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TRAVEL

Long-haul and long-stay: five luxury itineraries for post-pandemic travel

Many travellers are planning to maximise their trips abroad this year, turning travels into long stays and multi-stop adventures. Here are five luxury itineraries, from a road trip route across New Zealand to an epic Russian trail trip.

BY SAMANTHA LEWIS

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The Marlborough region of New Zealand is home to stunning vineyards and spectacular views.

PHOTOGRAPH BY PATRIK STEDRAK

1. Driving across New Zealand

A self-drive tour is one of the best ways to see New Zealand — and this 17-day itinerary is nothing short of epic. Highlights include a gourmet wine tour in the Marlborough region, a stunning helicopter trip over [Fiordland National Park](#) and the Southern Lakes region and a kayak tour of the Dart River. Plus, you'll stay in some plush accommodation, from a farmhouse in the rolling hills to an award-winning lodge with otherworldly lake views.

How to do it: [Audley Travel](#) offer a 17-day tailor-made itinerary. Luxury New Zealand self-drive tour costs from £12,905 per person and includes flights, transfers, accommodation, car hire and excursions.

2. Wellness in the Himalayas

[Ananda in the Himalayas](#) is one of India's finest spa resorts, located on a maharaja's palace estate overlooking the city of Rishikesh. It offers all-inclusive packages of up to 21 days that focus on traditional Indian wellness practices. For the ultimate mind and body cleanse, opt for the Holistic Detox package. Guests receive one-on-one consultations and nourishing healthy meals and can take part in a range of daily activities including yoga and meditation. They can also enjoy spa treatments and use the hydrotherapy facilities, the epitome of pure indulgence.

How to do it: [Healing Holidays](#) can arrange a 21-night Holistic Detox programme from £9,249 per person sharing, including British Airways flights, transfers, full-board accommodation and the Holistic Detox programme.

3. Exploring Japan

You could spend a lifetime exploring Japan and still barely scratch the surface, so if you're planning a visit go for two weeks or more. This 23-day itinerary is ideal for first-timers as it features major tourist attractions and some off-the-

Heritage Site, and relax in a hot spring spa in the Japanese Alps.

How to do it: Audley Travel's 23-day tailor-made Deluxe grand tour of Japan itinerary costs from £20,280 per person and includes flights, transfers, accommodation and excursions.



Passengers aboard the Golden Eagle can enjoy luxury surroundings while taking in the beautiful views of Russia.

PHOTOGRAPH BY GETTY IMAGES

4. Ride the rails in Russia

Travel through Russia in style on the Golden Eagle, one of the world's top luxury trains. The 18-day tour starts with three nights in St Petersburg and one in Moscow before boarding the train. You'll then spend 12 nights travelling the famous Trans-Siberian route taking in some of the most remote parts of the country. You'll attend a concert in Kazan, visit Mongolian Nomads around Ulaan Baatar and travel along Lake Baikal on the Circum-Baikal Railway. The trip ends with a final night in Vladivostok where you'll learn about the city's

person and includes flights, transfers, hotel accommodation, 12 nights on the Golden Eagle and excursions.

5. 'Work from home' in the Maldives

If you're working remotely, why not swap your home office for a beach in the Maldives? [The Nautilus](#), in the Baa Atoll, has launched a 'Workation' package that allows guests to combine work and play for up to three weeks. They're provided with luxury office amenities, including a desk with a sea view, a personal assistant on hand 24/7, high-speed wi-fi and refreshments throughout the day. There's scheduled time for relaxing, too. The exclusive package also features daily yoga, fitness and mediation sessions, an outdoor cinema experience, snorkelling and a sunset cruise.

How to do it: [Red Savannah](#) offers a 21-day Workation package at The Nautilus, Maldives, from £23,485 per person, based on two people sharing. It includes 21 nights in a beach house with private pool, return flights from Heathrow to Male with Emirates (via Dubai) in Economy, VIP arrival in Malé, return seaplane transfers and the Workation package. Price based on travel in May 2021.

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Eight of the world's most atmospheric dining experiences, from Venice to New York

Ranging from Michelin-starred restaurants to curated picnic experiences, these eight locations are prized for their ambience, each providing the perfect setting for a gastronomic date to remember.

BY JOEL PORTER

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Dine beside the Grand Canal at Aman Venice's riverfront restaurant, Arva.

PHOTOGRAPH BY AMAN VENICE

For diners who value the ambience as much as the food, views, decor and atmosphere can be essential components in creating an unforgettable meal. Whether planning a Valentine's Day dinner out, a scenic lunch to remember or a curated picnic with a view, here are eight dining destinations around the world to bookmark for future travels.

