



THE TRAVEL BOOK



A JOURNEY THROUGH **EVERY COUNTRY** IN THE WORLD



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MELBOURNE | OAKLAND | LONDON

THE STORY OF THE TRAVEL BOOK

Most travel journeys take in just a country or two, but the journey you're about to embark on incorporates every country on earth. In this book you'll find evocative glimpses of every single nation in the world, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, from the postage-stamp-sized Vatican City to the epic expanse of the Russian Federation.

To actually visit all the countries in this book would require several passports and a suitcase of plane tickets, or it can be simulated with a turn of these pages. Highlighted by some of the finest photography in the world, the *Travel Book* offers a glimpse of each country's perks and quirks: when to go, what to see, how to eat it up and drink it in, and ways to immerse yourself in the life and the land. What results is a grand snapshot of our diverse and kaleidoscopic world rather than an encyclopedic reference. It's a book that unashamedly views the planet through the prism of the traveller, focusing on places for their beauty, charm or singularity, even if this does sometimes conflict with defined political or geographical borders.

THE COUNTRY CONUNDRUM

A country count can be an arbitrary thing. At its core we've used the UN's list of 192 member states. Every one of these countries features in the book, but we've also built on the list to include foreign dependencies, whether they be self-governing or not, that are popular traveller destinations. Thus you'll find Caribbean islands (Anguilla, Cayman Islands, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Puerto Rico, Turks & Caicos, Virgin Islands), Atlantic islands

(Bermuda, Falkland Islands) and Pacific islands (Cook Islands, Guam & Northern Marianas, New Caledonia, Pitcairn Islands, Tahiti & French Polynesia). There are the two great land masses of Antarctica and Greenland, which are too large and fascinating to leave out of any true world guide. There are disputed lands such as Palestine, Kosovo, Tibet and Taiwan, and recognisably unique regions such as Hong Kong, Macau and French Guiana. We've also divided Great Britain into its component parts

(England, Scotland and Wales) to recognise their individual appeal and their rich and distinctive histories and cultures.

At the book's end you'll find an additional 11 places of interest, chosen by Lonely Planet's founder and chief frequent-flyer Tony Wheeler. These bonus destinations are small dependencies that still warrant great attraction, whether it be the smoking cigar of Montserrat or Gibraltar, that little piece of Britannia on the Mediterranean. In total, you can read about 229 countries and destinations. It's exhausting just to think about.

