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Gold Coast: Sky-high thrills

Seamlessly combining the cosmopolitan lifestyle with the natural haven beyond, the Gold Coast's striking sandy stretches are best seen from the vantage point of its shiny new high-rise buildings.

As part of Australia's tallest residential tower, it has unparalleled 360-degree views from the surf to the hinterland. For a serious adrenaline boost, try the SkyPoint Climb, the country's highest external building climb.

Australia's sixth-largest city is also the gateway to some of its most biologically diverse zones, from the lush rainforest-cloaked hills to the treasure troves of the sea.

Amsterdam: Culture up there

Like the rest of the Netherlands, Amsterdam is rather flat. Sure, it makes it easier to cycle, but it's tricky in terms of vistas. The historic centre doesn't leave much room for high rises either, but if you know where to go, you can still find those elusive panoramic views.

With its impressive colossal Corinthian pilasters, the Felix Meritis centre is another great place to soak up the city's history and culture. To celebrate its 225th anniversary this year, the Felix has opened its doors to the public for the first time in 200 years.

On a tight budget? The best free skyline views are from the high balcony at the modern Public Library. Splashing out? The Michelin-starred Ciel Bleu on the 23rd floor of the Hotel Okura is the place to celebrate.

New York: Top-notch cocktails

In a city of skyscrapers so high it makes you dizzy, the Empire State Building should be the number-one item on your 'to do' list. With two observatories, one on the 86th floor and one on the 102nd, it's famous for its unparalleled views that stretch all the way to New Jersey, Connecticut and Massachusetts.

Istanbul: High & Mighty Cuisine

Straddling two continents, Istanbul is where East literally meets West. With a checkered past, the one-time Constantinople is a feast for the senses, a buzzing city by the shimmering Bosphorus, and there's nowhere better to see this than from above.

For a little history, head up the 66-metre-tall Galata Tower. A striking landmark, the circular tower is said to have been built in 1348 (although no one knows for sure), and offers spectacular views to the Old City and the Sultanahmet district, where the Blue Mosque and Hagia Sofia reign supreme.

Hong Kong: Aerial relaxation

In Hong Kong, the International Commerce Centre - the city's tallest skyscraper at 490 metres - is the logical place to start. It's home to the Sky 100 Observation Deck, the city's highest indoor observation deck on the 100th floor, offering sweeping 360-degree views of Victoria Harbour and the territory.

Words by Rowena Carr-Allinson - Published in Voyeur September 2014

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