

# From Malta to Minneapolis, a look at where to go in 2018

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

NEW YORK — From Malta to Minneapolis, here's a look at some destinations around the world that will be making news in 2018. They include designated culture capitals, places hosting sporting events and even a couple of cities — San Antonio, Texas, and New Orleans — celebrating their 300th birthdays.

## Sports

Minneapolis hosts the Super Bowl on Feb. 4 in Minneapolis. The city is encouraging visitors to embrace winter with 10 days of "Bold North" events and activities leading up to the big game. On the other side of the world, the snowy mountains of Pyeongchang, South Korea, host the Winter Olympic Games, Feb. 9-25.

Eleven cities in Russia — including Moscow and Sochi — host the FIFA World Cup, June 14-July 15. The dates coincide with St. Petersburg's "white nights," the summer solstice season when city skies never get completely dark. FIFA reports strong ticket sales from the United States even though the U.S. national team failed to qualify for the games. Host cities include lesser-known gems like Nizhny Novgorod and Kazan, while Yekaterinburg is a good jumping-off point for an adventure in Siberia.

## Tricentennials

Two American cities mark tri-centennials in 2018. San Antonio plans a commemoration week in May, a "Summer of Spain" marketplace highlighting Spanish food, art and culture, Day of the Dead events Oct. 29-30 and a Witte Museum exhibition about the city's frontier history under the flags of many countries. The exhibit will include the keys to the Alamo and Davy Crockett's fiddle.

In New Orleans, tricentennial events include the Prospect.4 art exhibition, which is already underway; a blow-out Mardi Gras, Feb. 13, with the Krewe of Rex procession themed on New Orleans' history; various spring festivals; Luna Fete next December; and a New Orleans Museum of Art exhibition showcasing works by Raphael, Titian, Rembrandt and others from the Duke of Orleans' collection.

## Culture and design capitals

Despite the recent car bomb murder of an investigative journalist



AP Photo/Virginia Mayo, File

In this Feb. 3 file photo, a boat passes through the entrance to the Grand Harbour in Valletta, Malta. Valletta was declared one of two European Capitals of Culture for 2018, kicking off with an island-wide Maltese Festa Jan. 14-21. The other European Capital of Culture is the Dutch city of Leeuwarden, the capital of Friesland.



AP Photo/Gerald Herbert, File

In this Feb. 28 file photo, revelers congregate at the start of the Society of Saint Anne Mardi Gras parade in New Orleans. The city celebrates its tricentennial in 2018.

in Malta, the island is on many "where to go" lists for 2018. Its capital, Valletta, is one of Europe's 2018 capitals of culture and a UNESCO World Heritage Site with 7,000 years of history. Attractions include festivals, nightlife, ancient stone architecture, a rollicking Carnival in February and other festivals, plus World War II history, including scuba diving to wartime wrecks.

The other European capital of culture for 2018 is Leeuwarden in the Netherlands' province of Friesland. Cultural extravaganzas include an

Aug. 31-Sept. 1 event expanding an annual marathon across 23 villages with music, art, theater and unusual pop-up hotels.

Mexico City has been designated the sixth World Design Capital and the first city in the Americas to receive the title. It's being recognized for sustainable design-led initiatives like bike-sharing, urban gardens, parks and playgrounds. Events will include exhibits, conferences and installations.

## From England to Ethiopia

Elsewhere around the world, destinations on the travel industry's

radar for 2018 range from England to Ethiopia.

England is suddenly a pop culture darling. Fans of the Netflix series "The Crown" can visit one of Queen Elizabeth's favorite places, Sandringham House, April-November, while those intrigued by the May 2018 wedding of American actress Meghan Markle to Prince Harry can tour their wedding site, Windsor Castle. Oscar-watchers interested in "The Darkest Hour," starring Gary Oldman as Prime Minister Winston Churchill during World War II, should visit the



AP Photo/Rebecca Blackwell, File

In this Nov. 12 file photo, models displays creations by Mexican fashion house Yakampot during a fashion show at the Angel of Independence monument, in Mexico City.

Churchill War Rooms museum in London. Also to keep in mind: The Lake District was just named a UNESCO World Heritage site. Visits by Americans to England were up 31 percent January-June 2017 compared with the same period in 2016, thanks in part to the U.S. dollar's strength against the British pound.

