PRIVATE ITALY
THE PLEASURES OF GENOA
AND ITS COAST REVEALED

7 ASIAN GEMS
A VIVID VIRTUAL TOUR OF
WORLD HERITAGE ICONS

SOUTH OF THE
BORDER SIZZLE
GREAT COASTAL TOWNS IN MEXICO
GIANT BUDDHA OF LESHAN
Here's an opulent of the Giant Buddha of Leshan—it's over 230 feet tall, the tallest in the world. But the eighth-century figure, carved into a SiChuan hillside, has a pretty nice view himself! He overlooks the shipping traffic at the confluence of the Minjiang, Dadu, and Qingyi rivers. The site shares its World Heritage status with Mount Emei, a 60-square-mile area containing 30 Buddhist temples (including China's first), about 25 miles away. Most of both locations' tens of thousands of annual visitors stay in nearby Leshan City, a three-hour drive from Chengdu, the provincial capital.

Around the World in 360°

Tito Dupret has a mission: To photograph great monuments in the round, preserving them virtually. Pico Iyer reports on how it's developing.
Sometimes I wander amid white-globed lanterns in the narrow lanes of Gion, the old geisha quarter of Kyoto, and feel I could be in the thirteenth century. Dust falls, the shrines light up, and a maiko or apprentice geisha slips out of a door and into the dark. From the windows of teahouses come the sounds of koto music. Then I abruptly pulled out of the dream by the blast of pachinko parlors and the neon flash of bars on the other side of Shijo Street.

The hills to the northeast of Japan’s ancient capital are obscured now by high-rises, and tens of thousands of old wooden houses have been razed, replaced with concrete in the last few years. Were it not for preservationists, the city might resemble an Old Kyoto theme park.

It was with these losses in mind that UNESCO designated seventeen monuments around Kyoto World Heritage Sites in 1994, the year of the city’s twelve-hundredth birthday. The rock garden at Ryoanji, the golden temple of Kinkakuji, the hillside Kiyomizu temple above Gion, now all have a measure of protection from the pressures of forward motion. Yet everywhere our global cultural legacy can feel like an heirloom in the hands of a child racing across a slippery floor . . . and centuries disappear in an instant. The beauty of our age is that we can go

How It Works

To re-create the experience of visiting a location, photographer Tim Dupret follows a process that, though not complicated, is certainly painstaking. With his camera resting on a monopod, he captures the visuals that excite him. Once he’s rounded out his take with shots

from above, below, and all around him, Dupret connects the frames into a single, continuous, enveloping image, seemingly recorded all at one time. To view Dupret’s work, logon to www.world-heritage-tour.org.
After the Taliban bombed Afghanistan’s great Buddhas, Dupret
began a project that could occupy the rest of his life: Creating
interactive panoramas of all UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
Angkor is on a separate World Heritage in Danger list; even if it withstands the plague of tourists, it could still fall victim to political instability—one reason visitors now descend on it eagerly.
The number of sites increases constantly, says Dupret, "I am fully aware that my task is impossible," says Dupret, "but that's not a reason not to do it."

UNESCO makes every effort to protect these places, but the funding for World Heritage Sites totals only four million dollars annually— for the Statue of Liberty, Quebec's Old Town, and all the other locales deemed worthy. Once a site makes the World Heritage list, it becomes part of the world's heritage and is protected by law. UNESCO provides financial assistance to help protect these sites.