

RAINBOW
TOURS

WINTER
SPRING
2016

OTHER SHORES

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a GoPro
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São Tomé & Príncipe

Jurassic-park
panoramas
and jungle-clad
volcanoes

PERU TRAVEL GUIDE

ON AND OFF THE
BEATEN TRACK

Botswana birthday

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independence
celebrations

Wilderness *untamed* in the Pantanal

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2016 WELCOME

EDITORS

Gill Leaning & Rory Boland
editor@other-shores.com

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Emma Brisdion

DESIGN

Fredrik Dittlau

ADVERTISING

David Pointer
dpointer@westernoriental.com

WESTERN & ORIENTAL
enquiries@westernoriental.com

**RAINBOW
TOURS**

info@rainbowtours.co.uk

REGENT HOLIDAYS
holidays with stories to tell

regent@regentholidays.co.uk

villaselect

holidays@villaselect.com

ITC

info@itc-uk.com

Other Shores is an exclusive magazine for the clients of ITC Luxury Travel, Western & Oriental, Rainbow Tours, Regent Holidays and Villa Select.

From the Editor

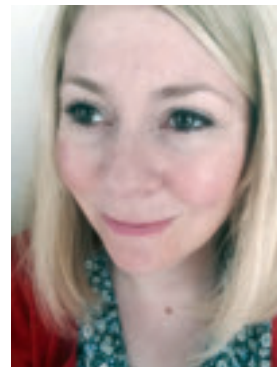
For many of us the journey simply signifies the start of the holiday. Cruising at 35,000 feet, glass of wine in hand, ready for the well deserved break ahead. For others however, the journey often lies at the heart of the holiday experience – chasing the northern lights in a Superjeep designed for adventure or taking a steamboat cruise from Memphis to New Orleans.

In this issue we celebrate the joy of getting from A to B with our pick of the world's best train journeys (p40). Scott Mathias glides through Brazil's Pantanal wetlands in

a canoe (p26) and Peter Wybrow travels on the iconic Trans-Siberian railway (p30) – the extraordinary, once-in-a-lifetime journey that tops many a travel wish list.

Here at Other Shores HQ we're celebrating a new journey all of our own, with Western & Oriental, Rainbow Tours and Regent Holidays becoming part of the renowned ITC Luxury Travel family. It's an exciting road ahead and we look forward to sharing the journey with you.

Gill Leaning, Editor



C O N T R I B U T O R S



BEN ROSS

Ben began his career in journalism at the BBC, before following his passion for travel to the *Independent*, where he is now the Head of Travel. He recently contributed a chapter detailing his calamitous adventures in Bhutan to the Bradt book, *The Irresponsible Traveller*.



TOM CHESSHYRE

Tom is a travel writer and author, whose assignments have taken him across Africa, Nepal, Iceland, Iran and North Korea. He has written five travel books, has contributed to *Condé Nast Traveller*, *Geographical* and *The Guardian*, and regularly writes for *The Times*.



MIKE UNWIN

Mike writes regularly for the *Daily Telegraph*, *Independent* and *BBC Wildlife* magazine, among other publications. He first worked in Zimbabwe in 1993, is now author of over 30 books, including *South African Wildlife* (Bradt) and was voted UK Travel Writer of the Year 2013.



SCOTT MATHIAS

Scott joined Rainbow Tours in March 2014 as a Latin America Specialist. He had his first taste of South America in 2007 when he travelled from Ecuador down to Chile and now returns to his favourite destinations, Guatemala and Peru, whenever he is given half a chance.



KATE POPHAM

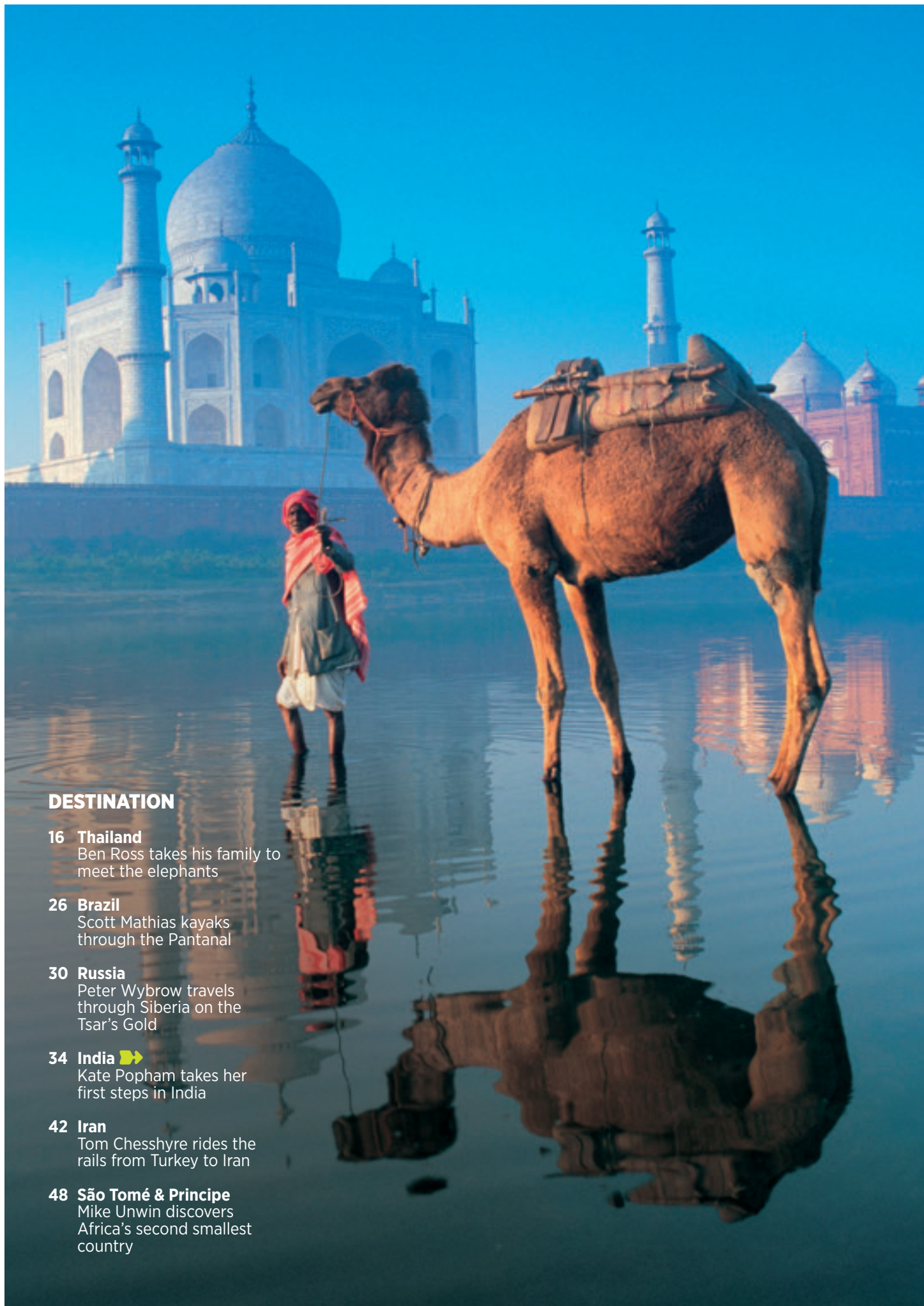
Kate has worked in the travel industry for 10 years and joined Western & Oriental in 2015. She is passionate about adventure travel and the great outdoors, so far managing to visit 49 countries, from Andorra to Zimbabwe. She hopes to make Costa Rica number 50.



