

# City in Bloom

Full of history and art, or filled to the brim with the most amazing trees and flowers: these urban parks are perfect for memorable long walks or casual strolling.

---

*Text Sara Madou*

Germany

## Surf 'n' beer

You sometimes feel like you are in China, but in reality you're in the German city of Munich, and the park is called Englischer Garten. It may sound confusing, but it's a brilliant place to check out. British physicist Sir Benjamin Thompson – hence the name – created it in 1789, and the gigantic area features a Chinese tower, beer garden, Japanese teahouse, carousel, Greek-style temple, boathouse and amphitheatre. If that isn't dizzying enough, you can also row (row, row) a boat gently down the lake. Does that sound too boring for you? Then, you can join the daredevil surfers (yes, really!) on the Eisbach river.

*See previous page*



Spain

## Artist's impression

Park Güell in Barcelona has sprung from the brain of the world-famous Catalan architect Antonio Gaudí, who was asked to design it by Spanish entrepreneur Eusebi Güell. Originally, they also planned to build 60 villas here, but nobody was interested, so only two were actually built. Gaudí lived in one of those, where you can enjoy some of his work in the Gaudí House Museum. When you visit this UNESCO World Heritage Site – which officially opened as a park in 1926 – you should really enter through the main entrance, with its spectacular stairway. And don't miss the giant terrace overlooking the city, showcasing a curved bench full of mosaics flowing around it.



China

## Ecological dream

It's hard to believe that Houtan Park in Shanghai was built on a former steel factory and shipyard site, although you still see some elements of that history. When it was made into a park for the Expo 2010, they combined the beautiful with the practical: the park's design doubles as a flood wall and has tons of ecological benefits, as the waterfront was transformed into a wetland. It cleans some 643,000 gallons of polluted river water daily, and has increased the biodiversity of the site, consisting of 93 sorts of plants and over 200 animal species. Inspired by traditional Chinese rice terracing, the seasons are changing in front of you: from golden blossom in the spring to green clover in the winter.

Alamy (Germany, Spain, US), Turenscape/ArchDaily (China)



US

## Multi-park

In 1967, the Human Be-In event was the prelude to the famous Summer of Love in San Francisco. The still remaining hippie vibe can especially be felt while you're strolling across the city's luscious and huge Golden Gate Park, where – on Hippy Hill – people still come together for improvised parties. But the park has so much more to offer. Close your eyes on the brim of one of the ten beautiful lakes, for instance. Or be amazed by the splendour of flowers at the 19th-century Conservatory of Flowers. And how about the indoor rainforest and planetarium at the Academy of Sciences? You'll never get bored in this overwhelming park.



## US Big Green Apple

Measuring around 3.4km<sup>2</sup>, welcoming 40 million visitors each year and featured in almost 400 films: this is the green heart of New York, Central Park. The world's most famous park unveils all kinds of mysteries when you dive in. For example: glaciers surrounded the area until 12,000 years ago. You can still see large boulders as evidence of that fact. It's been open to the public since 1858, and developers had to use gunpowder to blast the rocks and make it into a park. All that hard work paid off: it's the best place for people watching in the city that never sleeps.

## Italy Pope's place

Villa Doria Pamphili is, like the rest of Rome, stuffed with history. The city's 'secret park' has it all: landscaped gardens, lots of green and paths, where you can go jogging or ride your bike between the lemon trees. The noble Pamphili family built a villa here, but when paterfamilias Giovanni Battista got himself elected as Pope Innocent X, it was replaced with an even bigger home, which you can still visit. While most tourists visit the more famous Villa Borghese, Pamphili is less crowded and feels like you discovered it yourself. Just relax underneath the umbrella pines and enjoy the views, to give your feet some rest in the city that is made for walking.

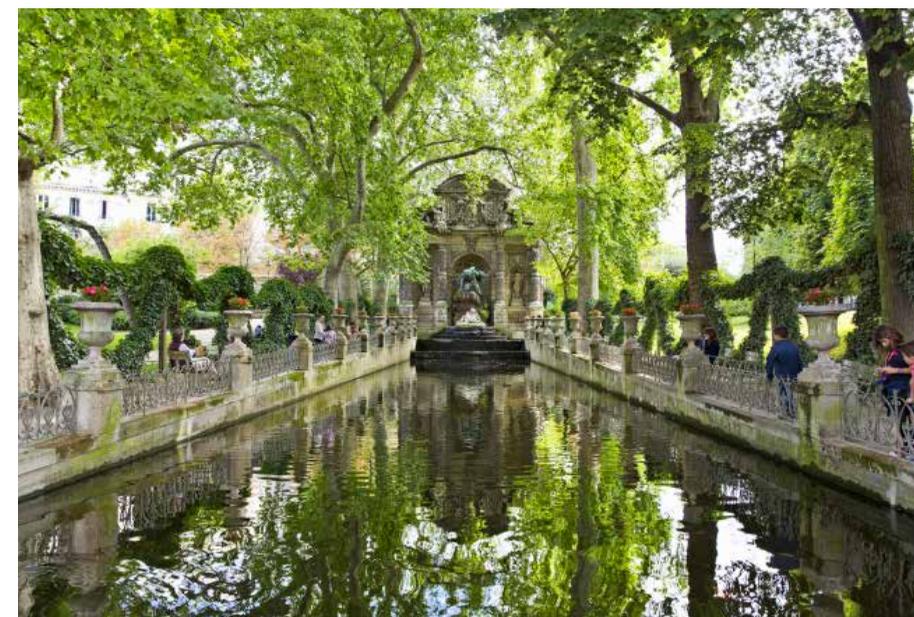


## Japan Natural shopping

Undulating shapes, in eight levels of gradually ascending terraces, bright green trees and waterfalls: Namba Parks in Osaka is a relaxing spot where nature interweaves with shopping. This gigantic complex is filled with colour and almost feels like the setting for a sci-fi movie. The shopping centre that accompanies all the trees presents you with an array of stores (almost 200 of them) and fine-dining restaurants. Osaka is a metropolis that at times can feel a bit overwhelming, but this is the perfect spot to recover. The rooftop garden in particular is an oasis of peace in this unforgettable concrete jungle.

## France Royal getaway

If you like history, there's no place like Luxembourg Gardens in Paris. It was commissioned in 1612 by Queen Marie de' Medici, the widow of French King Henry IV, and oozes romance; it's no wonder that Victor Hugo situated the meeting between Pontmercy and Cosette in his famous novel *Les Misérables* (1862) here. The impressive Luxembourg Palace, long promenades lined with trees, a large population of statues, colourful flowers, vintage sailboats for children to play with and the Instagram-worthy Medici Fountain: there are so many beautiful things to see here.



Stocksy (US), Alamy (Italy, Japan) Shutterstock (France)