THE STRUCTURE

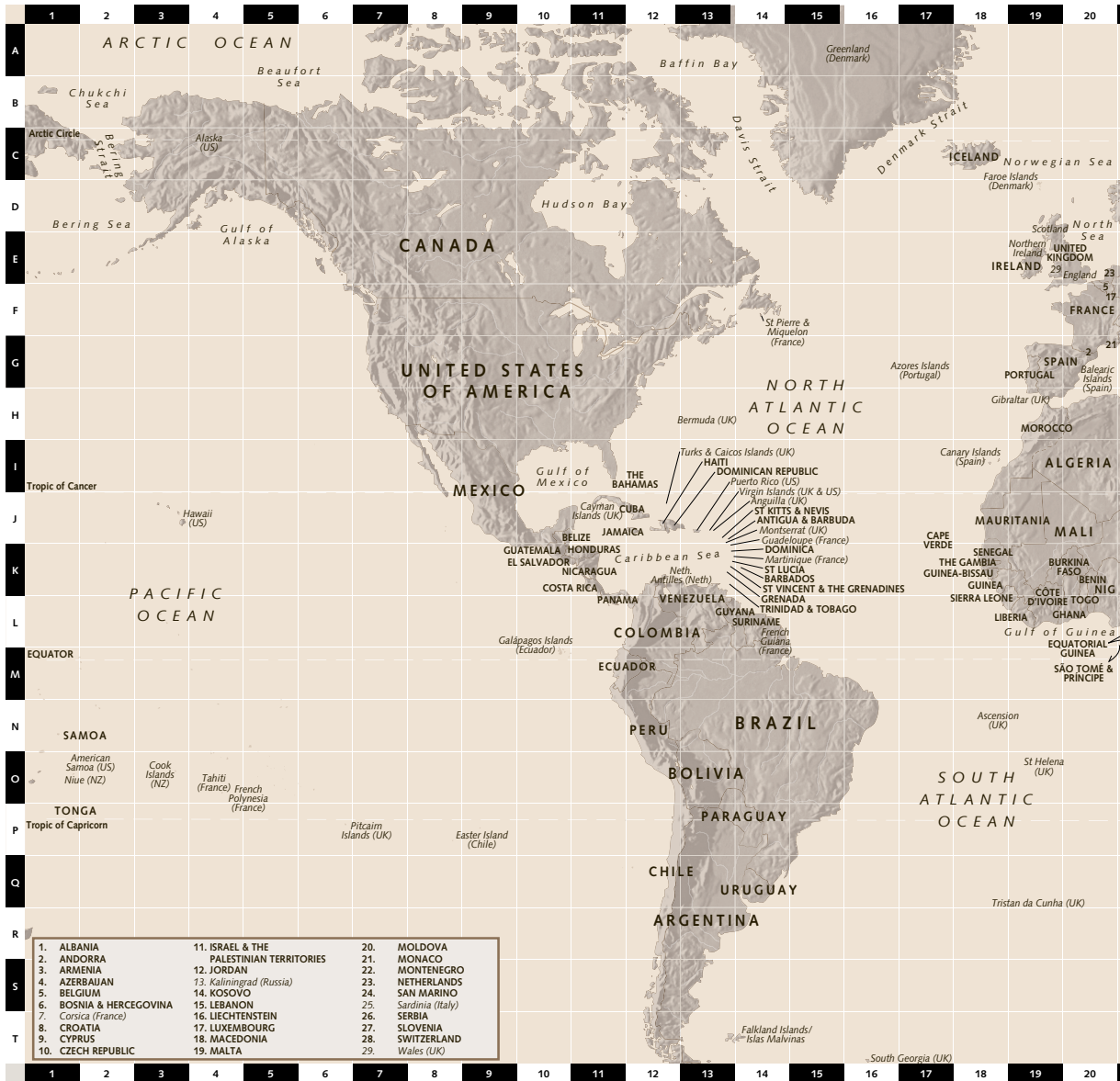
The Travel Book follows the most straightforward of formats – A to Z – rolling through the alphabet of nations. From a travellers' perspective, a country's might and power aren't necessarily relative to its fascination and appeal, and we've tried to capture that, giving equal weight to every country regardless of whether it has had 15 minutes or 15 centuries of world fame – the likes of Djibouti and Suriname are as noteworthy here, as the superpowers of the US and China.

The book's guiding philosophy is to present a subjective view of the world from Lonely Planet's perspective, looking below the surface to show a slice of life from every country in the world. Entries evoke the spirit of each place by appealing to the senses – what you might see and feel, what kind of food and drink might flavour your visit, and which books, music or films will help prepare you for the experience. You'll find the events, objects and people that are central to each country's identity and you'll find curious, little-known facts.

Photos are paramount to capturing and sharing the spirit of a place and its people, and images in this book have been chosen to weave stories of their own. Clichéd icons and picture-postcard views have been avoided in favour of photos that tell of life in its myriad forms – at work, at play, at worship, laughing, singing, relaxing, dancing or just surviving – in order to bring you countries, not brochures.

You may never visit all the *Travel Book's* destinations, but if it's true, as Aldous Huxley once wrote, that 'to travel is to discover that everyone is wrong about other countries', then to read about them all is to find out if you are right.

We hope the *Travel Book* inspires a world of travel.