PETER WYBROW

Peter has been jumping at every opportunity he's been given to travel since he got his first 'proper job' in the '90s. So far, he's climbed the highest peaks of Africa, followed Bradley Wiggins on his bike in the Tour de France and sailed a tall ship down the Brazilian coast.

Look out for NEW brochures from October onwards, including Western & Oriental's brand new USA Ranch America



DESTINATION

16 Thailand

Ben Ross takes his family to meet the elephants

26 Brazil

Scott Mathias kayaks through the Pantanal

30 Russia

Peter Wybrow travels through Siberia on the Tsar's Gold

34 India ➡

Kate Popham takes her first steps in India

42 Iran

Tom Chesshyre rides the rails from Turkey to Iran

48 São Tomé & Príncipe

Mike Unwin discovers Africa's second smallest country



ESCAPE

- 4 Picture This**
Commended at Travel Photographer of the Year 2015
- 6 Travel News**
The latest headlines from the world of travel
- 8 World Wines**
Naked Wines' bottles from around the world
- 9 The Interview**
Bradt Travel Guide Founder, Hilary Bradt
- 10 Travel Guide**
Visit the highlights of Peru and head off the beaten track



- 12 Ask the Experts**
Your travel questions answered

JOURNAL

- 22 World Festivals**
Eight must-see festivals to visit in 2016
- 40 Six of the Best**
Train journeys across the globe
- 52 Our Shores**
A taste of Iceland at Texture
- 56 Responsible Traveller**
Adopt a protected animal with Born Free
- 58 Family Traveller**
Best breaks for the whole gang
- 60 Pioneering Traveller**
Best undiscovered islands
- 64 Competition**
Win a GoPro Hero4 Session Camera



ESCAPE

PICTURE THIS





Travel

Photographer of the Year

Two proud lionesses prowl Kenya's Masai Mara with a tiny, young cub. Commended in the One Shot, 'Extraordinary' category at the Travel Photographer of the Year awards, this enchanting image was snapped by Australian David Lazar. The winners of the 2015 TPOTY awards (tpoty.com) will go on display in London in the summer of 2016.

Download a copy of *Rainbow Tours' latest Africa brochure* at rainbowtours.co.uk

TRAVEL NEWS

Northern Lights in your bedroom

Snuggled up under the sheets, an open fire blazing at your feet and the Northern Lights right above your head – the new Aurora Dome stays rate as one of the more special ways to enjoy nature's greatest light show. Set on the icy shores of Lake Torassieppi in Finnish Lapland, these igloo shaped tents have transparent walls so that you are surrounded by the snowy landscape and have front row seats for the Northern Lights. regent-holidays.co.uk



BA TO LAUNCH DIRECT FLIGHTS TO PERU AND COSTA RICA

No more swapping planes for those who want to explore the Incan ruins of Machu Picchu or try ceviche where they do it best, after BA announced a new direct route between London and the Peruvian capital, Lima. Return tickets start from £765. Another new non-stop connection is San Jose in Costa Rica. Return tickets to the adventure capital of Central America will start at £687. Both connections launch on May 4th, 2016. rainbowtours.co.uk



CALLING all COSMONAUTS

The Science Museum's new *Cosmonauts: Birth of the Space Age* exhibition has had stargazers queuing for tickets. With a collection that includes a lunar lander and Earth re-entry capsule, this is one of the best exhibitions on space travel

in the world. But if you want to go one better join Regent Holiday's cosmonaut weekend in Moscow tour. Not only will you see more incredible museum pieces in the Cosmonautics Museum, but you'll also spend a day in Star City, where Russian cosmonauts are trained. Explore the Soyuz spaceship hall, see the world's largest centrifuge and learn about cosmonaut flight preparation. regent-holidays.co.uk



It's all about the beach

Few hotels can upstage Bali's blockbuster beach landscapes, but the Alila Seminyak comes close. This new opening has a sharp combination of smart urban design mixed with traditional Balinese craftsmanship, where deliberate but sparing use of local ulin wood and Batu Jogia stone lets rooms look as if they have just stepped off the catwalk. The terraced gardens and wide corridors of greenery open up to five separate infinity pools and a traditional Balinese temple at the heart of the complex. But as beautiful as the hotel is, it's still that sand on its doorstep that steals the show. Enjoy this stretch of white sand and turquoise water with a seafront pig roast or with specially arranged candlelit dinner. westernoriental.com



