



10 break-even city trip destinations

Aarhus Bristol
Gothenburg Graz
Katowice Liège
Lviv Mannheim
Sheffield Toulouse

What do cities such as Barcelona, London and Paris have in common? They all belong to the one per cent of highly popular travel destinations that are visited by

99 per cent of all tourists. The only way to distribute them more evenly is to think differently, to go left when everybody else is going right. That's

why we've identified ten alternative city break destinations. Are you ready to tip the scale with us?



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Gothenburg, Sweden
// for the social type

Sweden's vast landscapes are a feast for the eyes in all four seasons. As a result, very few travelers visit the country as part of a city trip. The southwestern city of Gothenburg, however, will sway even the biggest outdoor fan. With the enormous Slottskogen park and

the rocky coast of Bohuslän only fifteen and sixty minutes away, nature is never too far for those who need a breather. Due to this proximity to nature, as well as a large number of sustainability initiatives, Gothenburg was voted 'Greenest City in the World' for three years in a row. But that's not all. Those who visit will experience fantastic

food – from fika (coffee and pastries) to street food – and a city calendar that is overflowing with cultural events. Plan your visit during the Way Out West festival or Gothenburg Culture Festival, to experience the laid-back ambiance first-hand.

Bed down The interiors of Hotel Pigalle will transport you back to the grandeur of early twentieth-century Paris, from € 100 per night for two people. Just outside of the city center, you'll bump into Anna & Jesper, a tasteful boutique hotel in a characteristic building, from € 125 per night for two people.



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Toulouse, France // for the epicurean

Toulouse has been ranking high in happiness indexes for years in a row. That joyous *joie de vivre* lifestyle is reflected in the many parks and squares. Here, spare moments are being put to use, simply by being outside and meeting old and new friends. When darkness falls, social activity moves into the many bars of the medieval center. La ville rose (the pink city) forms the heart of the city – a red-brick labyrinth, housing indoor markets and world-class museums, that calls for endless wandering. The younger generation, students in particular, refer to their city as 'Little Barcelona'. That claim is not as far-fetched as you'd think. Toulouse indeed is a French city with a Spanish twist. Many menus feature tapas and the southern climate is similar to that of Barcelona. The nightlife, too, lives up. The only thing that's missing is the sea. Toulouse lies as far from the Mediterranean as it does the Atlantic. That, perhaps, is the reason why many travelers choose to skip France's fourth city.

Bed down Airy and light, La Fonderie is an urban B&B in an old iron foundry. The patio serves as a downtown oasis, from € 110 per night for two people.



© Tim Bilman

Katowice, Poland // for the adventurer

Safe to say, decades of heavy industry left its marks on Katowice, a city in the south of Poland. Ever since the last mine shaft closed, administrators and residents look to the future. Green spaces were created to combat air pollution, traffic junctions were made car-free and the

old mining area was transformed into a so-called 'cultural zone', a stretch of entertainment venues, including a UFO-shaped events hall. "Before the transformation, it wasn't all doom and gloom," says Anna Gorczyca. Anna is one of the initiators of the Slaski Smaki Trail, a culinary walking tour created to preserve and showcase traditional

cuisine, based on grandmothers' recipes. "On Sundays," Anna says, "it was a tradition to have a family dinner at grandma's. I still remember the smell that took over the apartment block. Everyone ate the same: simple and honest dishes, made from local ingredients." Tip: a stay in Katowice can easily be combined with a visit to the former concentration

camp Auschwitz. Katowice lies even closer to the site than Krakow, which is loaded with tourists.

Bed down Vienna House Easy is a modern and colorful business hotel, close to the main sights. As a guest you'll enjoy the breakfast buffet, which is full of local products, from € 90 per night for two people.





© William Navarro

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Sheffield, England // for the visionary

In the *The Full Monty* (1997), a British film classic, six men from Sheffield start a striptease act after losing their jobs in the steel industry. The movie script, in fact, shows many parallels with the rise of Sheffield as a city trip destination. As factories closed and people were forced to improvise, new life was breathed into the city. With the help of cultural pioneers, Sheffield has become one of England's greatest city secrets. Steven Mullins, who's a chef at bar Piña and a long-time resident, remembers the old days: "If you had walked around here ten years ago, all

you would've seen was misery. Now, at the very same spot, you can enjoy exciting new concepts in an industrial setting." One of the areas that blossomed is Kelham. The brick buildings on this plot in the Don river, which previously served as workshops, warehouses and factories, have all been given brand new functions: from a restaurant to an indoor skate park and from a recording studio to het country's best industrial heritage museum.

Bed down Leopold Hotel is centrally located and housed in a former school, which was once attended by Joe Cocker, from € 81 per night for two people.

Lviv, Ukraine // for the history buff

Hidden behind the former Iron Curtain lies one of the most beautiful cities of Europe: Lviv. Although the historical cityscape remained largely intact, the people that used to live there suffered hugely from the war – they were banned or murdered, with their unique cultural blend wiped out. In today's Lviv, once again, you'll find a mishmash of cultures. Coffee, for instance, comes in many varieties, from sugary to Turkish and Viennese. Built an appetite? Stop for shashlik in an Armenian eatery or opt for healthy Ukrainian dishes in nondescript snack bars. It's virtually impossible to not be captivated by the beauty of Lviv. Thanks to the weathered down walls and unique architecture, some people lovingly refer to the city as 'the Florence of the East'. Also take a minute to dwell on the many empty plots in the Jewish Quarter. These 'holes' indicate the locations of synagogues, taken down during the war. Other must-sees are the hidden courtyards in the Armenian neighborhood.

Bed down Glance through the window of Opera Corner Loft and you'll see the beautiful opera house and the lively square in front of it. The loft itself has a minimalist design and cool features, from € 45 per night for two people.





