

16 Perfect Places to Ring in 2016



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Start the new year off right in these vibrant destinations.

Each year, elaborate fireworks, colorful street parades, impressive cultural traditions and all-night parties inspire travelers to begin the new year in exciting destinations across the globe. Chances are, if you're not considering battling the crowds to catch sight of the glimmering ball drop in Times Square, you're toying with the idea of ringing in the new year with a riotous party in [Rio de Janeiro](#) or a dazzling light display in Sydney. For a night to remember, resolve to start 2016 in one of these 16 must-visit destinations around the world.

Atlanta

If you're yearning for a great night out without the frigid temperatures of Chicago or New York, consider making a break to Atlanta. In previous years an 800-pound peach has descended upon revelers at Underground [Atlanta](#), rivaling the grand ball drop event of the Big Apple. Atlanta has seen a recent surge in popularity, with a 38 percent increase in flights searched compared to last year, making it the sixth most popular destination on Kayak's trending New Year's Eve Destination list. Greet the New Year in style at the city's Masquerade Ball or join other party people at the Buckhead NYE Block Party, or if you're clamoring for stunning light shows, venture to Callaway Gardens' Fantasy In Lights display.

The Bahamas

Unlike many popular destinations where the prime partying leads up to a midnight countdown, in the Bahamas, the main event is on New Year's Day. For a festive celebration, check out the lively performers, ornate costumes and local musicians in Nassau or Grand Bahama Island. "In the Bahamas, tourists should get in on traditional Junkanoo street parades -- think Carnival style with wild costumes, bands that lead to laid-back beach parties and fireworks displays," says Colleen Clark, managing editor of [Jetsetter.com](#).

The Big Island, Hawaii

For travelers looking for a way to ring in 2016 that's authentic, new and different, Hawaii's big island offers an idyllic spot to swap heavy tourist crowds for traditional hula skirts and breathtaking natural wonders in a laid-back environment. And if you want to dance and party as the clock strikes midnight, a variety of high-end hotels offer special packages and celebrations. For instance, Mauna Lani Bay Hotel and Bungalows is offering special prix-fixe dining menus paired with prime oceanfront fireworks viewing areas (and after parties).

Chicago

The Windy City may promise bone-chilling temperatures for New Year's Eve, but it also affords visitors with unique traditions, live concerts and all-night parties. "This year, Chicago is launching a major new tradition dubbed Chi-Town Rising, a giant outdoor party along the river with a fireworks display and a giant star that will rise into the sky after midnight," Clark says. Visitors can enjoy live performances, a live countdown broadcast on television, themed parties for the 21-plus crowd and family-friendly festivities at the nearby Millennium Park ice skating rink, which offers free skate rentals and a countdown for kids at 6 p.m. Best of all, you can clinch affordable flights from top hubs across the country and snag hotels at affordable rates, Clark adds.

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

If you want to celebrate the New Year in a far-flung locale, consider Dubai, which clocked in at No. 1 on Kayak's list. The analysis shows the flight searches that have seen the greatest uptick in search volume from the previous period among U.S and Canadian users, and reveals that Dubai's search volume spiked by 70 percent compared to 2014. "It's the city that's known for being over the top," says David Solomito, North America brand director for Kayak. And you can expect Dubai to put on quite a dazzling show. Last year, Dubai claimed the Guinness Book of Records' biggest display, and this year, you can expect nothing short of spectacular as the fireworks shoot above the Burj Khalifa Tower. And the city, which is characterized by luxury and warm weather is growing rapidly, Solomito says, pointing to its larger-than-life attractions.

Edinburgh, Scotland

In terms of unique New Year's Eve cultural traditions across Europe, it's hard to top Edinburgh, which puts on an annual four-day Hogmanay or "last day of the year" festival chock-full of concerts, singing and partying. The New Year's celebration begins on Dec. 30 "with a torchlight procession through the city (really wild folks swing fireballs around their heads) and crescendos into a massive outdoor Celtic party with a 4.5 ton fireworks display over Edinburgh Castle," Clark explains. To stay in the heart of the action on New Year's Eve, join the crowds belting out "Auld Lang Sang" on Princes Street or head to Carlton Hill, where you can enjoy fantastic views of the fireworks.

Key West, Florida

For a wild New Year's celebration like no other, consider visiting Key West. Instead of a glimmering ball drop, the fun-loving party town offers imaginative parodies of the celebration, and not one, but three separate televised events. For a riotous affair, you can catch sight of a "drag queen rid[ing] a giant red shoe down onto rowdy Duval Street to ring in the new year," Clark says. Other unconventional options for those looking to break away from conventional or cold-weather traditions include watching a small conch shell lower from Sloppy Joe's Bar or witnessing a pirate wench descend from a ship docked in the Historic Key West Seaport. And you can expect the party scene to continue after midnight on festive Duval Street, which hosts an abundance of nightclubs and thousands of revelers each year.

Las Vegas


For New Year's Eve, [Las Vegas](#)' iconic Strip transitions into a pedestrian-only block party filled with live bands and spectacular fireworks. More than 300,000 revelers are expected to flock to Sin City for the festivities. Thrill-seekers can soak in the views on the city's 550-foot observation wheel (ticket prices start at \$250 per person) while high-rollers test Lady Luck inside the city's casinos. And you can expect a mind-numbing number of VIP parties, shows, concerts and risqué bashes across the city, from Bruno Mars at The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas to Rhumbash 2016 at The Mirage, which boasts a VIP patio viewing area for catching the epic fireworks display.

