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WAYFARER

One Planet. Endless Journeys.

Istanbul to Cappadocia: a spring route, in the shoulder season

- SIKKIM'S MONASTERIES AND THE FIRST RHODODENDRONS
- HOLI IN BRAJ, AND QUIETER WAYS TO MEET THE SPRING
- JEJU AND THE HAENYEO: SOUTH KOREA'S SOUTHERN ISLAND IN MARCH
- WASHINGTON, KEUKENHOF AND THE CAPE WINELANDS: THREE SPRING SCENES

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EDITOR'S DISPATCH

Springs and Blossoms

From Gitanjali Gautam, Editor-in-Chief

There is a short window each year when a place is at its most photographed, and a longer one, either side, when it is at its most itself. March is a month for noticing the difference.

This issue chases blossoms, but we have tried to do so with some restraint. Blossom sites are popular for good reasons and also risk being loved to death, so alongside the pretty places you will find a short guide to visiting lightly, and stories of people whose work keeps these landscapes going: the divers of Jeju, a Sikkim farming policy, the growers behind a famous tulip garden, and the journalist who dreamed up the cherry trees of Washington.

As always, those stories come from published reporting and official sources, not from our own interviews, and we say so on the page. Dates for blossom are forecasts, not promises. We have also marked where Ramadan, which in 2026 runs through most of March, affects a journey to Turkey.

Plan loosely, look closely, and tell us what you found.

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GITANJALI GAUTAM, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

- Gitanjali Gautam

Masthead

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March is the month when the northern hemisphere starts to flower and much of India reaches for colour. Tulips open in the Netherlands from 19 March, cherry trees flower around the Tidal Basin in Washington, rhododendrons begin their climb up the Sikkim hills, and Holi paints the plains. This issue follows the blossom, and asks how to visit it lightly.

DID YOU KNOW

Hagia Sophia was built between 532 and 537 under the emperor Justinian.

DID YOU KNOW

Keukenhof is planted each autumn with roughly seven million bulbs.

DID YOU KNOW

Jeju's haenyeo tradition was inscribed on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2016.

DID YOU KNOW

Washington's first cherry trees were planted on 27 March 1912.

DID YOU KNOW

Sikkim decided in 2003 to convert its farming to organic methods.

PLAN FOR WEATHER

Balloon flights over Cappadocia are often cancelled by wind; keep spare days.

Prices, timings, permits and visa notes are approximate - please verify before booking.

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RESEARCHED	Compiled from public sources; field verification pending.
PROPOSED	A commission, brief or concept - not a published story.
ILLUSTRATIVE	An example itinerary; check times and costs locally.
TEMPLATE	A format showing how offers appear; no real prices.

TRAVEL TIP

Peak bloom is a forecast. Plan for a few days either side of it.

TRAVEL TIP

At Holi, ask before applying colour to anyone, and keep phones in sealed bags.

TRAVEL TIP

Stay out of commercial bulb fields; growers lose crops to trampling.

Plan loosely, look closely, and tell us what you found.

GITANJALI GAUTAM, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

A good spring trip does not depend on one photograph.

FROM THE RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL COLUMN

Treat blossom sites as places where people live and work.

FROM THE RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL COLUMN

Prices, timings, permits and visa notes are approximate - please verify before booking.



COVER STORY

Istanbul to Cappadocia: a spring route

Two cities of stone, six hundred kilometres apart. How to link them in March without falling out of love with either.

RESEARCHED

Photo: Benh LIEU SONG (Flickr) · CC BY-SA 4.0

SPRING IS A GOOD time to pair Istanbul with central Turkey. The crowds are smaller than in summer, the light is clear, and mornings are cool enough for long walks. The two halves of the trip are very different in character: Istanbul is a layered city on two continents, and Cappadocia is a volcanic plateau where people have carved homes and churches into soft rock for centuries.

Begin in Istanbul. The Historic Areas of Istanbul have been on UNESCO's World Heritage List since 1985, and include the old city around Sultanahmet, where Hagia Sophia stands. Built under the emperor Justinian between 532 and 537, it served as a church, then as a mosque after 1453, a museum from 1935, and again as a mosque since 2020. Arrangements for visitors have changed since then, so check the official rules before you go; our Heritage column this month looks at the building. Leave time away from the headline sights too: a ferry on the Bosphorus, the neighbourhoods across the Golden Horn, a long lunch with no schedule.

Cappadocia is reached by air from Istanbul, with flights to Nevehir Kapadokya Airport or to Kayseri, a larger city to the north-east, followed by a road transfer. The area was inscribed by UNESCO in 1985 as Göreme National Park and the Rock Sites of Cappadocia. Its tall pillars, known as fairy chimneys, were shaped by erosion of volcanic deposits. The Göreme Open Air Museum holds more than thirty rock-cut churches and chapels, some with frescoes from the ninth to the eleventh centuries, and underground settlements such as Derinkuyu and Kaymakl were dug by communities seeking shelter in unsettled times.

Hot-air balloon flights over the valleys at sunrise are the area's most famous activity. They depend on the wind and are cancelled on many mornings, so build in spare days rather than a single dawn, and choose an operator that is licensed and clear about its safety record and cancellation policy. Walking in the valleys is quieter, free and in March often has better light.

A day in Avanos, a town on the Kzlrmak river about 18 km north of Nevehir, shows another side of Cappadocia: potters have worked there with the river's red clay for generations, and many workshops invite visitors to try a wheel.

One fact belongs on every March plan. In 2026, Ramadan is expected to run from about 18 February to about 19 March, with Eid al-Fitr around 20 March; dates differ by a day depending on moon sighting. In Istanbul and Cappadocia, the main tourist sites and most restaurants remain open, but some local businesses keep shorter hours, and the evening iftar meal at sunset is a social moment worth sharing if you are invited. Eid brings a holiday period, with busy transport and some closures. Avoid eating or drinking conspicuously in a very conservative neighbourhood during daylight, and book transport early if you travel around Eid.

Entry rules depend on your passport, and e-Visa eligibility has conditions, so check the official Turkish e-Visa site and your own embassy before you book.

At a glance

BEST TIME	April to June and September to November are the classic shoulder seasons; March is cool and changeable
RAMADAN 2026	Expected from about 18 February to about 19 March; Eid al-Fitr around 20 March (moon sighting can shift it by a day)
HERITAGE	Historic Areas of Istanbul (1985); Göreme National Park and the Rock Sites of Cappadocia (1985)
GETTING THERE	Istanbul has two major airports; Cappadocia is reached through Nevehir or Kayseri
ENTRY	Visa rules depend on nationality; check the official Turkish e-Visa portal
CHECKED	10 November 2026: re-confirm site rules, fees and balloon operators before booking

