



THE STARS OF JAPANESE KABUKI THEATER BECOME HOUSEHOLD NAMES, ESPECIALLY THE MEN WHO PLAY THE WOMEN'S ROLES.

Although the professional Kabuki stages in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka retain the tradition of all-male performers, amateur Kabuki theaters in towns throughout Japan rely on women and child players as well. These local actors (left) portray roles from warriors to maidens.

HIROSHI WATANABE (KABUKI PLAYERS); PREVIOUS PAGES: DMITRY MOISEENKO/WWW.AIRPANO.COM (GREAT WALL)

and plunging into valleys. The wall's tallest point is Watching Beijing Tower, reached via the Sky Bridge.
Hot Tip: Sleep in modern style at the Commune by the Great Wall, a collection of villas and suites designed by top Asian architects.

Circle the Globe

SAMOA TO THE SERENGETI

Become a modern-day Magellan and circumnavigate the easy way on National Geographic's Around the World by Private Jet Journeys. Expert photographers, writers, and cultural guides lead the way. natgeoexpeditions.com/explore
Hot Tip: Region-specific private-jet journeys explore African safari lands, Pacific island chains, and Asia's temples and towns.

Applaud Kabuki Theater

JAPAN

Sword-wielding samurai, thwarted love affairs, and bloody betrayals make Japanese Kabuki performances as dramatic and compelling as Shakespearean plays or Spanish telenovelas. Its stars become household names, especially the onnagata, men who play the women's roles. Racy, often historic tales are performed, sometimes punctuated with dance and the haunting, plangent notes of the shamisen, a three-string lute.
Hot Tip: Look for shows at Osaka's Shochikuza Kabuki Theater, a converted 1923 movie palace. Pick up an English program or audio guide beforehand for interpretation.

Horse Trek the Andes

CHILE, PERU, ECUADOR

Extending roughly 4,500 miles from Venezuela to Tierra del Fuego, the Andes are the world's longest mountain range. Dirt paths skirting the mountains prove particularly suited to horseback trekking, with dozens of outfitters operating in Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Ecuador. One path crosses grasslands in the Ecuadorian highlands; another follows an old smugglers' route from Chile through the Patagonian Andes into Argentina, passing mountain lakes along the way. If you're lucky, you may spot llamas, cougars, chinchillas, or condors.
Hot Tip: For a cosmic experience, stay at Elqui Domos, in Chile, which features astronomy tours, cabins

with detachable roofs, and an outdoor deck with telescopes.

Be Dazzled by the Pyramids

EGYPT

The sands of Egypt shift around ancient monuments that capture the imagination as few others do. The Great Pyramids of Giza, built circa 2550 B.C., never cease to amaze with their vastness and history. Descend 300 feet through a 3.5-foot-wide passage into the heart of the only surviving wonder of the ancient world.
Hot Tip: Stay at the Mena House Oberoi, a 19th-century hunting lodge converted into a hotel with grand pyramid views.

Drink Argentine Wine at the Source

MENDOZA, ARGENTINA

Lush Malbec red wine provides a complex, berry-forward foil to Argentina's trademark fire-grilled parrilla meats. Its richness comes from Mendoza's mineral-laden soil, warm days, and cool nights. Taste its complexity and mystique at wineries south of this Old World city in western Argentina, where renowned bottles come from producers such as Achaval-Ferrer, Dominio del Plata, and Bodegas Salentein. Many wineries also run restaurants where you can wine and dine among the vines.
Hot Tip: Maipú's Museo del Vino San Felipe displays antique wine-presses and jumbo wooden barrels.

Follow in Ansel Adams's Footsteps

YOSEMITE VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

During the 40 years he lived in the Yosemite Valley, Ansel Adams hiked around the park with some 100 pounds of photography gear. The epic black-and-white images of the American West he captured here are infused with the innate power of these landscapes. Though fires ravaged some of the park's groves and grounds this past summer, you can still follow in his footsteps to explore the magnificence of places bearing evocative names such as Cathedral Spires and Unicorn Peak. You'll want to snap some of your own images of Adams's prize subject, El Capitan, the world's largest individual granite rock.