Paris, and Amsterdam became intellectual bazaars. Classical Athens, Renaissance Venice, and revolutionary Boston and Philadelphia were places where new democracies gestated, and even today urbanization and democracy tend to go together.” —Steven Pinker, *author of The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*

### 39 Green Acres

New York’s celebrated High Line keeps growing. A \$76 million extension to the elevated park is expected to debut this year. And at the Dallas Arboretum, the new Rory Meyers Children’s Adventure Garden, an eight-acre, \$62 million experiential ecosystem, hosts some 150 kid-friendly exhibits.



*New Yorkers maintain their High Line fidelity.* PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANK HEUER, LAIF/REDUX

### 40 Samba Simpatico

Fresh from the World Cup and poised to host the 2016 Summer Olympics, Rio de Janeiro will open in 2015 the Museum of Tomorrow, a forward-thinking science and tech hot spot designed by Santiago Calatrava. Open now: the Cidade das Artes, a modernist arts hall dedicated to music and film.

### 41 Small Is Beautiful

“Grand cities are immersive, but along with that comes the feeling of anxiety or guilt—of not



seeing everything there is to see. Small cities are wondrous places where you can submerge yourself and feel you've seen almost everything. In many Italian cities, such as San Gimignano, Siena, or Vicenza, you can get lost and feel nothing but happiness." —Richard Saul Wurman, *information architect, author, and founder of the TED conferences*

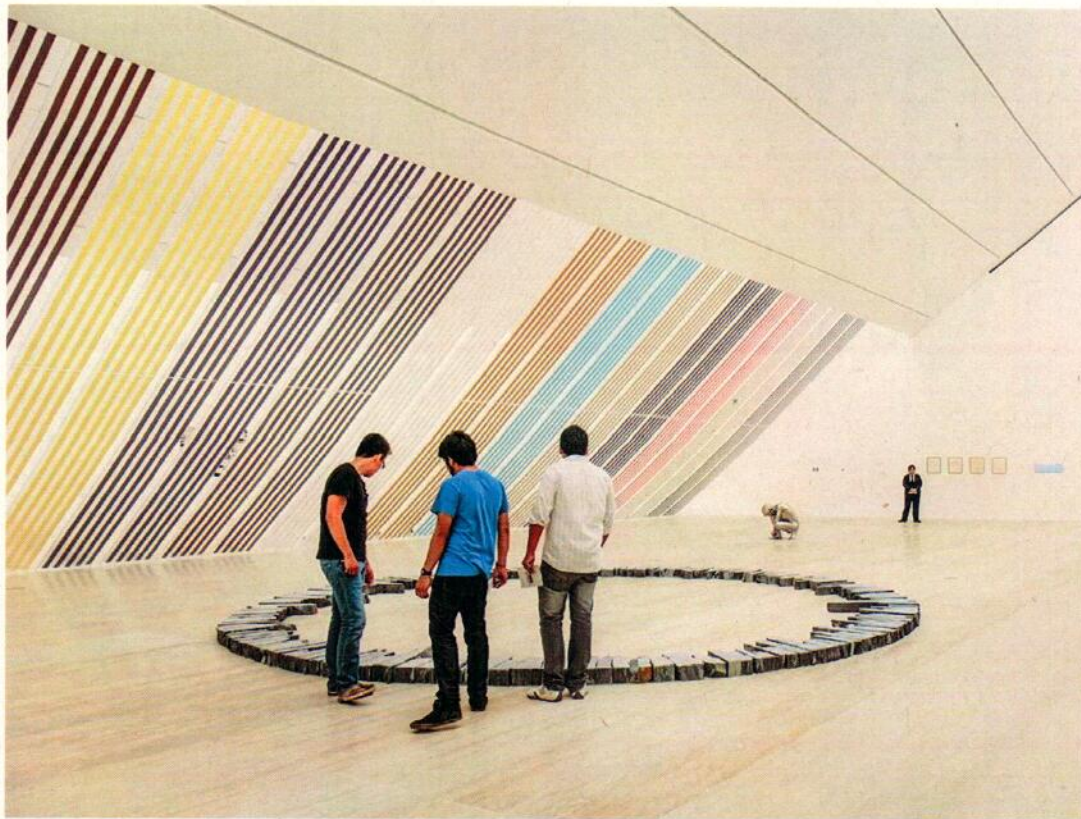


*The Italian hill town of San Gimignano* PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTINA ANZENBERGER FINK & TONI ANZENBERGER, REDUX

## 42 Mexican Mix

One of the world's most populous cities now adds a small but weighty venue for contemporary art. Museo Jumex, a 40,000-square-foot space in Mexico city's Nuevo Polanco district, further asserts the capital's standing as the place where North and South American aesthetics collide.





