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Bored with Europe? Try the 'new Europe'

Move over jaded European hotspots, there are some new towns in town

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Brno: the new Prague, don't you know?

When helmet-haired 18th-century diarist Samuel Johnson was asked if he could ever become bored with Britain's bustling capital, his conclusion was grim:

"When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life," he said.

Johnson, of course, lived in a charmingly compact version of the metropolis we know today.

Had he experienced modern London's snarled transport network, its costly restaurants and its ironically mustachioed youths, he might have bailed a lot sooner.

But to where?

It takes a lot to best such great cities as London. But often the search for a replacement -- the new Paris, Barcelona or Berlin -- reminds us of what we loved about the originals.

The new London: Bristol



An early Banksy daub; he's one of cool Bristol's greatest exports.

Where? Vibrant southwest English port city overlooking the mouth of the mighty Severn River.

Why? Bristol rivals London's contribution to Britain's development as a cultural and industrial powerhouse.

It boasts landmarks, such as [Clifton Suspension Bridge](http://www.cliftonbridge.org.uk/) (<http://www.cliftonbridge.org.uk/>), by top-hatted engineering genius Isambard Kingdom Brunel, and a modern arts and music scene that has given us the likes of [Banksy](http://visitbristol.co.uk/things-to-do/banksy-walking-tour-p1354013) (<http://visitbristol.co.uk/things-to-do/banksy-walking-tour-p1354013>), [Massive Attack](http://www.massiveattack.co.uk/) (<http://www.massiveattack.co.uk/>) and [Portishead](http://www.portishead.co.uk/) (<http://www.portishead.co.uk/>).

Its urban center contrasts with the surrounding [cider orchards](http://www.visitsomerset.co.uk/explore-somerset/food-and-drink/cider-producers) (<http://www.visitsomerset.co.uk/explore-somerset/food-and-drink/cider-producers>) of Somerset, where Bristol's [creamy dialect](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhgUeY1BEsk) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhgUeY1BEsk>) churns into pleasingly buttery tones.

Visit: [The Fleece](http://www.thefleece.co.uk/) (<http://www.thefleece.co.uk/>) (12 St Thomas St.; +44 0 117 945 0996), great venue hosting the city's next big musical names.

But: Sometimes insular small town vibe lacks London's expansive world city feel.

More information at Visitbristol.co.uk (<http://Visitbristol.co.uk>).

The new Paris: Marseille



Marseille ... hip (hop), great seafood and less stuck-up than Paris.

Where: Mediterranean melting pot on coast of France's cherished southern Provence region.

Why: Parisians are [less rude](http://edition.cnn.com/2013/06/21/travel/paris-tourist-charm-manual) (<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/06/21/travel/paris-tourist-charm-manual>) these days but still seem strangely annoyed by the fact that the whole world is in love with their city and is willing to splash big euros on tiny meals, tinier hotel rooms and appalling service.

Marseille, named [Europe's 2013 culture capital](#)

(<http://marseillecityofculture.eu/capital-of-culture.html>), is friendlier and less stuck up yet still lays claim to spawning [France's hip hop scene](http://www.iam.tm.fr/) (<http://www.iam.tm.fr/>) and some of its best [soccer](http://www.om.net/en/home/0/Accueil) (<http://www.om.net/en/home/0/Accueil>) and [seafood](http://www.passedat.fr/) (<http://www.passedat.fr/>).

It also has a Louvre-baiting new art museum called [MuCEM](http://www.mucem.org/) (<http://www.mucem.org/>), which bills itself as a "museum for Europe and the Mediterranean."

Visit: Architect Le Corbusier's [Unité d'Habitation](http://www.fondationlecorbusier.fr/corbuweb/morpheus.aspx?sysId=13&IrisObjectId=5234&sysLanguage=en-en&itemPos=58&itemCount=78&sysParentName=home&sysParentId=64) (<http://www.fondationlecorbusier.fr/corbuweb/morpheus.aspx?sysId=13&IrisObjectId=5234&sysLanguage=en-en&itemPos=58&itemCount=78&sysParentName=home&sysParentId=64>) (280 Boulevard Michelet; +33 04 91 16 7800), an uncompromising but revered vision of communal living.

