

# 10 places I recommend you visit during your lifetime



Including:

Four which you are unlikely to have ever heard about before.

One which you can only visit if you pay a "bribe", but it'll blow your mind.

One where you can have a coffee with me.

# INSPIRATIONS FOR YOUR NEXT EXPLORATION OR HOLIDAY

ALL TRIED AND TESTED –  
TRUE PERSONAL RECOMMENDATIONS



Dear Reader,

Does the Internet really need another "Places you need to visit" list?

Based on the feedback I've received from readers and friends, it seems that it does!

I had no intention of writing such a list, but eventually, I gave in to popular demand.

On the following pages, you will learn about:

- Some of the most interesting, off-the-beaten-path destinations I have been lucky enough to visit during my trips to circa 70 countries.
- Places you could visit to learn about exciting alternatives for leading your life and running your business.
- Destinations that are interesting in the context of some of the exciting political and economic changes we are witnessing around the world right now, and which could influence how you live, work and invest in the future.

I keep the information about each of these places relatively short and heavily based on photos that I believe represent what these places are about.

For each of these places (except one!), there is plenty of information to be found on the web - though feel free to [email me](#) any specific questions you may have about these destinations.

Also, for two of the places listed herein, I regularly organise reader trips and events. Keep an eye out for them on my website and in the email notifications.

Besides that, I hope you find the following pages inspiring for your own travels!

Best regards

Swen Lorenz

# DESTINATIONS

1

"LAWRENCE  
OF ARABIA"



2

YAKUSHIMA  
ISLAND



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WADI AL  
HITAN



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BAALBEK



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# NORTHERN REGION OF SAUDI ARABIA

## WHY IS IT SO REMARKABLE?

This is the heartland of "Lawrence of Arabia", but few people visit. Saudi Arabia still does not offer tourist visas (despite repeated plans to do so), and when I visited in 2018, I was probably the only European tourist within at least 100 miles. I found the most fantastic ancient sites, in each one of which I was the only visitor. My local guide took me to one fortification built by Lawrence of Arabia, but it was not even on the map of the country's archaeological authorities. This is pioneer tourism in a country that needs to be visited to be understood.

## HOW TO BEST VISIT

Despite there not being tourist visas in the conventional sense, I did find a way to get into the country. Anyone can do it easily and safely, provided you are willing to spend around \$1,500 on "paperwork". [Contact me](#) if you would like further information. I also have the contact information of one of the very few guides for the area.



# NORTHERN REGION OF SAUDIA ARABIA



Mada'in Saleh is a vast archaeological site consisting of the remnants of a city of the Nabatean Kingdom. It was recently closed for refurbishment, so keep an eye out on its reopening. From the end of 2019, EU citizens should be able to travel to Saudi Arabia without a visa. This is just one of many historical sites that are in the North of the country.



Wadi Tayyib al-Ism is a 119km (74mi.) long gorge on the Arabian coast. You could, in theory, hike its entire length. If you go there for a day trip, you can drive into it and then follow a well-maintained path. The background noise provided by the birdlife of the gorge is spectacular, as is the sight of the granite walls rising up almost vertically around you.



# YAKUSHIMA ISLAND, JAPAN

## WHY IS IT SO REMARKABLE?

Over 95% of this island is owned by a forestry company, which since the 1960s has carried out one of the world's most successful reforestation programmes. Yakushima is little-known outside of Japan but offers an experience on par with places like the famous Galapagos Islands. Stunning nature, unusual wildlife, and a fascinating human community of 15,000 residents thrown in for good measure.

I have been to Japan five times. After my extensive travelling throughout the country, Yakushima remains my favourite Japanese destination. Extensive hiking is obligatory.

## HOW TO BEST VISIT

Plan to stay there for at least three days, ideally five or six days. You can reach the island by ferry or plane from Osaka. I can put you in touch with the best English-language guide of the island, [send me an email](#) if you require her contact details. She has also published [a book about Yakushima](#).



# YAKUSHIMA ISLAND



Yakushima's moss-covered forests will provide your explorations with a fairytale backdrop.

▶  
What's hiding in those forests? Among others, you'll find 3,000-year old trees to rival California's Sequoias.



# WADI AL HITAN, EGYPT

## WHY IS IT SO REMARKABLE?

Imagine walking around the desert looking at scores of fossilised whale skeletons. Then imagine that the whale skeletons have legs!