In another world, Afghanistan would be near the top of any list of must-see tourist destinations. The crossroads of Asia, it has blended cultural ingredients from the Indian subcontinent, Central Asia and Persia into something quite unique. Old Silk Road oases tell of a rich history of Buddhist and Islamic empires, while the Hindu Kush Mountains that bisect the country are as beautiful as Afghan hospitality is famously warm. Unfortunately, Afghanistan's recent troubled history is equally as famous, from the Soviet invasion to the continued trauma the country suffers following the Western intervention that ended Taliban rule. Afghans' resilience and their desire for peace offer the ultimate key to the country's future.

BEST TIME TO VISIT

April to June and September to October – with all visits highly dependent on the political weather

TOP THINGS TO SEE

- The slow transformation of Kabul from war-ravaged capital to bustling Central Asian city
- The dizzying 800-year-old Minaret of Jam, adrift in the central mountains
- The skyline of Herat's medieval old city, punctuated by its mighty citadel and thicket of minarets
- The blue domes of Mazar-e Sharif's Shrine of Hazrat Ali, Afghanistan's holiest pilgrimage site
- The Panjshir Valley, with its rushing river and neat villages and orchards

TOP THINGS TO DO

- Contemplate the ruins of the giant Buddha statues amid the serene Bamiyan Valley
- Trek with yaks across the High Pamir mountains in the Wakhan Corridor
- Dip your toes in the blue mineral waters of the Band-e Amir lakes
- Watch a thundering *buzkashi* match – Afghan polo played with a headless goat instead of a ball
- Haggle for Afghan carpets at their source with Pashtun, Uzbek and Turkmen traders



JANE SWINNEY | LORENZ PANTINI IMAGES





STEPHAN VICTORI | LONELY PLANET IMAGES

3.

GETTING UNDER THE SKIN

Read Eric Newby's witty *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush* is a genuine classic; Rory Stewart's *The Places In Between* makes an excellent post-Taliban travelogue

Watch *Osama*, directed by Siddiq Barmak, tells the story of a girl assuming a male identity to work in Taliban-era Kabul

Eat fat Kandahari pomegranates; sweet grapes from the Shomali Plain; and (according to Marco Polo) the best melons in the world

Drink *chai sabz* (green tea), drunk scaldingly hot at a traditional teahouse

IN A WORD

Salaam aleikum (Peace be with you) – a ubiquitous greeting and blessing

TRADEMARKS

Bearded and turbaned men; veil-clad women; mountain views; tribal rugs; opium poppies; hospitality to guests

RANDOM FACT

The lapis lazuli in Tutankhamun's death mask were mined in northeastern Afghanistan



TONY WHEELER | LONELY PLANET IMAGES

4.



MAP REF J, 27

1. Pilgrims arrive to pay their respects at the Shrine of Hazrat Ali, one of the country's most iconic sights
2. It's a good idea to find some shade in Kabul's warmer months
3. A man in Mazar-e Sharif sports an impressive beard typical of many Afghans
4. The remote and spectacular Minaret of Jam, rising 65m high, is Afghanistan's first World Heritage Site





ROHMANN/GETTY IMAGES

Albania may have been largely ignored by the rest of the world, but that doesn't seem to have bothered the Albanians. They've just got on with embracing life in a languid and chaotically post-communist way. Here, family and friends are most important and the gentle rhythms of rural life persist, as shepherds casually urge their flocks across major highways. In some regards, Albania is the wild frontier of Europe, little visited and little developed, but that is part of its charm. From its unforgiving northern mountains to its unspoilt Adriatic and Ionian coastlines, from its vibrant markets to its picturesque museum towns, Albania unselfconsciously extends a warm welcome, raising a weather-beaten fedora and a shot glass of raki in honour of visitors.

