

CHASING WANDERLUST

Breathtaking Places and Experiences for 2023

You can find ideas for travel everywhere you look. Where to go next is the question. Here is a round up of National Geographic's yearly pick of the best places to visit throughout the year —destinations full of wonder, rewarding for tourists of all ages, and supportive of local ecosystems and communities.

Community: Where conservation benefits everyone

Discover how these forward-thinking communities, from Laos to Greece, are offering more opportunities for meaningful travel.



LAOS

BOARD A NEW TRAIN THAT MAKES THE COUNTRY'S WONDERS MORE ACCESSIBLE

A Chinese-financed and -built bullet train named the Lane Xang, an ancient Laotian name meaning Kingdom of a Million Elephants, will be inaugurated in December 2021, boosting internal travel in the country noted for its emerald-green vistas of the Upper Mekong River. The train's 260-mile Laos section begins in the border town of Boten and travels through 75 tunnels and 167 bridges before coming to an end in Vientiane. The promise of the train? to promote tourism among Lao people, who can now more readily experience their nation's rich heritage, notably the former imperial capital of Louangphabang, a UNESCO World Heritage site.



ALBERTA, CANADA

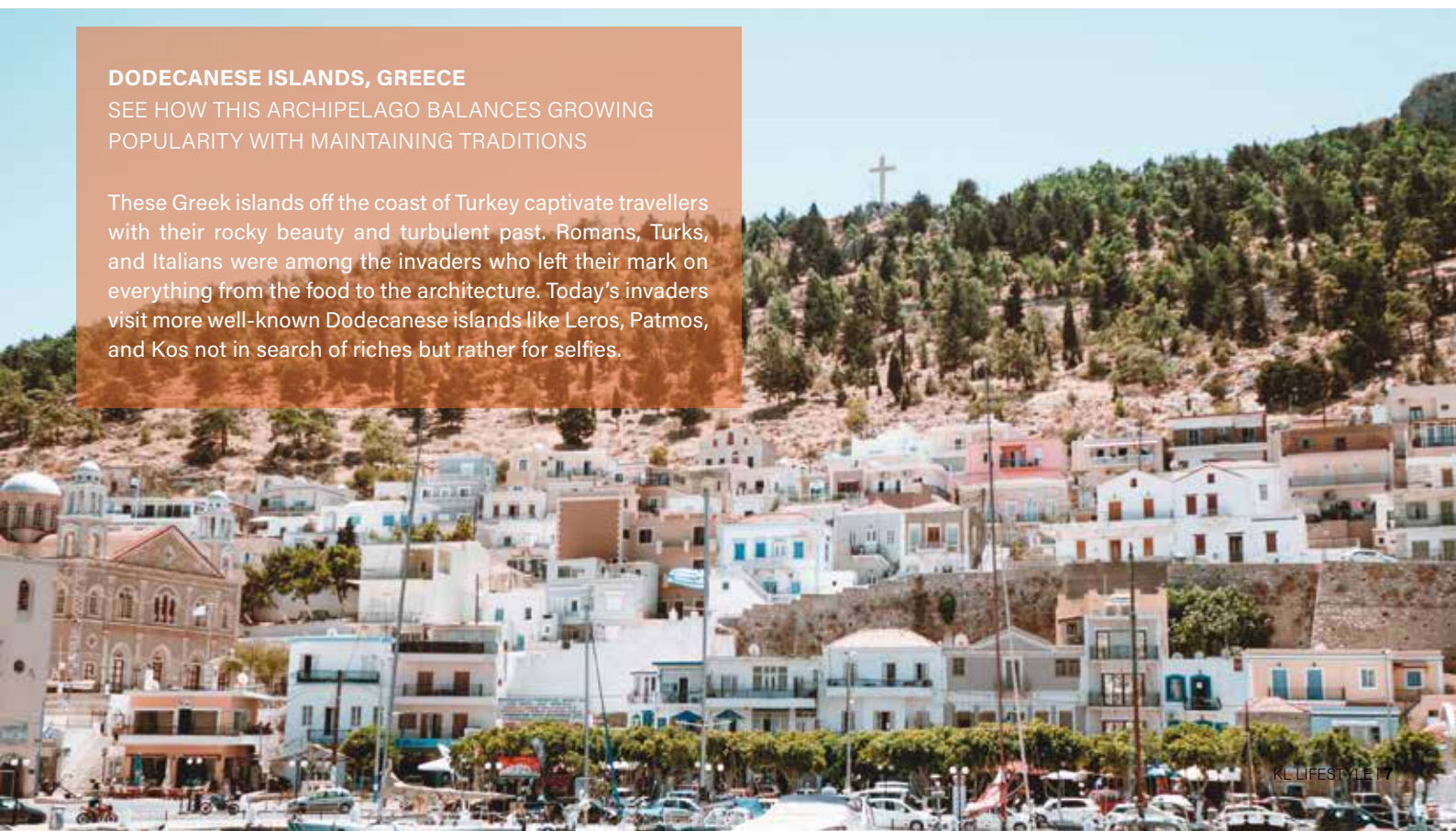
FOLLOW THE LEADER IN INDIGENOUS TOURISM

Alberta is renowned for its wide-open prairie panoramas, glass-and-steel sophistication of cities like Calgary and Edmonton, and natural treasures like the Athabasca Glacier and Banff National Park, both high in the Rocky Mountains. Nonetheless, there are several viewpoints to take into account in this Canadian province as part of a reevaluation of how Indigenous history are told throughout all of North America. The Native sites in Alberta serve as markers for the province's pre-European history. Located just east of Edmonton, Elk Island National Park offers guided hikes, interactive interpretive programmes using ancient stone tools, and Cree craft workshops where visitors can learn about 8,000-year-old cultural history.

DODECANESE ISLANDS, GREECE

SEE HOW THIS ARCHIPELAGO BALANCES GROWING POPULARITY WITH MAINTAINING TRADITIONS

