



This March 4, 2016 photo shows a skier at the Rusutsu resort in Hokkaido, Japan. Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost island, is home to a number of ski resorts known for deep snow. Tourism to Japan is booming and Hokkaido has turned up on several lists of top destinations for 2017.



This Aug. 24, 2014 file photo shows a child sprayed by a wave on the promenade, a popular tourist hotspot near the city of Cape Town, South Africa. Cape Town is turning up on some lists for places to go in 2017, partly because exchange rates make it affordable and also because a new contemporary arts museum is opening in the fall.

Where to go in 2017: Best destinations around the world

By **BETH J. HARPAZ**
AP Travel Editor

Where should you travel in 2017? Maybe you want to witness the U.S. solar eclipse, take advantage of great exchange rates abroad or get in on the hoopla for big anniversaries in places like Alaska, Germany, Canada or Finland. Perhaps you're looking for a Zika-free beach or a destination unscathed by terrorism.

The Associated Press looked at events, trends and recommendations from travel agents, magazines, publishers and others, to compile this list of where to go in 2017.

EVENTS & ANNIVERSARIES

On Aug. 21, a total eclipse of the sun lasting for more than 2 minutes will darken afternoon skies across a narrow strip of the United States stretching from South Carolina to Oregon. Nashville is one of the cities that will experience the phenomenon along with a number of national parks. Hotels in many eclipse destinations are sold out.

All eyes on Washington, D.C., for Donald Trump's Jan. 20 inauguration. An anti-Trump protest billed as a Women's March is scheduled for Jan. 21. Another D.C. draw: the new National Museum of African American History and Culture. Timed passes for the museum are essential.

Houston hosts the Super Bowl in February.

In June, Bermuda hosts the America's Cup sailing race. Just don't think of Bermuda as the Caribbean. It's nearly 1,000 miles north of Puerto Rico and too chilly for ocean swimming in January. On the plus side, Bermuda is Zika-free, and its famous Hamilton Princess hotel — aka the Pink Palace — is newly renovated.

Alaska celebrates the 150th anniversary of its transfer from Russia to the U.S. in 2017 along with the centennial of Denali National Park. Alaska cruises, which provide an easy introduction to the 49th state, got a shout-out from Travel Leaders travel agents.

Canada celebrates 150 years since its colonies were united under the Canadian Confederation, and Montreal marks its 375th anniversary. Don't forget the country's national parks and wild places. Frommer's singled out the British Columbia archipelago



This Sept. 14, 2016 photo shows the Washington Monument framed by a window at the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington. The new museum is a huge draw for visitors to Washington in 2017, but all eyes will also be on the city for Donald Trump's inauguration Jan. 20 and an anti-Trump march Jan. 21.



In this May 13, 2015 file photo, worshipers throw flower petals at the statue of the Our Lady of Fatima as it is carried at the Our Lady of Fatima shrine, in Fatima, central Portugal. The centennial of the miracle will be observed in 2017 with a visit by the pope, and it's one reason that Portugal has turned up on several lists for where to go in the new year.

Haida Gwaii, recently visited by Prince William and Kate.

With exhibits, tours and more, Germany marks 500 years since Martin Luther's "95 Theses" critique of the Catholic Church, which launched the Protestant Reformation.

Finland marks 100 years since independence from Russia in

2017. Go for the Northern Lights, design innovation in cool Helsinki, folk culture and saunas.

In Russia, 2017 marks 100 years since the revolution that toppled the czar and led to the rise of communism. The date was once a major state holiday but today it's a divisive subject, no longer glorified as it once was. With Vladimir

Putin's connections to Trump making headlines, some Americans may want to see Putinland firsthand. But visas for Russia can be complicated without help from a travel agency, though there's talk of simplifying the process.

DESTINATION DARLINGS

As concerns about terrorism cast shadows on destinations like France and Turkey, other destinations are coming into the spotlight. Portugal is having a moment, turning up on lots of go-to lists. It's safe and affordable with great food, wine and soulful fado music. The pope visits in May to mark the centennial of a miracle in the town of Fatima, where three children had a vision of the Virgin Mary in 1917.

The value of the British pound has weakened in the wake of Brexit (Britain's vote to leave the European Union), making the United Kingdom more affordable for many international travelers.

Last tango in Cuba? Some folks want to go now, afraid Trump will restrict travel there. Others are postponing booking, waiting to see what happens.

With Rust Belt states getting attention in politics, maybe it's time for travelers to land in "flyover country." Indianapolis

and Cincinnati turned up on Travel + Leisure's list. Other great Midwest destinations for art and food include Detroit — don't miss the Motown Museum — and Milwaukee, where the Harley-Davidson Museum draws visitors from around the world.

Mexico remains a top destination for Americans, from cheap spring breaks in Cancun to cultural attractions in places like Oaxaca. But if you're avoiding Latin America and the Caribbean because of Zika, consider Hawaii or Greece.