BEST TIME TO VISIT

April to October

TOP THINGS TO SEE

- Beautiful Berat, a preserved Ottoman town of whitewashed houses climbing up a hillside
- The serene ruins of ancient Butrint, lost deep in the forest with a lakeside setting
- Bustling Tirana, a bizarre mix of state-of-the-art nightclubs, potholes, mosques, rainbow-coloured apartment buildings and communist-era architecture
- The 'Albanian gothic' of Gjirokastra, with its imposing views, looming citadel and grand architecture
- The castle of Kruja, with its *hamam* (Turkish bath) and dervish lodge

TOP THINGS TO DO

- Discover your own isolated beachside idyll on the little-visited Ionian coast
- Jump aboard the weekly ferry on Lake Komani for a trip into the mountainous interior
- Set out to explore the remote mountains and valleys of Thethi National Park
- Plunge into the bottomless, blue glassy depths of the Syr i Kalter spring
- Spend a night of grandeur in a restored Ottoman guesthouse in Gjirokastra.

GETTING UNDER THE SKIN

Read *Chronicle in Stone* by Ismail Kadare, a boyhood tale set in



CAPITAL TIRANA | POPULATION 3,639,453 | AREA 28,748 SQ KM | OFFICIAL LANGUAGE ALBANIAN (TOSK)





ROBIN HANBURY-TENISON

Gjirokastra, and *Land of Eagles* by Robin Hanbury-Tenison, a horseback odyssey through modern Albania
Listen to the entwined vocal and instrumental parts of traditional southern Albanian polyphony
Watch Gjergj Xhuvani's *Slogan*, a wry and affectionate look at life in a mountain village during the communist era
Eat roast lamb in the mountains or freshly caught fish along the coast; *byrek* is the quintessential Albanian fast food: layered pastry filled with cheese, potato or minced meat
Drink raki (grape brandy, flavoured with aniseed) as an aperitif; or *konjak* (cognac) as an after-dinner tippie

IN A WORD

Tungjatjeta (Hello)

TRADEMARKS

Mountains; prickly minarets in mountain villages; the double-eagle flag; bunkers

RANDOM FACT

The Albanian language is unrelated to any other in Europe and is thought to derive from ancient Illyrian



SCOTT WALKER/SWITZERLAND



MAP REF I,22

1. Three generations gather outside an old brick house, Peshkopi
2. A small brick church in the ancient Greek city of Apollonia is a reminder of the Middle Ages
3. Sticking close together: women looking after the cows in Peshkopi
4. Taxi drivers battle it out on the streets of Tirana





Until recently, Algeria was the great barrier to travel in North Africa, leaving a hole the size of Africa's second-largest country in the travellers' map of the continent. But after having been a byword for danger during the 1990s, Algeria has made a stunning return to peace. Not only is it safe to visit, but its catalogue of attractions – from wonderfully preserved Roman ruins in the north to the extraordinary Saharan landscapes and oasis towns of the south – may even surpass the better-known charms of Morocco, Tunisia and Libya. Best of all, with most travellers yet to realise that Algeria is open for business, you can enjoy all of these in the company of far more locals than tourists.

BEST TIME TO VISIT

November to April

TOP THINGS TO SEE

- The Casbah in Algiers, arguably North Africa's most intriguing medina
- Djemila's Roman ruins, beautifully sited in the Mediterranean's hinterland
- The stunning pastel-coloured oasis towns in the M'Zab Valley on the Sahara's northern fringe
- A spectacular sunrise from atop barren mountains deep in the Sahara at Assekrem
- Tassili N'Ajjer's open-air gallery of rock art from the time before the Sahara became a desert

TOP THINGS TO DO

- Sip a cafe au lait in Algiers' French-style sidewalk cafes then dive into the Casbah
- Dream of Algeria's Roman and Phoenician past at the charming old port of Tipaza
- Discover the hidden treasures of Tlemcen's extraordinary Arab-Islamic architecture
- Sleep amid the sand dunes of the Grand Erg Occidental
- Explore the Tassili du Hoggar, with some of the Sahara's most beautiful scenery.

GETTING UNDER THE SKIN

Read *Between Sea and Sahara* by Eugene Fromentin, a classic of 19th-century travel literature; Jeremy Keenan's *Sahara Man: Traveling with the Tuareg*, which takes you deep into the Tuareg world







FRANZ LEMMENS | LORELV/PLANET IMAGES

3.