These Greek islands off the coast of Turkey captivate travellers with their rocky beauty and turbulent past. Romans, Turks, and Italians were among the invaders who left their mark on everything from the food to the architecture. Today's invaders visit more well-known Dodecanese islands like Leros, Patmos, and Kos not in search of riches but rather for selfies.



Nature: Escapes to wild, beautiful places

From one of the best whale-watching spots in the world to a legendary desert landscape, these destinations spark new appreciation for the planet's under-the-radar treasures.



AZORES

THESE ATLANTIC ISLANDS ARE ONE OF THE BEST SPOTS IN THE WORLD FOR WHALE-WATCHING.

The Azores, a land that was once covered in fire but is now covered in green, is fighting to ensure its future. This group of volcanic islands in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean is a self-governing territory of Portugal, situated nearly a thousand miles off its coast. The Azores take sustainable tourism seriously, having four of its nine islands designated as UNESCO biosphere reserves and being recognised by the World Wildlife Fund as an oasis for 28 whale and dolphin species.



BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK, TEXAS

THE FRONTIER LEGEND OF TEXAS COMES TO LIFE IN THIS DESERT PARK.

Although being situated in the mythical Lone Star State, just 400,000 people visited Big Bend National Park prior to the pandemic—nearly ten times less visitors than Yellowstone saw. More cactus species than any other national park are found in this isolated, desert region of west Texas, along with javelina and brightly coloured Scott's orioles and roadrunners. But in the desert, encounters with wildlife seem to be different.



BOTSWANA

CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITY DEFINE THE NEW SAFARI

Botswana, in southern Africa, continues to struggle with a variety of challenges, from poaching to overtourism, to its vast, wildlife-rich national parks and game reserves. But fresh anti-poaching initiatives, volunteer travel, and community-based outreach are easing some of the strain. Rangers are implementing cutting-edge equipment in the 270-square-mile Central Tuli Game Reserve in the Tuli Block, a wilderness on Botswana's eastern border that is home to leopards, brown and spotted hyenas, and a significant number of elephants.



