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Singapore-based The Straits Times newspaper has published an article hailing the tourism potential of Baku on its "Where to go in 2017" page.

Headlined "Old and new in Baku, Azerbaijan", the article says: "Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, is an intriguing gem set between Asia and Europe.

With the country sharing borders with Russia, Georgia, Armenia and Iran, its biggest city, Baku, seems to amplify the heady mix of European and Oriental traditions.

Baku may not be commonly found on the Singaporean bucket list, but travel planning and booking site TripAdvisor announced last month that the city has taken the top spot in Asia, in its Travellers’ Choice awards for destinations on the rise.

The popularity of these up-and-coming places is measured by their year-on-year increase in positive TripAdvisor traveller ratings for accommodation, restaurants and attractions. The rise in booking interest is also factored in."

"Baku’s must-visit landmarks span old and new.

Its mediaeval walled city, with its symbolic Shirvanshah's Palace and Maiden Tower, is on the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites. The 12th- to 15th-century palace is "one of the pearls of Azerbaijan’s architecture", according to UNESCO.

Resting on one of the highest points in the city, the palace contains tombs and a bathhouse, among other heritage remnants.

Azerbaijani cuisine has Mediterranean influences, so visitors can expect eateries selling kebabs and baklava. Or they can linger in traditional tea rooms to enjoy a Turkish tea or coffee.

Outside the old city, contemporary architecture abounds.

The Flame Towers—a trio of futuristic skyscrapers close to 200m high – are illuminated with LED lights. The tower complex contains a hotel, apartments and offices," the article notes.

"There is also the Heydar Aliyev Center, designed by the late architect Zaha Hadid. The complex, which has an undulating, curvy aesthetic, houses a museum and 1,000-seat auditorium.

TripAdvisor highlights two other fascinating nuggets about Baku: One, bread is sacred. As a sign of respect, it is known to be hung from trees and walls instead of being thrown away when it goes stale."

"Two, you can take a therapeutic bath in crude oil, known to the locals as naftalan oil. The thick, black grease is believed to contain health and healing properties," the article concludes.

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