



## TRAVEL

## Avoid the Crowds: 5 Unexpected Warm-Weather Getaways for Spring Break

BY ARCHANA RAM

March 7, 2016

Spring may be tantalizingly close, but with the balmy breezes just outside our grasp, it's time to consider making the annual spring-break pilgrimage to warmer climes. And we're not talking Señor Frog's and overcrowded beaches. If it's sunny and secluded you're after, you'll have to go beyond the tourist hot spots and opt for locales that are just slightly more off the beaten path. Here, five alternate warm-weather getaways, from a bucolic hideaway in Cuba to a yoga retreat in Sri Lanka.

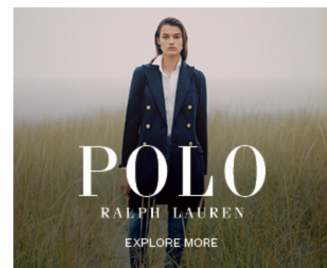
*If you love Kauai, Hawaii, try Viñales, Cuba.*



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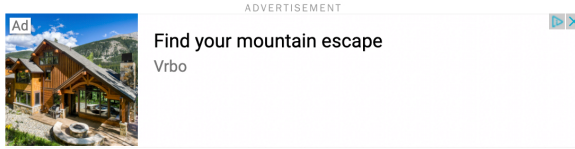


24 Hours of Tennis Practice and Avocado Toast With Naomi Osaka





**Why you should go:** Yes, Cuba is hot right now, but the fun doesn't end in Havana. The village of Viñales, located just a few hours from Cuba's capital, offers lush green landscapes and impressive mountain views, much like Kauai's verdant countryside. The valley-set locale is largely rural, so don't be surprised to see cows and chickens crossing the road.



**Where to stay:** As in most of Cuba, private homestays are the way to go. (Mi casa es su casa!) Or take in the magnificent views of the valley and limestone formations from [Villa Los Reyes](#), a cozy bed-and-breakfast set nearby the mountains.

**Where to eat:** A dose of high style in the nearby "downtown," the black-and-white-themed Paladar La Cuenca serves a range of Cuban eats.



**What to do:** Tour the UNESCO-protected valley via horseback. Local tour agencies can book you a ride, which often includes a trek through coffee plantations, tobacco farms, and more.

*If you love Cabo San Lucas, try Punta Mita, Mexico.*



beaches Photo: Courtesy of Kristen Adishian / @kladish

**Why you should go:** Cabo's rowdy crowds got you down? Punta Mita remains one of Mexico's lesser-known gems despite a prime location between busy

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one of Mexico's lesser-known gems despite a prime location between busy Sayulita and Puerto Vallarta and a bevy of celeb visitors ([Beyoncé](#) and [Jennifer Aniston](#), to name a few). That means ocean swimming, margaritas, and more in a relatively secluded tropical locale.

**Where to stay:** Book a stay in one of the casita-style rooms at the regal [Four Seasons Resort Punta Mita](#), an almost 400-acre property with an adults-only pool, lazy river, spa, and four alfresco eateries, including two by Richard Sandoval.

**Where to eat:** Dine on fresh seafood and carne asada on the beach at [Si Señor](#).

**What to do:** Situated a few miles west of Punta Mita is Mexico's version of the Galápagos—Marieta Islands National Park, where you can snorkel among dolphins, sea turtles, stingrays, and more.

*If you love Puerto Rico, try Cartagena de Indias, Colombia.*



beaches Photo: Courtesy of Alan Solorzano / @alansolorzano



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**Why you should go:** Puerto Rico has been attracting masses with its sandy beaches, nightlife, and historic downtown for decades—and it has the crowds to prove it. Instead, fly further south to the Colombian city of Cartagena de Indias, a UNESCO World Heritage site that blends Latin, Caribbean, and African influences.



AFRICAN INFLUENCES.

**Where to stay:** The centrally located [Hotel Quadrifoglio](#) is outfitted with restored ruins from the 1700s that reflect the city’s architectural heritage. Think: Spanish-style tile roofing, lush greens, and an inviting pool area ripe for Instagram snapping.

**Where to eat:** [La Cevicheria](#) remains one of the city’s best restaurants for fresh Caribbean catch dressed in tangy citrus. Culinary pro/world traveler Anthony Bourdain is a fan.

**What to do:** You could spend hours strolling the photogenic cobblestone streets and past Technicolor buildings, but for something less urban, hop on a one-hour ferry to Playa Blanca, a nearly deserted beach on Isla Barú with clear waters, fresh seafood, and hammocks that beg for do-nothing delights.

*If you love Los Angeles, try Mexico City.*



**Why you should go:** Craving art, great food, and party hopping in a more exotic locale than L.A.? You’ll find a similar urban edge in the Mexican capital, which has shed its formerly seedy reputation and emerged as a dynamic hot spot for city slickers.

**Where to stay:** [La Valise Hotel](#) in the über-trendy Roma Norte neighborhood promises hip and modern decor in an intimate space. Located in a townhouse, the hotel consists of just three rooms and offers food prepared by nearby



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**Where to eat:** Dig L.A.’s Grand Central Market? Then you’ll want to check out [Mercado Roma](#), a gourmet food hall, bringing the city’s top restaurants, like La Barraca Valenciana, under one roof.

**What to do:** The Distrito Federal is known for its impressive museum scene.



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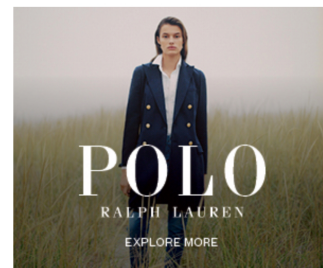
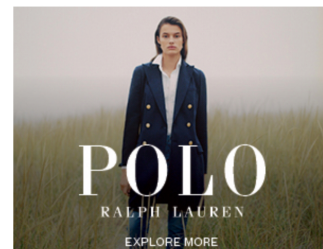
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Spend a few days gallery hopping in the [Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo](#), [Museo Frida Kahlo](#) , and extensive [Museo Nacional de Antropología](#).

*If you love Costa Rica, try Sri Lanka.*



Photo: Courtesy of Aki / @a\_kkiii\_

**Why you should go:** If you have more than a weekend at your disposal, consider the tropical island off the southeastern coast of India, which offers a similarly green landscape and hydrophilic pursuits.

**Where to stay:** Indulge in yoga classes, Ayurvedic remedies, and holistic treatments at [Tri](#), the new sustainable luxury design hotel developed by married duo photographer Rob Drummond and yoga instructor Lara Baumann.

**Where to eat:** The posh [Ministry of Crab](#) celebrates the namesake crustacean in a space once occupied by one of the oldest buildings in the fort area of Sri Lanka's capital city, Colombo. Expect chili crab, oysters, traditional Sri Lankan bread, and chicken curry rice.

**What to do:** The breaks at Hikkaduwa and Mirissa beaches are ideal for beginners, and you can find a number of surf schools in town. Surf's up!

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