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# Chasing Waterfalls

By Samantha Myers

**The roaring sound is both peaceful and intimidating. The magnitude of their formations is majestic. Their strength is awe-inspiring.**

**Waterfalls captivate us. But the experience loses something when you are in a throng of tourists. Here, top travel experts describe how to best marvel at some of the world's best falls.**

## **Iguazu Falls, Brazil & Argentina**

A travel destination for more than 1 million people annually, Iguazu Falls is a cascade that fringes two countries and begs to be experienced from both sides. “The falls are amazing in their width,” says Cari Gray from Gray & Co., a premier tour operator for discerning travelers. “They are 2.7 kilometers wide and twist and turn along the border of Brazil and Argentina into 275 different waterfalls that

are seen from different angles on catwalks from both sides. Simply amazing — that’s twice as tall as Niagara and three times as wide.”

“This is an incredible place to visit year-round,” says Chris Brunning, senior trip planner for Brown + Hudson, a bespoke travel company promising clients a unique and personal travel experience. “The jungle surrounding the falls often gets overlooked but is, in fact, extremely biodiverse.” Brunning and Gray laud the flora and especially fauna around the falls — howler



On the border of Brazil and Argentina, Iguazu Falls is almost twice as tall as Niagara Falls, and three times as wide.

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monkeys, caiman, macaws, coati, among other exotics.

The two are excited for Awasi Iguazu, a luxury jungle lodge opening there at the end of the year. “Traditionally, the imposing Belmond Hotel das Cataratas has enjoyed the reputation as the place to stay at the falls, largely due to its perfect location on the Brazilian side,” says Brunning. “Awasi Iguazu will be opening an intimate lodge up the river on the Argentine side — guests will enjoy dedicated 4x4 vehicles to help unlock the potential of this area and raise the standard significantly.”

### **Kaieteur Falls, Guyana**

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Unlike waterfalls such as Iguazu and Niagara, which are steadily frequented with tourists, Kaieteur Falls offers a rustic and isolated destination for a true adventurer. “This is an enormous part of the appeal — there is slim to no development,” says Gray.

Embedded in virtually pristine Amazon rainforest, the easiest way to get to the falls is by means of an hour-long flight from Georgetown — Guyana’s largest city. And you can expect there are basically no hotels within miles of the falls, either a major plus or downside depending on your inclination. It’s a trek to visit, but the vision of the falls is worth it.

Although difficult to assess waterfall formations, Kaieteur Falls is often recognized as the tallest single-drop waterfall, at 741 feet. “You can just imagine the happy wildlife in there — jaguars, anacondas, giant river otters, crazy amounts of birds, including the rare,” says Gray of the rainforest surrounding the secluded spectacle.

### **Havasupai Falls, Arizona**

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Located within the Grand Canyon, Havasupai Falls requires a 10-mile hike each way to the stunning blue-green waterfalls of the Havasupai tribal land (Havasupai essentially translates to “blue-green water people”). “The falls are fantastic year-round, but the hot summer months make swimming in the pools and behind the waterfalls that much more tempting,” says Brunning. Best experienced through a multi-day hike requiring camping in the wilderness, the trip can also be made via a helicopter for those wanting a short visit. →



In the Amazon rainforest of the South American country Guyana, Kaieteur Falls stands at 741 feet tall. That is twice the height of the famous Victoria Falls on the border of Zambia and Zimbabwe in Africa. Although accessible via airports and a short walking path, the Falls are in a rustic desination with virtually no hotels within its surrounding miles.



PHOTO BY JOHN CANNING/MEDIAHERPA

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“Join up with a Havasupai guide to learn about the spiritual significance and unique rock formations that have been carved out over centuries,” Brunning continues. “Practice gathering wild plants like walnuts, wild candytuft, and barrel cacti that the indigenous people depend on. Team up with archaeologists from the Museum of Northern Arizona and join in with the excavation efforts to recover significant historical artifacts along the Colorado River. Or, for the more adventurous, we’ll pick you up in a privately chartered Kodiak aircraft for a bespoke rafting expedition, with luxury camps set up each night and accompanied by an expert astronomer, a team of guides and your own personal chef. End in Lake Powell where your speedboat is waiting. Let your hair down and round things off with water skiing and stand up paddle boarding in deserted coves.”

