

DESIGN INSPIRATION

8 Travel Destinations Designers Secretly Swear by for Inspiration

Move over, Milan.

BY KELLY ALLEN | PUBLISHED: MAY 12, 2025

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Designers have long found inspiration through travel. Time and time again, they return to famous hotspots—Paris, Milan, New York, and so on. Beyond these classics, new destinations are rising to the top of designers' exploration lists. From the "effortless beauty" of Mallorca to the growing modern art scene in Morocco's capital, Rabat, these otherworldly regions are the new inspiration

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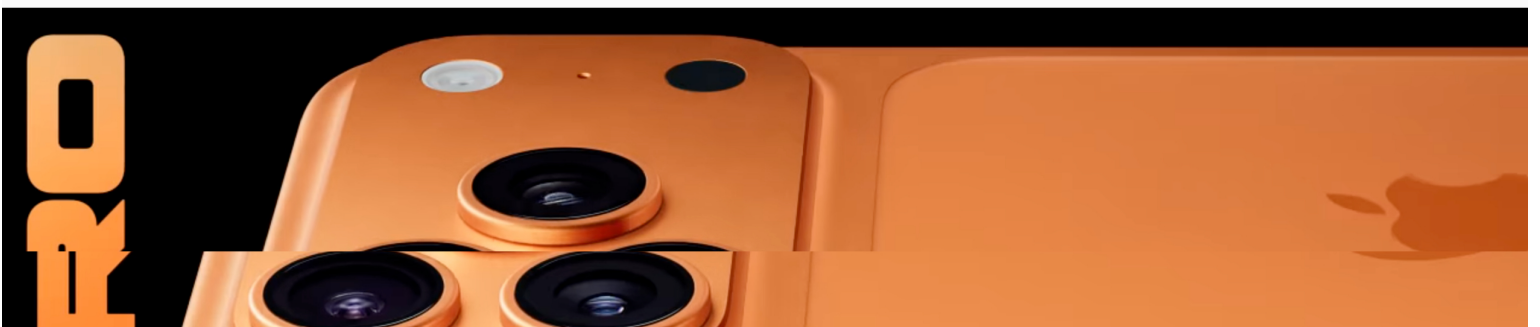


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With a human-centered set up conceived by architect Jože Plečnik, Ljubljana is leading the way in terms of sustainable urban design.

Slovenia's capital, Ljubljana, "is leading in sustainable urban design," according to Los Angeles-based design team **Ome Dezin**, founded by Joelle Kutner and Jesse Rudolph. The city's human-centered setup was largely conceived by **architect Jože Plečnik**. The destination is brimming with greenways, including the expansive garden and sculpture-filled Tivoli Park, along with other public spaces from town squares to riverside promenades. The cultural hub is brimming with inspiring sights, including many museums, galleries, and architectural marvels both new and old—including a historic castle!

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Dubai, United Arab Emirates

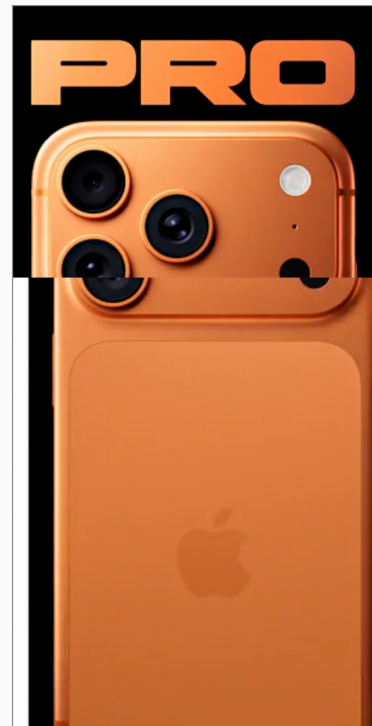
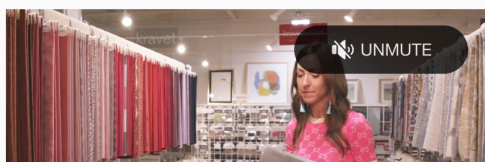


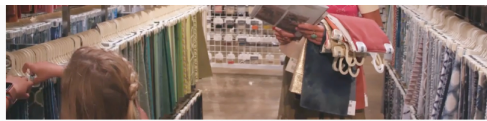
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Winding waterways offer a slow, scenic way to tour Dubai by boat with views of popular marketplace Souk Madinat Jumeirah and luxury hotel Burj Al Arab.

