

# The 27 Best Budget Travel Destinations For 2018



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From Senegal to China to Mexico, *Forbes'* 2018 list of budget travel destinations is better than ever before.

And with an all-star panel of experts, from KAYAK CEO Steve Hafner to TV host Samantha Brown, it's no wonder.



Sail into the new year with our list of best budget travel destinations for 2018. Photo credit: Spirited Pursuit.

Luckily for us, this seems to be the year of the island. From budget-friendly islas in Panama to cheap archipelagos in the South Pacific, 2018 is all about getting stranded on an affordable island paradise.

Sign us up.

With over 62 countries under her belt, television host **Samantha Brown** has explored the most remote corners of the world to the biggest metropolises. Her new show, "Samantha Brown's Places to Love" will air on January 6<sup>th</sup> on PBS. Follow "the girl with the best job in the world" on Instagram.

## 1. Montreal, Canada



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Montreal is at the top of TV host Samantha Brown's list for best budget travel destinations in 2018.

Right now, the dollar has a very favorable exchange rate in Canada. Montreal, with its strong French influence, offers a European fix without the long and expensive flight. In 2017, one of the most ambitious public art works ever was created: *Cite Memoire*, in which the 375-year history of the city is projected onto the buildings and streets in Old Montreal. It is nothing short of spectacular and all you have to do is download a [free app](#).

## 2. Xian, China



Xian, China lands on the top of Samantha Brown's cheapest places to visit in 2018.

As the ancient capital of China, Xian (unlike Beijing) is easy to get around by foot and it's smaller population (13 million) makes it a pleasant city to be in. The discovery of the Terracotta Warriors put Xian on the map and visiting one of the world's most incredible archeological finds is only \$23.00.

Pro-tip: at night all of Xian's ancient monuments, of which there are many, are dramatically lit. It costs nothing to walk around and enjoy the atmosphere.



### 3. Houston, Texas, the USA



For a fraction of the cost of bigger cities like New York, Houston is a must-see domestic destination in 2018. TV Host Samantha Brown recommends checking out their thriving art and culinary scene.

Being one of the most diverse cities in the U.S., Houston is creating buzz that cities like Miami and Chicago have long enjoyed. It has one of the most exciting food scenes in the country with restaurants owned by three James Beard Award winners. The art scene ranges from well-established institutions like the Menil Collection to local endeavors like Project Row Houses. People's perception that Harvey destroyed the whole city, which isn't true, means that hotels are operating below capacity, and might be offering better-than-normal deals.

After launching Orbitz in the early internet days to founding millennial darling travel site **KAYAK**, **CEO Steve Hafner** knows a thing or two about budget travel. Here are the disrupter's favorite destinations for an affordable 2018 vacation.

### 4. San Miguel de Allende, Mexico



The picturesque cobblestone streets of San Miguel de Allende make this Mexican city at the top of Steve Hafner's budget 2018 destinations. Photo credit: Shutterstock.

A small city in the state of Guanajuato, San Miguel de Allende is one of my favorite spots in Mexico. Depending on where in the U.S. you're flying from, it can be a relatively quick flight with top notch hotels, fun nightlife and a great art scene. Flight prices for the first half of 2018 are down 11% compared to the same time last year, plus the Mexican Peso is historically low, making it even easier to explore the city on a budget.

## 5. Barcelona, Spain



Park Güell in Barcelona, Spain is just one of the reasons you should put this Catalan city on your best budget travel destinations for 2018. Photo credit: Shutterstock.

This Catalan city is a great choice if you want to get to Europe on a budget in 2018. It offers some of the best museums in the world, the architecture is incredible and you can easily hit the beaches if you need a break from sightseeing. Despite being in the eurozone, it's still among the more affordable cities in Europe and we are seeing flight prices down 20% for the first half of 2018, when compared to the same time last year.

## 6. Curaçao





The beautiful Caribbean island of Curacao is an affordable destination in 2018, says KAYAK CEO Steve Hafner. Photo credit: LUIS ACOSTA/AFP/Getty Images.

This Dutch-Caribbean island was one of the places unscathed by the hurricanes this fall and we're seeing an 11% dip in hotel prices for 2018 – giving you a few extra dollars to spend on water activities. It has some of the best snorkeling and diving in the Caribbean and unlike some of the other islands where you may be tempted to just stay on hotel property, Willemstad has a charm that's worth checking out.

