

# Anti-Mainstream Travel Destinations

TEXT & PHOTOS ERZA S.T.

Since humans have existed, travelling has been recognised as one of our primary habits or needs, after surviving and reproducing. Pre-historic man travelled from one place to another to find food and a better place to live, whereas modern man travels for very different reasons. So what makes us travel these days? For me, it can be for many reasons, from visiting relatives or friends, travelling for business or media trips, to just a enjoying a quick getaway to rejuvenate.

Travelling became more of a habit for Indonesians when the airline industry created low cost fares. Middle class Indonesians who had never travelled before began to venture out to regional and international destinations. A decade later and Indonesia has various types of travellers who have developed their own style of travelling with (as predicted) the upper echelons enjoying the lavish style of travelling with Europe and The USA's mainstream cities being their destinations of choice. However, there is also a type of independent traveller who prefers to discover the unknown sides of the world, unguided. These travellers are divided only from a budget point of view; with low budget backpackers at one end of the scale and higher budget "hipster" travellers at the other.

Being a "hipster" means avoiding the mainstream, whether that be in terms of fashion, lifestyle, or even choice of holiday destination. To explore the world's rarely-visited destinations is definitely their objective when travelling. Nevertheless, these anti-mainstream destinations are not bad at all and in fact on the contrary quite fascinating to visit. Allow me to unravel the beauty of these less popular cities that might inspire you for your next holiday.

## The Historical Labyrinth City of Fez, Morocco

Fez, the second largest city in Morocco, is listed as a UNESCO World heritage site and is believed to be one of the world's largest car-free urban areas. Dating back to the year 789 during the ruling of the

Idrisid Dynasty, Fez is without doubt one of the most fascinating cities I have visited. Located in the hillside of the Atlas Mountains, this medieval city has been well preserved over the years. From above, Fez medina looks very dense and you can't see any roads at all; rather it is as if buildings have been constructed right next to each other.

If you decide to stay in the old city in the middle of the fun, prepare yourself to carry your luggage through endless tiny alleys in a labyrinth-like medina to find your accommodation. On our first day there, we recorded a video of how to get back to our hotel so that we wouldn't get lost. We got smarter on the second day and decided to use a guide instead. In this case our guide was also a full time history lecturer at the local university. With such a credible guide, we got to see the beauty of Fez and the exoticism of the whole Arab-meets-Berber culture.

If you are into architecture, design, historical sites and handicrafts, then Fez is the city for you! Known as the great city of ancient Islamic civilization, this is the place to see the pinnacle of Islamic design and architecture. Historical sites such as Kairaouine Mosque and the 14<sup>th</sup> Century Al Attarin Madrasa (religious college) feature the most amazing tile work, carvings of Arabic woodwork and calligraphy on the walls. Another fascinating place to visit is Chouara leather tannery in the middle of the medina where the famous leather dyeing in Fez takes place. The best way to see the whole tannery is

from the balcony of a nearby leather shop. Prepare for the smell as it can be quite pungent but it's a good chance to get yourself a nice camel leather bag. Along the way in this labyrinth-like medina you will also find many artisan workshops where you can pick up leather, metal or silver handicrafts.

For an unusual dining experience (think camel burgers and banana almond milk) in a very eclectic set up, visit the renowned Café Clock, which has, in the past, been frequented by the British Royal family while visiting Fez. It is a great place to meet other travellers and locals, where you can enjoy everything from medina views from the rooftop, cooking classes and Arabic classes, to traditional Moroccan music concerts and film screenings.

## The Charming Old Town of Malmo, Sweden

My trip to Malmo was somewhat unplanned. It sprung from a very impromptu decision during a week's stay in Copenhagen as the Swedish city is only 30 minutes away by train from Copenhagen.

Upon my arrival in Malmo, I saw a Tourist Centre where I was given a map of Malmo's old town and its points of interests that I could reach on foot. The train station is located right across from the border of the old town so it is quite convenient. Coming from Copenhagen, Malmo has many similarities of character (though don't say this to the locals there as they won't like it). From a historic point of view, the city was actually part of Denmark until 1658 when Malmo was ceded to Sweden in the Treaty of Roskilde as the result of many years of war.

In this charming old town, you can find the ornate Malmo City Hall, which dates back to 1546, go inside if architecture and design are of interest to you. Strolling around this old town, I really enjoyed seeing the combination of the old fine art sculptures with contemporary ones. As a nation that is known for design, even the children's playground here has uniquely designed equipment.

For contemporary art lovers, take a look at the current exhibition at Malmo Konsthall, designed by Klas Anshelm. This art hall, into which admission is free, showcases various great artworks from around the world including some from renowned artist Andy Warhol. Another museum that caught my attention was Moderna Museet Malmo, opened recently in 2009. The former electricity plant building with its new orange annex building is now the place where you can find great contemporary installations works from around the world.

In a way, I wish to come back to Malmo and explore more of this charming city. A half-day trip is simply not enough to unravel all of its beauty.

## The Art City of Nelson

A city like Nelson is a true hidden gem for a traveller like me. Why? Simply because it combines stunning nature, a great wine and dine scene, amazing arts and crafts scene and warm hospitality from the people. Simply put, it is a true holiday heaven! Its popularity amongst travellers spreads through word of mouth, making Nelson a well-kept secret.

Nelson's reputation as an arts city stems from the fact that many great Kiwi and international artists choose to reside there. Fine painters and sculptors such as Symen Hunter, Mike Ward, Daniel Campion, Ken Laws, Fumio Noguchi, and even the blown glass artisan duo Ola and Marie Hoglund all live in Nelson. The best thing is that you can choose between visiting the gallery and/ or visiting the workshop directly to see how the artists work.

The highlight of Nelson's arts scene for me is WOW, aka World of WearableArt. The museum, which opened in 2001, is dedicated to exhibiting wearable artworks from designers around the world. Starting as an event to promote rural art galleries in 1987 by Nelson's own sculptor Suzie Moncrieff, the World of WearableArt is now in its third decade showcasing pieces from an amazing WOW Awards show held annually in Wellington (since 2005) featuring over 300 designers from around the world. What you will see in the museum is mind-blowing and oozing with intense creativity. Aside from their exciting wearable artwork collection, this museum also owns a stunning classic car collection.

Nelson is a great retreat from the hustle and bustle of a big metropolitan city. Here you can get back to nature and channel your inner hipster mojo. It is definitely not just another typical tourist destination.

To read the full article, which includes Erza's trip to Hua Hin, Thailand, visit [www.nowjakarta.co.id](http://www.nowjakarta.co.id)

