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How to make short
work of city limits

Global

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Preface

So often the cities we love fall just short of perfection through some niggling omission or rudimentary failing that should be glaringly obvious but somehow sneaks under the radar. But with a tweak here and there, urban living really can deliver all it promises.

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01
Big trees

For better streetscapes

Whether your style is au naturel or perfectly pruned, having some greenery above your head not only adds colour to your streetscape but also helps slow you down in all the right ways. Yet when it comes to urban landscaping in many western cities the authorities purchase trees so youthful, small and vulnerable that they hardly make any impact on the landscape. Compare that with Tokyo, where adventurous developments merge into the cityscape overnight because they are adorned with trees that have grown for years before making their journey to the big, bad city. Big trees are what we need, not saplings that snap the moment they are used as a convenient place to lock a bicycle.



02
Signage

For finding your identity

As we're not getting any younger and taxi driving in many cities is an entry-level job for new migrants, numbers on the outside of buildings should be easy to read. Good signage has greater implications than just showing you the way: it helps to brand a city, terminus or airport. Look at the work of Paul Mijksenaar who, from his HQ in Amsterdam, has come up with simple, elegant solutions for the likes of Frankfurt airport. Then there are the Legible London maps and wayfinding pillars that show at a glance where you are and how to navigate, on foot, to your next stop. The city of Chattanooga, US, has even created its own font. Get your civic leaders to embrace a signage style to help reveal your city in all its glory.



03
Days off

For rekindling your enthusiasm

It's all too easy to assume that the only way to escape is to get out of town but the perfect city gives residents a reason to celebrate while staying put. It can be a centre-of-town music festival (we'll take Helsinki's Flow or the Laneway Festival in Sydney), a well-attended Pride parade, food festival or monarch's birthday but throw a bash worth attending and people will stay excited about their home.



04
Surprising visitors

For better urban safaris

They may be a bit dangerous, not to mention messy, but sometimes we want a moose to wander through our downtown. Or at least we would if we were in Anchorage. Cities often hold a few surprises when it comes to furry and feathered residents – whether it's a massive mammal in Alaska or a flock of colourful escapee parakeets in London. We're fans of these unexpected urban wildlife encounters, and hope that City Hall gives the interlopers the freedom to roam.