NEW HOLIDAYS TO THE USA AND CARIBBEAN

From learning how to lasso steers on a dude ranch to the best stays on both coasts of the United States, our latest USA and Ranch brochures feature all our latest holidays and experiences. For better beaches and more sun, request our brand new Caribbean brochure. westernoriental.com



100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TRANS-SIBERIAN

Built on the orders of Tsar Alexander III and completed in 1916, the Trans-Siberian railway is celebrating the grand old age of 100 – and this is a trip that only gets better with age. There is no better way to celebrate than with a journey on Regent Holiday's classic Trans-Siberian tour from Moscow to Vladivostok – taking in small Siberian villages, the grandeur of Lake Baikal and the Sea of Japan. regent-holidays.co.uk

MEET OUR EXPERTS AT THE DESTINATIONS SHOW

Join Regent Holidays and Rainbow Tours at the Destination Show, the UK's biggest travel exhibition. With tour operators, tourism boards and travel writers all in attendance, there is no better place to discover new destinations and emerging experiences for 2016.

Drop by stand E134 to talk to the experts at Regent Holidays about the latest pioneering travel destinations and pick up £100 of discount vouchers to save on our Albania and Balkans Group Tour and the Tsar's Gold Trans-Siberian Tour. Our Latin America and Africa specialists will also be at the show. Find Rainbow Holidays on stand AF48 offering advice on everywhere from Brazil to Zanzibar.

The show runs from the 4th -7th February at the Olympia London. destinationsshow.com



MAD ABOUT MADAGASCAR

Whether its lemurs, lemurs and more lemurs or you fancy a slice of paradise on the golden sands of Nosy Be, Madagascar is a fantastic holiday destination. Find out more about the country and the best ways to see it by requesting our new Madagascar brochure. You can also learn more about how to experience Madagascar on page 9, where Hilary Bradt tells us about her time in the country. rainbowtours.co.uk

WORLD WINES

From an award winning Englishman in Bordeaux to a husband and wife-run vineyard in Chile, Naked Wines pick five winemakers whose wines have as much character as they do



CALIFORNIA

F. Stephen Millier Angel's Selection Viognier Lodi, 2014

This light, refreshing white is the west coast's answer to the Viognier wines of the Rhône Valley, without the Rhône price tag. Stephen Millier's vineyards have slowly soaked up the Californian sun to produce a slightly different, yet well balanced and fruity wine with hints of peach.



CHILE

Kimbao Cabernet Sauvignon Carménère, 2013

Two of Chile's finest winemakers have cleverly produced this bold, fruity red by blending popular grape varieties (Cabernet, Carménère and Merlot) to create a winning combination. With smooth dark chocolate undertones, it's time to fill a glass and toast this husband and wife duo.



ITALY

Christian Patat Appassimento, 2014

Christian Patat has outdone himself with this full-bodied, dark and brooding red. Grapes are semi-dried in the Mediterranean sun to create an irresistibly intense flavour. Smooth and rich, this is the perfect accompaniment to a hearty roast, or ideal to share for an evening of good company.



FRANCE

Jonathan Maltus Labrie Bordeaux Supérieur, 2012

As the first Englishman in Bordeaux to receive a perfect score from world-renowned fine wine critic, Robert Parker, expectations are high for Jonathan Maltus. This refined wine combines his award winning Cabernet and Merlot grapes for a smooth, rounded finish topped with just enough tannin.



SOUTH AFRICA

Catoria Western Cape Chardonnay, 2014

Despite a hatful of awards and a growing reputation, South African Carmen Stevens still hand picks grapes and selects barrels for her small batches personally. This classy white Chardonnay balances hints of toasty oak and mouth-watering vanilla for a crisp, refreshing finish.

Uncork more interesting wines from interesting winemakers at nakedwines.com

GRAPE IDEA

"Naked Wines is a customer-funded wine business, delivering independently produced wines to thousands of customers across the UK. In return for their support, loyal Naked customers get wholesale prices – and talented winemakers finally get a fair cut for the hard work and passion they pour into each and every bottle."

naked wines

THE INTERVIEW



Hilary Bradt

Publisher, writer and co-founder of Bradt Travel Guides, Hilary Bradt has been writing about Madagascar for more than thirty years. *Other Shores* talks to her about her favourite experiences, memorable wildlife encounters and the places that draw her back to the country

You still co-author the Madagascar Bradt guide, which is now in its 11th edition. How has Madagascar changed since you wrote the first edition?

It's changed massively, mostly for the better. When I led my first trip there, in 1982, even the best accommodation was pretty dreadful. For instance, in the one hotel in Andasibe, there was no hot water unless the manager carried it up from the kitchen (which he did – bless him), and rats in the bedrooms.

There are now several luxury hotels close to the reserve. And Andasibe is a good example of other changes for the better. On that first visit with a group we heard the indri but didn't see them. Now the animals are habituated to people and everyone gets a close up. Indeed, wildlife viewing is much better now despite (or perhaps because of) the one big negative: loss of habitat through the destruction of the forest. Another change for the better is the influence various NGOs have had not only on conservation but in teaching the local people how to profit from tourists. Souvenirs on sale today properly reflect the delights of Madagascar. Back in the 1980s they were intent on selling us wooden giraffes!

You've spoken before about the pleasure of returning to a destination. Where are you always drawn back to in Madagascar and why?

I must have made over 30 visits to Madagascar now, and there's always something new to see as well as the familiar to enjoy. With the familiar I would include visits to the Centre Fihavanana, which I still think of as the 'Street Kids Centre' although they do much more than look after the street children. It's such a heart-warming place to visit and the nuns do such a terrific

job. And I never tire of the familiar wildlife such as lemurs and chameleons, but every visit I see a new species. And that's no exaggeration!

And what about somewhere new – is there still somewhere you want to discover in the country?