HOW TO REACH

Istanbul and Cappadocia, Türkiye

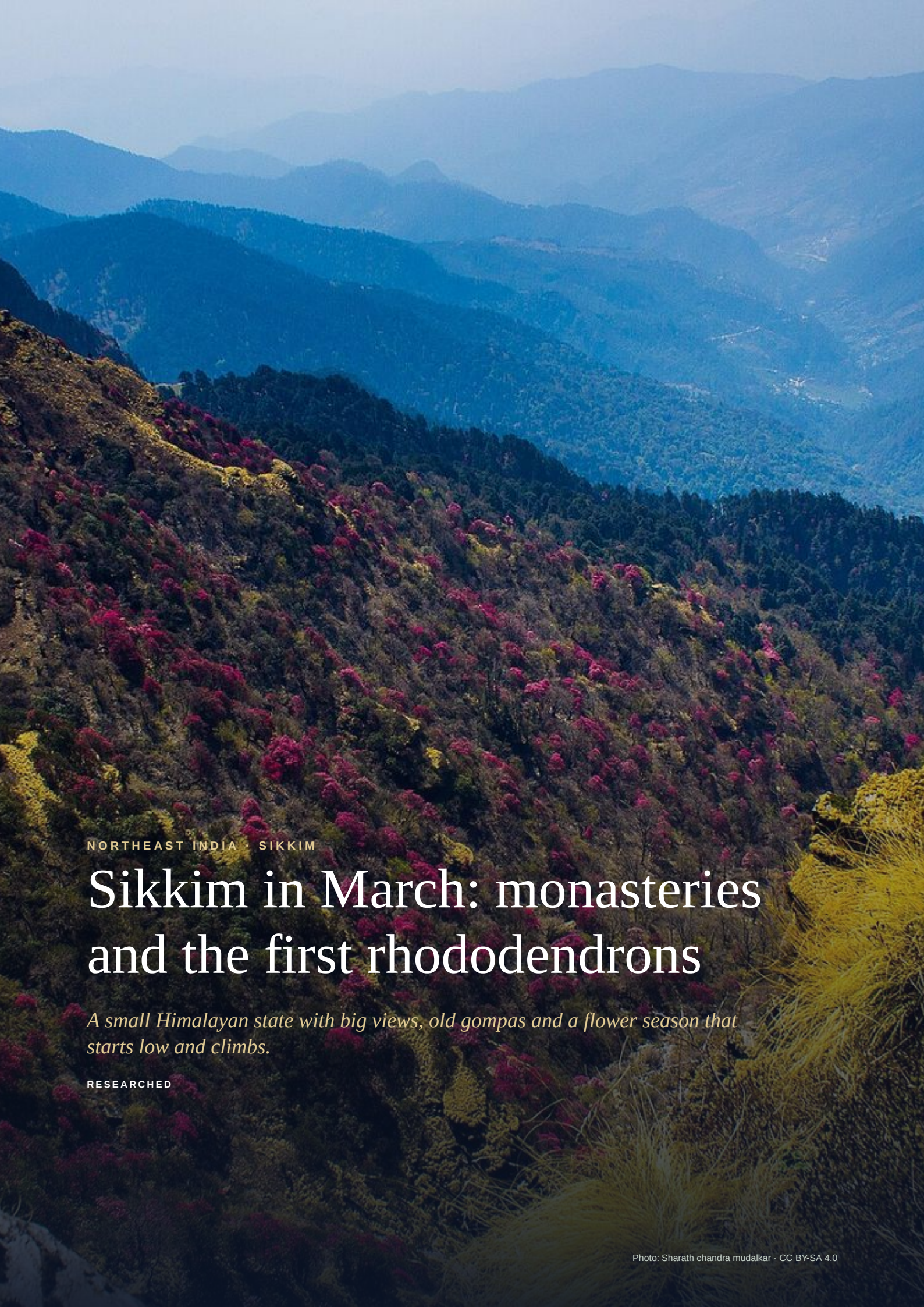
AIRPORT	Istanbul Airport (IST) and Sabiha Gökçen (SAW); for Cappadocia, Nevehir Kapadokya (NAV), roughly 30–40 km from Göreme, or Kayseri (ASR), roughly 70–80 km (approximate).
RAILWAY	High-speed trains link Istanbul to Ankara; Cappadocia has no direct rail link, with Kayseri the nearest big rail town.
BY ROAD	Istanbul to Cappadocia by road is roughly 700 km, a long day or an overnight bus; most visitors fly.
GETTING AROUND	Metro, trams and ferries in Istanbul; in Cappadocia, hire a car, join tours or use local taxis.

Distances approximate. Weather can cancel balloon flights and some flights. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: UNESCO: Historic Areas of Istanbul (whc.unesco.org); UNESCO: Göreme National Park and the Rock Sites of Cappadocia (whc.unesco.org); Türkiye Tourism (official) (www.goturkiye.com); Turkish e-Visa (official) (www.evisa.gov.tr)



Photo: Arild Vågen · CC BY-SA 3.0



NORTHEAST INDIA · SIKKIM

Sikkim in March: monasteries and the first rhododendrons

A small Himalayan state with big views, old gompas and a flower season that starts low and climbs.

RESEARCHED

Photo: Sharath chandra mudalkar · CC BY-SA 4.0

SIKKIM, TUCKED BETWEEN NEPAL, Bhutan and Tibet, is small and steep. Almost everything of interest sits on a mountain road, and the journeys between sights are part of the experience. March is a quiet, cool month when the first rhododendrons begin to open at lower altitudes and the hills are clear in the mornings.

A good base is Gangtok. Rumtek Monastery, about 24 km from the capital at roughly 1,500 metres, is a large Tibetan Buddhist monastery rebuilt by the 16th Karmapa after he arrived from Tibet in 1959 and opened in 1966. It remains a place where the monastic succession is contested, and security is visible; follow instructions and keep to the visitor areas. In the west of the state, Pemayangtse Monastery, near Pelling at about 2,085 metres, belongs to the Nyingma order and was founded in the seventeenth century, with the main complex dating to the early eighteenth. On a clear day, it looks toward Kangchenjunga, the world's third-highest mountain.

Sikkim's rhododendrons are famous. The Shingba Rhododendron Sanctuary in the Yumthang Valley in North Sikkim, around 3,500 metres, has more than two dozen species, and flowers across spring into early summer. Peak bloom at that height is usually April to May, and in March the road and valley can still be snowbound, so check access with a registered operator or the state tourism department before planning a trip. Lachung is the nearest village with places to stay; Yumthang is not a day trip from Gangtok.

Khangchendzonga National Park, which covers a large part of the state, has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2016. Treks into it need permits and a registered operator.

Permits matter in Sikkim. Gangtok and the main monasteries do not need special permissions, but areas near the border, including Tsomgo (Changu) Lake, Nathu La and parts of North Sikkim, need permits that are normally arranged through a registered travel operator. Foreign nationals need a Protected Area Permit for restricted areas. Rules change, so confirm with the Sikkim tourism department and your operator.

Travel in Sikkim is by road, and landslides can close routes in wet weather. Allow buffer days, and carry warm layers and motion-sickness tablets if you need them. Stay in homestays, eat the local food such as momos and thukpa, and buy from local crafts shops.

At a glance

BEST TIME	March to May for flowers and clear mornings; high valleys may stay closed into March
HERITAGE	Khangchendzonga National Park, UNESCO World Heritage Site (2016)
PERMITS	Special permits for Tsomgo Lake, Nathu La and North Sikkim, usually through a registered operator; Protected Area Permit for foreign nationals in restricted areas
ALTITUDE	Yumthang is around 3,500 m; acclimatise and check weather
CHECKED	10 November 2026: permit rules and road conditions change; confirm before travel

HOW TO REACH

Gangtok, Pelling and Yumthang, Sikkim

AIRPORT	Pakyong Airport (PYG) near Gangtok, with limited flights; Bagdogra (IXB) in West Bengal, roughly 125 km from Gangtok, is the main gateway (approximate).
RAILWAY	New Jalpaiguri (NJP) near Siliguri, roughly 115 km from Gangtok; Sikkim itself has no railway.
BY ROAD	Bagdogra or NJP to Gangtok takes roughly 4 to 5 hours; Gangtok to Pelling about 5 hours; Gangtok to Lachung about 5 to 6 hours.
GETTING AROUND	Shared and private jeeps; registered operators for permit areas.

Distances approximate. Landslides can close roads. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Sikkim Tourism (official) (sikkimtourism.gov.in); UNESCO: Khangchendzonga National Park (whc.unesco.org)



Photo: Moonik · CC BY-SA 3.0

Prices, timings, permits and visa notes are approximate - please verify before booking.



INDIA · HOLI

Holi in Braj, and quieter ways to meet the spring

Holi falls on 4 March in 2026. Where to find the famous celebrations, where to find calmer ones, and how to take part with consent.

RESEARCHED

Photo: Shikhers · CC BY-SA 4.0

HOLI, THE FESTIVAL OF colours, marks the arrival of spring across much of India. In 2026, Holika Dahan, the bonfire on the eve, falls on 3 March and the main day of colours, Rangwali Holi, on 4 March, according to the festival calendars. The festival is celebrated in many forms across the country, and the most elaborate observances take place in Braj, the region around Mathura and Vrindavan in Uttar Pradesh, where celebrations build up over several days in the weeks before.

Barsana and Nandgaon, near Mathura, are known for Lathmar Holi, a tradition in which women playfully chase men with sticks, and Vrindavan's temples hold flower and colour celebrations of their own. These are large, crowded and loud. Some pre-Holi events, including those listed for late February, will have passed by 1 March, and the dates and schedules of individual events vary between sources, so check with Uttar Pradesh Tourism and your hotel.

