



City seekers

Sometimes a simple poolside break just doesn't cut it. **Emily Handford** profiles city break destinations for those wishing to add a dash of adventure to their vacation

A city break can provide the perfect solution for those who want more from a vacation than lazing beside the beach. A chance to discover new cultures, travellers could find themselves going back in time, exploring age-old monuments, visiting iconic architectural structures, or shopping until they drop at some of the world's best retail outlets.

Historical Hub

History buffs will be hard-pressed not to pay a visit to Italy's Eternal City, Rome. Brimming with more than 900 ornately decorated churches, luxuriant piazzas and iconic architectural structures, visitors will feel as though they have stepped back in time to the days of the Roman Empire. One architectural gem not to miss is the Colosseum, an elliptical amphitheatre that was once used for gladiatorial contests, it is considered as one of the greatest

feats of Roman engineering. Climb the Spanish Steps for outstanding views of the city, or throw a coin (three for good fortune) in the Trevi Fountain. And once you've mastered the art of coin throwing, take some time to wander the beautiful Piazza Navona, stopping for lunch at one of the restaurants or open-air cafés that line the square.



In the afternoon, take a trip to Vatican City where you can marvel at St. Peter's Basilica – one of the largest and most beautiful churches in the world – and Michelangelo's Pietá, a stunningly beautiful but sad sculpture. Also within the Vatican's walls are the Vatican museums, which hold host to an array of renowned Italian masterpieces, including Michelangelo's painted ceiling at the Sistine Chapel.

The Big Apple

Attracting up to 55 million visitors each year, New York is the perfect city break for shoppers and cultural lovers alike. Start your trip by enjoying panoramic 360 views of the city from the 86th floor observatory of the Empire State Building. A

Above: Those seeking hustle and bustle should head to New York City Below: Rome is home to a myriad of architectural wonders to explore

global icon, it is the original place to go for an eagle-eye view of New York. Alternatively, the observation deck at the Rockefeller Center, aptly named 'Top of the Rock', is a great spot to take in the spectacular vistas of Central Park and beyond – without the long queues. And whilst you're there explore the sprawling subterranean mall, ice-skating rink and iconic bronze Atlas statue that dominates the front of the centre.

Meanwhile, shopping fanatics should swing by Fifth Avenue. The most expensive street in the world, it is jam-packed with luxury designer boutiques such as Louis Vuitton, Tiffany & Co and Gucci as well as department stores, Saks Fifth Avenue and Bergdorf Goodman.

Central Park is the perfect place to recharge your batteries after the shops have taken their toll. Spot raccoons, grey squirrels and even chipmunks amongst the trees, or make a visit to the park's zoo where there is an indoor rainforest, chilled penguin house and polar bear pool.

Come evening; why not take in a Broadway show and dinner. The Marriott's Two Times Square lounge ▶



offers outstanding 360 views of the square and delectable gourmet fare – ideal for a pre-theatre bite.

Beach Base

Those seeking sun, sand and sleek city living should look no further than Australia's thriving megalopolis Sydney. The best place to begin your trip is at its epicentre, Sydney Harbour, where the iconic Sydney Opera House and Sydney Harbour Bridge take pride of place. Often referred to as the most beautiful natural harbour in the world, take it all in by getting the ferry across the water, where it offers an easy link to other attractions The Rocks, Taranga Zoo, Darling Harbour and Bondi Beach. Alternatively, for a unique panorama of the city daredevils can ascend the arches of Sydney Harbour Bridge – situated 134m above sea level climbers will need a good head for heights.



Meanwhile, those with a taste for history should head to The Rocks. One of the oldest colonial districts in the city, it plays host to beautifully preserved buildings, historical pubs and a myriad of museums and galleries. This is also a great place to pick up one-of-a-kind handicrafts from the bespoke market stalls that dot the cobbled lanes.

And after sight-seeing has taken its toll, head to the beautiful Bondi Beach where you can sunbathe upon golden sands and surf amongst turquoise waters. Keen walkers will enjoy the 6km Bondi to Coogee coastal walk, where spectacular coastal views and beaches can be found.



Above and below: Sydney commands a stunning coastline and a world-famous harbour
Left and bottom: Hong Kong provides a diverse range of cultural landmarks and modern skyscrapers
Bottom: Catch a glimpse of a giant panda at Hong Kong's Ocean Park

the energy of the city from Victoria Peak – as the highest mountain on the island, its vantage point provides an impressive panoramic view of the city below. While for an image that truly encapsulates Hong Kong, take the funicular railway at sundown and watch as the city's skyscraper lights are illuminated.

While, below on sea level, the island of Lantau offers cultural enthusiasts plenty to see and do. Stand at the feet of the majestic bronze 'Big Buddha' statue, or opposite, discover the Po Lin Monastery. Rich with colourful

Asian Metropolis

Hong Kong, the restless urban metropolis that never sleeps, is an ideal break for those who love to be at the centre of it all. Capture



Buddhist iconography and surrounded by beautiful, tranquil gardens, it is a world-famous establishment that attracts visitors from across the globe.

And while you're on the island, be sure to entertain the family at Hong Kong's Disneyland resort, where guests can meet their favourite characters and enjoy spectacular firework shows over Sleeping Beauty's castle. Animal enthusiasts meanwhile will feel right at home at Hong Kong's Ocean Park, where they can spot giant pandas, or marvel at exotic fish from the world's largest Aquarium dome. ■