There are new areas and reserves opening up all the time, particularly in the south and east. I'd like another visit to Lake Tsimanampetsotsa. I went there briefly with Rainbow Tours some years ago and it was extraordinary, both the landscape and wildlife – including flamingos. And I've never been to Salary which I understand is a beautiful beach.

Your co-author of Bradt Madagascar, Daniel Austin, is leading a Rainbow Tours Madagascar Wildlife Discovery Tour for us in 2016. Do you have a favourite Madagascar wildlife encounter?

There are two which spring to mind – mainly because I managed to get such good photos. One was the twig-mimic snake found at Anjajavy. And not even by a naturalist guide – one of the hotel staff took our group out for a walk and spotted the snake. It's both rare and quite extraordinary!

The other is my first sighting of – to me – a new species of uroplatus (leaf-tailed gecko) in Andasibe. It was uroplatus sikorae which is spectacularly well camouflaged.

Is Madagascar always about landscapes and unusual wildlife, or do you find time for sun loungers and cocktails by the beach?

No! Waste of time. Except, actually, I can be seduced by a place such as Anjajavy...

● *Rainbow Tours 19-day Madagascar Wildlife Discovery Tour includes Andasibe and Ranomafana parks and Berenty private reserve. Prices start from £3,995.*

TRAVEL GUIDE

Travel guide to Peru

Follow Incan tracks through Andean trails, knock back Pisco sours in the oldest city in the Americas and meet communities whose feet remain firmly planted in colourful ancient culture. Welcome to Peru

With a new direct flight route being announced and a blossoming reputation within the culinary world, there's no better time to book a visit to one of South America's most vibrant countries. From the spectacular ancient Inca settlement of Machu Picchu perched high in the soaring Andean peaks to virgin Amazonian rainforest and tribal villages, a Peru holiday promises adventure amidst dramatic landscapes.

Visit Lima and Cuzco to explore cosmopolitan cities, charming mountain villages and the mysterious ruins of lost civilisations for a taste of Peru's rich cultural heritage. Tread in the footsteps of the Incas through the craggy peaks of Vilcabamba, hop aboard a train through the Sacred Valley and brave bridges stretching over the colossal Colca Canyon where Andean condors soar overhead. Below we pick the four places you can't miss on a trip to Peru, but also some of lesser known cities, culture and stretches of unspoilt beauty to consider.



LIMA

Both the old and the new collide to contrast and complement in Lima. Lima blends sophisticated metropolitan streets with colonial facades and ancient temples. The city has architecture dating back over five centuries and stately museums filled with relics of Peru's Inca past. But Lima is also where you'll find the best of a Peru that's increasingly confident of its 21st century style. Head to the bohemian Barranco district for hip art galleries tucked between laid back lounges serving up Pisco sours. Creeping onto the global fine-dining radar, Lima is also home to world class cuisine.

NORTHERN PERU

If an authentic, crowd-free view of Peru is what you're after, head to the north. Rich in pre-Columbian history spend a day exploring the colourful colonial church-lined streets of Trujillo, a city that has barely changed in hundreds of years, before delving further into the history books and visiting the vast ruins of an ancient adobe Chimú mud city at Chan Chan. Explore the little-known sacred Moche Pyramids before travelling to the impressive Moche Sun and Moon Temples, home to fantastically preserved, ornately decorated frieze walls, or visit the staggering Gocta Falls – the tallest in Peru.

US



CUZCO & SACRED VALLEY

Once the capital of the Inca Empire, Cuzco is the archaeological capital of South America. The terracotta roofed town sprawls through the valley high in the Peruvian Andes and the town's striking architecture reflects the distinct periods of Peru's history – combining pre-Columbian settlement, colonial Spanish baroque-style churches and squat whitewashed houses with contemporary modern development. Visit the impressive Plaza de Armas, a lively courtyard overlooked by the Cuzco Cathedral and join locals sipping their *mate de coca*.

VS

AREQUIPA / COLCA CANYON

The Colca Canyon dominates Peru's southern region, where Andean Condors soar high above the world's deepest canyon and indigenous cultures live in valleys still lined with Inca agricultural terraces. Wander through Arequipa's pretty colonial architecture overlooked by the towering El Misti volcano and if you've a strong stomach, visit the Juanita mummy – the preserved body of a girl sacrificed at the summit of Nevado Ampato.

LAKE TITICACA

Straddling the border between Peru and Bolivia high in the Andes Mountains, the vast shimmering body of water of Lake Titicaca is the largest navigable lake in the world. According to ancient Andean beliefs, Lake Titicaca is the birthplace of the sun. The lake and its shores have been settled by a succession of cultures for centuries and colourful local communities still farm the surrounding fields by hand accompanied, of course, by iconic tame llamas. Take to the deep waters and visit the floating reed communities – indigenous people still live on the island of Uros, while Taquile Island offers sweeping panoramas across the lake.

VS

MACHU PICCHU

One of the most distinguishable sights in the travelling world, the spectacular ruins of Machu Picchu Inca settlement are perched high in the Andes and command their position at the top spot of every traveller's South America 'to-do list'. Only accessible on foot, following the Inca Trail, or by train, the journey to reach the continent's best-known archaeological site is as memorable as the view at the summit. The lost city of the Incas was only discovered by American Explorer, Hiram Bingham, in 1911 and now the extensive citadel in all of its fantastically preserved stonework glory is a protected UNESCO World Heritage Site.

NAZCA

Less well known, but no less impressive are the Nazca lines. These ancient geoglyphs, patterns and images etched into the landscape stretch across southern Peru's Nazca Desert, so take to the skies as this spectacular UNESCO World Heritage Site is best viewed from the air. Once you've spent an afternoon sandboarding down the desert dunes, visit the Ballestas Islands, known for its fantastic abundance of wildlife, especially the local seal population.

VS



AMAZON

The Amazon may not be off the beaten track, but it's not often on visitors itineraries in Peru. The country is actually home to the second-largest portion of the Amazon Rainforest after Brazil, and this vast expanse of primary rainforest is easily accessible from either Lima or Cuzco. Listen to the cacophony of noise from the red howler monkeys, capybara and toucans that call the Amazon home and visit clay lick – where copper-coloured cliffs attract thousands of birds.