If you want a gentler Holi, consider alternatives. At Santiniketan in West Bengal, the Basanta Utsav, the spring festival associated with Rabindranath Tagore's Visva-Bharati, is a gathering of music, dance and coloured powder in a university setting. At Anandpur Sahib in Punjab, Hola Mohalla is held around Holi, usually the day after, and is a Sikh festival with martial skills displays, processions and community meals; its dates follow the lunar calendar, so confirm locally. In parts of Uttarakhand, Holi is marked with seated musical gatherings. Each is a community occasion first and a tourist attraction second.

Whatever you choose, take part with consent. Holi is not a licence to throw colour at strangers, and visitors, particularly women, have reported unwanted attention in crowds. Ask before applying colour to someone; accept when asked politely, and walk away from a situation that feels wrong. Wear clothes you do not mind ruining, put oil on your skin and hair, protect your eyes, and keep phones and cameras in sealed bags. Be careful of drinks you did not see prepared, including bhang, a cannabis preparation that is traditional in some places but is strong and unpredictable.

Plan transport and accommodation early. Trains and roads around Mathura and Vrindavan are crowded before Holi. Check the situation on the ground, and be ready to stay indoors on the main day if the crowds are too large.

At a glance

WHEN	Holika Dahan 3 March; Holi 4 March 2026
BEST TIME	The days around Holi; large crowds in Braj
RESPONSIBLE-TRAVEL NOTE	Ask before applying colour; avoid unfamiliar drinks; respect temple rules.
BOOK AHEAD	Hotels and trains in Mathura and Vrindavan fill early
CHECKED	10 November 2026: festival dates against calendars and press reports; event schedules vary

HOW TO REACH

Mathura–Vrindavan (Braj), Uttar Pradesh

AIRPORT	Delhi (DEL) is the usual gateway, roughly 150 km from Mathura; Agra (AGR) has limited flights (approximate).
RAILWAY	Mathura Junction (MTJ) is on the main Delhi–Agra–Mumbai line.
BY ROAD	Delhi to Mathura is about 3 hours on the Yamuna Expressway or highways, more in festival traffic; Vrindavan is about 12 km from Mathura.
GETTING AROUND	Auto-rickshaws, e-rickshaws and taxis; many streets are closed to vehicles on peak days.

Distances approximate. Expect heavy crowds and road closures around Holi. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Uttar Pradesh Tourism (official) (uptourism.gov.in); West Bengal Tourism (official) (wbtourism.gov.in)



Photo: Alexey Komarov · CC BY-SA 4.0



ASIA · SOUTH KOREA

Jeju in March: yellow fields, a volcano and the sea women

South Korea's southern island is where spring arrives first. A short guide to a volcanic landscape and a living tradition.

RESEARCHED

Photo: Basile Morin · CC BY-SA 4.0

JEJU IS A VOLCANIC island off South Korea's southern coast, and it is usually the first place in the country where spring shows up. Fields of yellow canola, known locally as yuchae , bloom from about March into April; coastal cherry and camellia trees follow. The island's Volcanic Island and Lava Tubes were inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2007, covering Hallasan, the volcano at the island's centre, the Seongsan Ilchulbong tuff cone on the eastern coast and the Geomunoreum lava tube system.

The island is compact, and one good way to see it is to pick two bases. Jeju City in the north has the airport, markets and museums; the south around Seogwipo has waterfalls, coastal walks and the quieter side of the island. The island's walking trails, the Jeju Olle routes, follow the coast and lead through villages, farmland and volcanic landscapes, and are a slower way to see it. In March, weather can be changeable, with wind and rain; bring layers and waterproofs.

Mainland South Korea's best-known cherry blossom event, the Jinhae Gunhangje Festival in the south-east, has been held in early April, traditionally from 1 to 10 April; confirm the current dates with the organisers, as blossom timing shifts from year to year. Jeju's blossoms come earlier, usually in late March.

Jeju is also the home of the *haenyeo* , women divers who harvest seafood without breathing equipment, a tradition inscribed on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2016. The Haenyeo Museum on the island explains their work, and you will sometimes see divers at work off the coast. Treat them as workers and not as an attraction: ask before taking photographs, keep your distance and buy seafood from them only when invited. Our People & Places pages look at their story.

Entry rules depend on your passport. Many nationalities are visa-exempt for short stays; others, including citizens of several countries, need a visa. Check South Korea's official visa portal before booking.

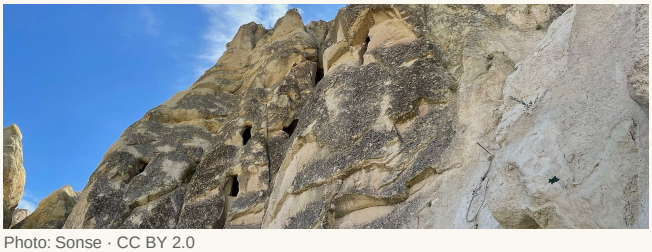


Photo: Sonse · CC BY 2.0

At a glance

BEST TIME	Late March to April for blossom and canola; weather is changeable
HERITAGE	Jeju Volcanic Island and Lava Tubes, UNESCO World Heritage Site (2007)
ENTRY	Visa rules depend on nationality; check the official Korea Visa Portal
RESPONSIBLE-TRAVEL NOTE	Ask before photographing divers; stay on marked paths in flower fields
CHECKED	10 November 2026: blossom timing is a forecast, not a date; confirm festival dates with organisers

HOW TO REACH

Jeju Island, South Korea

AIRPORT	Jeju International Airport (CJU), roughly 5 km from Jeju City; frequent flights from Seoul Gimpo (about 1 hour) and other Korean cities (approximate).
RAILWAY	There is no railway on Jeju; the mainland high-speed rail network reaches the coast, with ferries and flights beyond.
BY ROAD	Jeju City to Seogwipo is roughly 45 minutes to an hour by road.
GETTING AROUND	Buses, taxis and hired cars; foreign visitors driving need the right licence documents.

Distances approximate; weather can disrupt flights and ferries. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Visit Korea (official tourism) (english.visitkorea.or.kr); Korea Visa Portal (official) (www.visa.go.kr); UNESCO: Jeju Volcanic Island and Lava Tubes (whc.unesco.org)



Photo: Prof Ranga Sai · CC BY-SA 4.0



AROUND THE WORLD

Washington's cherry blossoms: how to see them without the crush

The National Cherry Blossom Festival runs from 20 March to 12 April 2026. Bloom is a forecast, so plan around the festival, not a single day.

RESEARCHED

Photo: APK · CC BY 4.0

THE CHERRY TREES OF Washington, D.C. trace back to 1912, when the mayor of Tokyo, Yukio Ozaki, sent trees to the city as a gift to strengthen friendship between Japan and the United States. The trees were planted around the Tidal Basin, and today they draw crowds each spring. The National Cherry Blossom Festival, which has grown from a school re-enactment in the 1920s to a national event, runs from 20 March to 12 April in 2026.

The trees themselves are not on the festival's schedule. Peak bloom is set by the weather, and the U.S. National Park Service issues a forecast in early March and an update as the date approaches; it announces peak bloom when a large share of the main variety's blossoms are open. A cold winter can delay it, a warm spell can bring it early, and the best days can be short. Plan to stay several days and treat peak bloom as a bonus.

The Tidal Basin is crowded at peak, particularly on weekends. Go at sunrise on a weekday, when the light is soft and the paths are quiet. Use public transit; parking near the Tidal Basin is limited and roads are busy. Other places with cherry trees, such as the neighbourhoods and parks away from the Mall, are less crowded and can be as pretty.

The festival adds events: an opening ceremony, a kite festival, cultural performances, fireworks on the waterfront and a parade on the last Saturday. Check the official programme for dates and ticketing.

Be gentle with the trees. Do not climb them, shake branches or pick blossoms. Stay on paths, and do not step into planted areas. Many of the trees are old and the sea wall and paths around the Basin are under strain.

