



Café Culture

A visit to one of these five international locales isn't complete without an exploration of its neighborhood cafés and coffee rituals.

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Café in Paris set amongst historical architecture



It's impossible to overstate coffee's impact. The mighty bean and resulting liquid have influenced global commerce and daily life since farmers first began cultivating the crop centuries ago in Africa and the Arabian peninsula. Coffee has since spread to all corners of the world, establishing itself as a ubiquitous drink in homes and cafés. But just like we've seen with wine or whiskey, coffee walks a fine line between commoditization and personalization — sure it's everywhere, but its availability and appeal have allowed countries, cultures and individuals to put their own unique stamps on this beloved beverage and the spaces that serve it.

Some cafés act as utility-first purveyors of food and drinks, while others play an outsized role in a destination's social fabric, providing locals and visitors with gathering spaces to meet, talk and relax. These five café-obsessed cities should be on every coffee lover's list.

PHOTO, OPPOSITE PAGE: MMX; FRAN THE NOW TIME



Graben Street in Vienna



Apfelstrudel

Since the 17th century, cafés in Vienna have served as gathering points for locals, first drawing intellectuals, artists, musicians and politicians before eventually attracting a broader clientele encompassing people from all walks of life.

Vienna

Vienna's café culture is an integral part of the city's identity — so much so that in 2011, UNESCO added Vienna's cafés to its national inventory of intangible cultural heritage. Since the 17th century, cafés here have served as gathering points for locals, first drawing intellectuals, artists, musicians and politicians before eventually attracting a broader clientele encompassing people from all walks of life. More than just a place to sip coffee, cafés were where the Viennese met to discuss the major events of the day. Centuries later, they remain popular bases for locals and tourists to socialize and relax.

One iconic go-to is **Café Central**. Located in the heart of Vienna and open since 1876, it's known as much for its elegant architecture and ornate interiors as for its coffee and pastries. At **Café Sacher**, which also opened in 1876, you can indulge in a *sachertorte*, the famed Viennese chocolate cake, or tuck into an *apfelstrudel* (apple strudel) with your coffee. Modern cafés abound in Vienna, but it's historic establishments like these that offer the greatest sensory rewards.

PHOTO, OPPOSITE PAGE: COURTESY OF 96B CAFÉ & ROASTERY (FAR RIGHT)

Ho Chi Minh City

Vietnam is the world's second largest coffee producer after Brazil, but its relationship with coffee isn't export-only, as cafés have proliferated across the country. That's especially evident in Ho Chi Minh City (also called Saigon), which has a booming café scene. Options include French-influenced cafés and modern shops with sleek espresso machines and latte-laced menus.

Some of the best experiences can be had at the numerous no-frills, garage-like shops throughout the city. Most rely on a *phin* — the traditional device used to brew and filter Vietnamese coffee — and sweeten the robusta bean brews with condensed milk. Start at **Hummingbird Café & Roastery**. Located in a small District 3 alley, it approaches coffee with a contemporary sensibility, turning single-origin beans into lattes, piccolos, Americanos and more. **96B Café & Roastery** in District 1 is part café, part instruction lab. Try one of their signature drinks, like the salted cream latte or a cold brew spiked with pineapple and mint, then join one of its workshops. Sensory training classes educate attendees on how to taste and evaluate coffee like a pro, while other hands-on workshops teach proper *phin* use and how to make a traditional egg coffee with whipped egg yolks, condensed milk and sugar.



Vietnamese phin



96B Café & Roastery



Fresh croissants and baked goods on display

Paris

Parisian café culture is easy to spot, with bistros and coffee shops spilling out onto the streets at seemingly every corner. These are vital social hubs where locals and tourists chat with friends or simply pass the time and watch the world go by; it's common for patio chairs to face the street, giving patrons a better view of the action. Grab-and-go coffee shops exist, but in Paris, stopping for an espresso and a croissant is more about savoring the moment. No one else is rushed, including your server, so feel free to sit and stay awhile.

The options are endless in Paris, and some of the best experiences come from unplanned stops at the nearest street-side café. But when you require a really good cup of coffee, you can't go wrong at **Ten Belles**. Now with multiple locations across the city, it's a reliable favorite for house-roasted beans and fresh-baked sourdough and pastries. At **Coutume Café**, a pioneer of Paris' third-wave coffee – a movement elevating coffee to a specialty product like wine or craft beer – skilled baristas make espresso shots and slow-extraction filtered coffees. Stop into **Le Peloton Café** for coffee and a dose of cycling culture, or check out 11th arrondissement hot spot **Passager**, a sunny respite offering caffeine, egg dishes and other sweet and savory bites.



Parisian sidewalk café



Barista in a Melbourne café

Melbourne

Melbourne is widely regarded as the coffee capital of Australia – some call it the coffee capital of the world – and for good reason. The city's love affair with coffee is relatively recent, having picked up steam in the mid-20th century when Italian and Greek immigrants brought their traditions and espresso machines to the city. It has been riding the coffee wave ever since, and today, Melbourne is teeming with coffee shops. Chains have a presence, but the city is particularly known for its independent shops and local roasters. Most offer a variety of beans, and skilled baristas treat coffee with care, serving pour-overs, flat whites, cappuccinos and other drinks with precision.

Cafés are an integral part of Melbourne's social scene, providing comfortable places for people to meet friends, work remotely or stop for a quick caffeine fix before going into the office or out for the evening. **Pellegrini's Espresso Bar**, a family-run icon dating back to 1954, is a popular stop on any self-guided café tour. More modern operations can be found at **Seven Seeds**, a Melbourne University district micro-roaster known for its variety of single-origin beans and blends, and **Patricia Coffee Brewers**, a centrally located favorite serving house espresso blends and filter coffees in a bustling, standing-room-only space.

FOR MELBOURNE VOYAGE INSPIRATION, SEE PAGES 68-75.

Buenos Aires

Cafés comprise the beating heart of Buenos Aires. More than 70 of the city's most historic cafés, dubbed *bares notables*, are recognized by the government for their cultural importance as community anchors and meeting places for prominent writers, artists, musicians and politicians. These historic cafés – some dating back more than a century—are like time capsules brimming with period decor and old-world grandeur. Favorites include **Café Margot** and **La Flor de Barracas**, both serving good coffee, aperitivos and snacks.

Modern coffee shops also abound, and Buenos Aires' acceptance of third-wave coffee is evident in places like **Full City Coffee House** in the Palermo Soho neighborhood. The coffee house and roastery sells filtered coffees, espressos and lattes alongside pastries and desserts. **Lattente** is another go-to pick; with several locations across the city, it offers multiple opportunities to stop in and linger over high-quality coffees created with a variety of brewing methods. Pro tip: When you're in Buenos Aires and want a break from coffee, follow the locals' lead and sip on mate, a popular tea-like drink made from the leaves of the yerba *mate* plant that's enjoyed throughout Argentina.



Cup of mate

FOR BUENOS AIRES VOYAGE INSPIRATION, SEE PAGES 79-83.

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