

DESTINATIONS

10 of the best places to spend New Year's Eve

Bucket-list destinations for seeing in 2019



BY IAN THE BUTT

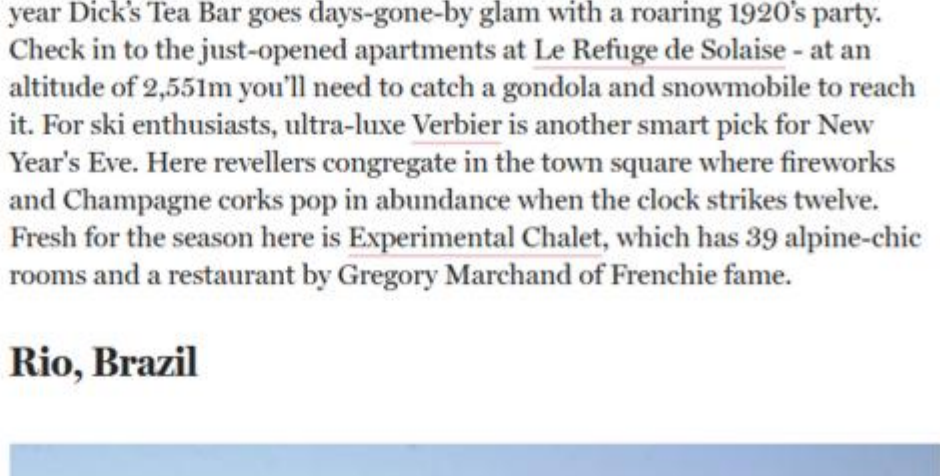
New Year; it's the one night where the planet unites in celebration. Whether you want to head on a mini-break or take a once-in-a-lifetime adventure, there's a New Year's Eve destination to suit every traveller. From firework-filled urban shindigs to barefoot parties on far-flung beaches, here are ten of the best places to spend New Year's Eve...

Hong Kong, China



Hong Kong's New Year's Eve countdown centres around a striking laser light and fireworks show in Victoria Harbour. The water's edge is the place to be - on the Kowloon side, people line the Tsim Sha Tsui Pier, from the iconic Star Ferry Pier all the way to the New World Centre - where a street party kicks off a couple of hours before midnight. For a unique vantage point take in celebrations from a traditional junk boat, such as Aqualuna, go sky-high at Ce La Vi Sky Bar, the Peninsula's 28th-floor restaurant Felix, or toast the New Year in with a mulled wine negroni at The Kerry's waterfront terrace bar, Red Sugar. Bed down at newly-opened The Murray, which has fabulous lobby artwork by Korean artist Seon-ghi Bahk and elegant rooms next to leafy Hong Kong Park.

Val d'Isère, France



It's a well-known fact that powder junkies love the après as much as the snowy slopes, and Val d'Isère delivers on both fronts when it comes to NYE. Celebrations at the legendary La Folie Douce are always a riot, sequined cabaret dancers shaking their tail feathers and top-notch DJs, while this year Dick's Tea Bar goes days-gone-by glam with a roaring 1920s party. Check in to the just-opened apartments at Le Refuge de Solaise - at an altitude of 2,551m you'll need to catch a gondola and snowmobile to reach it. For ski enthusiasts, ultra-luxe Verbier is another smart pick for New Year's Eve. Here revellers congregate in the town square where fireworks and Champagne corks pop in abundance when the clock strikes twelve. Fresh for the season here is Experimental Chalet, which has 39 alpine-chic rooms and a restaurant by Gregory Marchand of French fame.

READ NEXT



18 houses to book now for a New Year party

BY LEANNE WALSTOW

Rio, Brazil



All glitter, tropical glitz and hip-shaking samba rhythms, no one knows quite how to party like the Brazilians. See in the new year on the sand of the capital's most famous beach Copacabana, where live bands perform jazzy tunes and barefoot dancers shimmy all night. Join the locals in the surf under a firework-filled sky at midnight, and jump over seven waves - a tradition which is said to invoke the power of sea goddess Lemanjá. The de rigueur dress code is all-white - to ward off evil spirits and bring good luck. If you can't face the crowds (over 2 million people a year) head to [Hotel Emiliano](#), a smart boutique property for a bossa nova party on its rooftop bar, and futuristic-feel rooms to snooze in afterwards.

Vienna, Austria



There aren't many places on the planet where you can start your year having a knees-up in a palace. That is, other than in Vienna, where a highlight of the ball season - which runs from November through to February - is the New Year's Eve Ball at the Hofburg Imperial Palace. A tux and ballgown affair, it brings together a swanky gala supper with entertainment ranging from prouetting ballerinas from the city's top companies, chandelier-performances, and plenty of waltzing opportunities in grand, opulent-filled surrounds. Not to mention a live orchestra, and fireworks exploding over the Old Town. For an extra cultural hit there's a concert by the famed Vienna Philharmonic at the Musikverein on New Year's Day.

Reykjavik, Iceland



Although you'd never know until nightfall, one of the biggest draws to spending New Year's Eve in Iceland is the chance to glimpse the ethereal Northern Lights streaking across the sky. The atmosphere on Reykjavik's snow-filled streets is cosy and convivial, with community bonfires lit across the city. At midnight, families and friends set off some 500 tonnes of fireworks to illuminate the city. While there's no official event, it's a unique pyrotechnic extravaganza. For great views head to Vighóll hill in Kópavogur, or for a real party atmosphere visit concrete church Hallgrímskirkja, downtown. Stay at the design-led Ion City Hotel - from the team behind the sleek Ion Adventure Hotel - it has 18 contemporary rooms with snug touches.

