



# 8 Outdoor Adventures That Will Change How You See Your Favorite Cities

By Stacey McKenna 2.2.2018



Photo by BLM Nevada/Flickr

**Climbing in Red Rock Canyon will give you a whole new view of the lights of Vegas.**

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Some cities seem inextricably defined by their classic architecture or legendary nightlife, but step outside and you just might see these spaces in a whole new light.

Travelers are easily seduced by novelty, whether they're on the hunt for up-and-coming destinations or taken by the hype surrounding off-the-beaten-path spots. But sometimes it's just as valuable to get a fresh perspective on a familiar spot. In fact, you can discover a new side to a well-known urban center simply by heading outside; outdoor excursions can literally offer new vantage points of popular cities. From rock climbing outside of Las Vegas to paddleboarding through Ljubljana, here are eight urban-adjacent adventures to consider in 2018. You may never see your favorite place the same way again—and that's a good thing.

## Rock Climb in Las Vegas

Most visitors head to **Las Vegas** for the glitz of the strip and a thrilling game of chance. But just 20 miles west of the extravagant urban attractions, adventurous souls chase a different kind of rush while scaling the sandstone cliffs of **Red Rock Canyon** 🏜️. Routes in this 195,819-acre desert wilderness range from short, technically challenging “sport” climbs to 1,200-foot classics like **Solar Slab**. From atop the tallest crags, you can see the city shimmering in the distance like a mirage. If you're looking for a good place to start, head to **Red Rock Climbing Center**, a locally owned guide service, and browse its assortment of half- and full-day outings for all levels.



Photo by Nico Trinkhaus/Flickr

**Kotor, Montenegro, at night**

## Take a Night Hike in Kotor, Montenegro

By day, the 600-year-old trail to **St. John's Fortress** in **Kotor, Montenegro**, is swarmed by cruise passengers keen to complete the 1.5-hour round-trip hike before re-embarking. At dusk, however, the crowds thin, and scattered lamps and an occasional flashlight illuminate the 1,350 zigzagging limestone steps. Starting from the city's North Gate, hikers ascend roughly 800 feet up the mountainside. As darkness descends, the town's undulating red-tiled roofs disappear and are replaced by views of the city lights reflecting off the bay. The scene at the fortress is serene: Montenegro's flag whips in the wind and the urban glow gives way to stars twinkling overhead.

## Horseback Ride in Siem Reap, Cambodia

**Angkor Wat** may be the most famous temple in **Siem Reap, Cambodia**, but tucked into the tangle of jungle and farmland that surrounds the primary complex are numerous small temples worth exploring. Although these less-visited sites can be reached by motorbike, touring on horseback offers a quaint and quieter alternative. Riders follow the raised dirt paths between rice paddies and amble through villages, greeted by waving children. **The Happy Ranch** offers rides for all ages and levels—from 30-minute lead-line rides for kids to four-hour excursions. It has both English and Western saddles.




Courtesy of Bananaway

**Paddleboarding in Ljubljana, Slovenia**

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## Stand-Up Paddle in Ljubljana, Slovenia

Ample parks and a thriving bicycle culture have earned **Ljubljana, Slovenia**, a reputation as an active, eco-friendly destination. But the city's outdoor appeal isn't limited to terrestrial activities. A stand-up paddle down the Ljubljanica River allows visitors to slow down and take in the city's dragon-adorned baroque and art nouveau architecture from below. The willow-lined river winds through the bustle of bars and restaurants and beneath the arches of the iconic **Triple Bridge** . **Bananaway** offers two-hour stand-up paddleboard tours, including instruction, from mid-March through mid-October.

## Dive Under Valletta, Malta

Named the 2018 European Capital of Culture, **Valletta, Malta**, is a Mediterranean wonderland of al fresco dining, 500-year-old cobblestone streets, and **festivals** celebrating religion, art, and music. But to really appreciate the island's diversity, go underwater. Navigable cave systems will seduce beginners and experts alike, while the reefs teem with grouper and octopi, both of which feature prominently in Maltese cuisine. Near Valletta's shores, dive the HMS *Maori*, a World War II destroyer that sunk in 1942. Malta has 50 licensed dive centers offering scuba courses and packages for all levels; **Sliema**-based **Dive Systems** is an easy ferry or bus ride from downtown Valletta.

## Kayak Through New Orleans

Paddling the waters of Bayou St. John provides a peaceful break from **New Orleans's** famous revelry. Kayak tours of the bayou, which winds through several midcity neighborhoods, showcase 18th-century homes alongside an array of wildlife, from brown pelicans to snapping turtles. The waterway even passes through Faubourg St. John, which was founded about 10 years before the French Quarter was established, on its way to Lake Pontchartrain (which is actually an estuary). Family-owned **Kayak-iti-yat**  offers tours year-round, weather permitting.



Courtesy of Sky Waltz

**Aerial view of Jaipur's Amber Fort**

## Hot Air Balloon Above Jaipur, India

Urban **India's** incessant rush of people, smells, and noises can be overwhelming. In **Jaipur**, hot air balloon rides provide a way to slow down and take in the big picture from above. In the sky, there's plenty of time to watch everyday life go by while absorbing the landscape and taking in the area's famous sites, such as the sprawling 16th-century **Amber Fort**. **Sky Waltz** runs two flights per day from September through March and morning flights only from April to June.

## “Cross-City” Ski in Montreal, Canada

Once winter hits **Montreal**, it tends to stick around, transforming one of North America's most cosmopolitan cities into a snowy playground as 125 miles of ski trails pop up throughout the city's parks. A few minutes from downtown, skiers can get some elevation at **Mont Royal**, meander **Montreal Botanical Garden's** arboretum, or cross the St. Lawrence River to **Parc Jean-Drapeau** for a glimpse of the skyline. Several nature parks **rent skis** and other outdoor equipment, and you can find updated trail conditions **here**.