Tourism to Japan is booming but it's not just Tokyo. Hokkaido, an island known for skiing, turned up on Afar and Lonely Planet lists.

Cape Town, South Africa, is being recommended by Fodor's, Travel + Leisure and Lonely Planet, with a spotlight on the opening of the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa in September. Exchange rates make it a bargain right now.

Artsy Asheville, in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina, landed in top spots for both Lonely Planet and Afar magazine, despite a state law limiting LGBT rights that led some entities to boycott the state.

THEME PARKS

Guests visiting Disneyland in California and Disney World in Florida can now meet Moana, star of the new Disney film. But the biggest 2017 news from Disney parks is the summer opening of a new land at Animal Kingdom in Florida called Pandora — The World of AVATAR, inspired by the movie "Avatar." Pandora will include a multisensory ride called Flight of Passage and a water ride.

Fans of the classic Twilight Zone Tower of Terror attraction at Disney California Adventure park can stop mourning its Jan. 2 closing. It will be replaced next summer by Guardians of the Galaxy — Mission: BREAKOUT! with freefall and other ride experiences.

Universal Orlando Resort opens Volcano Bay water park early next summer, featuring an innovative water ride called the Krakatau Aqua Coaster. Volcano Bay visitors will also use new wearable technology that allows them to wait in line virtually. In the spring, Universal opens a hilarious new ride themed on a wild race through New York City against Jimmy Fallon.

The secret to a better pasta? Bake it, don't cook it

By **SARA MOULTON**
Associated Press

If there's anything more comforting than boiled pasta in a sauce, it's got to be baked pasta in a sauce. The baking adds a crispy crust that is such a delicious contrast to the tender goodness of the dish.

The challenge is how to get the pasta to turn out just right. Most baked pasta recipes instruct you to boil the noodles until cooked halfway before baking them. This allows the pasta to finish cooking in the oven as it bathes in the sauce. But this method has challenges. If you boil the noodles more than halfway, they'll be overcooked by the time you pull the finished dish out of the oven. I find it hard to get the precooking time right.

And precooking the pasta, even halfway, takes work and dirties a large pot and colander. Then again, if you don't precook the pasta and instead add it dry to the sauce for baking, it will take much longer to become tender in the oven, even as it absorbs all the liquid in the sauce. Dry pasta needs to hydrate.

So what's a home cook to do? Use my simple no-cook method of precooking the pasta. Just soak the pasta in warm salted water before adding it to the other ingredients and sliding the mixture into the oven. Presoaking is a way to begin hydrating the pasta and washing away



Baked penne pasta with prosciutto and fontina cheese.

some of its starch, even as the salt in the water pre-seasons the pasta.

Yes, you'll dirty a bowl, but given that that's the same vessel in which you'll combine all the dish's ingredients, it's the only bowl you'll need. The soak requires 45 minutes, but it's hands-off time, freeing you to prep the rest of the ingredients. Then it takes no time at all to assemble the dish and pop it into the oven.

Just 20 or so minutes later you can

collect your reward: deeply flavored baked pasta, creamy on the bottom and crispy on top. Add a salad and some crusty bread and be happy.

Sara Moulton is host of public television's "Sara's Weeknight Meals." She was executive chef at Gourmet magazine for nearly 25 years and spent a decade hosting several Food Network shows, including "Cooking Live." Her latest cookbook is "Home Cooking 101."

BAKED PENNE WITH PROSCIUTTO AND FONTINA

Start to finish: 1 hour 15 minutes (20 minutes active)

Servings: 6

- 1 pound penne pasta
- Kosher salt
- Butter, for coating the baking pan
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 cup crushed tomatoes
- 1 to 2 teaspoons red pepper flakes, to taste (optional)
- 1 1/2 ounces finely grated Parmesan cheese
- 4 ounces coarsely grated fontina cheese
- 4 ounces thinly sliced prosciutto, chopped

In a large bowl, combine the pasta with enough lukewarm, well-salted water to cover. Let stand for 45 minutes.

Heat the oven to 450 F. Lightly butter a shallow baking dish (12-cup capacity with 2 to 2 1/2-inch sides).

Drain the pasta and set aside. In the same bowl, combine all remaining ingredients, stirring well. Add the pasta, toss to combine, then season with a pinch of salt. Transfer the mixture to the prepared baking dish, pressing it down evenly. Bake on the oven's middle shelf until bubbly and browned, 20 to 22 minutes.

Nutrition information per serving: 590 calories; 240 calories from fat (41 percent of total calories); 27 g fat (15 g saturated; 0.5 g trans fats); 100 mg cholesterol; 1060 mg sodium; 63 g carbohydrate; 3 g fiber; 5 g sugar; 24 g protein.