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January 13, 2014 by [Steve Adams](#)

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Coastal Nicaragua. @hapulcu via [Compfight cc](#)

Nicaragua heads a list of the hottest "go now" destinations for savvy, sophisticated travellers, unveiled by exclusive agent and travel community [Hideaways.com](#).

The selections provide a fascinating insight into popular markets for 2014, and while they are bound to cause debate, there's no doubting the list of hot spots certainly offer unique and memorable travel experiences, according to Mike Thiel, founder and president of US-based Hideaways International Inc.

"We consulted our travel crystal ball to find places on the verge of discovery, or prime for rediscovery, in 2014," he said.

"Our Top 12 Hottest Travel Spots for 2014 are either well-kept secrets or enjoying a renaissance of sorts. And each celebrates those special things, like unspoiled beauty, that set them apart from every other place."

Thiel also offered a little insight into why each destination made the list:

- 1. Nicaragua:** Safe and welcoming, this Central American country offers delights like hundreds of small tropical islets with sandy cove beaches, rolling hills with cloud forests, colonial towns with churches and museums, and new and noteworthy accommodation.
- 2. Brazil:** The largest country in South America, Brazil is vast and varied, boasting destinations like historic Salvador, Manaus (the gateway to the Amazon), Buzios (Brazil's version of the Cote d'Azur), and fiery Rio de Janeiro.
- 3. Ecuador:** The second-smallest country in South America, Ecuador has massive appeal, both as an affordable destination and as a paradise for nature lovers (think Amazonian rainforest, snow-capped Andes, Galapagos Islands), with plenty of restaurants, historic sites, and accommodation options.
- 4. Mexico City:** Mexico's capital city will delight with its fascinating architecture, vast collection of museums, exceptional restaurants, and more than 300 neighborhoods (or colonias). Combine a stay here with the back-to-nature attractions of up-and-coming Riviera Nayarit on the Pacific Coast, for a combo city and seaside escape.
- 5. Canouan Island:** This year, the Caribbean island of Canouan begins improvement projects costing more than \$11 million, including a new ring road, commercial jetty, and community wharf. These will improve the sleepy island's infrastructure, but they'll also attract more travellers, so visit soon!
- 6. South Korea:** Unlike its East Asian neighbor to the north, South Korea is quite hospitable, offering a fascinating blend of old-world tradition and high-tech futurism. In addition, 'The Korean Wave', or hallyu, has popularized South Korea's music, culture, and food – experience it all at the source.
- 7. Russia:** As the host of the 2014 Winter Olympics, all eyes are on Russia. Despite its questionably 'open' arms, this Eastern European/North Asian country continues to fascinate travellers, making it ideal for land-based vacations and river cruising.
- 8. South Africa:** The world glimpsed the heart of South Africa's people after the recent death of President Nelson Mandela. Experience this warmth for yourself, as well as the country's diversity: safaris to whale-watching, fine dining to wine tastings, and Cape Town city to natural wonders like Victoria Falls.
- 9. Norway:** Riding a wave of popularity inspired by Disney's animated film *Frozen*, this Scandinavian country shares an inviting and unique Viking heritage – an enchanting way to experience Norway is with a cruise along its coast, especially during the 'Northern Lights' of winter trip.
- 10. Croatia:** This Eastern European country offers modern delights like sport fishing and golfing as well as authentic glimpses of the past, especially along Croatia's famed Dalmatian Coast. Choose from a plethora of private villa rentals and live like a local. The nearby and formerly isolated country of Albania provides something rare in this day and age – a glimpse into an unspoiled culture that is only now beginning to taste the fruits of tourism.
- 11. Scotland:** In 2014, Scotland is hosting the Year of the Homecoming, the Ryder Cup, and the 2014 Commonwealth Games, while still offering experiences like world-class golf. In this country, rent a cottage, stay in a country home, or get pampered at a luxury retreat like The Balmoral Hotel in Edinburgh.
- 12. Vancouver:** This vibrant city on Canada's west coast is easy to get around and get to know. Plus, Vancouver has a long list of great things to do, from outdoor recreation to gambling.

"Let's face it, a 'hot' destination is only hot if you discover it before the crowds," added Thiel. "And each one of our hottest spots offers a special something worth experiencing this year. My best advice? Go now, before the rest of the world discovers these little secrets!"

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