But: High crime rates, exacerbated by recent drug wars, also rival Paris.

More information at [Marseille-Tourisme.com](http://www.marseille-tourisme.com/en/what-to-do/visit-marseille/) (<http://www.marseille-tourisme.com/en/what-to-do/visit-marseille/>).

The new Rome: Bologna



I scream, you scream, we all scream for Bologna -- gelato city par excellence (or whatever the Italian is).

Where: Northern Italian home of famous pasta dish (note: It's called ragu, not bolognese).

Why: Rome has been around for 2,500 years, so it's long overdue a rest, particularly with the price of gelato [hitting the \\$85 mark](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/italy/10043366/Rome-mayor-apologises-to-British-tourists-charged-54-for-four-ice-creams.html) (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/italy/10043366/Rome-mayor-apologises-to-British-tourists-charged-54-for-four-ice-creams.html>).

Unless you're hellbent on following in the [Vespa fumes](http://www.myvespa.it/it/home/) (<http://www.myvespa.it/it/home/>) of Audrey Hepburn, Bologna should tick all the Roman holiday boxes. There's [great cuisine](http://edition.cnn.com/2012/11/05/travel/bologna-italy-food-marathon/) (<http://edition.cnn.com/2012/11/05/travel/bologna-italy-food-marathon/>), cherished [ancient architecture](http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5010/) (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5010/>) and reasonably priced [gelato](http://www.stefino.it/) (<http://www.stefino.it/>).

The world's oldest university town also has a strong underground music scene -- Bologna hosted the influential but now defunct "Homesleep" label, which published successful Italian indie acts such as [Julie's Haircut](http://www.julieshaircut.com/) (<http://www.julieshaircut.com/>).

Visit: [The Gelato Museum](http://gelatomuseum.com/en/) (<http://gelatomuseum.com/en/>) (*Via Emilia, 45, Bologna; +39 51 650 5306*). It can't be licked. OK, it can.

But: Student-seeking dope dealers make parts of the city intimidating at night.

More information at [BolognaWelcome.com](http://www.bolognawelcome.com/en/) (<http://www.bolognawelcome.com/en/>).

The new Berlin: Dresden



You can watch a VW being put together at The Transparent Factory.

Where? Eastern German city that repeatedly refuses to flinch in the face of brutal history.

Why? While Berlin scenesters have started to overcook their communist legacy, pushing up prices in once-accessible Kreuzberg, Dresden's boho hangouts in the lively and eclectic [Neustadt](http://www.dresden.de/dig/en/sightseeing/sehenswuerdigkeiten/dresdner_neustadt.php) (http://www.dresden.de/dig/en/sightseeing/sehenswuerdigkeiten/dresdner_neustadt.php) district have yet to be sucked

into the black hole of yuppiedom.

There are all the cultural trappings, including [an esteemed music festival \(http://www.musikfestspiele.com/cms/en/\)](http://www.musikfestspiele.com/cms/en/), of a classic European baroque city, albeit one recreated from the rubble of World War II.

Visit: The [Transparent Factory \(http://www.glaesernemanufaktur.de/en/\)](http://www.glaesernemanufaktur.de/en/) (Lennestrasse 1; +49 351 420 4411): a striking modern structure that lays Volkswagen's production process bare.

But: Dresden's efforts to cover its battle scars have left it lacking Berlin's grittier appeal.

More information at [Dresden.de \(http://www.dresden.de/dig/en/service/touristinfo.php\)](http://www.dresden.de/dig/en/service/touristinfo.php).

The new Barcelona: Bilbao



Pintos ... like tapas but possibly tastier.

Where? Spanish port on north Atlantic coast, not to be confused with a [hairy-toed Hobbit \(http://talkiengateway.net/wiki/Bilbo_Baggins\)](http://talkiengateway.net/wiki/Bilbo_Baggins).

Why? Petty annoyances and rip-offs are too often the price paid to enjoy Barcelona's rich culture and nightlife.

