



**NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC**

**Stunning landscapes
Breathtaking vistas
Awe-inspiring getaways**

**The
World's Most
beautiful
places**

**100
Unforgettable
Destinations**



Lake Pehoe in Torres del Paine National Park, Patagonia, Chile



The
World's Most
**beautiful
places**





The
World's Most
**beautiful
places**
100 unforgettable destinations

 NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC
WASHINGTON, D.C.



Page 1: The setting sun lights the walls at Toroweap Point on the rim of the Grand Canyon. Pages 2-3: The Shwesandaw Pagoda temple at sunrise in Bagan. This page: A beachcomber strolls across the sands at Frégate Island in the Seychelles.

contents

World Map 6

peaks & valleys 8

1-25 Verdant hills, jagged peaks, mist-shrouded jungles, rippling grasslands, rocky moors, and undulating landscapes majestic enough to steal your breath away

rivers & shores 38

26-50 Magnificent landmarks and worlds shaped by water, from bright coral reefs and white-sand shorelines to twisting rivers and glistening fjords

cities & beyond 68

51-75 Structures and foundations so beautiful it's hard to believe that we created them: spectacular cities, architectural gems, and remnants of great civilizations past

stark & wild 98

76-100 Vistas of shimmering heat and sparkling ice, strange shapes, and sharp contrasts sure to inflame your imagination and inspire the adventurous spirit