At a glance

WHEN	National Cherry Blossom Festival: 20 March–12 April 2026
BLOOM	Forecast by the National Park Service in early March; peak bloom varies each year
GETTING AROUND	Use Metro and walk; limited parking near the Tidal Basin
ENTRY	Visa rules depend on nationality; check the U.S. Department of State
CHECKED	10 November 2026: festival dates against the organiser; bloom is weather-dependent

HOW TO REACH

Tidal Basin, Washington, D.C., USA

AIRPORT	Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA), roughly 6–8 km; Dulles (IAD) is about 40 km (approximate).
RAILWAY	Union Station, with Amtrak links to New York, Boston and other cities.
BY ROAD	Roads around the Tidal Basin are crowded in festival weeks.
GETTING AROUND	Metro (Smithsonian station is the closest in the area), walking and rideshare.

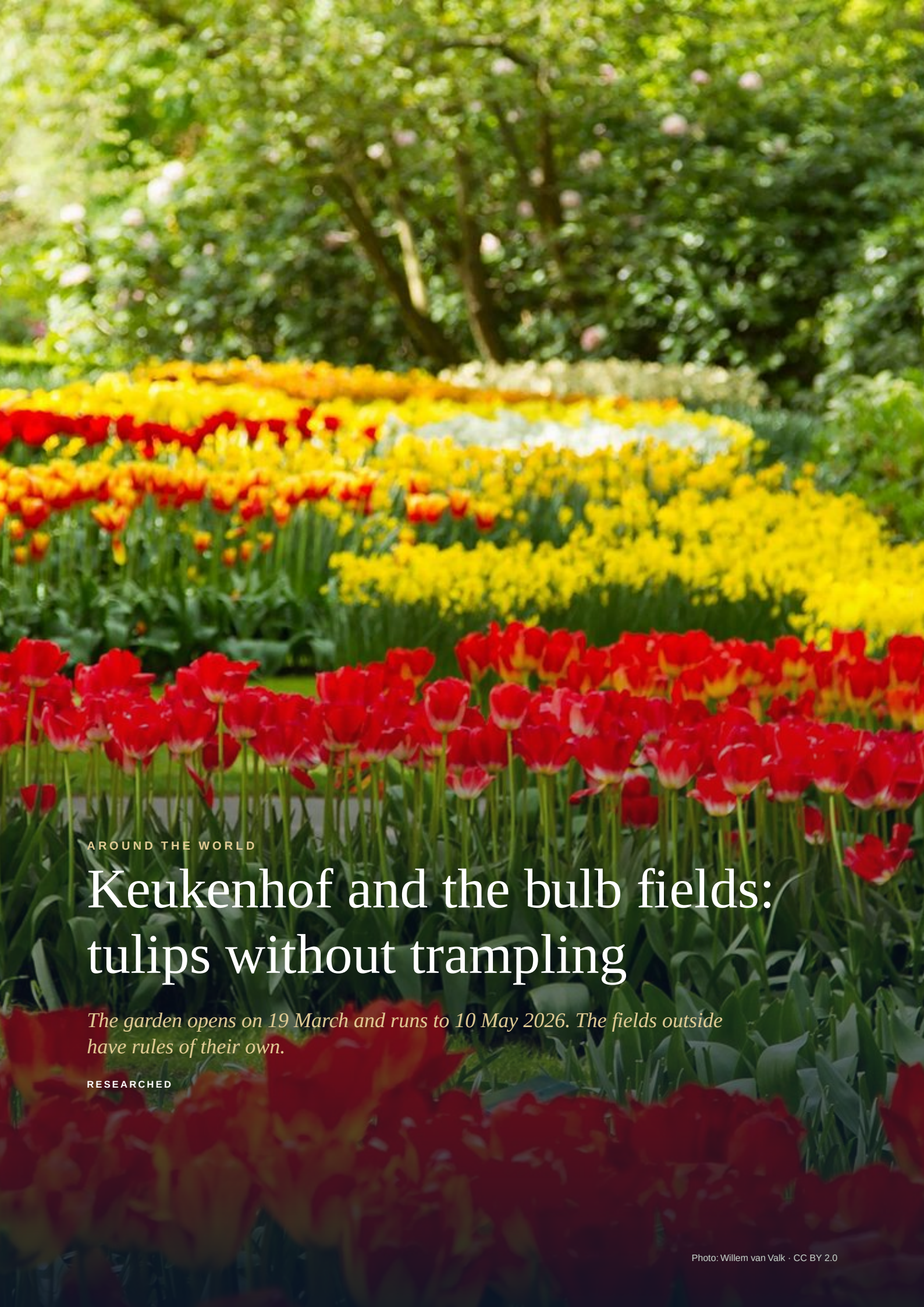
Distances approximate. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: National Cherry Blossom Festival (official) (nationalcherryblossomfestival.org); U.S. National Park Service: Cherry blossoms (www.nps.gov)



Photo: Bernard Gagnon · CC BY-SA 4.0

Prices, timings, permits and visa notes are approximate - please verify before booking.



AROUND THE WORLD

Keukenhof and the bulb fields: tulips without trampling

The garden opens on 19 March and runs to 10 May 2026. The fields outside have rules of their own.

RESEARCHED

Photo: Willem van Valk · CC BY 2.0

KEUKENHOF, IN LISSE IN the Dutch province of South Holland, is one of the world's best-known spring gardens. The 2026 season runs from 19 March to 10 May, according to the garden's own site. It covers about 32 hectares and is planted each autumn with roughly seven million bulbs, supplied by more than a hundred growers. It was founded in 1949 by bulb growers and exporters as a showcase and opened to the public in 1950.

Timing matters. Early in the season, daffodils and hyacinths dominate; tulips peak around mid-April, though the weather decides. Weekends and school holidays are crowded, and tickets are normally sold online for set days. Go on a weekday morning, and check the garden's own bloom reports before choosing a date.

The commercial bulb fields around Lisse, Noordwijk and Hillegom are the second half of the experience: long stripes of colour that you can see from the road or by bicycle. They are working farms. Do not walk into the fields, pick flowers or take photographs from within the rows; growers have reported damage to crops and spread of disease from visitors who do. Stay on public paths and roads, and buy flowers from farm shops or the garden.

Getting there is straightforward. Buses connect the gardens with Amsterdam Schiphol Airport, Leiden and Haarlem during the season, and the town of Leiden is a pleasant base. Cycling is a good way to see the fields, but traffic on narrow roads is heavy at peak times.

Mind the weather. March can be cold and wet, and flowers may open early or late depending on it. Pack layers and rain gear and keep your plans loose.

At a glance

WHEN	Keukenhof: 19 March–10 May 2026
PEAK	Usually around mid-April; weather-dependent
BOOK AHEAD	Buy dated tickets online; weekends sell out in peak weeks
RESPONSIBLE-TRAVEL NOTE	Stay out of the commercial bulb fields; do not pick flowers.
CHECKED	10 November 2026: opening dates against Keukenhof's own site

HOW TO REACH

Keukenhof, Lisse, South Holland, Netherlands

AIRPORT	Amsterdam Schiphol (AMS), roughly 30 km (approximate).
RAILWAY	Leiden Centraal and Haarlem are the nearest main stations; seasonal buses link them to the garden.
BY ROAD	About 40 minutes by road from Schiphol in normal traffic; parking fills early at weekends.
GETTING AROUND	Seasonal buses, bicycles and taxis.