### **Goðafoss, Iceland**

“Iceland is dotted with spectacular, incredible waterfalls often framed by vibrant rainbows,” says Carolyn Werry of Gray & Co. One of the most astounding is Goðafoss. Translated to “waterfall of the gods,” it was named after an ancient myth connected with a significant event in the country’s history. If you visit, Brunning recommends hearing the full retelling of Thorgeir Thorkelsson from an Icelandic neo-pagan, who was said to have thrown the idols of his gods into the waterfall after converting from Norse paganism to Christianity.

“I would say that Iceland is a destination for more explorer-type travelers who want a national geographic experience, not a high-end luxury traveler,” says Werry, though she names Deplar Farm as a five-star property that can offer guests hiking with an expert guide or taking a helicopter to a number of impressive locations. If wanting to avoid travel by foot, Brunning recommends a helicopter experience from the capital Reykjavik to drop you off on top of the waterfall for a picnic and a view.

“The coldest months are December, January and February; however, at this time you can enjoy an unforgettable spectacle of a frozen waterfall,” says Brunning. “Also, the summer is a perfect time due to the longest duration of daylight. Try to get there at sunrise to watch the sun begin to shine straight through the canyon onto the waterfall.”



**Goðafoss Falls in Iceland**

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**Ban Gioc-Detian Falls**

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### **Ban Gioc-Detian Falls, China & Vietnam**

Straddling the border of China and Vietnam, the impressive Ban Gioc-Detian Falls is in a lush and diverse location worthy of a visit. “There are lots of beautiful spots around the base of the falls on which to sit and take in the spectacle — providing you don’t visit on a weekend or public holiday, you may have it almost all to yourself. Enjoy a glass of champagne on your own bamboo raft, as you float closer to the cascade for better views,” says Brunning.

“For the more experienced walkers, there’s a testing path leading up through

the jungle to the first and second tiers of the falls,” says Brunning. “Your expert guide will show you an array of jungle flower and fauna throughout your walk, before a traditional dumpling lunch overlooking the falls from a magnificent height. For even more spectacular views, you can climb higher.”

Next to the Ban Gioc-Detian Falls, you can find the Nguom Ngao Cave, an impressive, well-lit cave system that you can easily explore for hours. For a more luxurious experience, Brunning recommends a private boat to take you to Ba Be National Park. “The scenery here swoops from towering limestone mountains peaking at 1,554

meters down into plunging valleys wrapped in dense evergreen forests, speckled with waterfalls and caves, with the lakes themselves dominating the very heart of the park,” Brunning explains.

### **Jog Falls, India**

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Also known as Gerosoppa Falls, Jog Falls stands at 829 feet high and spills water from four different cascades — Raja, Roarer, Rocket and Rani — into a below gorge. “The arduous terrain along the Jog Falls takes more than an hour for an individual to climb up and walk down toward the base of the falls,” says Brunning. “But the beautiful forests around the waterfalls and the Swarnanadi River are a must-visit, where your own private picnic can be set up in this beautiful, secluded area.”

A helicopter flight can give an ideal experience of the falls, which you can take from Mangalore Airport. Brunning recommends an expert guide for a tour around Banavasi, an ancient temple town in Uttara Kannada. Although second to Nohkalikai Falls, the tallest falls in the country, Jog Falls is the tallest in its state and plays a significant role in tourism for Karnataka. The Ganesha Festival is another great reason to visit, which is held every year to worship a black marble idol of the widely celebrated deity.

### **Niagara Falls, U.S. & Canada**

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On the border between the U.S. and Canada, Niagara Falls is North America’s most well known waterfall. It’s no secret that the best place to see Niagara is from the Canadian side; the Maid of the Mist and Journey Behind the Falls tours are tourist staples. But Gray notes there is more to the region.

“The Niagara region offers great hiking and biking. You can cycle from Niagara Falls along bike paths to Niagara-on-the-Lake, which is a lovely lakefront town, host to the Shaw Theatre Festival, restaurants, shopping, and an excellent base for exploring the Niagara region’s wineries,” says Gray. Since Niagara can be touristy, for accommodations, she recommends Queen’s Landing or Prince of Whales on Lake Ontario, or Inn on the Twenty in Jordan. “If you want to stay in Niagara, the Hilton is your best option.”



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Four cascades make up Jog Falls in India — Raja, Roarer, Rocket and Rani. Around the Falls, there is plenty to see, such as another closeby cascade, Kudumari Falls in the deep forest in the Chaktikal Village, and the Sharavathi Wildlife Sanctuary — home to lion-tailed macaque, tigers, black panthers, sloth bears, wild dogs, jackals and more.