This remarkable natural visitor site, dubbed "Whale Valley" and designated as a stand-alone World Heritage Site by UNESCO, is 170km (105mi.) off the coast of the Mediterranean, i.e., deep into the Egyptian desert. It was covered by sea about 40 million years ago, home to a species of whale that provides the evolutionary link between land-dwelling mammals and what we now know as whales. If you think Darwin's Finches provided a good example of evolution, think again!

At last count, it received only about 1,000 foreign visitors per year. The newly built visitor facilities on site are world-class, and the 1.5-hour hike is a memory that will stay with you a lifetime.

## HOW TO BEST VISIT

Take a day-trip from Cairo, with a 4WD jeep. Do not go there with any driver who offers you a trip in a regular car. The desert drive is dangerous, and you could quickly get stuck. Day trips are offered by a range of websites, such as [www.viator.com](http://www.viator.com).

Wadi al Hitan is surrounded by a surreal landscape, one that was visibly shaped by water but which is now a desert.

# WADI AL HITAN





Your hike will take you past countless whale skeletons, fossilised mangrove forests, and vast areas covered by fragments of shells. It's an authentic Jurassic Park experience.



# BAALBEK, LEBANON

## WHY IS IT SO REMARKABLE?

The world's largest Roman temples aren't in Rome, but in the Baalbek Valley in Lebanon. I rank this place as more impressive than the Pyramids of Giza in Egypt. Parts of these facilities were built using giant rocks that even with today's technology could not be moved. The temples are known to consist of 13 layers built by consecutive civilisations, several of which remain unidentified. Very little research has been done about this place. Because the city of Baalbek is controlled by Hezbollah, it only gets a trickle of visitors, despite being perfectly safe.

## HOW TO BEST VISIT

Organised day trips are on offer from a variety of tour agencies in Beirut. During the same day trip, you should also visit the ancient city of Anjar as well as the winery of Ksara.



▲  
The Temple of Bacchus is one of the best preserved and grandest Roman temple ruins in the world. Incredibly, it was only rediscovered in 1898.

BAALBEK

▶  
The ruins of Baalbek span a vast area and will keep you occupied for hours.



# KRAKOW, POLAND

## WHY IS IT SO REMARKABLE?

If you like "Old Europe" but despise places that are overrun by masses of tourists, then Krakow is a place you should visit sooner rather than later. Its beautiful Old Town isn't exactly a secret, and it does get its fair share of visitors already. However, even during summer, it's still pleasant to visit, and outside of the high season, you will find it as charming as Venice was off-season until the early-2000s. I have no doubt that Krakow will eventually be absolutely overrun by visitors.

## HOW TO BEST VISIT

Depending on how many other day trips to nearby sites (such as Auschwitz) you want to do, stay for two to five days. The nearby Salt Mine of Wieliczka is definitely worth a visit and often overlooked by non-Polish visitors.

Exploring the backstreets of Krakow is best done with a good appetite so that you can make proper use of the large number of charming restaurants, bars, and cafes that you'll find in the different neighbourhoods.

KRAKOW



Old-style European culture at its best, in a perfectly restored and well-managed city.



# SAMARKAND, UZBEKISTAN

## WHY IS IT SO REMARKABLE?

This used to be the very heart of the ancient Silk Road. The three Islamic Schools ("Madrasahs") built on Samarkand's central square should be on the list of the world's top 10 most remarkable architectural wonders, alongside the likes of the Taj Mahal. They aren't yet, because Uzbekistan was shut off from the rest of the world until 2016. This site is like Cambodia's Angkor Wat back in the 1990s, i.e., few visitors and "access all areas" (such as climbing up minarets). Go before the crowds arrive!

## HOW TO BEST VISIT

Uzbekistan is worth a one to two-week visit. The country is safe and surprisingly comfortable to travel in. If you want to learn a bit more about my own trip, [read up my 3-part series on Uzbekistan](#), or [watch me in a Financial Times video that was shot in this very square!](#)

# SAMARKAND

I am convinced that Registan Square will one day be mentioned along with the Taj Mahal, Angkor Wat, and Machu Picchu. Right now, it is still relatively little-known.





Exploring Samarkand and its surrounding sites deserves spending not just one, but a few days. Don't book a trip that makes you hurry through this site.



# BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

## WHY IS IT SO REMARKABLE?

Few places on earth make you feel like you have landed on a different planet, and Buenos Aires is among them. It's surreal to experience a city that looks, feel and tastes like Italy or France, but which is actually in one of the most remote parts of the world. For anyone considering to leave Western Europe, Buenos Aires is an increasingly exciting alternative to look at if you don't have to rely on the local economy to make a living. I'd move there in a heartbeat!