Distances approximate. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Keukenhof (official) (keukenhof.nl); Holland.com (official tourism) (www.holland.com)

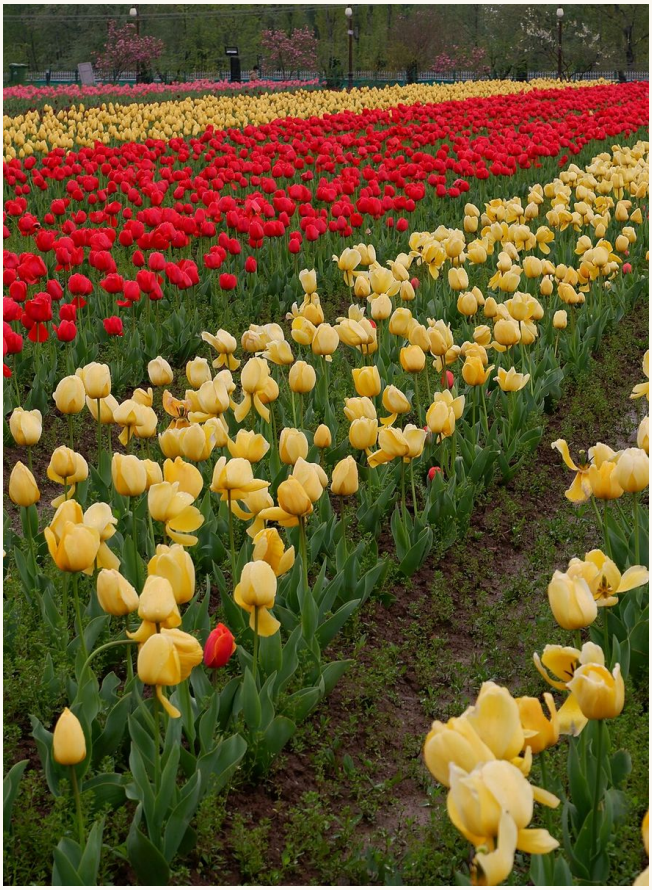


Photo: JyotiPN · CC BY-SA 4.0

Prices, timings, permits and visa notes are approximate - please verify before booking.



AROUND THE WORLD

The Cape Winelands in harvest season

Late summer in South Africa: vines heavy with fruit, cellars busy, mountains dry and gold.

RESEARCHED

Photo: pedrik · CC BY 2.0

IN MARCH, SUMMER IS turning to autumn in the southern hemisphere, and the harvest in the Western Cape's vineyards is in progress or ending. The Cape Winelands, inland from Cape Town, include the towns of Stellenbosch, Franschhoek and Paarl, each within about an hour's drive of the city.

Stellenbosch is home to South Africa's first official wine route, opened in 1971, and has a university-town atmosphere with oak-lined streets and historic Cape Dutch buildings. Franschhoek, settled by French Huguenots in the late seventeenth century, is known for its restaurants and its mountain-backed setting. Groot Constantia, nearer to the city, is described as the country's oldest wine estate.

March days are warm and mostly dry, and cellars are busy. A harvest visit can be more interesting than a tasting-room stop: ask whether a producer offers a vineyard walk or a cellar tour. Book popular estates and lunches in advance, particularly at weekends.

Plan the driving. Wine tasting and driving do not mix, and South Africa has strict drink-driving laws. Hire a driver, join a guided tour, use the Franschhoek wine tram, or nominate a non-drinking driver. Spit, share tastings and eat well.

Responsible-travel points: ask producers about their labour practices and ethical certifications, and buy from estates that are open about them. Entry rules depend on your passport; check the official South African government site.

At a glance

BEST TIME	Roughly January to March for the harvest; summer weather is warm and dry
GETTING THERE	Cape Town International Airport; the towns are 45 minutes to an hour away by road
ENTRY	Visa rules depend on nationality; check the official South African government site
SAFETY	Do not drink and drive; arrange a driver or tour
CHECKED	10 November 2026: harvest timing varies by year and grape

HOW TO REACH

Stellenbosch, Franschhoek and Paarl, Western Cape, South Africa

AIRPORT	Cape Town International Airport (CPT), roughly 50 km from Stellenbosch and 75 km from Franschhoek (approximate).
RAILWAY	Metrorail suburban lines reach Stellenbosch and Paarl, though most visitors drive or join tours.
BY ROAD	The N1 and N2 give direct access; Cape Town to Stellenbosch is about 45 minutes.
GETTING AROUND	Hire car, tours, ride-hailing and the Franschhoek wine tram.

Distances approximate. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Wines of South Africa (official trade body) (www.wosa.co.za); Cape Town Tourism (official) (www.capetown.travel)

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

The sea women of Jeju

On a volcanic island, a community of women divers has harvested the sea for generations without breathing equipment.

PROFILE · FROM PUBLISHED REPORTING · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER



Photo: Republic of Korea from Seoul, Republic of Korea · CC BY-SA 2.0

The haenyeo, or sea women, of Jeju Island are women divers who gather abalone, conch, octopus, seaweed and other seafood by diving and holding their breath. UNESCO added the culture of the Jeju haenyeo to its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2016, after South Korea nominated it in 2014.

According to commonly cited accounts, girls traditionally began training at a young age, moving from shallow water to deeper dives over years. Dives can reach around twenty metres, with breath-holds of a minute or two, and divers use a distinctive whistling breath on surfacing. Equipment is simple: a mask, fins, a weighted belt, a small hoe and a net on a float. Before wetsuits, winter dives were short; modern wetsuits let divers stay in the water for much longer.

The tradition is shrinking. Industrialisation, tourism and new job opportunities drew younger women away, and most

haenyeo today are in their sixties or older, with the oldest in their eighties. Rising sea temperatures and concerns about marine resources have added pressure. Government support includes subsidised equipment and rights to sell fresh seafood, according to the sources we consulted. Figures vary, so use only counts that come directly from the Jeju provincial government.

As a visitor, learn about the haenyeo at the island's Haenyeo Museum and at village exhibitions, and treat any chance to see them at work as a privilege. Do not get close to divers in the water, do not photograph without asking, and if you eat seafood sold by them, pay what is asked.

At a glance

VERIFICATION	Facts and figures are taken from the cited reporting and must be re-checked against the original before print.
REPORTED BY	UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage listing (2016); encyclopaedic summaries of published sources; reporting dates to be confirmed
PEOPLE NAMED	No individual divers are named; this is a community profile
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	This profile paraphrases published and institutional sources. We have not spoken to any divers, and numbers of active divers vary.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Approach the Jeju Haenyeo Museum or the Jeju provincial government for introductions, consent and photographs.

HOW TO REACH

Jeju Island, South Korea

AIRPORT	Jeju International Airport (CJU), roughly 5 km from Jeju City (approximate).
RAILWAY	No railway on the island.
BY ROAD	The Haenyeo Museum is on the north-east coast, roughly 30 to 40 km from Jeju City (approximate).
GETTING AROUND	Buses, taxis and hired cars.

Approximate; confirm museum hours locally. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: UNESCO: Culture of Jeju Haenyeo (ich.unesco.org); Visit Jeju (official tourism) (www.visitjeju.net)



Photo: Rohit Sharma · CC BY-SA 4.0

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

The journalist who imagined the cherry trees

Eliza Scidmore, a travel writer and geographer, first proposed Japanese cherry trees for Washington in the 1880s. It took more than two decades to happen.

PROFILE · FROM PUBLISHED REPORTING · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER



Photo: APK · CC BY 4.0

Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore (1856–1928) was an American writer and geographer who travelled widely and wrote about Japan, Alaska, India, Java and China. Among her books are *Jinrikisha Days in Japan* (1891) and *Winter India* (1903). In 1892 she was elected secretary of the National Geographic Society, making her the first woman on its governing board, and she wrote for its magazine.

According to published accounts, she was struck by the cherry blossoms she had seen in Japan, and from the 1880s she proposed to the officials responsible for Washington's parks that cherry trees be planted along the Potomac waterfront. The idea found little interest at first. It gained momentum only decades later, when First Lady Helen Herron Taft took it up in 1909.

The first attempt failed. A shipment of trees sent from Tokyo in 1910 arrived infested with pests, and, on the president's orders, had to be burned. A second shipment, of about three thousand trees, was sent in 1912 and planted around the Tidal Basin; on 27 March 1912, Mrs Taft and Viscountess Chinda, wife of the Japanese ambassador, planted the first two. The gift is credited to the mayor of Tokyo, Yukio Ozaki. The first formal festival followed in the 1930s.

Scidmore received a medal from the Emperor of Japan for her services to Japan, according to biographical accounts. The next time you walk under the blossoms, you are following an idea that took decades and one failed shipment to bear fruit.

At a glance

VERIFICATION	Facts and figures are taken from the cited reporting and must be re-checked against the original before print.
REPORTED BY	National Park Service (cherry blossom history pages); biographical and encyclopaedic summaries; exact tree numbers vary
PEOPLE NAMED	Eliza Scidmore; Helen Herron Taft; Viscountess Chinda; Yukio Ozaki
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	This is a historical profile paraphrasing published sources.
TO FEATURE HER PROPERLY	Consult the National Park Service and the National Geographic Society archives for primary documents and image rights.