Illustrations Credits 128

peaks & valleys

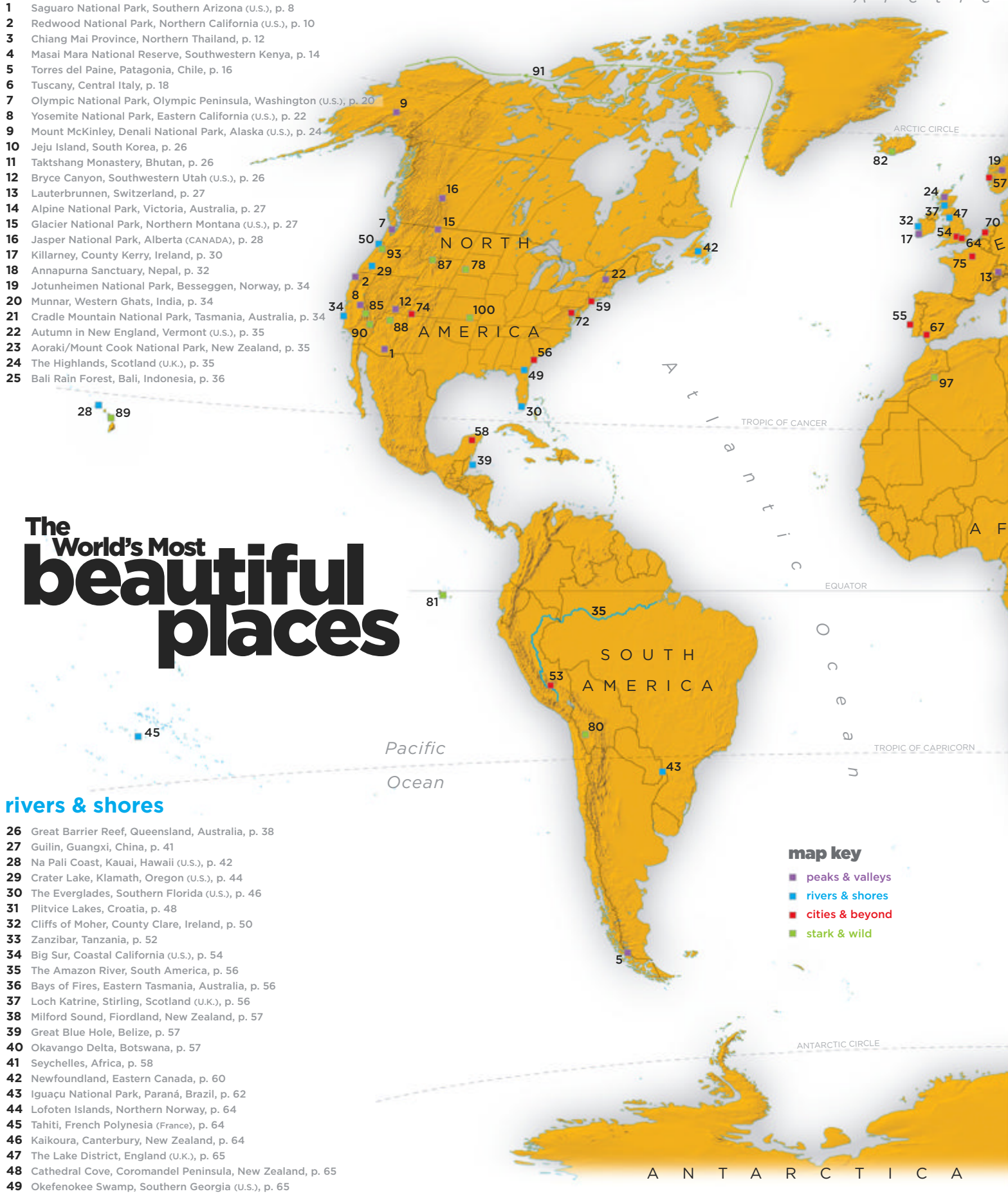
- 1 Saguaro National Park, Southern Arizona (U.S.), p. 8
- 2 Redwood National Park, Northern California (U.S.), p. 10
- 3 Chiang Mai Province, Northern Thailand, p. 12
- 4 Masai Mara National Reserve, Southwestern Kenya, p. 14
- 5 Torres del Paine, Patagonia, Chile, p. 16
- 6 Tuscany, Central Italy, p. 18
- 7 Olympic National Park, Olympic Peninsula, Washington (U.S.), p. 20
- 8 Yosemite National Park, Eastern California (U.S.), p. 22
- 9 Mount McKinley, Denali National Park, Alaska (U.S.), p. 24
- 10 Jeju Island, South Korea, p. 26
- 11 Taktshang Monastery, Bhutan, p. 26
- 12 Bryce Canyon, Southwestern Utah (U.S.), p. 26
- 13 Lauterbrunnen, Switzerland, p. 27
- 14 Alpine National Park, Victoria, Australia, p. 27
- 15 Glacier National Park, Northern Montana (U.S.), p. 27
- 16 Jasper National Park, Alberta (CANADA), p. 28
- 17 Killarney, County Kerry, Ireland, p. 30
- 18 Annapurna Sanctuary, Nepal, p. 32
- 19 Jotunheimen National Park, Besseggen, Norway, p. 34
- 20 Munnar, Western Ghats, India, p. 34
- 21 Cradle Mountain National Park, Tasmania, Australia, p. 34
- 22 Autumn in New England, Vermont (U.S.), p. 35
- 23 Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park, New Zealand, p. 35
- 24 The Highlands, Scotland (U.K.), p. 35
- 25 Bali Rain Forest, Bali, Indonesia, p. 36

The World's Most Beautiful places

rivers & shores

- 26 Great Barrier Reef, Queensland, Australia, p. 38
- 27 Guilin, Guangxi, China, p. 41
- 28 Na Pali Coast, Kauai, Hawaii (U.S.), p. 42
- 29 Crater Lake, Klamath, Oregon (U.S.), p. 44
- 30 The Everglades, Southern Florida (U.S.), p. 46
- 31 Plitvice Lakes, Croatia, p. 48
- 32 Cliffs of Moher, County Clare, Ireland, p. 50
- 33 Zanzibar, Tanzania, p. 52
- 34 Big Sur, Coastal California (U.S.), p. 54
- 35 The Amazon River, South America, p. 56
- 36 Bays of Fires, Eastern Tasmania, Australia, p. 56
- 37 Loch Katrine, Stirling, Scotland (U.K.), p. 56
- 38 Milford Sound, Fiordland, New Zealand, p. 57
- 39 Great Blue Hole, Belize, p. 57
- 40 Okavango Delta, Botswana, p. 57
- 41 Seychelles, Africa, p. 58
- 42 Newfoundland, Eastern Canada, p. 60
- 43 Iguacu National Park, Paraná, Brazil, p. 62
- 44 Lofoten Islands, Northern Norway, p. 64
- 45 Tahiti, French Polynesia (France), p. 64
- 46 Kaikoura, Canterbury, New Zealand, p. 64
- 47 The Lake District, England (U.K.), p. 65
- 48 Cathedral Cove, Coromandel Peninsula, New Zealand, p. 65
- 49 Okefenokee Swamp, Southern Georgia (U.S.), p. 65
- 50 Cannon Beach, Coastal Oregon (U.S.), p. 66

