



COURTESY OF PEXELS.COM

These Are 5 of the World's Most Peaceful Places to Visit

They're some of the safest places to travel—and some of the most beautiful, too.

BY ANNA MAZUREK 7.17.2017



If you need another excuse to go to [Iceland](#) (aside from cascading waterfalls and geothermal pools) you're in luck: The island nation was ranked the most peaceful country in the world for the seventh year running by the 2017 Global Peace Index (GPI).

The GPI is a yearly survey that ranks 163 independent states and territories—or roughly 99.7 percent of the world’s population—by their level of peacefulness. Overall, the index found that the world has become slightly more peaceful, with an increase of 0.28 percent peacefulness from last year. Ninety-three countries were ranked more peaceful this year than they were last, including Sri Lanka, Portugal, Cambodia, and Djibouti.

The 2017 GPI, the 11th edition of the study, was recently released by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), a nonprofit think tank based in [Sydney](#). The index is based on three main criteria: the level of safety and security in society, the degree of militarization, and the extent of domestic or international conflict. These standards are measured using 23 qualitative and quantitative indicators, including violence or fear of violence, internal peace within the country, and external peace outside the country’s borders.

The majority of the top 10 countries are in Europe; in addition to Iceland, [Portugal](#), [Austria](#), [Denmark](#), [Czech Republic](#), [Slovenia](#), [Ireland](#), and [Switzerland](#) also made the list. [New Zealand](#) snagged the number two spot and, rounding out the list, [Canada](#) sits at number eight. (View the full report and methodology at the [Institute for Economics and Peace](#).)

But a high level of peacefulness is just one of the many reasons these places deserve to move up your travel priority list. With scenery so beautiful it deserves to be the cover of a wall calendar, epic adventure sports, and memorable culinary treats, these five locations from the top 10 list will make you want to change your current travel plans.

Iceland

This tiny, peaceful island nation has long dominated the top spot on the GPI. The only difficult part about visiting Iceland is deciding when to go. For endless daylight and good hiking conditions, July and August are the best months. The Northern Lights appear in the long nights from September to mid-April, while the ice caves are accessible from November to March. Puffins visit from April through September. So go ahead, pick your season!

Portugal

Portugal ranked third this year in the GPI, which is its highest position to date and a significant jump from number 16, a spot it's held for the past five years. *Forbes* also ranked the country one of the cheapest places to travel this year, which is a welcome relief from the rest of Western Europe. From ocean views reminiscent of California's Highway 1 to the diverse Beiras region that calls to surfers, wine lovers, and history buffs alike, it's a difficult country to leave. And then there's the food—flavorful local handmade cheese, smoked meats, and the quintessential Portuguese dessert: *pastel de nata*, a delectable custard tart that often sparks debates over which shop makes the best.

New Zealand

This remote adventure destination snuck into second place this year, moving up from fourth place last year. The flight over may be long, but where else in the world can you skydive over glaciers one day and walk through a Hobbit village the next, before heading to a glowworm cave a day later? There's no bad time to visit New Zealand, and you can choose your season based on your preferred activities: June through August for winter sports and December to February for hiking. Don't worry—you can bungee jump all year long!

Slovenia

Postcard-perfect Slovenia rose three spots this year to snag the GPI's number seven spot. A quick Google image search of Slovenia is enough to convince almost anyone to book a flight. Who can resist the lure of the fairy-tale church on a tiny island in Lake Bled, the Alps towering over the deep green Logar Valley, or the epic stalagmite formations at Postojna, one of the world's largest karst caves? Oh, and it's also a terrific destination for gastro-tourism, blending the flavors of its Italian, Hungarian, and Austrian neighbors, all of which naturally pair well with the local wine.

Canada

Canada held onto the eighth spot this year with no change from last year. Aside from peace and stability, there are a number of reasons to head to Canada right now. First of all, it's berry season. The fresh blackberries and blueberries in the Granville Market in Vancouver would be a perfect addition to a picnic in Stanley Park. Secondly, the weather will be ideal for cycling through Montreal's scenic Canal de Lachine, grabbing some *poutine* at a café in Plateau Mont-Royal, or hiking the rugged cliffs of Nova Scotia in search of the perfect place to photograph a lonely lighthouse.