As the face and voice behind the creative platform Spirited Pursuit, **Lee Litumbe**'s mission is to publish inspiring and informative travel content. A Cameroonian by birth, an American by upbringing and a nomad at heart, Litumbe is currently traveling long term throughout Africa. She is passionate about changing the way the world sees Africa, and Africans see themselves. Follow her adventures [on Instagram](#).

## 7. Zanzibar, Tanzania



From pristine beaches to rock bottom prices, Tanzania is a budget traveler's dream in 2018. Photo credit: Spirited Pursuit.

Pristine white sand beaches, colorful coral reefs, endless spices, a varied culture and name that commands curiosity – [Zanzibar](#) is an East African island full of beautiful contrasts. If like me you're a foodie, culture lover and adventurer but still enjoy beautiful beaches you can relax on, Zanzibar is definitely for you. Although tickets can be expensive, dollars will definitely go far once you're there.

## 8. Dakar, Senegal



Lee Litumbe recommends checking out the surf, and culture of Senegal in 2018. Photo credit: Spirited Pursuit.

[Senegal](#) is among the top three African countries I always recommend to both first time visitors of the continent or seasoned travelers looking to experience a modern alternative to the travel possibilities in Africa. I love Dakar in particular because it's such a modern city and is pretty easy to navigate independently, so long as you speak some French. Although it is a backpacker friendly destination, you can also enjoy the luxe life...for less.

#### 9. Port Salut, Haiti



Although news of Haiti's earthquake in 2010 dominated news cycles, the country has mostly recovered and should be at the top of your budget travel list for 2018. Photo credit: Spirited Pursuit.

In search of positive travel stories highlighting what was once known as "The Pearl of the Caribbean", I was extremely disappointed (though hardly surprised) to only find negative articles detailing the catastrophic earthquake of 2010 paired with horrific tales of violence, extreme poverty and tragedy. However, with miles of pristine powder-white sand, cyan blue sea and fringed coconut palm trees found in [Port Salut](#), Les Cayes, I was happy to discover one of several destinations that embodied exactly what I was after: a pleasant



alternative to what is typically associated with Haiti. And thanks to cheap lodging and food costs, Port Salut is an affordable destination for 2018.

After having travelled the world together, **Kach and Jonathan Howe** are the writers and online entrepreneurs behind Two Monkeys Travel and *Mr and Mrs Howe*. Together, they've visited 80 countries and seven continents (including Antarctica!), but they are about to embark on their biggest adventure yet: living and exploring the seas on their 37 foot sailboat, SV Empress. Follow their epic journey [on Instagram](#).

#### 10. Gaziantep, Turkey



Although not as many tourists put Gaziantep on their list as Istanbul, the travel bloggers behind Two Monkeys Travel say its a must-see for 2018. Photo credit: Jonathan Howe.

This Turkish city gets less attention from international tourists than other locations further west, but it is even bit as stunning and has just as much if not more to offer. Only a 90 minute flight from Istanbul, [Gaziantep is one of eight UNESCO Creative Gastronomy Cities](#) in the world. It is also pistachio capital of Turkey! With Gaziantep, you can find everything you would look for in Istanbul but more authentic interactions at a fraction of the price.

#### 11. Herceg Novi, Montenegro



This seaside city of Montenegro offers the luxe of the Mediterranean at a cheap price. Photo courtesy of Herceg Novi Tourism.

Nestled between the picturesque Adriatic Sea and the impressive backdrop of Mount Orjen, Herceg Novi has one of the most turbulent histories in Europe. For a budget traveler, this means you can see incredibly eclectic architectural styles and enjoy some history, while traveling the more affordable parts of Europe. The area is also famous for hot springs, mud spas and hidden beaches. Many of the beaches are only accessible boat and we're hoping to make it there in early 2018 ourselves. Maybe you'll catch us there!

## 12. Zagreb, Croatia



Zagreb is a great city for budget travelers in 2018. Photo credit: Kach Howe.

[Croatia](#)'s coastal areas and the western region of Istria tend to get most of the attention when tourists visit the country, but on a recent visit we found out that the capital of Zagreb, with its well-preserved Austro-Hungarian architecture and surrounding mountains, offers an entirely different experience. With cheap restaurant meals and nearby mountain wineries, we'd recommend spending a few days in the city.