● Explore Peru with Rainbow Tours' Peru Express itinerary. A 10 day trip including flights with BA costs from £2,625 per person. rainbowtours.co.uk 020 7666 1304



ASK THE EXPERTS

Q When is the best time to go on Safari in East Africa?

Mr & Mrs Hammersmith, Exeter

a It all depends on what you are looking for from your safari experience. Apart from the rains in May and April and the short rains in November, East Africa is a fantastic destination all year round weather wise. If it's the spectacular wildlife that you're after, the phenomenal great migration across the Masai Mara and Serengeti is a continual process, but August through to November is when the migration usually crosses the two National Parks and the Mara River. Peak season is from July to the end of October, while visiting Africa during January and February is a great way to escape the winter blues.

Fiona Herring, Rainbow Tours Africa Travel Specialist

Q When I visit Borneo, can I cuddle an orang-utan?

Lauren Hughes, Bristol

a The simple answer is no – they might be cute, but they are wild animals. You can still have a close encounter, though. Borneo is at the forefront of rehabilitating orphaned and injured orang-utan through programmes like the ones at Sepilok and Semmengah rehabilitation centres.



Their diminishing numbers result largely from the actions of humans – hunting, logging and de-forestation. The work of the rehabilitation centres is pivotal in increasing numbers of orang-utan in the wild and part of this work involves limiting direct human contact where possible. Naturalists here seek to reacclimatise them to the wild. But while physical contact with these beautiful animals is not to be encouraged, being able to see them up close is still a fantastic and rewarding experience.

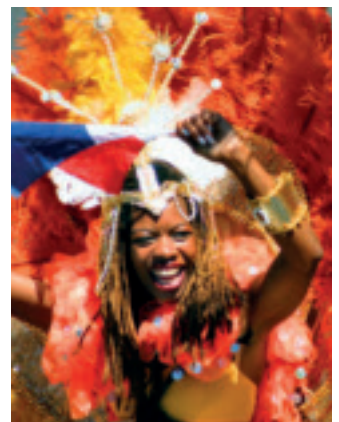
Visitors are warmly welcomed at the centres and it is a unique experience to see them feeding and playing just a short distance away. You'll also be providing a vital contribution to their gradually expanding numbers in the wild.

Michael Voss, Regent Holidays Central Asia Travel Specialist

Q I'm keen to visit the Caribbean but don't want to spend all my time on the beach, where would you recommend?

William Hillsborough, Leeds

a The Caribbean might be famed for its stunning beaches, but the region has so much more to offer than just its coastline; from the excellent dining scenes of Barbados and Antigua to the undiscovered wilderness that covers much of Dominica and St Lucia. Destinations such as Guadeloupe offer a combination of beach, unspoiled nature and lively culture to provide a holiday that has a little bit of everything that's best of the Caribbean. Alternatively, island hopping is a fantastic way to experience more than one island on your trip – why not combine the larger, well-known islands such as Antigua or



Barbados with lesser visited St Vincent or St Kitts. Direct flights from the UK and plenty of internal connections mean we can tailor make the experience you want and showcase this exciting region.

Ben Murtagh, Western & Oriental Worldwide Destination Expert



We love to hear from you. Email your travel questions to editor@other-shores.com, and your questions could be answered in the next issue

ESCAPE TO THE INDIAN OCEAN

With each of its tiny tropical islands and coral atolls fringed by stretches of pristine sands and gently lapped by warm azure waters, the Maldives can boast some of the world's most beautiful beaches



Set on Dhigufinolhu Island in the South Malé Atoll, the luxury villas of Anantara Dhigu Maldives Resort make the most of their stunning surroundings – with thatched roof huts that sit over the crystal clear Indian Ocean that feature 90 degree windows to bring you the best seats in the house for every spectacular Maldivian sunset. Soak up the sun in the resort's tropical lagoon setting, take a morning dip directly from your villa and snorkel with the puffer fish and stingrays around the jetty.

Take to the water on the resort's new Sunseeker boat and try diving, snorkelling or surfing before hopping between the neighbouring islands to explore this snaking atoll nation. Hit the gym or play a game of tennis, before swimming in the infinity pool and pampering in the spa or tucking into fresh grilled seafood; whatever your personal idea of luxury paradise, Anantara Dhigu has everything you need.

For visitors in search of a luxury romantic getaway, the seclusion and stunning natural setting of the Maldives make it the perfect honeymoon destination. Find your own private



slice of heaven among the bays and beaches. Honeymooning couples and guests celebrating anniversaries can receive 30% off their booking, plus an array of goodies including champagne, credit for use of the indulgent spa and a special

gift upon arrival. From 11 April to 31 October, Anantara Dhigu Maldives Resort have a free upgrade from BB to HB available to combine with the honeymoon/anniversary offer, when booked by 31 Jan, 2016.

Reasons to celebrate Botswana

Named Lonely Planet's 'Top country to visit in 2016' and set to blow out the birthday candles on 50 years of independence as well, Botswana is in celebratory mood. There has never been a better time to pay the country a visit

Thanks to a multitude of landscapes spanning Africa's great wildernesses, from the Okavango Delta to the Kalahari Desert and the iconic wildlife that fills them, Botswana is one of Africa's greatest safari destinations. National parks and game reserves protect nearly half of a country whose wetlands and savannah are traversed by big cats, endangered rhinos and the largest population of wild elephants in the world. We pick some of the best camps and reserves to meet Botswana's wildlife.

