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Top surprising summer travel destinations



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Summer months mean travelling season for most Canadians. If you've been there, done that at all the traditional tourist spots and want to experience a truly unique location that'll give you something to brag about over the water cooler or on social media, check out one of these incredible unexpected cities on your next trip.

Brisbane. One of the oldest cities in Australia, Brisbane's central business district stands on the original European settlement making it perfect for seeing distinctive Queenslander architecture. A cultural hotspot, be sure to visit the Queensland Museum and Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA), which offer free admission to permanent exhibitions. Learn more about a favourite animal at the Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary, or take a day trip to Moreton Island to feed wild dolphins and snorkel around an old shipwreck. Nature-lovers can head to nearby Scenic Rim, Somerset and Lockyer Valley, which boast waterfalls, lookouts and mountains to climb. For some R&R, head over to Gold Coast or Sunshine Coast, idyllic resort towns a short distance from the city. New non-stop flights now from Vancouver onboard Air Canada's Boeing 787 Dreamliners.

Lyon. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1998, Lyon is located between Paris and Marseille and boasts dozens of culturally-significant landmarks featuring architecture spanning from the 12th century to the present day. Especially noteworthy are the church of Saint Francis of Sales, the Opéra Nouvel and Parc de la Tête d'Or (literally, Golden Head Park), the largest urban park in France. Historically known as an important producer of silk, be sure to explore the renaissance and silk districts famous for their narrow passageways or "traboules" that pass through buildings and link streets on either side. France's second-largest urban area is also celebrated for its cuisine and has been hailed "the gastronomic capital of the world" by many food critics. Be sure to try "mâchons," brunch fare that was the silk workers' customary meal — it's usually accompanied by Beaujolais red wine. New non-stop flights from Montreal begin this summer.

Casablanca. Yes, it's that Casablanca — the setting of the famous 1942 film of the same name starring Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman. Beside this claim to fame, Casablanca is one of the largest and most important cities in Africa. It offers breathtaking architecture, most notably the Casablanca Cathedral and the Hassan II Mosque designed by the French architect Michel Pinseau. Be sure to explore the small island of Marabout de Sidi Abderrahmane, a local favourite where you can walk across to the rocky island at low tide. New non-stop flights from Montreal begin this summer.

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 