

Copenhagen's waterways:
see page 92; Havana's music
scene (right): see page 86



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INTRODUCTION

How can the term 'culture' be defined? For some people it's manifestations of human achievement – paintings that capture a moment in history, emotive operas or classic literature.

For others, it's the social rituals and customs of a particular place or group of people. More often than not, the two are intertwined. When we travel, the cultures of the countries we visit are usually what we notice first, and it is often what inspires us to visit in the first place. The memories we take home with us may be of artisans hammering on the streets, historic architecture looming around a plaza, or music wafting from a backalley doorway: culture exists everywhere, and it means everything to the curious traveller.

If that's you, you'll love this tour of the world in 52 short trips – one for every week of the year. We've scoured the globe to find the richest cultural enclaves, where the arts have had a profound, lasting impact and local culture is being protected and nurtured; where old customs hold true, new ones are being forged, or the past is melding with the future in fascinating ways. The cultural spectrum is broad: literature, art, architecture, music, theatre, dance, festivals, TV, film, comics – you name it, it's in here. All you need to do is bring your curious minds, and explore.



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A classic
lighthouse at
Provincetown in
Cape Cod: see
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Canada

ABORIGINAL CULTURE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Canada's westernmost province embraces its aboriginal forefathers with monuments, museums and experiences designed to help visitors connect with First Nations cultures.

Aboriginal people have lived on Canada's west coast, in what is now the province of British Columbia, for more than 10,000 years. This region, which stretches from the Pacific Coast to the Rocky Mountains, from the border with the United States north to the Yukon, is still home to more than 200 different First Nations. Nearly 20 per cent of Canada's aboriginal population resides in BC.

Here on the northwest coast of North America, indigenous people drew on the region's abundant natural resources, catching salmon, crab, and other seafood from the surrounding waters. They built homes, carved dugout canoes and crafted totem poles from western red cedar and other native trees; using images of eagles, bears, and other wildlife, these poles marked milestones and told stories of their communities. For centuries, aboriginal artists from this region also created, and continue to create, masks, carvings,

jewellery and other works that are highly prized today. Starting from Vancouver, BC's largest city, where glass and steel towers rise up between the mountains and the sea, you can explore this native heritage and present-day culture. Stay in Canada's first aboriginal art hotel, explore traditional cultures at one of the country's best anthropology museums, check out contemporary aboriginal art and tour the city's vast rainforest park accompanied by a First Nations guide to bring the indigenous history to life.

From Vancouver, follow the scenic Sea-to-Sky Highway towards Whistler, a mountain resort community located a two-hour drive to the north. While Whistler is best known for its outdoor adventures, its aboriginal experiences may come as a surprise. Complete your trip with a visit to a modern cultural centre jointly operated by two First Nations, and a mountainside art museum with a significant aboriginal art collection.

NEED TO KNOW
Allow three days for this trail — two days in Vancouver and one in Whistler; reach the latter by car or bus.

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New Zealand

THE ESSENCE OF MĀORI SPIRIT

The traditional culture of New Zealand's original Polynesian settlers remains intertwined with present-day island life, particularly in the spiritual landscapes of the North Island.

Since crossing the vast expanses of the South Pacific to reach New Zealand from their Polynesian homelands more than eight centuries ago, Māori culture and spirituality has been tightly entwined with the rugged forests and coastal landscapes of their island home.

According to legend, seven great ocean-going *waka* (canoes) journeyed to the islands known to Māori as Aotearoa (Land of the Long White Cloud); travellers in New Zealand's North Island can journey through the homelands of ancestors from the Tainui and Te Arawa canoes. Constants along the route are superb examples of art, architecture and performance, recognition of the spiritual connection Māori have with the natural world and how this unique culture is held in regard by all New Zealanders.

Beginning with a sunrise welcome and blessing high above Auckland's Waitemata Harbour, this trail explores Māori mythology, history and art. It takes in the city's

museum and a stirring performance of the haka — the traditional challenge performed by New Zealand's world champion All Blacks rugby team before every match provides an energetic coda before travelling south to Tainui country around Hamilton.

The forested volcanic lakes around Rotorua are Te Arawa country — according to tradition the canoe made landfall north at Maketu Harbour — and the natural power of the region's geothermal landscapes has been harnessed by local Māori for centuries. Myths and legends are illuminated with energy and grace in waiata (songs) performed by Rotorua's world-renowned *kapa haka* (Māori performing arts) cultural groups, and traditional foods are served steaming from the *hangi* (earth oven).

Beyond these traditions, Rotorua's art galleries and jade-carving studios feature contemporary updates of traditional motifs, revealing how Māori culture is also a vital part of modern New Zealand.

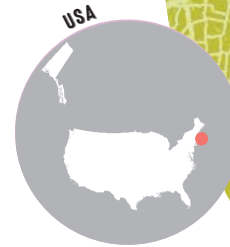
NEED TO KNOW

This trail can be completed in three to four days and having your own vehicle is ideal; fly in and out of Auckland.





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USA

LITERARY LANDSCAPES OF CAPE COD

There's something about the Cape's natural splendour, quiet towns and placid waters that has inspired generations of America's literary greats, many of whom came and never left.

Cape Cod (or just 'the Cape', as locals call it) has long been a popular destination for tourists, primarily for its wealth of pristine beaches and accompanying seafood joints. What fewer people realise is how many writers have lived on or travelled to this curious peninsula and its islands, and how many works of literature these lands have spawned.

Part of that inspiration has come just from the Cape's pure beauty: here there is a quaint, quiet radiance that shines in all four seasons. Trellises exploding with Cape rose blooms. A stretch of beach washed footprintless by the incoming tide. A herring gull hanging motionless in an updraft. A doe looking across the fog and stillness of a hidden kettle pond. Some of the world's most iconic, memorable literature has been inspired by the Cape's landscape and its denizens. Herman Melville, Henry David Thoreau, Peter Benchley, Norman Mailer and

more all came here and left (or didn't!) with the Cape deeply imprinted in their minds and their muses. While the landscape that brought Thoreau and naturalist/writer Henry Beston contemplative solitude has changed substantially from the rolling pasturelands of their time, the area — now pine and scrub oak forests — still holds wonder at nearly every turn.

Modern writers such as Norman Mailer, Paul Theroux and Edward Gorey found inspiration, tranquility and solace here just as their fellow writers did decades or centuries before. Peter Benchley's bestseller *Jaws* and the cult-classic movie it became was inspired by Martha's Vineyard, and filmed there.

The Cape is just over an hour's drive from Boston's Logan International Airport. To make more of this trail, add extra days for ferry rides across to popular islands Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket — the latter being Herman Melville's inspiration for *Moby Dick*.

NEED TO KNOW

Rental car is the ideal mode of transport on the Cape, which makes an easy two-day trail; four days with the islands.