A r c t i c



map key

- peaks & valleys
- rivers & shores
- cities & beyond
- stark & wild

A N T A R C T I C A

cities & beyond

- 51 Neuschwanstein Castle, Bavaria, Germany, p. 68
- 52 Rome, Italy, p. 70
- 53 Machu Picchu, Peru, p. 72
- 54 Oxford, England (U.K.), p. 74
- 55 Sintra, Portugal, p. 76
- 56 Savannah, Georgia (U.S.), p. 78
- 57 Bergen, Western Norway, p. 78
- 58 Chichén Itzá, Yucatán, Mexico, p. 78
- 59 New York City, New York (U.S.), p. 79
- 60 Kyoto, Japan, p. 79
- 61 Rostov Veliky, Russia, p. 79
- 62 Saint Petersburg, Russia, p. 80
- 63 The Great Wall of China, China, p. 82
- 64 London, England (U.K.), p. 84
- 65 Santorini, Greece, p. 86
- 66 Bagan, Myanmar, p. 88
- 67 Seville, Andalusia, Spain, p. 90
- 68 Istanbul, Turkey, p. 92
- 69 Pyramids of Giza, Egypt, p. 94
- 70 Amsterdam, The Netherlands, p. 94
- 71 Petra, Ma'an, Jordan, p. 94
- 72 Washington, District of Columbia (U.S.), p. 95
- 73 Cape Town, South Africa, p. 95
- 74 Mesa Verde, Colorado (U.S.), p. 95
- 75 Paris, France, p. 96

stark & wild

- 76 Arctic Circle, Sweden (Kiruna, Lapland), p. 98
- 77 Devils Marbles, Outback Australia, p. 100
- 78 Badlands National Park, South Dakota (U.S.), p. 102
- 79 Ice sheets, Antarctica (ice flow on the Southern Ocean), p. 104
- 80 Salar de Uyuni, Bolivia, p. 106
- 81 Galápagos Islands (Ecuador), South America, p. 108
- 82 Landmannalaugar, Southern Iceland, p. 108
- 83 Chocolate Hills, Bohol Island, Philippines, p. 108
- 84 Sossusvlei Dunes, Namibia, Africa (Namib Naukluft National Park), p. 109
- 85 Racetrack Playa, Death Valley, California (U.S.), p. 109
- 86 Emerald Lakes, Tongariro National Park, New Zealand, p. 109
- 87 Grand Prismatic Spring, Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming (U.S.), p. 110
- 88 Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona (Wotan's Throne on the north rim) (U.S.), p. 112
- 89 Haleakala Crater, Maui, Hawaii (U.S.), p. 114
- 90 Mojave Desert, (U.S.), p. 116
- 91 Northwest Passage, Canada, p. 118
- 92 The Pinnacles, Cervantes, Australia (Nambung National Park), p. 118
- 93 Oregon Lava Fields, Oregon (U.S.), p. 118
- 94 Simien Mountain National Park, Ethiopia, p. 119
- 95 Lake Baikal, Siberia, Russia, p. 119
- 96 Socotra, Yemen, p. 119
- 97 Sahara Desert, Africa (Erg Chebbi, Maroc), p. 120
- 98 Mineral Forest, Pamukkale, Turkey, p. 122
- 99 K2, Karakoram Range, China/Pakistan, p. 124
- 100 The Prairies, Midwestern U.S. (Flint Hills), p. 126

0 2000 km
0 2000 mi



peaks &

A desert landscape at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, pink, and purple. In the foreground, several saguaro cacti are visible, some with arms. The background shows rolling hills and mountains under the twilight sky.

1

saguaro national park

SOUTHERN ARIZONA

The sun sets, shadows lengthen, and on the horizon the Tucson and Rincon Mountains glow orange-pink in the gathering dusk. One of the iconic images of the American West then slowly emerges as hundreds of saguaro cacti—North America's largest cactus—take on their unmistakable silhouettes against the darkening sky.

