

Condé Nast Traveler



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WOMEN WHO TRAVEL

The Trips We Want to Take First

Whether far away or close to home, they all have one thing in common—a change of scenery.

BY CNT EDITORS

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If there's one way to ease the monotony of being unable to travel right now, it's by dreaming about the days when we can again. For some of us, it's a fantasy as simple as **driving** a few hours away for a long-awaited family reunion; for others, it's flying to the other side of the world in search of a completely new experience, a **Trans-Siberian train journey** perhaps, or a road trip through southern Japan. In search of some much-needed travel inspiration, we tapped five of our editors to find out the places they've pinned on the map—both for later this year and beyond.



The heated sand baths of Ibusuki in Kagoshima, Japan Yiming Chen/Getty

A road trip through southern Japan

I'm planning a month-long adventure through southern Japan for fall 2021—or whenever it's safe to visit. It'll be my seventh trip to **Japan** but my first time exploring Kyushu beyond Fukuoka, a city I fell in love with five years ago while sitting elbow-to-elbow at a Naka River *yatai* (food stall), slurping an enormous bowl of creamy, porky tonkotsu ramen.

Armed with an [international driver's license](#), I'll kick off a two-week road trip around the main island of Kyushu, where I plan to hike Takachiho Gorge in Miyazaki, bask in the geothermally heated sand baths of Ibusuki in Kagoshima, kayak Soyo Gorge (Kumamoto's answer to the Grand Canyon), race across the dizzyingly high Yume Otsurihashi suspension bridge in Oita, and sleep like Japanese royalty in the soon-to-open Kaiju Yagura turret of Hirado Castle in Nagasaki.

After I return the rental car, I'll bounce down to Shiratani Unsui-kyo ravine in Yakushima to explore the enchantingly mossy sugi (Japanese cedar) forest that inspired Studio Ghibli's *Princess Mononoke* and spend a week stuffing my face on goya champurū (bitter melon stir-fry) and beni imo (purple sweet potatoes) in [Okinawa](#). Finally, I'll end the trip with a glut of snow-white beaches and rainbow-colored coral reefs in the Yaeyama Islands (Ishigaki, Iriomote, and Taketomi), which are closer to [Taiwan](#) than [Tokyo](#). Taketomi, in particular, is home to a beautifully preserved Ryukyū village. My heart swells at the thought of exploring the island by bicycle—though some visitors choose to get around by water buffalo cart. Dreaming of travel like this is what keeps me going, coronavirus be damned. —*Asblea Halpern, contributing editor*



The sun setting over Hydra, Greece Anton Petrus/Getty

A lazy few weeks in Greece

My travel wishes for 2021 are two-pronged. Firstly, I simply want to **travel somewhere solo**. I've been incredibly lucky to ride out the past year holed up with my husband in our tiny apartment. He has been my rock, and helped preserve my sanity throughout the more challenging times (plus, he makes a great **cocktail**, which is always useful). But it also means that I have spent essentially no time alone. I've always taken great pride in my independence, and I've found myself fantasizing about drifting around an airport terminal by myself in the early hours, or landing in an unfamiliar place far from home with just my own wits to rely on. I want to drink a martini at a hotel bar, undisturbed, while reading my book, and take myself out for an outrageously decadent omakase dinner for one, just because I can. After such a jolting year—one that has likely changed all of us in ways we're not even aware of yet—I want the opportunity to get to know myself again.

When it comes to a big, international trip, however, I want to share that experience with as many people as possible. I haven't seen my family in over a year—the longest I've ever gone apart from them—and I've begun hatching a plan to get us all together in Greece for a few weeks. (Yes, *weeks*, because 2020 taught me that vacation days are to be used, not wasted.) There is a magnificent swathe of islands to choose from, but it's mountainous Hydra that's calling to me at the moment. I spent a few days there in 2017, tacked onto a trip to **Athens**, and it provided the perfect counterpoint to the magnetic chaos of the capital. Mornings consisted of meandering hikes along the coastline; lunches meant eating my weight in freshly-caught seafood; afternoons required nothing more than that a lazy back-and-forth between baking yourself in the sun and dipping into the sea. I want to return because, like everyone, I desperately need a holiday that takes me beyond the four walls of my apartment. But it's ultimately because the prospect of watching the sun go down in a beautiful place, with the people I love most, feels like a luxury I'll never take for granted again.

—*Lale Arikoglu, senior lifestyle editor*



The new wellness-focused Miraval Berkshires in Massachusetts. Courtesy Miraval Berkshires.

A no-responsibilities trip

When I think about where I want to go next, the honest answer is anywhere. After the stillness of last year, destination matters less to me than experiencing the joy of travel once again. In 2020, I took shorter trips that captured the thrill of being somewhere new, and [one long-haul trip](#) home to Taiwan, a place that has largely contained COVID-19. But throughout the year, the general [anxiety](#) of living through a pandemic has colored every move.