SLOVENIA

EUROPE'S PIONEER IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CREATES A GOURMET CYCLING ROUTE

Generally regarded as a pioneer in environmentally friendly travel, Slovenia has already developed a variety of green vacations as part of its seven-year-old national green scheme. The Slovenia Green Gourmet Route has now been added to the menu.

Culture: Places where history and heritage rule

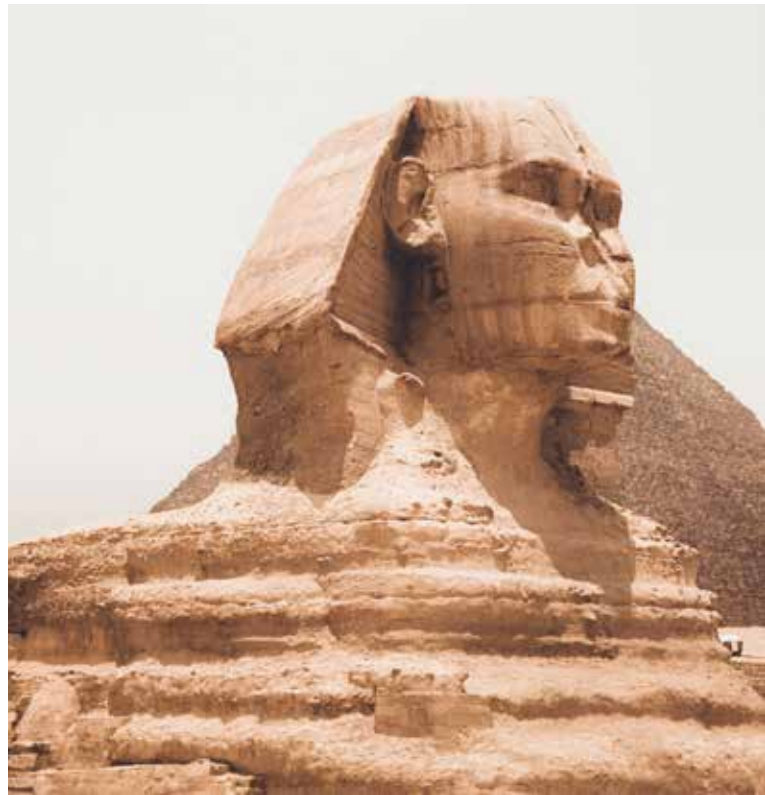
Venture off the beaten path to explore places lost in time, from Italy to Egypt.



APPIAN WAY, ITALY

WALK ANCIENT ROME'S "SUPERHIGHWAY"