Less so in Bilbao, which has spent the past two decades reinventing itself from decaying industrial center to tourist playground, replete with shining [Guggenheim \(http://www.guggenheim.org/bilbao\)](http://www.guggenheim.org/bilbao) outpost, stylish new [metro system \(http://www.metrobilbao.net/\)](http://www.metrobilbao.net/) and a scrubbed-up old city center.

The tapas, known here as [pintos \(http://www.bilbaointernational.com/en/category/pintos/\)](http://www.bilbaointernational.com/en/category/pintos/), are better, too.

Visit: [The Museo de Bellas Artes \(http://www.museobilbao.com/in/\)](http://www.museobilbao.com/in/) (Museo Plaza 2; +34 944 396 060): less fun to look at than the city's Guggenheim, but arguably better inside.

But: Bilbao may have polished its heart, but its outer industrial layers are still unappealingly rusty.

More information at [VisitBilbao.info \(http://www.visitbilbao.info/\)](http://www.visitbilbao.info/).

The new Amsterdam: Utrecht



Yes, we've got canals ... or at least one. Boaters crowd in during Utrecht's "Inflatable Boat Mission" festival this year.

Where? Charming university town enviably sited at the heart of Dutch transport networks.

Why? Ignore the fact that there has already been a New Amsterdam -- the city we now know as New York.

If you want canals, [Gothic architecture](http://www.visit-utrecht.com/en/event/st-willibrord-church) (<http://www.visit-utrecht.com/en/event/st-willibrord-church>) and [waxy cheeses](http://zuivelland.nl) (<http://zuivelland.nl>) without having to dodge British bachelor parties yakking regurgitated Heineken onto your souvenir clogs, Utrecht beats the old Amsterdam hands-down.

Visit: [The Inkpot](http://www.visit-utrecht.com/en/event/inkpot) (<http://www.visit-utrecht.com/en/event/inkpot>) (*Moreelsepark 3*): a railway HQ that's the Netherlands' largest brick-built building. And it has a flying saucer parked on the roof. Who needs drugs?

But: [The Miffy](http://www.holland.com/us/tourism/cities-in-holland/utrecht-1/museums-in-utrecht-2/miffy-at-the-dick-bruna-house.htm) (<http://www.holland.com/us/tourism/cities-in-holland/utrecht-1/museums-in-utrecht-2/miffy-at-the-dick-bruna-house.htm>) exhibition is cute, but hardly compares to the revamped [Rijksmuseum](https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en) (<https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en>).

More information at [Holland.com](http://www.holland.com/uk/tourism/cities-in-holland/visit-utrecht.htm) (<http://www.holland.com/uk/tourism/cities-in-holland/visit-utrecht.htm>).

The new Athens: Heraklion



Ancient Greece (at the millennia-old Knossos) clashes nicely with beaches at Heraklion.

Where? Ancient Crete capital and former safe haven from Aegean pirates.

Why? Hot, grubby and congested Athens has the [Acropolis](http://www.acropolisofathens.gr/aoa/#sthash.9LXfctAd.dpbs) (<http://www.acropolisofathens.gr/aoa/#sthash.9LXfctAd.dpbs>) but little else to keep visitors from catching the first ferry out of [Piraeus](http://www.piraeus-greece.org/) (<http://www.piraeus-greece.org/>).

Heraklion combines its history -- the millennia-old [palace of Knossos](http://www.interkriti.org/crete/iraklion/knossos.html) (<http://www.interkriti.org/crete/iraklion/knossos.html>) -- with decent

[beaches](http://www.cycladia.com/best-beaches-greece/heraklion) (<http://www.cycladia.com/best-beaches-greece/heraklion>) and a cheap but lively nightlife and cultural scene.

Visit: [Lychnostatis](http://www.lychnostatis.gr/) (<http://www.lychnostatis.gr/>) (*Limenas Chersonisou, Thesi Plaka; +30 289 702 3660*): not a disease but an outdoor folk museum that's an antidote to Greece's usual stuffy galleries.

But: Heraklion can be hotter, grubbier and more congested than Athens at times.

More information at [VisitGreece.gr](http://www.visitgreece.gr/en/main_cities/heraklion) (http://www.visitgreece.gr/en/main_cities/heraklion).