Dubai is a widely admired design hub “with the most multinational diversity I’ve experienced,” says Carisha Swanson, *House Beautiful* director of special projects. The city’s **annual design festival** continues to put a breadth of innovative, regional talent on display through installations, workshops, talks, and more. Home to the tallest building in the world, Burj Khalifa, the city is known for its ultramodern, cutting-edge architecture, which persists in reaching new heights. “What’s happening there in terms of sustainable design—and the dynamic between innovation and rapid development—is truly fascinating,” Swanson adds.

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Rabat, Morocco



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Mosaic tiling at the King Mohammed mausoleum showcase tradition design details Morocco is known for.

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Long underrated, Morocco's capital city of Rabat "blends Moroccan heritage with a growing modern art scene" in the eyes of the Ome Dezin design team. When the **Mohammed VI Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art** opened about a decade ago, it ushered in a new era. The city's cultural vibrancy has blossomed through the years, including with the 2024 return of the music festival **Mawazine Rythmes du Monde** (with mostly free entry to shows at several open-air stages!) following a years-long hiatus. Plus, the highly anticipated, UNESCO-listed Grand Théâtre—the largest performing arts complex in Africa designed by



theater—the largest performing arts complex in Africa designed by architect Zaha Hadid—is poised to be a must-visit landmark when it finally opens.

Mallorca, Spain



ALEXANDER SPATARI // GETTY IMAGES

The gothic Cathedral of Santa Maria of Palma stands out in Mallorca's treasure trove of historic architecture.

Mallorca's "effortless beauty" draws **Garrow Kedigian** to the Spanish island. The New York City-based designer had the pleasure of staying at the **Hotel Cappuccino** in Palma de Mallorca for a few days last summer and completely fell in love. "**The city is a gorgeous blend of neoclassical and Spanish-style architecture**, and the walking path down the central avenue in Palma with its canopy of trees is just a dream," Kedigian says. "I love color, and the brilliantly painted architecture of this magnificent Balearic island is exceptional. The buildings are one with nature. It is awe-inspiring and magnificent!"

AlUla, Saudi Arabia



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The rock-cut Tomb of Lihyan, son of Kuza, dates back to 1st-century CE and is surrounded by hundreds of other monolithic sandstone outcrops in AlUla.



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“AIUla, Saudi Arabia, is firmly establishing itself as one of the most compelling design destinations of 2025,” says Los Angeles–based architectural designer **Amr Samaha**. “Beyond its extraordinary natural landscape and ancient Nabataean heritage, it’s now home to innovative hospitality projects that seamlessly blend architecture and geology.”

Samaha points to **Desert Rock Resort** as a prime example. The resort is “carved directly into the mountainside and designed to exist in harmony with its surroundings,” Samaha explains. “It’s a powerful example of how thoughtful design can both honor and elevate a place’s historical and natural context—a balance I always strive for in my own work.”

Douro Valley and Comporta, Portugal



MARISA LÓPEZ ESTIVILL // GETTY IMAGES

The Douro Valley’s vineyards and small villages exude endless charm.

“While Lisbon and Porto dominate the urban scene [in Portugal] with Moorish, Baroque, and Neoclassical influences, there is a growing focus on sustainability we are seeing just outside of the city,” says Los Angeles–based designer **Jackie Kosnett**. “Both the Douro Valley and Comporta stand out with a focus on eco-luxury, combining both the natural environment and design, integrating architecture into the stunning landscape environments.”

Bandung, Indonesia





MUHAMMAD FARIS // GETTY IMAGES

Bandung's well-preserved buildings are brimming with character.

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Another destination that “highlights the fusion of tradition and modern design,” according to Ome Dezin, is Bandung. The city “thrives as Indonesia’s creative hub with its indie fashion and Art Deco charm,” the design team says. Known as Flower City and the Paris of Java, Bandung is set amid volcanoes and tea plantations. With relatively cool tropical weather, the destination’s natural beauty and architectural sights provide a visual feast alongside equally inspiring fashion and food scenes.

Costa Brava, Spain



DOMINGO LEIVA // GETTY IMAGES

The Costa Brava region is steeped in history and cemented in pop culture. In the city of Girona, stone steps and alleyways were tapped as backdrops for HBO's mega-hit series *Game of Thrones*.

“Costa Brava is redefining itself with artistic retreats, like [the hotel] **Finca Victoria**,” according to Ome Dezin. “We were there about five years ago and enjoyed the Spanish/French inspirations.” After an extensive renovation blending heritage with contemporary elegance, the five-star hotel will reopen in 2025. Beyond the surplus of lavish accommodations throughout the coastal region's towns, the enchanting Mediterranean beaches are postcard perfect. But don't overlook the region's botanical gardens, ancient ruins, and artisan hubs, like the Catalan capital of ceramics, La Bisbal d'Empordà.

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