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## [Global doomsday hot spots draw believers, revelers](#)



[VANESSA GERA](#) | December 20, 2012 01:47 PM EST | Associated Press 

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Though the Mayans never really predicted that the world would end on Friday, some New Agers are convinced that humanity's demise is indeed imminent. Or at least that it's a good excuse for a party.

Believers are being drawn to spots where they think their chances of survival will be better, and accompanying them are the curious, the party-lovers and people wanting to make some money.

Here are some of the world's key doomsday destinations and other places marked by fear and fascination.

## MEXICO

About 1,000 self-described shamans, seers, stargazers, crystal enthusiasts, yogis, sufis and swamis are gathering in a convention center in the city of Merida on the Yucatan peninsula about an hour and a half from the Mayan ruins at Chichen Itza, convinced that it was a good start to the coming "New Era" supposed to begin around 5:00 a.m. local time Friday. These are not people who believe the world will end on Friday: the summit is scheduled to run through Dec. 23. Instead, participants say, they want to celebrate the birth of a new age.

Meanwhile, Mexico's self-styled "brujo mayor," or chief soothsayer, Antonio Vazquez Alba, who warned followers to stay away from all gatherings on Dec. 21. "We have to beware of mass psychosis" that could lead to stampedes or "mass suicides, of the kind we've seen before," he said.

Star gazers are planning to welcome in the new era with a dawn ceremony Friday at Uxmal, the only major Mayan pyramid that has rounded edges. Others will spend the day at the more famous Chichen Itza archaeological site.

Also, organizers of Yucatan's broader Mayan Culture Festival saw the need to answer some of the now-debunked idea that the Mayas, who invented an amazingly accurate calendar almost 2,000 years ago, had somehow predicted the end of the world. The Yucatan state government asked a scientist to talk about the work of Large Hadron Collider in Switzerland to debunk the idea it could produce world-ending rogue particles.

## FRANCE

According to one rumor, a rocky mountain in the French Pyrenees will be the sole place on earth to escape destruction. A giant UFO and aliens are said to be waiting under the mountain, ready to burst through and spirit those nearby to safety. But here is bad news for those seeking salvation: French gendarmes, some on horseback, are blocking outsiders from reaching the Bugarach peak and its village of some 200 people.

One believer, Ludovic Broquet, a 30-year-old plumber, made his way to the mountain after a year of preparation, hoping to find a "gateway, the vortex that will open up here (at) the end of the world."

Local residents, instead, are skeptical – and angry at having their peace disturbed. "What is going on here is the creation of an urban legend," fumed resident Michele Pous, who blamed those who spread Internet rumors. "They created a media frenzy, they created a false event, they manipulated people."

## RUSSIA

For \$1,500, a museum is offering salvation from the world's end in former Soviet dictator Josef Stalin's underground bunker in central Moscow – with a 50 percent refund if nothing happens.

The bunker, located 65 meters (210 feet) below ground, was designed to withstand a nuclear attack. Now home to a small museum, it has an independent electricity supply, water and food – but no more room, because the

museum has already sold out all 1,000 tickets.

## BRITAIN

Hundreds of people have already converged on Stonehenge for an "End of the World" party that coincides with the Winter Solstice.

Arthur Uther Pendragon, Britain's best-known druid, said he was anticipating a much larger crowd than usual at Stonehenge this year. But he doesn't agree that the world is ending, noting that he and fellow druids believe that things happen in cycles.

"We're looking at it more as a new beginning than an end," he said. "We're looking at new hope."

Meanwhile, end-of-days parties will be held across London on Friday. One event billed as a "last supper club" is offering a three-course meal served inside of an "ark."

## SERBIA

Some Serbs are saying to forget that sacred mountain in the French Pyrenees. The place to go Friday will be Mount Rtanj, a pyramid-shaped peak in Serbia already drawing cultists.

A local legend has it that the mountain once swallowed an evil sorcerer who will be released on doomsday in a ball of fire that will hit the mountain top. The inside of the mountain will then open up, becoming a safe place to hide as the sorcerer goes on to destroy the rest of the world. In the meantime, some old coal mine shafts have been opened up as safe rooms for the dozens who have arrived already.

"We got calls from as far away as Holland from people trying to seek shelter," said Vlada Minic, a local villager. "They are asking to be as close as possible to the mountain."

## TURKEY

A small Turkish village known for its wines, Sirince, has also been touted as the only place after Bugarach that would escape the world's end. But on Thursday there were more journalists and security officials present there than cultists – to the great disappointment of local restaurateurs and souvenir shop owners.

Nobody was quite sure where Sirince's alleged powers to survive the Mayan doomsday come from, but the idyllic village in western Turkey is close to an area where the Virgin Mary is believed to have lived her final days, and some New Agers reportedly believe the region has a positive aura. For months, local business owners have been promoting the village and even produced wines with special labels to commemorate the event.

## ITALY

Another spot said to be spared: Cisternino, in southern Italy, plans a big party Friday with hot-air balloons and music in the main piazza. "Nobody will want to sleep anyway as they await the end of the world," Mayor Donato Baccaro was quoted as saying in the newspaper La Stampa on Wednesday. Though Baccaro goes on to say he doesn't really believe the end is coming, hundreds have reportedly booked hotel rooms.

## CHINA

A fringe Christian group has been spreading rumors about the world's impending end, prompting Chinese

authorities to detain more than 500 people this week and seize leaflets, video discs, books and other material.

Those detained are reported to be members of the group Almighty God, also called Eastern Lightning, which preaches that Jesus has reappeared as a woman in central China. Authorities in the province of Qinghai say they are waging a "severe crackdown" on the group, accusing it of attacking the Communist Party and the government.

U.S.

For some, doomsday will be a chance for mockery.

Giorgio A. Tsoukalos, producer and host of the History Channel's "Ancient Aliens" program, is throwing a party in New Orleans on Friday where he will descend onstage in a mock spaceship. Tsoukalos is a leading proponent of the idea that ancient myths arose from visits by alien astronauts, an idea rejected by many mainstream researchers. Still, Tsoukalos scoffs at the idea that the world will come to an end Friday.

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Associated Press writers Florent Bajrami in Bugarach, France; Mansur Mirovalev in Moscow; Suzan Fraser in Ankara, Turkey; Paisley Dodds in London; and Dusan Stojanovic in Belgrade, Serbia, contributed to this report.

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