Concerns about terror attacks and unrest have dampened travel to Egypt, Turkey and other destinations in North Africa and the Middle East. But that's prompted interest in places in the region that are perceived as safe and just as compelling culturally, including Morocco and Jordan. In Africa, Ethiopia also popped up on a couple of where-to-go lists. Its magical attractions include the churches in Lalibela, carved from soft stone and dating to the 12th century.

## Asia and Central Asia

U.S. visitors to Japan increased 10 percent January-October 2017 compared with the same period in 2016, and the upward trend is expected to continue as Japan pushes tourism ahead of the 2020 Summer Olympics. Where-to-go lists are highlighting not just Tokyo but also places like Sapporo and the Kii Peninsula, honored as a UNESCO World Heritage site for its pilgrimage routes and sacred mountains.

These days, many well-traveled millennials have already hoppedscotched around Western Europe by the time they're done with college, so it makes sense that they're turning to Asia for spring breaks and backpacking trips with stops in Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, China, India and Singapore. The youth-oriented travel company StudentUniverse says bookings for 18- to 25-year-old U.S. passport holders to Asia from the U.S. have risen more than 700 percent since 2014. And many of those travelers stay in Asia three weeks or more.

Another area that's starting to intrigue travelers as they expand bucket lists beyond familiar destinations is Central Asia, which includes the countries of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and others with names ending in "-stan." The country of Georgia also turns up on several where-to-go-in-2018 lists. Geographically it's considered part of Asia but culturally it's more Eastern European.

## Korean Grain Bowl is built on healthy, filling ingredients

By **SARA MOULTON**  
Associated Press

Every New Year, lots of us resolve to lose weight. And every year, lots of us fail. The problem? We go from eating too much food, much of it unhealthy, to eating very little of anything. But after starving ourselves for a while, many of us return to our old habits and regain the weight.

This recipe for a Korean Grain Bowl is built on healthy, filling ingredients — whole grains and vegetable protein — and some good fat. It's a middle ground between empty calories and self-starvation. In Korea, this traditional rice dish is called bibimbap. Usually it consists of white rice topped with meat, vegetables, a raw or cooked egg, a soy-based sauce and some chili paste — all of it tossed together right before eating. My version swaps in a few healthier ingredients and increases the amount of veggies.

Instead of white rice, use your favorite whole grain, such as brown rice, wheat berries or quinoa. Instead of meat, use tofu, a protein-rich bean curd that can be prepared to feature a satisfyingly "meaty" texture. Start with firm tofu, cut it into planks 1/3-inch thick, and weigh it down between paper towels for 20 minutes to remove excess moisture.

Miso sesame sauce, an all-purpose sauce for many items like sautéed fish and raw vegetables, makes this dish even more substantial. I encourage you to prepare your own, but if you don't have time, just drizzle your bowl with low-sodium soy sauce.

The vegetables specified here — carrots, shiitakes and spinach — could be replaced with vegetables of your choice. Just be sure to pick from different-colored vegetable groups, which will deliver both nutritional and visual benefits.

But whatever else you might swap out or lose, don't abandon the lightly fried egg. Breaking the yolk and tossing it with the other ingredients adds a creamy coating to the grains. It's the perfect finishing touch.

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 "HomeCooking 101."



Sara Moulton via AP

Korean grain bowl.

### KOREAN GRAIN BOWL

**Servings:** 4  
**Start to finish:** 80 minutes (45 active)

#### For the miso sesame sauce:

- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 2 tablespoons white or red miso
- 2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger
- 1 1/2 tablespoons well-stirred tahini
- 1 teaspoon sugar

#### For the grain bowl:

- 1 cup brown rice, wheat berries or whole grain of your choice (you'll need 3 cups cooked)
- 8 ounces firm tofu
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 2 cups coarsely grated carrots
- Koshier salt
- Black pepper
- 4 ounces shiitake mushrooms, stems discarded and caps cut into 1-inch pieces
- 5 ounces baby spinach
- 4 large eggs
- 1/2 cup thinly sliced scallions
- 1 tablespoon toasted sesame seeds
- Korean chili sauce (Gochujang), Sriracha or the hot sauce of your choice
- Kimchi for garnish (optional)

Make the sauce: In a blender combine all of the ingredients with 1 tablespoon water and blend until smooth. Set aside.