1. Racines, Paris, France

While there are more obvious and flashy restaurants overlooking the Eiffel Tower or River Seine, the key to unlocking the romance of the City of Lights lies in finding a secluded corner to call your own. The 19th-century *passage couverts* (covered passages) are full of surprising nooks, perhaps none more so than the intimate, Michelin-starred wine bar Racines, with its antique tile floor, rickety oak furniture and walls stacked high with wine bottles. Add modern bistro dishes and a charismatic cast of waiters and elegant fellow diners, and *voilà*: an unrivalled Parisian evening out.

2. Clos Maggiore, London, UK

This French bistro is often ranked among the most beautiful restaurants in the

part of its charm, but it's the stunning conservatory dining room that really dials up the ambiance. Swathes of cherry blossom cover the glass ceiling and twinkling fairy lights hang artfully above the tables. And on chilly days, a roaring fire in a stone fireplace warms the room.

Sydney Picnic Co will make up a beautiful picnic hamper and deliver it right to the waterfront of Sydney Harbour, as well as to several other picturesque locations in the city.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDY STAFFORD

3. Sydney Harbour, Australia

With its famous Opera House and steel arched bridge, the views along Sydney Harbour count as some of the most iconic in the world — making it an ideal backdrop for dining out. There are plenty of restaurants with excellent vistas, but in a sun-drenched country like Australia, an al fresco picnic on the waterfront is the way to go. If you want someone to do the hard work for you, Sydney Picnic Co will make up a beautiful picnic hamper and deliver it right to the harbour (or to several other picturesque locations in the city).

Italian-American diner pays homage to the mid-20th century Lower East Side with decor so convincing you feel Frank Sinatra might saunter past. The dimly lit rooms with plush furniture and crisp white tablecloths set the stage for red-jacketed waiters who whizz around the room performing like actors on a stage. There are some legendary must-order dishes, such as the spicy rigatoni pasta, a favourite of eternally lovelorn rapper Drake (he even gave Carbone a shout out in his song Do Not Disturb).

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Boschendal Wine Estate in Franschhoek offers ready-made picnic hampers to enjoy in the grounds of the vineyard.

PHOTOGRAPH BY BOSCHENDAL WINE ESTATE

5. Picnic in the Cape Winelands, South Africa

South Africa certainly isn't lacking in beautiful scenery, but its pride and joy is Stellenbosch, only an hour's drive outside Cape Town. It's famous for its vineyards, but just as intoxicating as the wine is the landscape — all rolling hills, lush greenery and Cape Dutch architecture. Many of the wineries, such as [Boschendal Wine Estate](#), have delis with ready-made picnic hampers to take away. Enjoy them in the grounds of the vineyard itself or take a short drive to the stunning Jonkershoek Nature Reserve to find your own spot.

6. Arva at Aman Venice, Italy

Set in the 16th-century Palazzo Papadopoli on the Grand Canal, the Aman Venice is one of the city's most significant buildings, a stunning, frescoed baroque palace filled with chandeliers, antiques and artworks. It's one of the most exclusive addresses in the Floating City, but even if you're not sleeping here, you can get a taste of Venetian high society by booking a table for dinner at [Arva](#), the hotel's intimate restaurant. Choose between the grandeur of the dining room with its yellow tapestries and marble fireplace or, in the summer months, the tables in the private canal-side garden where you can watch gondolas drift by.

At Arva, the intimate restaurant at Aman Venice, choose between the grandeur of the dining room or, in the summer months, the private canal-side garden where you can watch gondolas drift by.

PHOTOGRAPH BY AMAN VENICE

7. Il Refettorio, Amalfi Coast, Italy

With jaw-dropping scenery and some of the best Italian restaurants in the world, the Amalfi Coast is well-charted terrain for honeymooning couples. When it comes to dinner locations, however, they don't come much more exclusive than Il Refettorio, the Michelin-starred restaurant at the Monastero Santa Rosa Hotel & Spa. Set in a converted 17th-century monastery, the hotel and restaurant hang over the edge of the cliff, offering candlelit tables with spectacular views across the Tyrrhenian Sea. On the menu there's fresh pasta, fish and produce from the Campania region, plus superb Italian wines.

8. Hanami picnic, Japan

Visit Japan during the first throes of spring to witness its spring cherry blossom season, when the country's parks and cities are awash with bright pink petals. These picture-perfect scenes provide the backdrop for *hanami* (flower viewing) picnics, a centuries-old tradition that sees friends, family and

available — everything from iced tea to limited edition KitKats. The trees bloom between mid-March and early May depending on the climate and their location in the country, while plum blossom trees (*ume*) bloom from early February to mid-March.

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