MEET THE EXPERTS

Join Rainbow Tours' Africa & Madagascar Expert, Fiona Herring, at the Destinations Travel Show for a 'Meet the Experts' talk on Botswana as Africa's Best Safari Destination. Sunday 7th February, 12.45am, Olympia London

SANCTUARY CHOBE CHILWERO

Located on the edge of Chobe National Park, the Sanctuary Chobe Chilwero sits overlooking the islands and stretching floodplains of the Chobe River – a well known wildlife watering-hole. Join their shallow-hull photographic safari boat to get close to the buffalo that line the banks and the hippos bathing in the waters. Home to the largest remaining population of African elephants in the world, game drives explore the heart of the Chobe National Park in search of Botswana's charismatic residents. The 15 thatched cottages at the sanctuary have an indoor and outdoor shower, as well as a private garden and viewing deck, and the lodge features a swimming pool and full-service tree-house spa.



SANCTUARY STANLEY'S CAMP

Escape into the African wilderness for an authentic safari camp experience, without compromising on comfort. Eight classic canvas tents at Sanctuary Stanley's Camp overlook the floodplains of the



Okavango Delta, nestled away on a private concession and hidden between ebony trees on the border of the Moremi Game Reserve. Drift down the Okavango Delta on a traditional mokoro canoe ride (season depending) and take advantage of the unique opportunity to explore the great plains with a guide from the Living with Elephants Foundation and the three orphaned elephants they care for. The camp also offers game drives to spot towering giraffes and zebras grazing the grasslands and walking safaris through the bush.



SANCTUARY BAINES' CAMP



Built on raised platforms above the Boro River in a private concession bordering the Moremi Game Reserve, Sanctuary Baines' Camp is a small camp. It has just five luxury suites, each complete with a four-

poster 'sky bed' for a night under the stars and a private 'star bath' which can be set up on your deck – perfect for a romantic escape. During the Okavango flood season, take a mokoro ride or motorised boat trip across the floodplains, the 'Living with Elephants' walk with orphaned elephants is also available from Baines' and night game drives offer the chance to meet the lesser-seen nocturnal wildlife that calls Botswana home.

SANCTUARY CHIEF'S CAMP

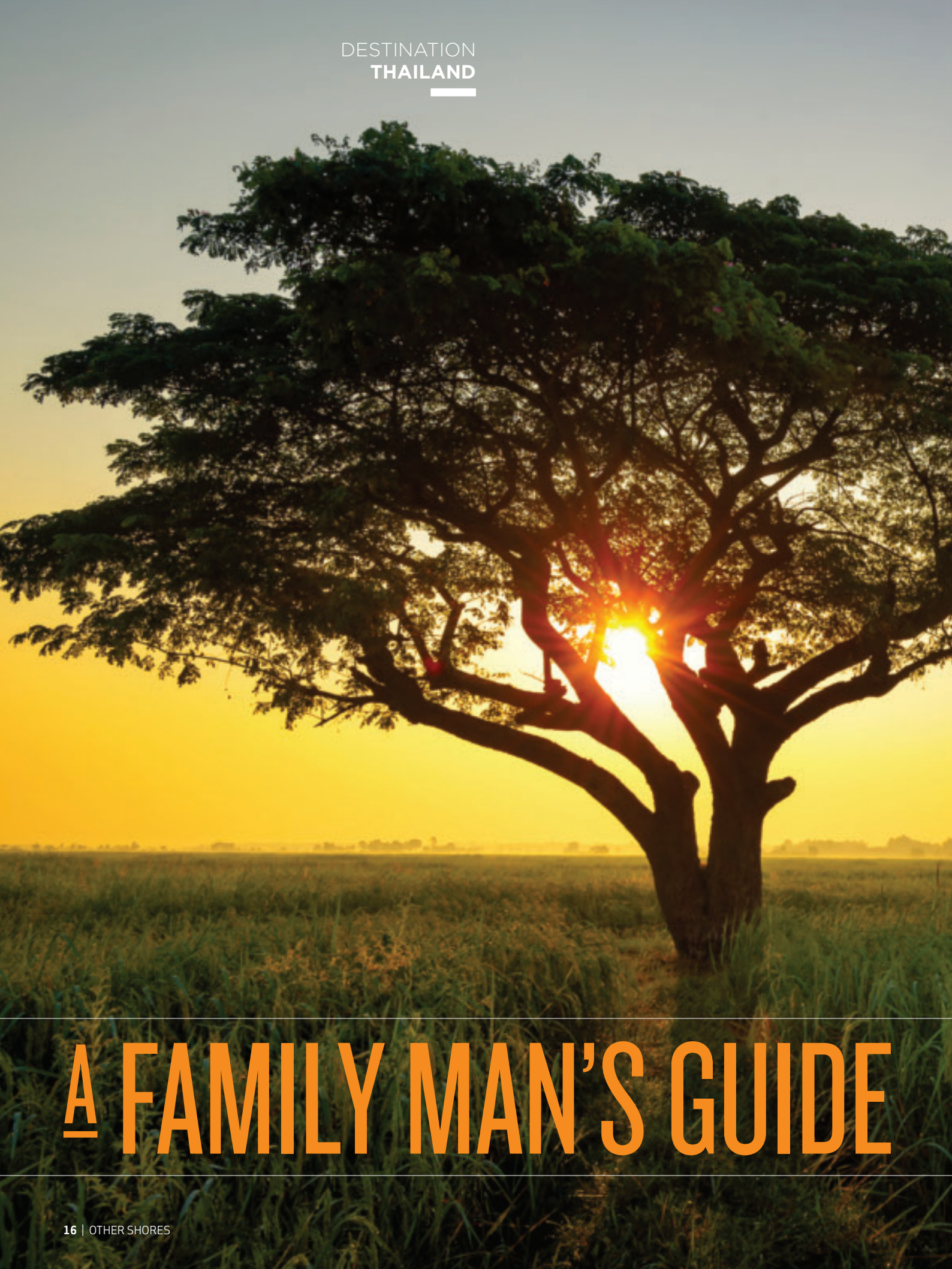
Wildlife enthusiasts keen to set off in search of the Big Five should head to the game reserve menacingly nicknamed the 'predator's capital of Africa'. This exclusive camp is in the Mombo Concession in the Moremi Game Reserve, perched on Chief's Island – one



of the many islands created by the seasonal floodwaters of the Okavango Delta. It means that the camp surroundings transform from a dry floodplain teeming with antelope, zebra and lion to a lush and tranquil lagoon at different times of the year. The camp is being rebuilt early in 2016 and the new suites will feature private plunge pools.