## HOW TO BEST VISIT

Unless you enjoy the heat, stay clear of the peak summer period, which runs from December to February. Besides that, simply get a travel guide about Buenos Aires and the rest of Argentina. You can go for a week, a month or a year. This place indeed is your oyster.



Buenos Aires is a piece of Europe dropped into one of the most remote parts of South America. You would not be able to tell it apart from Italy.

# BUENOS AIRES

▶ Among the many gems of Buenos Aires is this former theatre converted into a bookshop. It has an English language section as well as a café (behind the curtain!) where you can comfortably linger for hours.



# SARK, CHANNEL ISLANDS

## WHY IS IT SO REMARKABLE?

Visiting Sark will teach you how your life could be without government bureaucracy. The island is the smallest independent state of the British Commonwealth. Despite having a population of just 400, it has its own parliament, its own legislation, and its own tax system. Sark has one of the most minimalist governments on earth, e.g., residents pay an annual property tax and are left in peace outside of that. Oh, it's also visually beautiful, has a fascinating 400-year history, and the seafood is as fresh as it gets.

## HOW TO BEST VISIT

The tourist season starts in April and ends in October. My personal favourite month is September when the crowds have left, but the crystal-clear sea has had all summer to warm up. I may organise one or the other reader event on Sark, so watch out for them getting announced in my e-letter (past Sark events always sold out quickly!).

# SARK

Sark has long had strict planning laws, which is why it offers miles of unspoilt coastline for you to explore and enjoy.



The small village in Sark will provide you with all the amenities that you require for a comfortable trip.



# TEL AVIV, ISRAEL

## WHY IS IT SO REMARKABLE?

Israel is a juggernaut of an economic success story, and nowhere else is this as visible as in Tel Aviv. It is also one of the genuinely cosmopolitan cities in the world, one that is at the forefront of new trends. I rate it as having one of the world's best urban beaches, besides all the obvious and less obvious historic sites it offers, such as the largest concentration of Bauhaus-style residential homes in its centre. Tel Aviv is another place I would happily spend a few months in or put my roots down (albeit, without Jewish heritage, they wouldn't let me).

## HOW TO BEST VISIT

I suspect most visitors to Israel will prioritise Jerusalem and try to do Tel Aviv on the side. During my own trip, both my companion and I agreed that unless you are there for biblical history, there is a strong case for doing it the other way around. Outside of that, given just how much is on offer across Israel, you'll really have to study a tour guide and create a plan based on what interests you the most. Just don't cut Tel Aviv short if you like cities!

A city with a 21<sup>st</sup> century mindset like Manhattan, but set on a beach that can easily rival Miami's South Beach.

TEL AVIV



The Bauhaus district of Tel Aviv is a large open-air museum, and I recommend trying to find an Airbnb apartment to stay in one of these buildings.



GALAPAGOS  
ISLANDS,  
ECUADOR

## WHY IS IT SO REMARKABLE?

Do they even need an introduction? Darwin, giant tortoises, and sea-faring iguanas. I created a successful vocational school on these islands back in 2005 and have lived there full-time from 2011 to 2015 as CEO of the Charles Darwin Foundation. Much as I have already travelled extensively throughout the archipelago, even I don't get bored with its sights and wonders. Each time, you see something entirely new and mind-blowing.

## HOW TO BEST VISIT

There is a plethora of tour operators and options which you can easily find on the Internet. Alternatively, I occasionally organise group trips for small numbers of readers. Over the past decade, I've organised six such tours for groups of 10-16 people. Send me an email if you'd like to register your interest.



If you are a bit lucky, you'll see tortoises that are so big that it'd take four men to lift them. Which, if they wander onto the road, is exactly what's required! I recently had one block the way on my trip back to the airport.

## GALAPAGOS ISLANDS



One of my personal favourite spots in the world, snorkelling with sharks and penguins in the waters just below the famous Pinnacle Rock on Bartholomew Island. You can reach this place by day trip, or as part of a cruise on a 16-passenger boat.

# DID YOU ENJOY THIS LIST OF DESTINATIONS?

Would you like to learn more about:

- Building a business that allows you to travel extensively.
- Picking the world's best jurisdictions, e.g., to minimise your taxes.
- Hacks and systems to get the most out of your life.

My website [www.swen-lorenz.com](http://www.swen-lorenz.com) is building a community of individuals who are passionate about these subjects.

Entirely separately, I also publish an investment blog. If you are interested in undervalued, publicly listed companies, then do pay a visit to [www.undervalued-shares.com](http://www.undervalued-shares.com).

Do visit regularly, and use my email alerts to read new articles right when they come out.



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