Professional photographer and solo female travel guru **Laura Austin** took a break from her outdoor adventures recently to release her first book, "SOLO: A



Guidebook To Traveling Alone.” The stunning 76-page tome is part-travel diary, part-photo journal, part-ruminations, with a good dash of practical tips. Follow her beautiful adventures [on Instagram](#).

### 13. Yelapa, Mexico



Yelapa, Mexico offers luxe lodging at a fraction of the cost. Book [Verana](#) for your budget vacation in 2018. Photo credit: Laura Austin.

Looking to travel some place that feels exotic on a budget? Look no further than [Verana](#) in Yelapa, Mexico. A flight to Puerto Vallarta and a boat ride to Yelapa leads you to this incredible hotel tucked in the jungle of Mexico. After a quick hike up stone steps, the thick jungle opens up into ten unique and beautiful bungalows providing equal parts adventure and luxury...on a budget

### 14. Moab, Utah, USA



You don't have to travel far to find natural beauty in the good old US of A. Moab makes professional photographer Laura Austin's list of best budget destinations for 2018. Photo credit: Laura Austin.

Moab provides the most incredible diverse views in a small radius... consisting of two [National Parks](#) within 20 minutes of each other. To complete the experience, I highly recommend staying at [Moab Under Canvas](#)... which provides the ultimate “glamping” experience. Great for your budget, and your back.

#### **15. Anza-Borrego State Park, California, USA**



Skip California’s more well-known attractions like Joshua Tree, and find yourself at the budget-friendly Anza-Borrego State Park. Photo Credit: Laura Austin.

For anyone living on the west coast... Palm Springs and Joshua Tree are pretty obvious instant desert vacations. But have you heard of Anza-Borrego State Park? An hour and a half from Palm Springs you’ll find yourself away from the crowds and in the midst of breathtaking desert landscapes.

**Hande Cilek** is one of Turkey’s biggest travel influencers. From exploring South Africa’s Cape of Good Hope to discovering unknown travel gems in her backyard, Cilek never says no to adventure. The famous blogger behind Gümüş Pusula or silver compass recently moved to California. Follow along her family-friendly explorations [on Instagram](#).

#### **16. Namibia**





Stop by Namibia for an off-the-beaten track, budget-friendly adventure in 2018. Photo credit: Hande Cilek.

This West Africa country is a traveller paradise because it offers adventure, beautiful landscape and untouched nature. It receives much less tourists than its popular neighbor South Africa, although it has similar budget-friendly prices. I will never forget climbing [to the oldest dunes in the world](#) and doing a jeep safari where the huge sand dunes meet the Atlantic Ocean.

#### **17. Bosnia Herzegovina**



Bosnia offers European vacation style, for less. Photo credit: Hande Cilek.

This European country offers history, culture and vibrant green nature full of rivers and waterfalls. The more you travel through Bosnia, the more you want to get to know it. It is less expensive than other European countries, which makes it a steal, in my book.

#### **18. Morocco**





Not only is Morocco a cheap destination for 2018, but you can travel back in time at the edge of the Sahara Desert. Photo credit: Hande Cilek.

When you are in Morocco you feel as if you are in another world of colors, smells and tastes. As you wander the streets of Fez or venture into the Sahara, it feels like you are traveling through time. Morocco is extremely budget-friendly so you can splurge out on fancy meals or hammams without breaking the bank.

**Matt Kepnes** made a name for himself in the early days of blogging, and since then his eponymous website, Nomadic Matt, is a hit with travelers around the world. And this year, his book, *How to Travel the World on \$50 a Day*, is publishing its third edition. In celebration, Kepnes is offering one lucky person a free trip around the world. Enter [before November 30th](#) and who knows, you could be the next budget travel guru.

#### 19. New Zealand



Thanks to a good exchange rate, New Zealand lands on this year's best budget travel destinations. Photo credit: Shutterstock.

New Zealand is not a usual budget destination but given that the US dollar is currently very strong and the NZ dollar is at multi-year low, now is an incredible time to visit because you're getting a lot more value for your money than you have in the past. Sometimes that's what budget travel is about.

## 20. Fiji



Tropical flora and backpacker prices are two of the reasons Fiji should be on your must-travel list for 2018. Photo credit: Shutterstock.

