

TRAVEL

It starts with a stopover

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AAP

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Tick off another destination on your bucket list with a stopover en route to Europe, writes Caroline Berdon.

It's boom time for travellers planning their slice of the 2017 European summer, and with an injection of heat into the industry, long-haul airlines are ramping up their offerings.

Stopovers are most certainly a sweetener, and many Kiwi travellers relish a touchdown mid-flight that allows them to shop, explore and taste regional delights.

There's plenty to consider when choosing a stopover destination. A city that's easy to access from the airport with plenty to see and do in a relatively small area is ideal.

We look at the most popular stopovers and some new ideas on the way to Europe to see how they match up.

DUBAI

This Middle Eastern hub is top of the list when it comes to shopping and luxury. But visitors can also indulge in more traditional experiences, including desert safaris, dhow cruises and open-air jewellery and spice markets. If you can time your stopover for the end of the working week check out Dubai's infamous Friday brunches, which are served across hotels in the city and involve an array of music, food and drinks. The airport is well connected to the city by the Dubai Metro, which takes just a few minutes.

GUANGZHOU

The hub of China Southern Airlines, the airline has compiled stopover packages including Cantonese food and local sights. Food is the big drawcard - the place is considered the birthplace of dim sum - but visitors may simply enjoy the chance to soak up this dynamic metropolis with its busy streets and endless shopping malls. Pack your energy. Baiyun International Airport is less than 30km from the city centre, meaning you should get there within the hour by bus or taxi.

SINGAPORE

Singapore is Asia for beginners, so easy to dive into for those wary of culture shocks. In fact, the island nation's sterility can be a shock in itself. There is plenty to see and do in a day - from the Marina Bay Sands SkyPark and Singapore Flyer, which both offer breathtaking views of the city's skyline, to Singapore's gastronomic hubs of Chinatown and Little India. The food in the hawker centres is as incredible as the city's gourmet restaurants - for fantastic authentic eating head for Smith St, in the heart of Chinatown. Don't forget to sip a Singapore sling in colonial-style luxury at Raffles. The MRT offers easy rail access from the airport to the city, and most cabbies speak good English.

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For authentic food head to Smith St, in the heart of Singapore's Chinatown. Photo / Getty Images

KUALA LUMPUR

Kuala Lumpur's airport is about an hour from the city centre but once you're there, most of the major sights, including the Batu Caves, Merdeka Square, Petronas Twin Towers and Jalan Alor food market can easily be ticked off in a day.

HONG KONG

Hong Kong's Airport Express takes you to Kowloon in less than 30 minutes. Attractions are centralised; you can visit Hong Kong Island, including Victoria Peak, the Avenue of Stars and the Ladies' Market, or take the Star Ferry or watch the Symphony of Lights in one day. The high level of English spoken also makes things easy.

TOKYO

Tokyo is huge, loud, fast-paced and spread out, which can make it quite daunting, particularly if you only have a day or two. Narita Airport is a fair distance from the city - up to 90 minutes by "Friendly Airport Limousine" - but this crazy Japanese city certainly seems to draw in fans. Perhaps it's the shopping in the Ginza district, combined with Senso-ji temple and Ueno Park and Zoo. It also boasts a number of world-class museums.

SEOUL

Incheon Airport is up to 90 minutes to the city, by bus and train. The city is a sprawling metropolis, which can make it hard to tackle in a day, but it does offer a fascinating mix of hyper-modern pop culture and Buddhist traditions. There are temples, palaces and street

markets, alongside the futuristic Dongdaemun Design Plaza, a convention hall with curving architecture and a rooftop park.

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