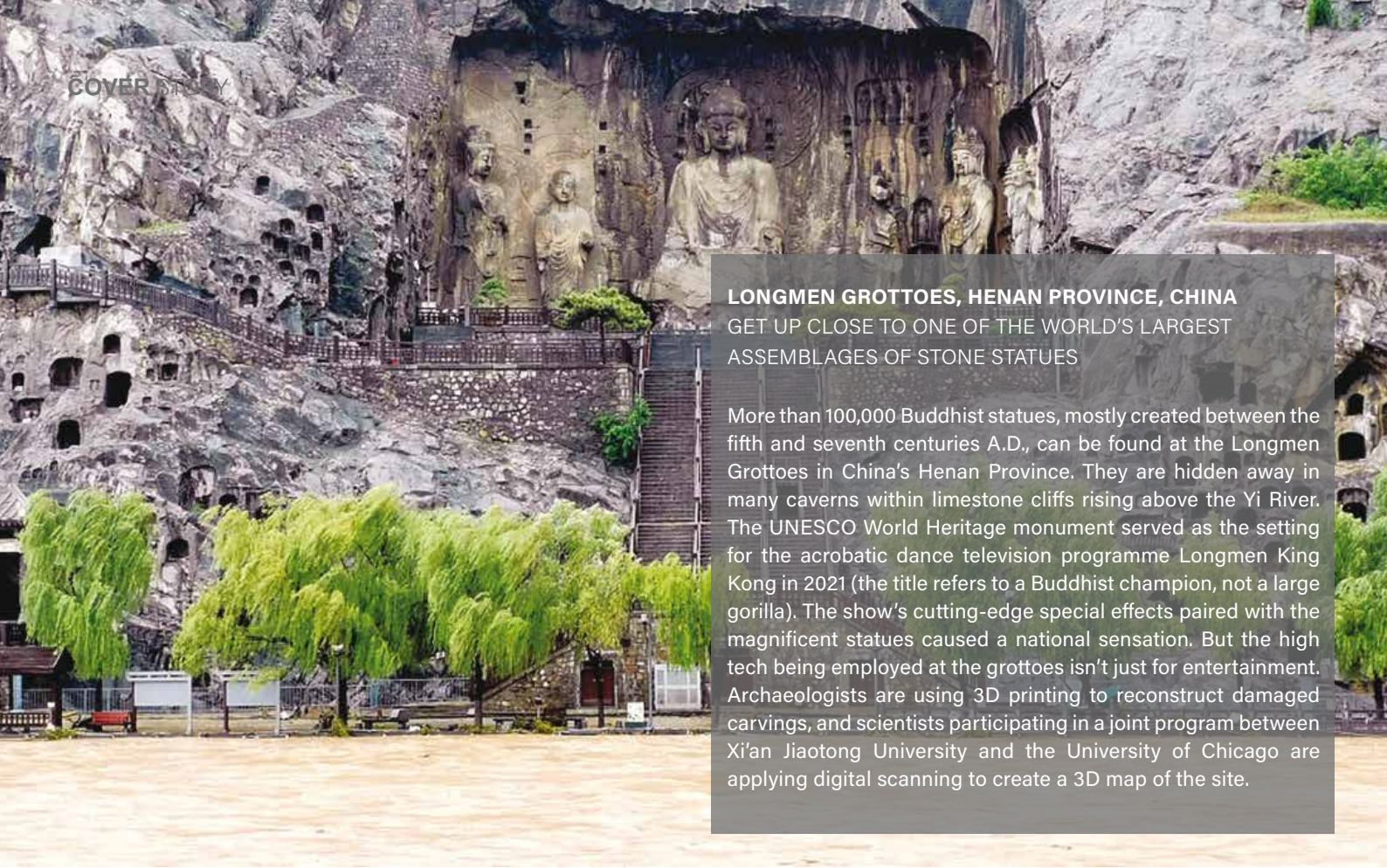
If all roads lead to Rome, then this historic thoroughfare, constructed 2,300 years ago, was the mother of all highways. From the Roman poet Horace to the gladiator-tussling Emperor Commodus, travellers travelled the 360-mile Via Appia (also known as Regina Viarum, or "Queen of Roads"), which connected the centre of Italy's capital to the port of Brindisi on the Adriatic. The Appia is experiencing a revival as the Italian government works to retrace, uncover, and restore the old cobblestones—turning the Appia into a pedestrian path for contemporary travellers. The road was neglected after Rome's destruction but was never forgotten. The objective is a journey through history with prearranged overnight lodgings at the conclusion of each stay at picturesque communities and archaeological sites.



EGYPT

CATCH THE DEBUT OF KING TUT'S NEW HOME

King Tut's spectacular new abode will be unveiled on the 100th anniversary of his discovery, and numerous recent archaeological discoveries are rekindling interest in Egypt around the world. Cairo's Great Egyptian Museum (GEM), which is dramatic and contemporary, is situated in Giza on the outskirts of the Pyramids. It seems as though the Egyptians constructed a second pyramid to house all of Tutankhamun's gold artefacts, many of which were kept secret in the [old] Cairo Museum's basement. It will turn into a must-see museum and alter how tourists view Egypt. The almost 5.3 million square foot facility also houses the estimated 100,000 items of the nation's incredible collections of ancient artefacts in addition to the more than 5,000 valuables that belonged to the young king. But, room can become limited soon. A "golden city" in Luxor that was constructed more than 3,000 years ago during the rule of Amenhotep III, Tut's grandfather, was also found during recent digs, along with 250 mummies in Saqqara. Among the items discovered were things often used by average Egyptians.