The new Prague: Brno



Brno ... sounds like a shiver but actually quite lively, like this participant from a historical fashion show in the city.

Where? Bizarrely overlooked central Czech city riddled with architectural gems.

Why? Prague has become such a Gothic playground for moviemakers and beer-swilling

backpacker parties that it's a wonder some of the focus hasn't spilled over into equally delightful but trickier to say Brno (it is pronounced bur-noh).

Not only is Brno blessed with [citadels](http://www.spilberk.cz/?lang=en) (<http://www.spilberk.cz/?lang=en>) and [cathedrals](http://www.katedrala-petrov.cz/) (<http://www.katedrala-petrov.cz/>), to rival the Czech capital, it has a great tradition of [modernist architecture](http://www.bam.brno.cz/en/) (<http://www.bam.brno.cz/en/>). Plus it's generally cheaper, and hosts an incendiary [international fireworks competition](http://www.ignisbrunensis.cz/?setLanguage=eng) (<http://www.ignisbrunensis.cz/?setLanguage=eng>).

Visit: [St James Church Ossuary](http://www.ticbrno.cz/en/podzemni/kostnice-u-sv-jakuba) (<http://www.ticbrno.cz/en/podzemni/kostnice-u-sv-jakuba>) (*Jakubske namesti* 602; +42 054 221 2039): macabre underground bone collection.

But: Brno's folksy provinciality is often compared unfavorably to livelier Prague.

More information at [CzechTourism.com](http://www.czechtourism.com/tourists/search/?searchtext=brno&searchmode=anyword) (<http://www.czechtourism.com/tourists/search/?searchtext=brno&searchmode=anyword>).

The new Krakow: Wroclaw



Love-locks ... interlinked padlocks signify lovers' fidelity on a Wroclaw bridge.

Where? Country-hopping archipelago city now firmly ensconced in western Poland.

Why? With Krakow getting as crowded as Prague, it makes sense to turn to another tricky to say (it's pronounced vrot-swov) and largely ignored alternative.

Wroclaw centers on a sweeping market square lined with cafes and bars where you might find yourself the only tourist.

There's an attractive litany of [parks](http://www.wroclaw.pl/park_szczytnicki_z_ogrodem_japonskim.dhtml) (http://www.wroclaw.pl/park_szczytnicki_z_ogrodem_japonskim.dhtml), [museums](http://www.en.muzeum.miejskie.wroclaw.pl/) (<http://www.en.muzeum.miejskie.wroclaw.pl/>) and [shops](http://www.visit-wroclaw.eu/where_to_shop_list.html) (http://www.visit-wroclaw.eu/where_to_shop_list.html), but the square is where it's at, especially at night.

Visit: Wroclaw town hall (*Rynek Place*; +487 1347 1693): a vast complex 250 years in the making that has its own [brewery](http://www.spiz.pl/) (<http://www.spiz.pl/>).

But: Industrial zones beyond the center can detract from its overall beauty.

More information at [Visit-Wroclaw.eu](http://www.visit-wroclaw.eu/) (<http://www.visit-wroclaw.eu/>).

The new Brussels: Ostend



Ostend's faded seaside glamor is oddly uplifting.

Where: Brooding Belgian port and beach resort overlooking North Sea

Why: Admittedly there isn't a pressing need for an old Brussels let alone a new one, but Ostend makes a strong case.

Spared the EU bureaucrats that throng the Belgian capital and the saccharine feel of Bruges's medieval theme park, Ostend is cheaper but still has good [brasseries](http://www.twaterhuis.be/) and [bars](http://www.hotelmarion.be/?lang=en).

Off-season its faded seaside glamor is gloomy but oddly restorative -- as soul legend Marvin Gaye found during an unlikely early 1980s sojourn.

Visit: The [Marvin Gaye midnight lover tour](http://www.visitoostende.be/en/do/marvin-gaye-midnight-love-tour/100#.UyYCA22wW8U) (Tourist office, Monacoplein 2; +32 5970 1199).

But: Ostend doesn't enjoy Brussels' swish [Eurostar](http://www.eurostar.com/) rail escapes to London and Paris.

More information at [VisitOstend.be](http://www.visitoostende.be/en).



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