HOW TO REACH

Tidal Basin and West Potomac Park, Washington, D.C.

AIRPORT	Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA), roughly 6–8 km (approximate).
RAILWAY	Union Station.
BY ROAD	Roads around the Tidal Basin are crowded at peak bloom.
GETTING AROUND	Metro and walking; the first two trees are marked by a plaque near the north bank, at the end of 17th Street SW.

Approximate. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: National Park Service: Cherry blossom history (www.nps.gov); National Cherry Blossom Festival: history (nationalcherryblossomfestival.org)

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

The hills that went organic

Sikkim set out in 2003 to convert all its farming to organic methods, and became India's first fully organic state.

PROFILE · FROM PUBLISHED REPORTING · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER



Photo: Greenchild · CC BY-SA 4.0

Sikkim's terraced farms, in steep valleys at heights from near sea level to several thousand metres, grow cardamom, ginger, maize, mandarin oranges and vegetables. In 2003 the state government decided to convert all of its farming to organic methods, a policy that was carried out in stages over more than a decade. Sources give 2015 or 2016 for the year Sikkim was declared fully organic, making it India's first organic state.

The transition involved phasing out chemical fertilisers and pesticides, training farmers, promoting compost and organic inputs and certifying farmland. The state also promoted organic produce to visitors, and many hotels and restaurants now advertise local produce. The sources we consulted do not name individual farmers, and this profile is a place profile for that reason.

Independent writers have raised questions about yields, farmers' incomes and the practical details of enforcement, as well as about what the label means for imported food sold in the state. The discussion is open, and we recommend reading independent studies and local reporting alongside government statements.

For visitors, the practical lesson is to eat what the hills grow. Ask your homestay about the farm behind it, try seasonal vegetables and fruit, and buy cardamom or tea from local cooperatives and markets. Stay on paths when walking through terraces, and ask permission before entering fields.

At a glance

VERIFICATION	Facts and figures are taken from the cited reporting and must be re-checked against the original before print.
REPORTED BY	Encyclopaedic summary of published sources; Government of Sikkim materials; specific articles and dates to be added at fact-check
PEOPLE NAMED	None; this is a place profile
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	We have not spoken to any farmers. The year of the 'fully organic' declaration varies between 2015 and 2016 in sources.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Approach the Sikkim Department of Food Security and Agriculture Development or a farmers' cooperative for names, consent and photographs.

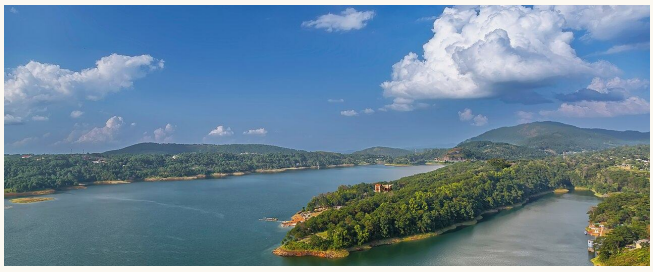


Photo: Prof. Vikramjit Kakati · CC BY-SA 4.0

HOW TO REACH

Sikkim farming valleys, near Gangtok and West Sikkim

AIRPORT	Bagdogra (IXB), roughly 125 km from Gangtok; Pakyong (PYG) has limited flights (approximate).
RAILWAY	New Jalpaiguri (NJP).
BY ROAD	Gangtok is about 4 to 5 hours' drive from Bagdogra or NJP.
GETTING AROUND	Shared and private jeeps; homestay hosts can arrange village visits.

Approximate; roads can be disrupted by landslides. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Government of Sikkim (official portal) (sikkim.gov.in); Sikkim Tourism (official) (sikkimtourism.gov.in)

REAL STORIES FROM THE ROAD

The growers behind the garden

Keukenhof was started in 1949 by bulb growers who wanted a shop window. Today more than a hundred of them still donate the bulbs.

PROFILE · FROM PUBLISHED REPORTING · NOT INTERVIEWED BY WAYFARER



Photo: Willem Nabuurs · CC BY-SA 4.0

Every Keukenhof spring begins in the previous autumn, when about forty gardeners plant roughly seven million bulbs by hand, according to descriptions on the garden's own site and in reference summaries. The bulbs are donated by more than a hundred growers, many of them family firms working fields in the Dutch bulb belt around Lisse.

The garden was founded in 1949 by a group of bulb growers and flower exporters who wanted a place to show their products to the world. It opened to the public in 1950. The land has older roots: it was once the hunting ground and kitchen garden of Teylingen Castle. Today Keukenhof is run by a charitable foundation, receives no government subsidy and drew about 1.4 million visitors in 2025, according to reference sources.

Behind the display is a business of selecting, breeding and cultivating bulbs that takes years. Growers use the garden as a showcase, and visitors can see new varieties alongside established ones. The commercial fields outside the garden belong to farmers, and the best way to see them is from the road or by bicycle, while respecting private land.

As a visitor, you can support growers and workers by buying bulbs and flowers from the garden's shops and local farms, and by following the rules about staying out of the fields.

At a glance

VERIFICATION	Facts and figures are taken from the cited reporting and must be re-checked against the original before print.
REPORTED BY	Keukenhof (official site); encyclopaedic summary of published sources; reporting dates to be confirmed
PEOPLE NAMED	None; this is an institutional profile of the growers' foundation
NOT INTERVIEWED BY US	This profile paraphrases published material; bulb counts and grower numbers vary by year.
TO FEATURE THEM PROPERLY	Approach Keukenhof's press office or the Dutch bulb-growers' associations for named growers and consent.

HOW TO REACH

Keukenhof, Lisse, South Holland

AIRPORT	Amsterdam Schiphol (AMS), roughly 30 km (approximate).
RAILWAY	Leiden Centraal and Haarlem; seasonal buses to the garden.
BY ROAD	About 40 minutes by road from Schiphol in normal traffic.
GETTING AROUND	Buses, bicycles and taxis.

Approximate. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: Keukenhof (official) (keukenhof.nl)



Photo: Diganta Talukdar · CC BY-SA 4.0

READER AND CONTRIBUTOR BRIEFS

Proposed commission: “Spring, somewhere”

A brief for a real reader or contributor. Not a published story.

PROPOSED COMMISSION · NOT A REAL STORY

What we want: a first-person account (800–1,200 words) of seeing spring arrive in a place you had not expected: a blossom you had waited years for, a monastery on a hillside, a garden in a city you did not know well. One place, one morning, one encounter.

What we need: a true story; photographs you own, with permission to publish; and a trip recap (destination and dates, duration, route, budget range with currency and date, transport and accommodation, one thing you wish you had known).

Rights: you keep the copyright; we ask permission to publish and archive with credit, and will show you the edited text before publication. Please do not send invented or composite stories. Write to us via the contact page.

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

The Taste of Travel: a Turkish breakfast, and an iftar table

Two of Turkey's most sociable meals, one at the start of the day and one at sunset.

RESEARCHED

A traditional Turkish breakfast, *kahvalt* , is a spread rather than a plate: bread and simit, fresh cheeses, olives, tomatoes and cucumbers, honey and clotted cream, jams, boiled or fried eggs, sometimes a dish such as *menemen* , eggs cooked with tomatoes and peppers, and endless small glasses of tea. It is meant to be eaten slowly and shared, and many hotels and cafes serve it in a long, leisurely format on weekends.

In March 2026, Ramadan is expected to run until about 19 March. At sunset, families and friends break the day's fast with *iftar* , often starting with dates and water, and soup and bread before a larger meal. In Turkey, a special round flatbread called *Ramazan pidesi* is baked fresh at that time of year. If you are invited to an iftar, accept: it is an honour. Arrive on time, bring a small gift such as sweets, and wait for your host to begin.

In tourist areas of Istanbul and Cappadocia, restaurants stay open through the day, but some smaller local places keep shorter hours. Be discreet about eating or drinking in front of people who are fasting. Eid al-Fitr, around 20 March, brings a holiday and sweet pastries such as baklava, shared with family and neighbours.

At a glance

SAY IT	“Afiyet olsun” (ah-fee-YET ol-SOON) is the polite wish before a meal.
ETIQUETTE	At an iftar, wait for your host and for the call to prayer or the stated time to begin.
VEG-FRIENDLY?	Breakfast is largely vegetarian; ask about meat in cooked dishes.