DESTINATION
THAILAND



A FAMILY MAN'S GUIDE



TO THAILAND

WHOEVER THOUGHT TAKING KIDS INTO THE RAINFOREST WAS A BAD IDEA? **BEN ROSS** TAKES HIS FAMILY TO SOUTHERN THAILAND FOR AN UP-CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH THE ELEPHANTS

DESTINATION THAILAND



Anyone who's ever been camping, or slept in an attic room, knows that sound; the beat of raindrops against canvas, the drumming drip of water against roof. It's nighttime. You bury deep under your bedclothes, confident (fairly confident, at least) that you're secure against the elements as you listen to the water drain from the heavens. It's comforting and elemental: you are warm and dry, while the rest of the world is wet and wild.

Now multiply that sound (and that feeling) a hundred-fold. Don't worry; your tent is utterly secure, pinned not to soft ground but to a firm, concrete foundation. Above it – because a basic

canvas simply wouldn't cut it here – is a corrugated iron roof. The rain is a deluge, a torrent, a tropical rhythm so complicated and ornate that the beat is lost in a crashing storm of white noise. Lightning forks but still you are warm and dry, and better yet, tired out after a day of exploration and (soft) adventure. The storm has simply turned up the volume on the excitement of your trip.

There's a reason they call it the rainforest. But, whatever you do, don't let that put you off. Khao Sok National Park in southern Thailand is a patch of ancient landscape that dates back more than 150 million years to when coral reefs rose from the oceans to spike a land of jewel-like green with limestone



1. Elephants with traditional Mahouts at Elephant Hills
2. Ben's kids clamber over buttress roots
3. Ben's family hikes through the jungle



karst peaks. It's the biggest rainforest area in Thailand and a last redoubt for some of Thailand's more exciting animal life, including gibbons, wild elephants and hundreds of species of birds. It's also the wettest spot in the country and I, along with my wife and our two sons, aged 13 and 10, had arrived in July, the rainy season.

Happily, we soon discovered that the rainy season in a rainforest didn't mean a monotonous, off-putting drizzle. It meant spectacular, yet thankfully fairly brief, downpours late in the day or at night. In fact, other than to lend an added frisson to our stay, it scarcely affected us at all.

There's a clue, too, in the name of

the place we'd come to stay: Elephant Hills. A gathering of 35 luxury tents is set around a thatched central hub. Guests stay for two or three nights to experience family-friendly jungle hikes, head out on canoe journeys along the mud-coloured Sok River and go on trips to the mangrove swamps along the Andaman coast. But mostly, they're here to meet the elephants.

That's meet the elephants, not ride them. There are plenty of places in Thailand – a country that celebrates the elephant as its national animal – where visitors have the chance to take a pachyderm for a spin, but the practice has become controversial. At Elephant Hills, riding was abandoned in 2010,

“The elephants are happier; their working day now consists of playing in the pool, eating and a massage”



DESTINATION THAILAND

1. Shower time for the elephants
2. Elephants walk freely with Mahouts
3. Kayaking through Thailand
4. The lake at Rainforest Camp
5. Elephant enjoys an afternoon massage
6. Dinner of traditional Thai curry
7. Elephant Hills Rainforest Camp
8. Kayaking from the lodge

and a new approach introduced, called an “elephant experience”. Chris Kaiser, the property’s marketing manager, explained things: “The elephants are happier – their working day now consists of playing in the pool, eating... and a massage.”

MAHOUTS AND MUD BATHS

It certainly sounded like my idea of a good time! Just five minutes’ drive from the camp, we encountered a pair of young elephants cavorting in a muddy pond. They had fun spraying each other with water and snorting as they scooped mud off the bank, while their mahouts watched and cajoled them nearby. Then it was up to us to prepare lunch. We chopped green bananas and sugarcane, popping packets of food into their mouths as the animals scooped up any spillages from the ground with their extraordinarily flexible trunks. And the massage? That was mostly me, scrubbing their hide with coconut husks, while the boys sprayed the elephants – and each other – with a hose. Experience is the right word: it’s not something we’re likely to forget in a hurry.

“We try only to do what elephants do naturally,” said Chris. “Washing is something they really enjoy as well – and if they don’t like it, they can just wander off.”

Back at camp, we had a jungle routine of our own to get used to. Green curries and sweet-and-sour staples dominated our canteen-style dinners (ushered by three strikes on a giant gong), for which we settled around communal tables, children scampering among the throng. Our tents were splendid, decked out in colonial style with dark-wood flooring, dim electric lights and proper, wonderfully comfortable beds. The bathrooms completed the feeling that we were part



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of the jungle ecosystem; only mosquito nets separated us from the chirruping, ticking, croaking and twittering of the animals lurking beyond.

Guests at Elephant Hills also have the chance to stay the night at a nearby sister property, the Rainforest Camp at Cheow Lan Lake. Cheow Lan itself is remarkable – a 165 sq km artificial lake created by the construction of the Rajaprabha Dam. What was once low-lying jungle (and home to 385 families who had to be resettled) became gradually inundated, forming a vast hydro-electric reservoir. We crossed the dark, jade water on a longtail boat, powering round karst peaks that had once been mountain-tops, but which were now marooned as islands.

Rainforest Camp is a simple place. 15 luxury tents are placed on pontoons over the water as land-based camps aren’t

allowed in the national park. They’re perfect for swimming straight from your door and form a wonderful base for kayaking over the quiet, lapping water. We spent the afternoon splashing from the main deck, feeding the shoals of fish that congregated nearby and marvelling at the Langur monkeys creeping silently in the jungle foliage beyond.

The sun shone down as we paddled round those jungle shores, with not a cloud in the sky – ideal weather for a family holiday. But it’s rain that breathes life into this extraordinary part of the world. Make sure you listen out for it.