*Museo Jumex in Mexico City* PHOTOGRAPH BY DOROTHY ALEXANDER, ALAMY

### 43 The City to Watch in Africa

“Rwanda’s complete ban on plastic bags has helped make its capital, Kigali, a remarkably clean-looking city with beautifully groomed gardens. The Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre educates locals and tourists on the genocide in Rwanda 20 years ago. Close access to conservation-minded places with community-based initiatives—from volcanoes to wildlife (mountain gorillas and more)—makes this city an educational gem.” —Pegi Vail, *anthropologist, director/producer of the tourism documentary Gringo Trails*





*Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda* PHOTOGRAPH BY JOE MCDONALD, CORBIS

#### **44 Holodeck Holidays**

Powered by 3-D image capturing software, “holodeck” will soon project realistic virtual environments ripe for exploring. The device will be pricey, but will bring the dream of ogling art in the Prado or dancing in Djibouti to your living room. Other projects in the works aim for e-escapes via smartphone.

#### **45 Heart in Seoul**

This century’s definitive architect may be Zaha Hadid, whose Aquatics Centre was the centerpiece of the 2012 London Olympics. Her newly opened Dongdaemun Design Plaza has freshened up Seoul’s chic shopping district, positioning South Korea as Asia’s most stylish hub.

#### **46 Electric Slide**

Are you a power walker? Commuters near Calais, France, are. A sidewalk section at the St.-Omer train station has been outfitted with 14 energy-harvesting tiles that capture and convert enough pep from pedestrian traffic to light up seating areas and power USB recharging stations.

#### **47 Ban in Colorado**

Celebrated for his cardboard cathedral in New Zealand, which helped Christchurch rise above a devastating earthquake, Japanese architect Shigeru Ban has designed his first U.S. museum. The Aspen Art Museum boasts the only unobstructed public rooftop view of Aspen Mountain.



## 48 End of Road Rage

"As autonomous vehicles become more prevalent and increasingly replace traditional automobiles, the urban landscape and travel experience will change in profound ways. Imagine a world in which driverless car software makes traffic obsolete and parking garages unnecessary, and sends taxi drivers the way of the Pullman porter. Autonomous cars are a less chaotic urban experience, which—with companies like Google and Uber perfecting the software—we'll begin to see take shape within the next decade." —Patrick Dowd, *founder and CEO, the Millennial Trains Project*

## 49 Taipei Personality

Some call Taiwan's capital "humble hip" for its sunny disposition and creative spark. Both traits shine at Huashan Creative Park, a once derelict 1914 factory recast as an arts center. The little island off China's coast is not just home to the world's most famous collection of ancient Chinese art; now it's a modern arts player, too.



An acrobatics event in Taipei's Huashan Creative Park PHOTOGRAPH BY LI MINGFANG, XINHUA PRESS/CORBIS

## 50 Neighborhoods on the Rise

**Vila Madalena** Sao Paulo's stylish, bike-friendly neighborhood merges the imaginative charge of Portland, Oregon, with the relaxed cheer of Brazil.

**Tai Ping Shan** Hong Kong's leafy contrast to the cacophony of the business district is a fashionable bastion of boutiques and galleries.

**Mouraria** Lisbon's gritty hood has a history that stretches back 900 years to Portugal's



medieval times.

**King Albert Square** Fans of Tel Aviv's Bauhaus architecture linger here for new design-minded hotels and indie Israeli shops.

***More From National Geographic Travel:***

Photo Galleries: Cities

Free City Guides

Travel to some of these cities and more with National Geographic