HOW TO REACH

Istanbul and Cappadocia, Türkiye

AIRPORT	Istanbul Airport (IST) and Sabiha Gökçen (SAW); Nevehir Kapadokya (NAV) for Cappadocia.
RAILWAY	High-speed trains from Istanbul to Ankara; Kayseri for Cappadocia by connection.
BY ROAD	Istanbul to Cappadocia is roughly 700 km by road.
GETTING AROUND	Metro, tram and ferries in Istanbul; taxis and tours in Cappadocia.

Approximate; Ramadan and Eid dates vary by a day depending on moon sighting. Distances approximate - verify.

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

Heritage Without Borders: Hagia Sophia

Fifteen centuries, three roles and one dome. How to visit a building that is both monument and place of worship.

RESEARCHED

Hagia Sophia in Istanbul was built between 532 and 537 for the Byzantine emperor Justinian I, by the architects Isidore of Miletus and Anthemius of Tralles, replacing an earlier church that had burned during the Nika riots. Its vast dome influenced church and mosque architecture for centuries. After the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453, Mehmed II turned it into a mosque. In 1934 it was designated a museum, opening in 1935, and in 2020 Turkey's Council of State annulled that decision and it became a mosque again, a move that drew criticism, including from UNESCO.

It remains part of the Historic Areas of Istanbul, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1985. Visitor arrangements have changed since 2020, including how tourists enter, separate areas for worshippers and visitors,

and the possibility of a ticket for foreign visitors; check the official sources before you go.

Visit in the early morning if you can, to avoid queues, and avoid the times of prayer. Dress modestly: shoulders and knees covered, and women should carry a scarf for the head. Shoes are removed at the entrance of the prayer area. Keep voices low, do not photograph worshippers, and follow staff instructions. Understand that the building is a living place of worship, not only a monument, and that it also preserves Byzantine mosaics that tell part of its long story.

At a glance

ETIQUETTE	Dress modestly, remove shoes in the prayer area, avoid prayer times, do not photograph worshippers.
CHECKED	Visiting arrangements, fees and hours must be confirmed with official sources.

HOW TO REACH

Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Türkiye

AIRPORT	Istanbul Airport (IST), roughly 40 km, or Sabiha Gökçen (SAW), roughly 45 km, depending on traffic (approximate).
RAILWAY	Sirkeci station and the Marmaray line; the T1 tram runs to Sultanahmet.
BY ROAD	Traffic around Sultanahmet is heavy; the area is best reached by tram or on foot.
GETTING AROUND	Tram, metro and walking; taxis in heavy traffic can be slow.

Distances approximate. Distances approximate - verify.

Official sources: UNESCO: Historic Areas of Istanbul (whc.unesco.org)

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

The Natural Calendar: March

What to look for, where, and how sure we are.

RESEARCHED

Cherry blossom: in Japan, the national weather agency issues blossom forecasts that move north through the country from late March; in Washington, the National Park Service forecasts peak bloom in early March, with the festival running 20 March to 12 April. *Season predictable; exact days are not.*

Rhododendrons in Sikkim: the first blooms appear at lower altitudes in March; at Yumthang, peak bloom is usually in April and May. *Timing varies with snow and temperature.*

Tulips: Keukenhof opens on 19 March; peak is usually mid-April. In Srinagar, Kashmir's tulip garden normally opens in late March or April, depending on the weather. *Season predictable; weather decides the week.*

Canola flowers on Jeju: yellow fields from about March into April. *Season fairly predictable; varies by year.*

Grape harvest in the Cape Winelands: continues into March in many vineyards. *Varies by variety and year.*

FOOD, HERITAGE AND NATURE

Responsible travel: visiting blossom sites lightly

Crowds and cameras can damage the very thing people come to see. A few ways to do better.

PRACTICAL · EVERGREEN

Blossom sites, from Washington's Tidal Basin to Japan's temple gardens, are popular for a few days a year. Visiting lightly starts with timing. Go on a weekday and at sunrise, when there are fewer people; consider shoulder days either side of peak bloom, or choose lesser-known places nearby.

On site, stay on the paths. Do not climb trees, shake branches, pick flowers or step into planted beds. Do not sit on roots, which compact the soil. Do not use drones unless clearly permitted, and avoid setting up tripods in places where people need to pass.

Carry out what you carry in, including bottles, food wrappers and picnic waste. Use public transport where possible. Be considerate of residents: many blossom sites are in neighbourhoods where people live, and noise and parking affect them.

If a site is closed or limited because of crowds or damage, accept the rule and look for another place. A good spring trip does not depend on one photograph.

At a glance

TIMING	Weekday mornings; shoulder days around peak bloom
DO NOT	Climb trees, pick blossoms, enter planted beds or fly drones without permission

Prices, timings, permits and visa notes are approximate - please verify before booking.

HOW TO REACH

Tidal Basin, Washington, D.C.

AIRPORT	Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA), roughly 6–8 km (approximate).
RAILWAY	Union Station.
BY ROAD	Roads and parking are limited near the Tidal Basin at peak.
GETTING AROUND	Metro and walking.

Approximate. Distances approximate - verify.

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

Travel insurance, explained

What it usually covers, what it often does not, and what to read before you pay.

PRACTICAL · EVERGREEN

1. **What it is:** a contract that pays for certain costs if specified things go wrong on a trip, such as medical treatment abroad, trip cancellation or lost baggage.

2. **Read the exclusions first:** common ones include pre-existing conditions, certain sports and activities, travel to areas under government advisories and claims that arise from alcohol.

3. **Medical cover:** check the limit, whether it covers emergency transport home and whether the insurer pays the hospital directly or reimburses you.

4. **Cancellation cover:** note which reasons are covered, what proof you will need and the deadlines.

5. **Adventure and altitude:** if you plan to trek or dive, confirm that these activities, and the altitude, are included.

6. **Keep documents:** carry the policy number and emergency contact, and keep receipts and reports for any claim.

7. **Compare, do not guess:** read the policy wording, not only the summary, and ask the insurer or a regulated broker if you are unsure.

This is general information, not financial advice. Policies differ widely; confirm terms with the insurer.



Photo: Udit Kapoor · CC BY-SA 4.0

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

The 24-Hour Destination: Istanbul

One illustrative day. Hours, crowds and your own pace will change it.

ILLUSTRATIVE ITINERARY · VERIFY LOCALLY

Early morning: Sultanahmet, to see Hagia Sophia from the outside and walk before the crowds. Check visiting arrangements first.

Breakfast: a traditional Turkish breakfast in a small cafe, taken slowly.

Mid-morning: the Basilica Cistern or a museum, depending on opening hours.

Lunch: a simple meal in a local restaurant, or a fish sandwich by the water, if open.

Afternoon: a ferry across the Bosphorus to the Asian side, with a walk in a neighbourhood such as Kadköy.

Evening: the old bazaars at closing time, then a meal. In Ramadan, an iftar table is a meaningful way to spend sunset if you are invited.

What to skip if short on time: extra museums; see one major sight and spend the rest on the water and in neighbourhoods.

Prices, opening hours and fees are not listed here and must be confirmed locally.

HOW TO REACH

Istanbul, Türkiye

AIRPORT	Istanbul Airport (IST) and Sabiha Gökçen (SAW).
RAILWAY	Sirkeci and the Marmaray line; T1 tram to Sultanahmet.
BY ROAD	Heavy traffic in the old city; use trams and ferries.
GETTING AROUND	Tram, metro, ferries and walking.

Timings approximate. Distances approximate - verify.



Photo: Extreminatethejuice · CC BY-SA 4.0

COMMUNITY

The Traveller's Lexicon: hanami

A Japanese word for sitting under the blossoms.

LEXICON

Hanami (; roughly “hah-nah-mee”) means flower viewing, and in practice usually the custom of gathering under cherry trees in spring to eat, drink and enjoy the blossom with friends and family.

It is a good word for a month of blossoms. As with any custom, it is best experienced politely: leave no litter and give other people room.

COMMUNITY

Travel Quiz: March

Five questions. Answers appear in next month's issue.