LONGMEN GROTTOES, HENAN PROVINCE, CHINA
GET UP CLOSE TO ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST
ASSEMBLAGES OF STONE STATUES

More than 100,000 Buddhist statues, mostly created between the fifth and seventh centuries A.D., can be found at the Longmen Grottoes in China's Henan Province. They are hidden away in many caverns within limestone cliffs rising above the Yi River. The UNESCO World Heritage monument served as the setting for the acrobatic dance television programme Longmen King Kong in 2021 (the title refers to a Buddhist champion, not a large gorilla). The show's cutting-edge special effects paired with the magnificent statues caused a national sensation. But the high tech being employed at the grottoes isn't just for entertainment. Archaeologists are using 3D printing to reconstruct damaged carvings, and scientists participating in a joint program between Xi'an Jiaotong University and the University of Chicago are applying digital scanning to create a 3D map of the site.

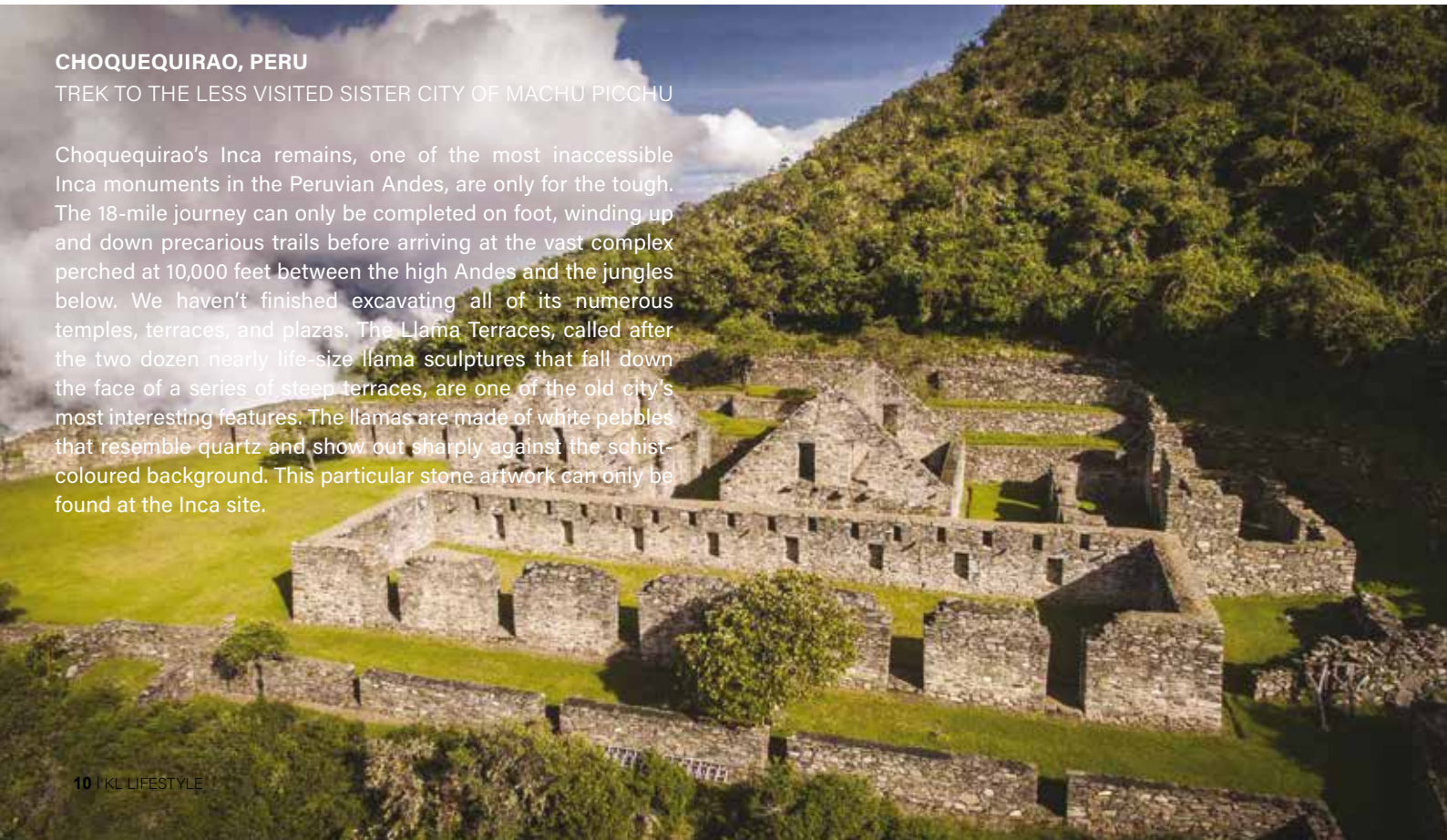
Adventure: Adrenaline-pumping outdoor excursions

