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# World of adventure awaits tourists in 2014

Spanning the globe



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HIGH INTEREST: Peru's Machu Picchu, above, and Brazil's Rio de Janeiro, could be among this year's hot spots.

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By: Travel Guy, Bill Burke

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Predictions for hot travel destinations in 2014 are — excuse the pun — all over the map.

With the American dollar stronger in some regions, historical commemorations and global sporting events drawing travelers to others, there are both bargains and reasons to hit the road.

Of course, **Sochi, Russia**, will be a top draw early in the year, as the Winter Olympics (Feb. 7-23) take place at the Black Sea resort city, and at various Caucasus Mountain resorts nearby. But it could be the world's most popular sport that drives a good amount of tourism to South America in 2014.

"The FIFA World Cup will draw the world's attention to **Brazil** as a popular destination for 2014," Traveljunkiejulia.com's Julia Dimon said. "In Rio, the city's infrastructure — everything from the airport to hotels — is being upgraded. 2014 will have tons of new amenities for tourists to enjoy, beyond the stunning beaches and sizzling nightlife."

Boston-based FlipKey, a vacation rental website, also has put Brazil at the top of its list of potentially hot destinations in 2014.

"We weren't surprised to see Rio at the top of this year's list, given the popularity of the 2014 World Cup," said Eric Horndahl, vice president of marketing at FlipKey.

It's not only about the World Cup (held June 12 to July 13 in 12 Brazilian cities), however. Other regions of South America also can expect a nice bump in travel dollars, according to experts. Sure, there's the soccer (football, if you like), but there are also unmatched experiences available.

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"Exotic destinations in South America allow travelers to explore striking landscapes, colonial architecture and ancient sites like **Machu Picchu**," Mark Drusch, chief supplier relations officer of CheapOair.com, said. "Travelers can also find affordable airlines to countries like **Peru**, where one U.S. dollar is currently converting to nearly three Peruvian nuevo sol."

Where the U.S. dollar is stronger against foreign currency, travelers will find more reasonably priced hotels, dining options and even tours and

entertainment, Drusch said.

Then there's the football we know, which puts **New York City** on the list of hot spots.

"The Super Bowl is being held there this year, plus the new 'Aladdin' Broadway musical starts in March," Dimon said. "The National September 11 Memorial Museum will also open in 2014."

Winthrop native Matt Kepnes, author at Nomadic Matt (nomadicmatt.com), says a formerly quiet southeast Asia destination may see substantial growth this year.

"One of the hottest destinations in 2014 is going to be **Myanmar**," Kepnes said. "Now that relations with the country have been normalized, and the country is now fully open to tourism, there's already been an increase of tourists to the country."

As the number of hotels increase and the border crossing becomes easier, the setting there will change from one that primarily hosted aid workers and hardened backpackers to one that is open to visitors with a new hospitality infrastructure.

"It's easy to see why, too," he said. "Myanmar has been the most isolated, rural country in the region and is filled with lovely food, friendly locals and a lot of historic sites. Everyone is going to rush there before it's overdeveloped."

Drusch also has Myanmar on his list of potentially popular destinations in the coming year.

"Travel within Southeast Asia on low-cost carriers like Jetstar can help travelers experience more destinations in one trip, from major cities to uncharted locales," he said.

Among Drusch's picks for the region, which showed strong growth in 2013 with bookings up between 40 and 90 percent year-over-year, include: **Kuala Lumpur**, Malaysia; Hanoi, Vietnam; and **Naypyidaw**, Myanmar.

This summer also marks 100 years since the start of World War I, which was triggered by the assassination of archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo. Commemorative events are planned throughout Europe, making it another popular travel destination this year.

"With Croatia recently joining the EU and other new Balkan nations not far behind, the scars of the '90s war are long-forgotten," said Rita Anya Nara, author of "The Anxious Traveler." "**Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia** offer stunning scenery and enough mystique to thrill Euro-trippers who have seen everywhere else between Ireland and Greece."

Dimon is also a fan of the region.

"Slovenia is a hidden gem of Europe," she said. "In the capital city, picture canals, cobblestone streets with incredible pizza restaurants at a fraction of the cost. For outdoor enthusiasts, the Julian Alps offer tons of hiking and skiing options."

Getting there could be less expensive, as well. Low-cost carriers like easyJet and Vueling will be offering a wide range of cheap flights among larger European cities, Drusch said.

"Fly into the UK or Italian airports with flights in and out of these countries — within Europe — which are offering some of the most affordable fares in 2014," he said.

As for cruise destinations, it may be a case of getting in while you can.

"We have requests for much more exotic destinations lately," said Bill Walsh of Cruise Travel Outlet in Salem, N.H. "Like the **Galapagos Islands, Tahiti, Australia, New Zealand** — and itineraries that include **Venice** are in high demand also."

Walsh said the rise in Venetian vacations could be because large ships will be banned from the lagoon as of November. The government there is imposing a ban on the largest ships visiting the city's center, as it seeks to mitigate damage to at-risk structures and cultural sites.

As far as domestic travel, travelers are continuing to flock to central **Florida** as expansions and new attractions keep families looking south. Walt Disney World will debut a new roller coaster — the Seven Dwarfs Mine Train — in its Magic Kingdom theme park, and Universal Orlando will open the new Diagon Alley section of its Wizarding World of Harry Potter, along with a new resort and new restaurants on the CityWalk.

Hotwire.com's list of the most popular New Year destinations is topped by Orlando — which, to be fair, offers a lot more than some of the planet's most recognizable theme parks. Take a lack of snow, for example.

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"The winter weather outlook is likely prompting many travelers to head south for some warmer weather celebrations," said Henrik Kjellberg, president of the Hotwire Group.

Competition among low-cost and mid-tier airlines also will spur travel there, Drusch said. But he added people may see bargains on carriers such as JetBlue and Virgin America to destinations like New York, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Fort Lauderdale, Fla., San Francisco, Denver, Dallas-Fort Worth, Miami and Seattle.

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