QUIZ

1. Which emperor ordered the building of Hagia Sophia?

2. In which Indian state is the Yumthang Valley?

3. Which South Korean island is home to the haenyeo?

4. Which city's mayor gave cherry trees to Washington, D.C. in 1912?

5. In which country is Keukenhof?

Answers (for the editor's copy, reveal next issue): Justinian I · Sikkim · Jeju · Tokyo · Netherlands.

Answers to February's quiz: Darjeeling Himalayan Railway · Tungabhadra · Sapporo · Olympus · Bonhomme.

COMMUNITY

Your turn: spring, somewhere

Reader engagement idea for the next issue.

READER INVITATION

Send us one photograph of spring that you took yourself, with two sentences on where it was and what made you stop. A selection may appear in the Readers' Pages, with your name and photo credit, only with your permission.



Photo: Vikramjit Kakati · CC BY-SA 4.0

COMMUNITY

The Traveller's Bookshelf

Three books for a month of blossoms.

RECOMMENDED READING

Istanbul: Memories and the City by Orhan Pamuk — a memoir of the author's city, melancholy and exact. Read it before you go.

Unbeaten Tracks in Japan by Isabella Bird — a Victorian traveller's account of journeys in Japan in 1878. Read it for the curiosity.

Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra by Ruskin Bond — a collection of stories set in a small town in the foothills. Read it for the way spring arrives.

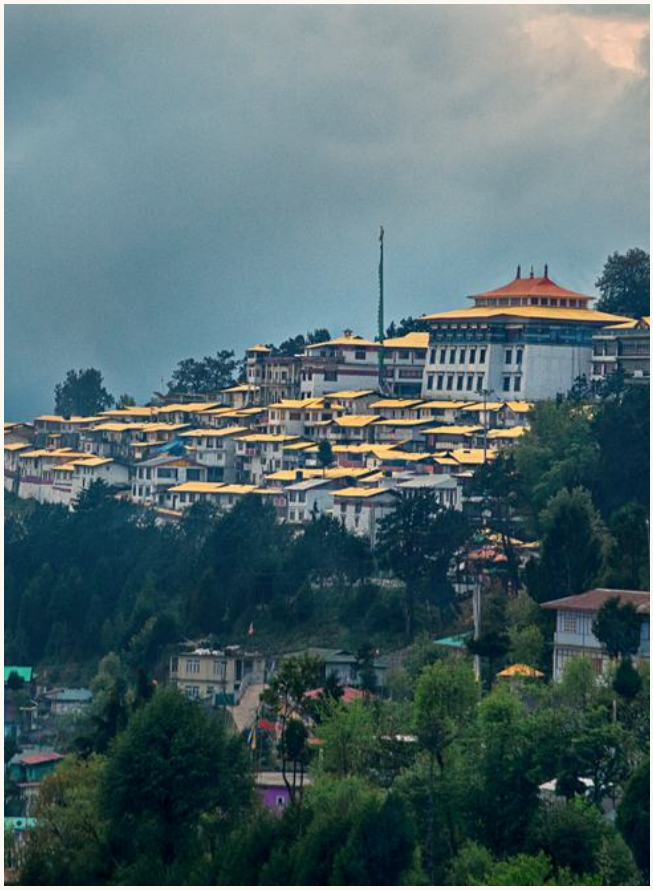


Photo: Rumelade · CC BY-SA 4.0

Prices, timings, permits and visa notes are approximate - please verify before booking.

THE WORLD CELEBRATES

Festivals & events radar

Dates come from our festival guide and are approximate. Confirm with the official organiser before booking; lunar-calendar and annually announced events are provisional until confirmed.

NORTHEAST INDIA & INDIA

EVENT	WHERE
Holi (Holika Dahan and Rangwali Holi)	Mathura–Vrindavan (Braj), Uttar Pradesh, and across India
Hola Mohalla	Anandpur Sahib, Punjab
Chapchar Kut	Aizawl, Mizoram
Tulip Garden Srinagar	Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir
Rongali (Bohag) Bihu	Assam



Photo: Arunachal2007 · CC BY-SA 4.0

ASIA

EVENT	WHERE
Jinhae Gunhangje (cherry blossom festival)	Jinhae, Changwon, South Korea
Japan cherry blossom season (hanami)	Japan
Songkran (Thai New Year)	Thailand

extend)

recognised, with temple rituals and street celebrations..

EUROPE

EVENT	WHERE	WHEN (APPROX.)	WHY GO
Keukenhof	Lisse, Netherlands	19 March–10 May 2026	One of the world's largest spring flower gardens..
Eurovision Song Contest	Wiener Stadthalle, Vienna, Austria	Semi-finals 12 and 14 May; final 16 May 2026	The annual international song competition; Vienna hosts in 2026..
Cannes Film Festival (79th edition)	Cannes, France	12–23 May 2026	The international film festival on the French Riviera..

AFRICA & THE AMERICAS

EVENT	WHERE	WHEN (APPROX.)	WHY GO
National Cherry Blossom Festival	Washington, D.C., USA	20 March–12 April 2026; peak bloom is weather-dependent	A three-week festival around the Tidal Basin's cherry trees..

OCEANIA & INTERNATIONAL

EVENT	WHERE	WHEN (APPROX.)	WHY GO
Nowruz (Persian and Central Asian New Year)	Iran, Central Asia, the Caucasus and diaspora communities	20 March 2026, at the spring equinox	A spring new-year celebration of many centuries' standing..
Eid al-Fitr	Worldwide	About 20 March 2026, after Ramadan; the date depends on moon sighting	The festival marking the end of Ramadan; many countries observe a holiday..

Easter (Western and Orthodox)	Worldwide	Western Easter Sunday 5 April; Orthodox Easter Sunday 12 April 2026	A holiday period with processions and services in many countries..

THE TRAVEL BRIEFING

Format example

Dated developments up to 1 March 2026, with source links. Each is labelled announced, planned or implemented. Re-confirm before relying on any of them.

ANNOUNCED: Reports on 7 February 2026 said the UK plans to raise the Electronic Travel Authorisation fee from 16 to 20 pounds from 8 April. Source: The Local, 7 February 2026. www.thelocal.it

PLANNED: The EU's Entry/Exit System, which began a phased start on 12 October 2025, is due to be fully in operation at all external borders by 10 April 2026. Source: European Commission, Migration and Home Affairs. home-affairs.ec.europa.eu

PLANNED: Japan's tax reform outline for fiscal 2026 includes raising the international tourist (departure) tax from 1,000 to 3,000 yen. Source: Travel Voice (Japan), December 2025. www.travelvoice.jp

IMPLEMENTED: India's first Vande Bharat sleeper train began commercial service between Kamakhya (Guwahati) and Howrah on 22 January 2026. Source: Business Standard, January 2026. www.business-standard.com

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PLAN	travaah.com/planner
CONTRIBUTE	Send a story or photograph via the contact page



Photo: ANKAN · CC BY-SA 4.0

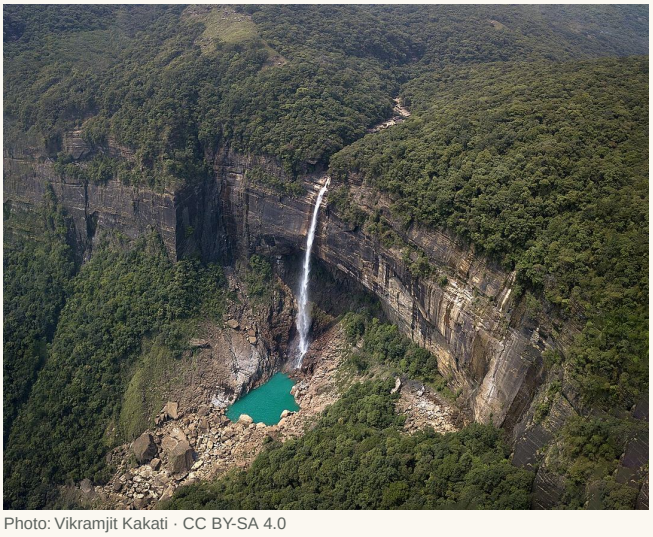


Photo: Vikramjit Kakati · CC BY-SA 4.0

WAYFARER

One Planet. Endless Journeys.

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