FRANZ LEMMENS | LORELV/PLANET IMAGES

4.

Listen to *King of Rai: The Best of Khaled*, for Algeria's best-loved musical (and most danceable) export

Watch Gillo Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers*, a searing portrayal of the 1954–62 Algerian War of Independence, with Algiers' Casbah playing a starring role

Eat chickpea fritters, couscous and lamb tajine spiced with cinnamon

Drink three servings of strong tea around a Tuareg campfire

IN A WORD

Salaam aleikum (Peace be with you)

TRADEMARKS

The Sahara's biggest sand seas; the 'End of the World' (the literal translation of Assekrem); Tuareg nomads; Roman ruins along the Mediterranean Coast; civil war in the 1990s

RANDOM FACT

Some of France's most famous names were born in Algeria, including Edith Piaf, Albert Camus, Yves Saint-Laurent and Zinedine Zidane



MAP REF I,22

1. Tuareg drummers defy the desert heat to put on a thumping performance, Tamanrasset
2. A vehicle speeds through the lunar landscape of Tassili N'Ajjer, home to some incredible rock paintings
3. A rock climber's dream house? Traditional mudbrick buildings, complete with wooden spikes, are a common sight throughout Timimoun
4. Giddy-up! Camels race through the Sahara, Tuareg-style





ALBERTO MARQUEZ | L'ESPRESSO/ALAMY

Racing down snowy pistes, nursing post-ski mulled wine and sleeping snug between ice-hotel walls is how most think of this principality in Europe, neatly wedged between France and Spain in the eastern Pyrenees. Fewer know about its history (which harks back to the 9th century), its people (Catalan-speaking Andorrans, staunchly Catholic and a minority in their own country), the cobbled old town that casts a summertime spell over the country's only town (Andorra la Vella) or its secret hoard of thermal spas that soothe skied-out limbs. Jet into Barcelona in neighbouring Spain, drive a couple of hours and dip into one of Western Europe's most intriguing mini-nations.

BEST TIME TO VISIT

Mid-December to early April during the ski season

TOP THINGS TO SEE

- The cobbled streets and hidden squares of Andorra la Vella's quaint historic quarter
- Andorra's three valleys – each justifies a one-day hike, at least
- Grandvalira, the largest ski area in the Pyrenees
- The Museu del Tabac in Sant Julià de Lòria, a tobacco-factory-turned-museum devoted to the decadent pleasures of smoking and smuggling

TOP THINGS TO DO

- Ski the winter slopes of Grandvalira
- Wallow in toasty-warm mineral water at Europe's largest spa complex, Caldea in Andorra la Vella
- Join the dusk-time crowds on the rooftop of Plaça del Poble, Andorra la Vella, oohing and aahing over valley views
- Hike between tobacco fields and near-pristine meadows around the hamlet of Llorts
- Rip along downhill, cross-country and log-tree mountain-bike trails at the pulse-racing Vallnord Bike Park in La Massana

GETTING UNDER THE SKIN

Read the paperback reprint of *A Tramp in Spain: From Andalusia to Andorra*, a travelogue by Englishman Bart Kennedy, who tramped, knapsack on back, to Andorra in 1904

Listen to something classical by the National Chamber Orchestra of Andorra directed by top Andorran violinist Gerard Claret – flip through its discography at www.onca.ad





PHOTO: BIRBY

Watch *Dies d'Hivern* (Days of Winter) directed by Andorran Josep Duran, about a band of young delinquents on a voyage of self-discovery

Eat hearty – think *trinxat* (bacon, potatoes and cabbage) or traditional *escudella* (a cockle-warming chicken, sausage and meatball stew)

Drink mulled red wine laced with lemon, apple, raisins, cinnamon and cognac after a day on the slopes

IN A WORD

Hola (Hello!)