Prepare the grain bowl: Cook the rice, wheat berries or whole grain of your choice such as quinoa following the package directions (you should have about 3 cups); keep warm. Slice the tofu into planks 1/3-inch thick. Place the planks between paper towels on a plate, top the plate with another plate and a weight, such as several cans of tomatoes, and set aside for 20 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 300 degrees F. In a large nonstick skillet heat 1 tablespoon of the oil over medium heat. Add the carrots, season them with salt and pepper to taste, and cook, stirring, until they are crisp-tender, about 2 minutes. Transfer them to a rimmed baking sheet.

Add another 1 1/2 tablespoons oil to the skillet. Add the mushrooms and a pinch of salt and cook, stirring occasionally, just until tender, about 4 minutes. Add the spinach and another pinch of salt to the mushrooms and cook, stirring, just until wilted, about 3 minutes. Transfer the mixture to the baking sheet with the carrots.

Cut the tofu planks in half and pat the pieces dry. Heat another 1/2 tablespoon of oil in the skillet over medium-high heat; add the tofu. Cook until golden brown, about 3 minutes a side. Transfer the tofu to the baking sheet and put the baking sheet of ingredients in the oven to keep warm while you fry the eggs.

Heat the remaining tablespoon of oil in the skillet over medium heat, add the eggs and fry until cooked to the desired degree of doneness.

To serve, mound 3/4 cup of hot grain into the center of each of 4 shallow bowls. Arrange one-fourth of the tofu on top along with one egg and one-fourth of the carrots and the spinach mixture. Sprinkle the scallions and sesame seeds over the top and drizzle with the miso sesame sauce and hot sauce. Serve with the kimchi on the side.

**Nutrition information per serving:** 617 calories; 333 calories from fat; 38 g fat (5 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 215 mg cholesterol; 508 mg sodium; 50 g carbohydrate; 6 g fiber; 4 g sugar; 20 g protein.

## Where not to go in 2018

The Associated Press

As you contemplate all those "where to go in 2018" lists, here's a twist: a list of places to avoid in the new year.

The where not to go list is from Fodor's, the travel guidebook publisher. Fodor's "no list" includes places plagued by overtourism and destinations with safety issues. They range from a U.S. state to bucket-list wonders of the world. Here are the 10 places Fodor's suggests we avoid.

**THE GALAPAGOS:** Ecuador heavily regulates tourism in the Galapagos as part of its environmental conservation policies, but Fodor's says the islands' fragile ecosystems remain vulnerable.

**THE PLACES THAT DON'T WANT YOU TO VISIT:** Too many tourists in places like Venice and Amsterdam have resulted in a local backlash against visitors. Fodor's says we should just stay away.

**TAJ MAHAL:** In 2018, the Taj Mahal's dome will get its first thorough cleaning since the monument was built 369 years ago. A mud paste has been used to clean other parts of the monument, and Fodor's says "unless your dream Taj Mahal visit involves being photographed standing in front of a mud-caked and be-scaffolded dome, maybe give it until 2019 at the earliest."

**PHANG NGA PARK, THAILAND:** Fodor's says "the rush to paradise has overwhelmed" some of Thailand's beaches with pollution and overuse. Successful recovery initiatives are in progress, but Fodor's recommends taking "the road less littered and enjoy a tropical vacay away from the fray."

**MYANMAR:** Just a few years ago Myanmar was on every globetrotter's list, having opened up to tourism after years of isolation. Now Myanmar is one of the world's pariahs because of a violent campaign against the ethnic Rohingya minority. Fodor's noted that the United Nations labeled the atrocities "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing."

**MOUNT EVEREST:** Fodor's says the pursuit of bragging rights from a trip up Mount Everest just isn't worth the danger (six people died climbing there in 2017) and the cost (\$25,000 to \$45,000).

**MISSOURI:** Fodor's put Missouri on its no-go list because of an NAACP travel advisory for the state, citing reports that African-Americans were more likely than whites to be stopped by law enforcement officers there, as well as other incidents and policies that raise questions about various types of discrimination.

**HONDURAS:** The murder rate in Honduras has dropped in the last several years but it's still among the deadliest places on earth. Fodor's says travelers should stay safe and spend their money elsewhere.

**GREAT WALL AND BEIJING:** Fodor's cites the deterioration of sections of the Great Wall of China and air pollution in Beijing as reasons to stay away.

**CUBA:** Americans are still permitted to visit Cuba, but new rules from the Trump administration are complicated and the mysterious illness reported among American embassy workers in Havana is worrisome. Fodor's urges caution.