Los Angeles

Whether you want an over-the-top rooftop celebration or a low-key party this New Year's Eve, you can find it in Los Angeles. "Downtown Los Angeles has gone through a bit of a metamorphosis in the last couple of years," says Gabe Saglie, senior editor at Travelzoo, pointing out that with that, the area has become an epicenter for nightlife. If your heart is set on a New Year's Eve fete with plenty of glitz and glamour, step back in time at a 1920's Prohibition era-inspired soiree at Union Station, where jazz, free-flowing Champagne and 1920s-themed costumes are aplenty (prices start at \$150). Or, if you're in search of family entertainment, Saglie recommends planning a trip to Grand Park in Los Angeles, which will feature live music, a photo booth, 3-D videos and projection screens.

New York City

While standing among the millions in [Times Square](#) might seem daunting, experiencing the Big Apple's big-city buzz and world-class entertainment (not to mention the crystal-studded, 11,875-pound ball that lowers upon One Times Square) is an epic event. To celebrate in high fashion, Clark suggests staying at The Knickerbocker hotel to catch the impressive spectacle and outstanding confetti display from a convenient perch above Times Square. "Their rooftop St. Cloud bar is a mere 150 feet from the ball," she says.



Reykjavik, Iceland

For a nontraditional New Year's Eve bash, consider making the pilgrimage to Reykjavik. "Throughout the streets are bonfires to warm up partiers, and you can see nature's natural fireworks (the northern lights)," Clark describes. Stunning fireworks streak the sky across different areas of the city, thanks to lax fireworks laws. (Optimal views can be found at Perlan, or the Pearl, a futuristic complex comprised of steel and glass with an outdoor observation platform filled with telescopes and dramatic city views). After midnight, you and fellow partiers can make your way to festive pubs and clubs across town, or if you're feeling adventurous, head to the city's famous thermal springs, or refuel with a traditional pylsur (hot dog). Best of all, you can plan an exotic getaway without a steep price tag, Clark explains. "With increased competition thanks to new discount airline WOW, there's increased competition on flights to Reykjavik, which means more affordable fares for travelers."

Rio de Janeiro

Rio de Janeiro knows how to throw a memorable New Year's Eve bash. "More than two million people, all dressed in white, crowd Copacabana's beach party known as Réveillon," Clark says. And as part of the tradition, participants throw flowers into the ocean for good luck, she adds. The party commences at 8 p.m. with live beachfront music and entertainment, and when the clock strikes midnight, bright fireworks illuminate the city's dramatic skyline for a 15- to 20-minute spectacle. After the show, there are a bevy of clubs and bars lining the beach where soothing samba rhythms carry on through the wee hours.

South Lake Tahoe, California

In terms of unexpected, out-of-the-ordinary places to ring in the new year, Clark points to South Lake Tahoe as a prime choice. The party-centric ski haven "hosts the SnowGlobe Music Festival, in addition to ice-sculpting performances, fire dancers, fireworks and a ski gondola ball drop," she says. For more thrills, you can make your way to one of the area's casino clubs. Or if you'd prefer a more low-key celebration, you can catch the colorful fireworks and ball drop festivities on the earlier side at 9 p.m. on Dec. 31 and turn in for the evening to get a head start on 2016 with an unforgettable New Year's Day on the slopes.

Sydney

When it comes to dazzling fireworks displays, Sydney outshines its peers. "One of the most spectacular fireworks displays is in Sydney Harbour, where 60 illuminated ships perform choreographed sails through the harbor and there's an over-the-top pyrotechnic display set off from seven barges, the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the four sails of the Sydney Opera House," Clark explains. Another major draw is the time difference, she says. You can be among the first to toast to the new year, as Sydney celebrates the new year 16 hours ahead of New York City, she adds. And thanks to the weather in the Southern Hemisphere, audiophiles can take advantage of music festivals across the country.

Tokyo

For an outside-the-box New Year's Eve celebration, head to [Tokyo](#) and take part in the city's annual "hatsumode" tradition. To kick off the new year, revelers flock to the city's ornate temples and the world-renowned Meiji Shrine to listen to the bells ring an impressive 108 times before the clock strikes midnight, a Buddhist ritual to mark and absolve the 108 temptations of humankind before the next year. Just brace yourself for crowds. A reported 3 million revelers have visited the Meiji Shrine from Dec. 31 to Jan. 3 in previous years. Tokyo claims the No. 5 spot on Kayak's list with a 40 percent increase in flight search volume year over year.

Vancouver, British Columbia

If you want to ring in 2016 somewhere new but you're on a tight budget, Vancouver is a compelling option. The dollar is strong against the Canadian dollar, Saglie says. Plus, Vancouver offers a "pedestrian-friendly, culturally rich and nightlife-driven experience" he says, pointing out that it's also an easily accessible place for New Year's Eve revelers on the West Coast. It's an especially attractive choice if you're traveling with kids in tow, thanks to the free kid-friendly spectacle in downtown Vancouver that includes live music and a countdown at 9 p.m. for early revelers at Mount Seymour and a midnight extravaganza a few hours later. Families can cozy up over s'mores and cider, and night owls can admire the breathtaking display over Coal Harbour.