TRADEMARKS

Skiing; shopping; smuggling; the Pyrenees

RANDOM FACT

Just 33% of people in Andorra are Andorran, making them a minority in their own country – Spaniards dominate



MAP REF I,20

1. In Aninsal, soar to dizzy heights for skiing in the winter and hiking in the summer
2. Hit the slopes at Pas de la Casa, part of the Grandvalira ski resort



Angolans are fighters – but they are lovers, too. The latter fact has been lost on the world’s press, who have long labelled this African nation a haven of havoc, broadcasting stories of its civil wars, blood diamonds, wasted oil revenues and starving people. For those who visit, however, it’s the love that they’ll remember. Whether it’s an unquestioning love of God, an enthusiastic embrace of romance or an unwavering desire to dance like there is no tomorrow, the passion within the people of Angola is intoxicating to observe. Some may call it escapism to the nth degree – we call it resilience like no other.

BEST TIME TO VISIT

June to September during the cooler dry season

TOP THINGS TO SEE

- The crumbling art deco and neoclassical facades in the coastal town of Namibe
- Miradouro de Lua, a rusty-topped Martian-like rock formation that drops dramatically to the Atlantic
- The horizon-topping dunes of Parque Nacional do Iona
- The enigmatic Himba tribes that inhabit the nation’s southern fringe
- The burgeoning wildlife of Parque Nacional da Kissama

TOP THINGS TO DO

- Join Cristo Rei, Angola’s version of Rio’s Cristo Redentor, and stare down over the city of Lubango
- Get your hot hands on a surfboard and ride the cool Atlantic swells – they are some of Africa’s best
- Be one of the first to ride the rejuvenated Benguela railway to the Congo’s fringes
- Sink into the sands of a Luanda beach and soak up more than the sun – caipirinhas are a good start
- Try to keep your eyes open and your mouth shut at Luanda’s mesmerising carnival.

GETTING UNDER THE SKIN

Read *Angola: The Weight of History* by Patrick Chaba for an understanding of the social and political evolution since breaking free from Portuguese rule

Listen to anything with Carlos Vieira Dias, an acoustic guitarist who spread the influence of Angola’s samba music



YOCKMARK WENZEL | NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC/GETTY IMAGES

2.



REINOLDERS PETERSSON | REPORTAGE/GETTY IMAGES

3.





VODAWALK/ISTOCK | NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC | GETTY IMAGES

Watch *Rostov-Luanda*, a documentary hinged on a Mauritanian's journey to find an old friend in Angola

Eat *calulu de peixe* (fish stew)

Drink *galãos* (white coffee) – Angola has historically been one of the world's largest producers of the bean, and locals love drinking it with milk

IN A WORD

Tudo bom (How's things?)

TRADEMARKS

Blood diamonds and *garimpeiros* (diamond diggers); oil; civil war; landmines; demining campaigns; staggering beaches; *kizomba* (a genre of dance and music that's full of romance and sensuality)

RANDOM FACT

It wasn't that long ago that Angola had more landmines than children



MAP REF P,21

1. A Mwila girl is seemingly lost in thought
2. A masked Chokwe man makes an imposing sight in front of a tree decorated with bones
3. On the right track: three young friends walk the train line in Dondo
4. A church stands out upon the hill of Catumbela





The sun sets over the sea, leaving striations of orange amid the gently rippling azure waters. You lean back against the warm sands of a dune, letting an ‘ahh’ escape from your mouth as your back finds the perfect position. Artfully wrecked old wooden boats perch on the sand, and soon you’re hearing the ever-mellow strains of reggae, played by some of the Caribbean’s most renowned musicians. It’s just another evening on Anguilla, one of the region’s smallest islands and one that takes every holiday cliché (perfect white sand, rum, reggae, turquoise waters etc) and distils them down to perfection. Visitors delight in a series of picture-perfect bays strung along the island’s 10km length. Go for a stroll, chat to some locals, find your own beat.