READ NEXT



The best American road trips to see autumn leaves

BY LEANNE WALSTOW

London, England



Come midnight, London's skies become a spectacle - set ablaze with impressive fireworks displays. The heart of the action is riverside close to the London Eye, with tickets available for standing space along Embankment, the South Bank and Westminster and Waterloo Bridges. Parliament Hill on Hampstead Heath, or Primrose Hill are good places to view the festivities from a distance. For a quirkier party, guests at the National History Museum's Party Animals bash can wander the galleries (and the acclaimed Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition), after hours, and dance under the skeleton of Blue Whale, Hope. For sky-high firework-viewers and serious 70s vibes, Sky Garden's hosting a groovy Studio 54-themed party, while over at Somerset House, see in the New Year festive-style whizzing around its pop-up ice rink, accompanied by soon-to-be-revealed entertainment.

Edinburgh, Scotland



No one does New Year quite like the Scots; Hogmanay celebrations hark back to the days when the Vikings used to hold wild parties to celebrate the winter solstice. These days it's a three-day tartan-and-whiskey-filled spectacle. Highlights include a torchlit procession along the Royal Mile, Bach cantatas by candlelight at St Giles' Cathedral, and Creamfields classics accompanied by a live orchestra at Symphonic Ibiza (all on December 30th this year). On New Year's Eve, there are early evening singalong parties for little revellers, traditional ceilidhs, as well as street performers, fire-eaters and big-name acts (Scott chart-toppers Franz Ferdinand) performing at Princes Street Gardens - all building up to Auld Lang Syne and fireworks whizzing from the Castle ramparts. Stay at the Dunstane Houses, a revamped Victorian town house in the West End, where rooms are old-world glam with rooms' deep, free-standing copper bathtubs - the ideal place to soak off the night's festivities.

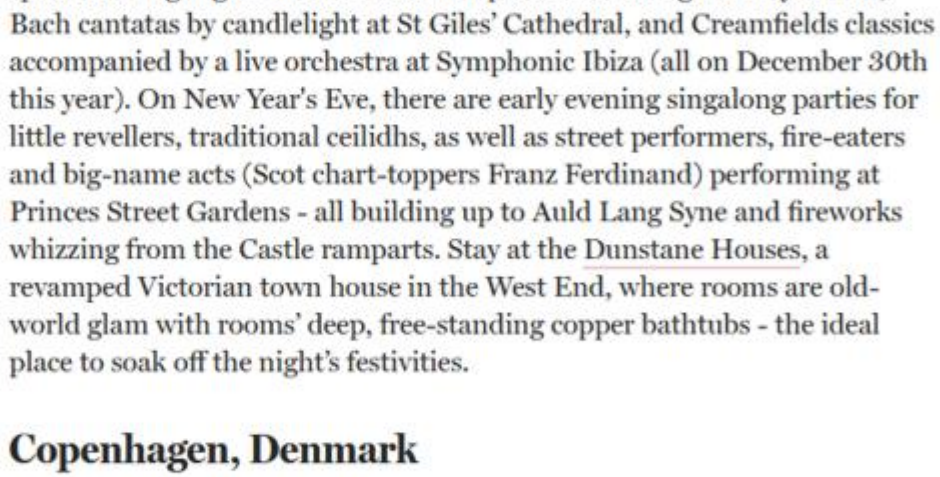
READ NEXT



Famous writers' houses you have to visit

BY LEANNE WALSTOW

Copenhagen, Denmark



Famed for its contemporary design, New Nordic cuisine and spire-filled skyline, celebrations in Europe's coolest capital centres around the Rådhuspladsen - or City Hall Square. At six o'clock, Danes gather to watch the Queen's New Year's Speech - shown on big screens - and the festive atmosphere grows until a show-stopping fireworks display at midnight. Another jolly spot - particularly good for families - is Tivoli Gardens. Centred around a lake, this enchanting park has a funfair with a classic Ferris Wheel and looping rollercoaster. Book in for a New Year's feast at Tivoli Chteel, or the twinkly-lit greenhouse of Gemise - before rip-roaring fireworks at eleven. Stay at Nimble Hotel - actually *in* the park - well-known for its lightbulb-studded Moorish-style architecture, or for somewhere more central book new industrial-chic crashpad Herman K, which is housed in a converted 1960s electrical power station.

New York, USA



A real classic, everyone should do New Year's in New York at least once in a lifetime. The most quintessentially NYC activity is to join the crowds going wild in Times Square as a 5-ton Waterford-crystal adorned, glowing ball drops, and the air fills with fluttering confetti to ring in the new year. Nice alternatives are to head to Prospect Park for fireworks and rousing live music, to don sportsgear and join the New York Runner's NYE run on a four-mile Central Park dash at midnight, or take in a mind-bending performance from immersive theatre maestros punchdrunk, with a masquerade-themed after-party at the McKittrick Hotel.

Sydney, Australia



Arguably the world's most famous fireworks explode happens in Sydney, with warm-up shows for little ones, air displays, and a dazzling light show, all building up to the main event at midnight which sees fireworks whizz from barges on the water, the Harbour Bridge and Opera House. While the best (and busiest) views are from the Harbour, those from the Botanic Gardens are fantastic too, plus there are swish river cruises too. For killer views minus the crowds, head to Sydney Observatory's sophisticated garden party, then sleep over at hip newbie hotel, Paramount House Hotel in Surry Hills.

DESTINATIONS | TRAVEL & LIFESTYLE

Share this article