Saguaro cacti near Tucson: The cacti grow naturally only in the Sonoran Desert and can reach heights of 60 feet and live for up to 150 years.

valleys

“Climb the mountains
and get their good tidings.
The winds will blow their
own freshness into you,
and the storms their energy,
while cares will drop off
like autumn leaves.” John Muir

In the collection of unique and iconic places contained within these pages, the notion that beauty is in the eye of the beholder is disproved. We may experience different feelings as we stand before the Grand Canyon, Machu Picchu, or Rome’s eternal ruins, but some strand links them and their power to inspire. Sometimes we can look and know. Sometimes we simply recognize a place for what it is—one of the most beautiful places on Earth.

We start with the world’s great peaks, which inspire great awe; no wonder we have long been drawn to them. To gaze on the majesty of Alaska’s Mount McKinley or the great Himalayan summits that ring Nepal’s Annapurna Sanctuary is to understand why the ancients and our elders reserved the highest places for their gods. To hike, climb, or look on the world’s mountains is to escape our earthbound lives.

Valleys are different. Their beauty still inspires awe—as in the immense savanna of Kenya’s Masai Mara or among the cliffs and rocky amphitheatres of America’s Bryce Canyon—but often valleys are places of habitation whose gentler beauty owes something to a human touch, such as the vineyards and olive groves of Tuscany or the emerald patchwork of paddy fields across the lowlands of northern Thailand.

The spaces between the realms of peak and valley offer up resplendent landscapes of infinite variety, from the verdant rain forests of Bali and wildflower meadows of Montana’s Glacier National Park to the glittering turquoise lakes of Patagonia’s high plateaus and New England’s dulcet hills and villages, whose blaze of autumnal color reminds us that beauty need not be in thrall to the seasons.

2 **redwood national park** **NORTHERN CALIFORNIA**

Big is beautiful when it comes to coast redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*), and they don’t come much bigger than in Redwood National Park, which protects a precious relic forest—some 45 percent of all surviving coast redwood habitat—whose 350-foot-tall, 2,000-year-old trees are among the world’s oldest and tallest living organisms.

DON’T MISS

The 32-mile Avenue of the Giants (Route 254) gives access to the region’s finest forest and the world’s largest surviving stand of virgin redwoods.

Redwoods reach for the sky in Redwood National Park, part of an ecosystem that is 160 million years old.





3 chiang mai province

NORTHERN THAILAND

The landscapes of Chiang Mai are as varied as the many peoples that have long been drawn to this area of Thailand, one of Southeast Asia's most important historical crossroads. Paddy fields fill the lowlands and sinuous hillside terraces with a vivid patchwork of jade and emerald. Encroaching on all sides is the darker, denser green of jungle, laced with slow-flowing rivers and shadowed by mountains like Doi Inthanon (8,415 ft/2,565 m) and Doi Chiang Dao (7,136 ft/2,175 m), two of the country's highest peaks.

DON'T MISS

The region's capital, Chiang Mai, has a moated old town that has retained its charm and is a base for excursions to out-of-the-way tribal villages and for cycling, hiking, elephant trekking, bird-watching, and rafting trips in the surrounding backcountry.

Paddy fields near Chiang Mai; about half of Thailand's arable land is given over to rice production.





4 masai mara national reserve

SOUTHWESTERN KENYA

When the sun sets in the Masai Mara National Reserve, Africa's vast skies fill with stars as the tree-dotted grasslands and low escarpments of the savanna below are bathed in a gentle golden glow. Shadows gather and the dry, searing heat of the day gives way to the balmy stillness of twilight, a cooling calm before the storm of evening activity erupts among many of the thousands of creatures—lions, leopards, elephants, rhinoceros, hyenas, and more—that call this corner of southwestern Kenya home.

DON'T MISS

Visit the Masai Mara in August, when 1.2 million wildebeests, 750,000 zebras, and other animals driven north by drought arrive in the region during the "Great Migration" from the Serengeti plains of neighboring Tanzania.

Sunset over the Masai Mara (right) and a cheetah (above), which likes to hunt when the sun is low