BEST TIME TO VISIT

December to May are the best times to visit as hurricane threats and humidity levels are low

TOP THINGS TO SEE

- Shoal Bay, everything a Caribbean beach should be
- Prickly Pear is Anguilla distilled down to a milky white nub of sand amid the cyan sea
- Meads Bay, an idyllic mile-long crescent of blinding white sand
- Wallblake House and St Gerard’s church, glimpses of 18th-century plantation life
- Sandy Ground is the appropriately named cluster of the island’s languorous nightspots

TOP THINGS TO DO

- Sail the perfectly azure waters – it’s the number one local sport
- Hide out in Junk’s Hole, an especially intimate spot on an intimate island
- Carefully plan your day so that you do nothing at all; Anguilla means relaxation
- Dive the 1772 wreck of the *El Buen Consejo*
- Jam to the beat of the Dune Preserve, where local reggae legends play amid wrecked boats and, yes, dunes

GETTING UNDER THE SKIN

Read *Green Cane and Juicy Flotsam: Short Stories* by Caribbean Women

Listen to Bankie Banx, a celebrated Anguillian singer-songwriter known as a reggae pioneer



CAPITAL THE VALLEY | POPULATION 14,436 | AREA 102 SQ. KM | OFFICIAL LANGUAGE ENGLISH





MAQUETTE EDITION | CORBIS

Watch one of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies to get in the mood

Eat the sweet, fresh local lobster and crayfish

Drink a Dune Shine (fresh ginger, pineapple juice, bitters and rum) at the Dune Preserve

IN A WORD

Limin' (Hanging out with friends, preferably on the beach)

TRADEMARKS

Beaches that are great even by Caribbean standards; wild goats running amok; ganja; sailing

RANDOM FACT

Anguilla was once part of St Kitts and Nevis, but squabbles between pint-sized Anguilla and its more-populous neighbours caused a permanent split in 1967; it's taken shelter as a British overseas territory ever since

3.



PHOTOGRAPHY

4.



MAP REF L,13

1. A healthy catch: a spear fisherman reaps the rewards of a hard day's work
2. Sun, surf and church: a lovely stone church sits right on the beach
3. A musician concentrates on the absorbing beauty of the banjo
4. Lobster traps are unloaded amid stunning blue waters





DAVID TREND | TORREY PALMER IMAGES

Snow, ice, water, rock, sky. The stark surroundings of Antarctica and the enormousness of its ice shelves and mountain ranges make for an elemental beauty that can haunt you for the rest of your life. Nothing compares and nowhere else on earth can so heighten feelings of humanity's insignificance and nature's grandeur. The wildlife, including emperor penguins, leopard seals and minke whales, are not afraid of humans, allowing for spectacular and surreal close encounters. Governed by 29 nations, this continent/country is primarily dedicated to scientific research but it's also one of the planet's regions that's most visibly affected by global warming; as parts of the continent melt, others grow, leaving scientists to debate what it all actually means.

BEST TIME TO VISIT

November to February for 'summer'

TOP THINGS TO SEE

- Majestic icebergs and mountain reflections on the water at Paradise Harbour
- The true grit of Antarctic exploration icily preserved at Shackleton's expedition hut
- Dazzling blooms of violet, pink and white in the gardens on Campbell Island
- Three eerie, ghost-filled explorer's huts on Ross Island
- A beautiful blue-eyed shag regurgitating a meal to its chick

TOP THINGS TO DO

- Glide on a Zodiac under the morning's pink skies past basking Weddell seals and noisy gentoo penguins
- Sail inside the restless volcano at Deception Island
- Get startled by a loud 'fffff', then be bathed in a fish-scented mist as a whale surfaces next to your boat
- Experience the bluster of 'Home of the Blizzard', one of the windiest places on earth

GETTING UNDER THE SKIN

Read *Travelers' Tales Antarctica: Life on the Ice*, a collection of Antarctic tales from the goofy to the harrowing

Listen to Rothera Station's wintering rock band Nunatak – made up of two scientists, two engineers and a field assistant



POPULATION 4400 (SUMMER), 1100 (WINTER) | **AREA** 14.2 MILLION SQ. KM

ANTARCTICA