A lot of people [think the South Pacific](#) is filled with expensive islands and resorts but Fiji, despite the high cost of the water bottles that bear its name, is actually a backpacker budget paradise filled with hostels, affordable guesthouses, inexpensive cuisine and stunning beaches.

## 21. Santiago, Chile





Santiago, Chile boasts the best of Argentina's Buenos Aires, but at a fraction of the cost. Photo credit: Shutterstock.

While neighboring Buenos Aires gets a lot of attention, Santiago is an up-and-coming city with a lot of hip restaurants, start ups, co-working spaces and incredible nightlife. It's very affordable and you get a great value for your money here with nice accommodation and healthy portions of food at a fraction of the price in Buenos Aires.

World traveler, chocolate enthusiast and Sikh activist **Harjinder Singh Kukreja** jets around the globe with his family of four. Follow his delicious adventures [on Instagram](#).

## **22. Amritsar, India**

[#Rehras](#) [#GoldenTemple](#) [#Sikh](#) [#Amritsar](#) [#India](#) [#DarbarSahib](#)  
[#GoldenTempleAmritsar](#)

A post shared by Harjinder Singh Kukreja (@harjinderkukreja) on Nov 17, 2017 at 12:05pm PST

Home to the Harmandir Sahib, or Golden Temple, Amritsar is an important spiritual and pilgrimage center of the Sikh religion. The north-western Indian city also boasts ornate architecture and a peek into the painful history of British colonization. Although the city welcomes thousands of tourists a day, there are plenty of options for budget-minded travelers.

## **23. Paris, France**



Travel blogger Harjinder Singh Kukreja says Paris can be an affordable, family-friendly destination for 2018. Photo credit: Harjinder Singh Kukreja.

Although many travelers consider France to be a not-so cheap country, it is possible to visit the city of lights on a budget. Stick to family-friendly activities like museums and parks – both of which don't have to break the bank. And consider looking for an airbnb or short-term rental, as oftentimes in Europe you can snag awesome accommodation for the fraction of the cost of a hotel. The Euro is still at an all-time low compared to the dollar, so take advantage and book your French family vacation ASAP.

**Amirah and Jarrell Cook** have been traveling the world for over four years on an indefinite honeymoon. What might make other couples crazy has led the pair to a lifetime of adventures. Amirah has also written a book on excelling at expat life. Follow along their #squadgoals [life on Instagram](#).

#### **24. Koh Lanta, Krabi, Thailand**





Enjoying the paradise of Koh Lanta on their indefinite honeymoon, Amirah and Jarrell Cook recommend this Thai paradise for budget travelers. Photo credit: Amirah Cook.

Unlike its more popular neighbors, this Thai island is much less visited by tourists, offering empty stretches of white sand beaches and crystal blue water. With easy access from Krabi International airport, [Koh Lanta](#) offers all the amenities sought at other Thai islands, from pampering to water sports at a fraction of the price. Visit soon, as an influx of high-end resorts will make this getaway pricier, and more crowded.

## **25. Granada, Nicaragua**



Beautiful architecture and cheap prices make Granada a budget travelers dream. Photo credit: Amirah Cook.

After being added to many top places to retire lists, the number of visitors in this previously well-kept secret has increased dramatically. The colorful, Spanish architecture makes even walking through town an adventure in Granada. Visit sooner rather than later, and enjoy the enchantment of this budget-traveler paradise.

**26. Koh Dach (Silk Island), Phnom Penh, Cambodia**





Camodia's Silk Island is a great budget travel destination for 2018. Photo credit: Amirah Cook.

Earning its name from the considerable production of beautifully colored fabric spun by hand, [Silk Island](#) is a hidden gem just outside of Phnom Penh. The small community includes a few temples in addition to the silk production factories, which are open to visit. A bridge and ferry service easily connects you to the busyness of the city, while the island, located along the Mekong River, offers a quiet escape.

#### **27. Bastimentos Island, Bocas Del Toro, Panama**



Relax on Panama's Caribbean side, where rock bottom prices and beautiful vistas welcome travelers from all over the world. Photo credit: Amirah Cook.

Surrounded by the Caribbean Sea, [Bastimentos](#) is a bustling backpacker's dream. Boasting both jungle and water activities, this large island is mostly uninhabited, leaving for much to discover. Travel between islands in the region is simple and cheap, making it a great place post up in Panama.

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