Mannheim, Germany // for the hipster

We're going out on a limb here, by claiming that Mannheim is not the first city that comes to mind when planning a city trip to a German city – and probably not even the tenth. Nevertheless, this multicultural and student-laden city in the west has all the ingredients you desire from a city break: numerous sights that are not yet over-touristed, a buzzing hipster district and a growing range of great places to sleep. The one thing that immediately stands out when you stroll through the city center, is the lay-out. The baroque

buildings, rebuilt after two devastating wars in the 17th century, are arranged in a chessboard pattern. You won't find any street names here – each Quadrat (square-shaped block) has its own letter and number combination. Mannheim is compact and therefore easy to discover on foot. Located slightly outside of the center, is the Jungbusch district. This is by far the liveliest part of town. Here you will find trendy bars and eateries, and a revamped harbor promenade. When the weather's nice, do as the locals do and flock to the banks of the Rhine and Neckar.

Bed down Speicher7 is a design hotel in a 1950s warehouse, right by the Rhine river, from € 158 per night for two people. NYX Hotel Mannheim is kitted out with arcade machines and other fun elements, such as an in-house DJ and a floor-to-ceiling street art theme, from € 59 per night for two people. SYTE Hotel Mannheim is as stylish as they come. This old mansion is located across the station, from € 89 per night for two people.

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Graz, Austria // for the (hopeless) romantic

Vienna, move over. Austria's second city, Graz, is well on its way to conquer travelers' hearts. The vibe is relaxed and the culinary scene is top notch – not to mention the picturesque location at the foot of the Alps. Here, even a regular summer evening feels like a vacation. Sabrina Deutsch, a local designer, draws inspiration from the little things in city life. "In order to really experience the soul of Graz, one should walk the cobbled streets and narrow alleys, and look up the richly decorated facades. Unlike many other cities, Graz has the ability to connect the old and the new. A sci-fi-like art hall was built in between centuries-old baroque buildings and in the Mur river, an artificial 'island' was installed to connect the west and east banks of the river. "Graz has always been an inviting and hospitable city," says Sabrina. "No idea has ever been too forward-thinking."

Bed down Hotel Daniel is a colorful boutique hotel from the 1950s, from € 89 per night for two people. On the roof of the hotel you'll find a prefabricated cube house with a panoramic views, from € 260 per night for two people. Make sure to rent an electric Vespa scooter for the day (€ 35).

Liège, Belgium // for the innovator

"Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere." In the last decade or so, Einstein's words have resonated with the people of Liège. Sparked by the creative community, this former industrial city managed to turn the tide, from a languishing outpost to an urban city that, once again, feeds the imagination. Liège, in a way, rose from the ashes. Numerous creative companies were established and initiatives unfurled. A fine example is

'slow design'. This movement calls on entrepreneurs and artists to be more thoughtful in regards to available resources and the environment. According to the 68-year-old tour guide Yvette Hebbinckuys, the transformation of Liège took shape in the streets. "Liège was known as 'the city of a hundred church towers'. But as the street art scene flourished, that nickname was quickly replaced by 'the city of 100,000 graffiti tags'." Another symbol of the resurrection is Liège-Guillemins. This open and

vaulted train station, designed by the Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava, is nothing short of a master piece.

Bed down Hotel Neuvise is a boutique gem in what is arguably the most Diagon Alley-esque (from the Harry Potter movies) rue in Liège: Rue Neuvise. The small-scale hotel is housed in an 18th-century building, that used to serve as a master printer's work space, from € 99 per night for two people.

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© David Harper

Bristol, England // for the trendwatcher

Bristol is currently undergoing a Big Bang – the energy that was bottled up for so long is now sparking an explosion that is rapidly changing the city. Dilapidated docks are being transformed into inviting hotspots and an army of street food chefs adds color and zest to the local cuisine. This urban renaissance did not go unnoticed. In a short period of time, the city in the southwest of England was



© Nathan Riley

hailed 'Britain's happiest city', 'Best place to live for young people (<25)' and 'Top destination for foodies'. In addition, Bristol was voted 'Green Capital of Europe' in 2015 – a direct result of efforts that made the economy, energy supplies and public transport more sustainable. Our advice? Add Bristol to your European bucket list, before the city grows into its newfound status and word gets out.

Bed down Want to spice things up for a change? Book an Airstream trailer on the roof of Brooks Guesthouse. It comes with a roof terrace and downtown views, from € 94 per night for two people.

Aarhus, Denmark // for the design aficionado

"In Aarhus, culture equals design. Whichever building you enter, you immediately find yourself in a Pinterest or Instagram capture," recalls Belgian actress and TV host Evi Hanssen. The most eye-catching piece of design balances on top of the ARoS Museum: a circular walkway, lined with glass in all colors of the rainbow. It doesn't matter how many Instagram followers you have, this is one of

those photos you simply want to have. Outside of the city, on Varna Beach, a similar design awaits: Den Uendelige Bro (The Infinity Bridge). This artwork – an 'infinite' circular walkway elevated above the water – was designed for a sculpture festival in 2015, and proved so popular that the municipality decided to keep it. Though Aarhus is a forward-thinking city, the past will not be forgotten. Den Gamle By (The Old Quarter) is an open-air

museum, complete with replica buildings and historical artefacts, providing a rare glimpse into the past. The concept of hygge (coziness) is timeless. The quays of the Aarhus river have traditionally been, and still are, the epicenter of the city.

Bed down Badehus – literally: bath house – is a tiny house along the water in the harbor. Modern and unique, and only a stone's throw away from the city center, from € 97 per night for two people. In the centrally located Hotel Carmel you can rent a vintage-style room for a decent price, from € 67 per night for two people.



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