As I look ahead to future trips, I want to embrace the freedom of being able to move around—and I'm exhilarated by the idea of putting myself in someone else's hospitable hands. So much of 2020 was about being self-sufficient (remember when we were all regrowing scallions?) and when I travel, I love being taken care of to the fullest extent possible. What I'm craving, most of all—and what the hospitality industry excels at—is the human connection that's been dimmed slightly by social distancing and mask-wearing.

As much as I can't wait to fly to a city I've never been to before, go sightseeing until my feet ache, and be surrounded by strangers in bars and restaurants, my first priority is simply to let someone else take care of me. That might mean a **five-star resort in South East Asia**, with long beach days and incredible dining. Perhaps it's a **cruise** where I can visit a litany of destinations without worrying about logistics. Or maybe it's a wellness-focused trip to a place like the new **Miraval Berkshires**, where the focus is on rebalancing priorities and listening to your body. I can't think of a better vacation than letting go and allowing myself to once again rely on the kindness and generosity of professionals to do what they do best. —
Stephanie Wu, articles director



St. Basil's Cathedral, Moscow—just one of the many architectural sites Betsy Blumenthal plans to visit in Russia. Getty

An epic train journey through Russia

One of the first places I'm hoping to visit when we're able to get back out in the world is Russia, where my maternal great-grandparents are from. I've been interested in the country's history, particularly of the pre-Revolutionary period, for as long as I can remember—probably thanks to the 1997 animated film *Anastasia* and the nonfiction tomes of Robert K. Massie. I'm especially keen to see firsthand all the architectural remnants of that era. In St. Petersburg, there's the Mariinsky Theatre, the Winter Palace, the State Hermitage Museum, and the Peter and Paul Fortress, and in Moscow, the Kremlin, St. Basil's Cathedral, and the Bolshoi Theatre—and that's just naming a few. Hulking and often pastel-colored, the buildings possess a special quality, of being both imposing and yet utterly delightful; and so much has happened inside each of them that I'd be thrilled to engage my inner history buff.

The twist is that I'd like to see all of these places—and many more—by train. Earlier this year, I worked on a [story](#) with a photographer who'd taken the Trans-Siberian Railway across most of Russia, meeting locals and seeing the sights, including Lake Baikal and the remote city of Novosibirsk, along the way. It's a mode of transportation that I hadn't previously considered, but the more I've thought about it, the more it makes complete sense: It would combine my desperate desire to be around people after hunkering down in my New Jersey apartment with the ability to cover vast amounts of ground. The experience, as he described it, was an intimate one—he befriended folks from all across Russia, some of whom he continues to exchange WhatsApp messages with. It would fulfill one of the things I miss most about travel—the ability to get to the roots of a place by getting to know the people who live there, settling into their way of life and their mores until you forget your own. And isn't that the point? —*Betsy Blumenthal, associate editor*



For Lauren DeCarlo, nothing will beat renting a big house upstate with family. Mrinal Kanti Paul/Getty

A family get-together in upstate New York

At least a dozen times a day, I start a sentence with, “I can’t wait until we...” Sometimes it’s directed to my husband, but more often to no one in particular. I usually mutter it to myself around dinnertime as I pull out our sauté pan to prepare what feels like our thousandth consecutive dinner at home since COVID wreaked havoc on New York last March. “I can’t wait until we can meet friends for a late dinner at the loudest, most crowded restaurant in the city.” Or on cold Saturday mornings, as we’re strategizing schemes to keep our four-year-old occupied for the next 10 hours: “I can’t wait until we can lay on a beach, just the two of us, reading and napping and consuming nothing but margaritas and ceviche.” My son has his own mantra, though his longings are really quite simple: “When the virus is over, can we eat dinner at Grandma’s house?” he’ll ask, or “go on the rides at Coney Island?”

Needless to say, there's a lot of fantasizing about where we'd all like to be when we can actually be someplace else. The irony is, for all that daydreaming, our first trip will be a four-hour drive from home, in upstate New York. My parents are celebrating their 50th anniversary this summer and they've invited my family and my two sisters's families to a tricked out compound on a lake for five nights. When my older sister was scouting rentals, she texted us a link to the house a few weeks before the holidays, which we knew we wouldn't be celebrating together. Our enthusiasm and hope was reflected in our replies: "OMG is that a regulation-sized basketball court?" "Did you see the dock with the canoes?!" "There's a room with three sets of bunk beds!" "Book it! Book it!"

This trip feels like the soft landing my re-entry requires. I think about the hours-long dinners we'll have, the table littered with empty wine bottles, and how we'll laugh until we cry and play records and share stories until someone inevitably notices the time, shocked that we've managed to stay up that late. And how the kids will rush through dinner so they can run off to play and ultimately fall asleep with full bellies, stacked in their bunks, thrilled to be having the most epic sleepover with their cousins instead of yet another Zoom. The beach can wait. So can a trip with just me and my husband. But hugging my parents goodnight simply cannot. —*Lauren DeCarlo, director of strategic projects*