These are some locations where you can go on your next big adventure, whether it be paddling a famous river, hiking a secluded mountain trail, or biking a "Great Ride."

CHOQUEQUIRAO, PERU

TREK TO THE LESS VISITED SISTER CITY OF MACHU PICCHU

Choquequirao's Inca remains, one of the most inaccessible Inca monuments in the Peruvian Andes, are only for the tough. The 18-mile journey can only be completed on foot, winding up and down precarious trails before arriving at the vast complex perched at 10,000 feet between the high Andes and the jungles below. We haven't finished excavating all of its numerous temples, terraces, and plazas. The Llama Terraces, called after the two dozen nearly life-size llama sculptures that fall down the face of a series of steep terraces, are one of the old city's most interesting features. The llamas are made of white pebbles that resemble quartz and show out sharply against the schist-coloured background. This particular stone artwork can only be found at the Inca site.





REVILLAGIGEDO NATIONAL PARK, MEXICO

DIVE INTO THE GALÁPAGOS OF MEXICO

On the southernmost point of the Baja California Peninsula, about 300 miles away, is a national park that is the stuff of legends. The largest fully protected underwater park in North America is Revillagigedo National Park, a 57,000 square mile Mexican marine reserve. It has earned the moniker “the Galápagos of Mexico” because it provides sanctuary to the biggest number of tropical marine megafauna on the continent, including humpback whales and hammerhead sharks. And the area’s four main islands’ surrounding seas are quickly becoming into a haven for scuba divers. The park is one of the few, if not the only location on Earth, where you can get up close and personal with enormous ocean manta rays.



NEW ZEALAND

BOUNCE BACK IN THIS CAPITAL OF ADVENTURE

A revitalised Queenstown in New Zealand’s South Island is now welcoming adventurers from all over the world. Skiing and hiking in the aptly called Remarkables range are two of the year-round activities that draw people to this lakeside town of 15,000 people. But the most buzz ought to be about bicycles. The Queenstown Trails Trust wants to build a network of bike lanes and trails for commuting and pleasure that will connect businesses, institutions of higher learning, and other urban areas by 2025. The highlight of the network is the 80.7-mile Queenstown Trail, one of New Zealand’s Great Rides. The Ride pedals east from Queenstown to Gibbston, beginning on the shore of Lake Wakatipu. Cycling enthusiasts can travel far into the nearby terrain on the 31-mile Coronet Loop Trail. In addition to passing waterfalls, river gorges, beech forests, and the historic ruins of a Chinese gold mining community along the Arrow River in the 19th century, the singletrack circles the 5,410-foot-tall Coronet Peak.