● Ben Ross and his family travelled to Thailand with Western & Oriental. A 13 night holiday for four, costs from £8,998 including flights, based on 2 adults and 2 children 11 yrs and under, with 3 nights at Elephant Hills. westernoriental.com 020 7666 1303



Eight of the best world festivals

From powdered dye and paint balloons in India to midnight baptisms in Ethiopia, we pick eight festivals to see in 2016

DAY OF THE DEAD IN MEXICO

Despite its spooky sounding name, there's nothing ghoulish about this Mexican fiesta that dates back to Aztec times. Mexicans have a refreshingly uplifting view on death – and at the beginning of each November they feast in celebration of life. Families gather to honour and remember their ancestors, opening their homes to the departed souls and teaching children about mortality. For visitors the highlight of the celebrations is the special effect scenery at the parades that take place

across the country. With faces painted as skulls and dressed in elaborate costumes as Aztec warriors or Mayan gods, characters whirl through the streets beating their feet to ritual drums. They're joined under the torchlight by giant papier-mâché skeletons decorated with jewellery and swinging life size puppets of Catrina, the Lady of the Dead.

When: November 1st

● *Rainbow Tours' 9 day Day of the Dead Culture & History Tour, including flights and transfers costs from £2,795 per person.*
rainbowtours.co.uk 020 7666 1304



TIMKAT IN ETHIOPIA

Throw off the post-Christmas blues with a trip to the Timkat Festival, where the Ethiopian Orthodox Church honours the baptism of Jesus Christ in the Jordan River with singing, dancing and ancient ceremony. Led by golden crowned priests draped in bright coloured robes, replicas of the Ark of the Covenant are carried from local churches through the streets amidst a fog of incense and the hum of joyful chanting. The festival culminates in the spraying of holy water over the faithful, while other pilgrims leap into the ceremonial waters for a full baptismal bath. This late night celebration keeps going until the early morning, and as the clock strikes 2am the crowds dance back through the streets to feast on chicken wot washed down with mead.

When: January 20th

● **Rainbow Tours' 13 day Ethiopia and Timkat Small Group Tour**, departing January 9th 2016 including flights and transfers, costs from £2,875 per person. rainbowtours.co.uk 020 7666 1304



WHITE NIGHTS IN ST PETERSBURG RUSSIA

The reward for St Petersburg residents having to shake under snow for half of the year is summer months where the sun not only burns brightly but sags rather than sets at night. This beautiful half-light is celebrated by the festival of White Nights; a cultural calendar packed with world class opera, concerts and ballet performances. But as impressive as this daily diet of blockbuster culture is, the best of the festival takes place outside under the twinkle of the midnight sun. Stroll along the riverfront to find stilt walkers, fire eaters and local bands providing the entertainment, while locals sneak off for a scoop or three of ice cream. The festival's oldest event is also the most spectacular – the Scarlet Sails sees a ship flying red sails parade under an immense firework display.

When: May - July

● **Regent Holidays' 6 day St Petersburg Short Break**, including flights, costs from £995 per person. regentholidays.co.uk 0117 280 0131



HOLI IN INDIA

Prepare to send the cold weather packing amidst a riot of colour at the Indian festival of Holi. Traditionally Holi is held during the last lunar cycle of the winter across India, Nepal and Sri

Lanka to celebrate the changing of the seasons and welcome the spring – and welcome it they certainly do. Locals stuff their pockets with powdered dye and arm themselves with paint balloons ready to be hurled straight into the euphoric, bustling throng. Known as the festival of love, the skies erupt with explosion upon explosion of colour; and young and old, stranger and friend all share the streets amidst the photogenic chaos. Beyond this clash of colours, there are also huge bonfires burning in the night sky, Bollywood dance troupes strutting their stuff and temples thronged with devotees.

When: March 23rd

● **Western & Oriental's 8 day Heritage Golden Triangle**, including flights, costs from £1,195 per person. westernoriental.com 020 7666 1303



SONGKRAN WATER FESTIVAL, THAILAND

There are two ways to celebrate the Thai New Year. In temples around the country you'll find crowds gathered to watch statues of Buddha given their yearly bath, while water is poured gently over the hands of elders and blessings sought for the months ahead. On the streets? Mayhem. This is the world's largest water war and locals and tourists, young and old take to the streets armed with buckets, balloons and super soakers to do battle. You'll find kids on street corners strafing passers-by and giant organised exchanges in town and city centres, where the carnival atmosphere is fuelled by streetside BBQ and beer. Amidst average temperatures of 31C, you'll be relieved that most of the water being chucked about is chilled.

When: April 13th-15th

● Western & Oriental's 11 day Thailand Highlights tour, including flights, costs from £1,719 per person. westernoriental.com 020 7666 1303

CHICAGO BLUES FESTIVAL USA

If there were ever a time that Chicago might possibly live and breathe blues music more than it already does, then it's during its dedicated Blues Festival. For three days Chicago's best blues musicians join the likes of Ray Charles and BB King to descend upon open air stages and fill the city with their soulful sounds. The best part? The events are free. The intimate stages are scattered throughout Grant Park and performances continue throughout the day well into the warm summer evenings. Head for the lakefront to see the big names belting out their big hits, or pick a smaller stage to find emerging artists learning whether they can impress the Chicago crowd.

When: June 10-12th

● Western & Oriental's 9 day Boston, New York & Chicago Three City Break, including flights costs from £1,690 per person. westernoriental.com 020 7666 1303



GREAT FISH DAY IN ICELAND

Iceland's Great Fish Day is the least famous festival in our list, and it is all the more enjoyable for it. Join the villagers in the small fishing port of Dalvík for this fishing community's

celebration of its connection with the sea. Fish burgers are grilled on the longest barbecue on the island and traditional dishes are served alongside experimental seafood cuisines. Try Japanese shrimp with homemade whole wheat bread and tuck into Iceland's famous dried fish, or sample anything from fresh salmon to marinated catfish, while local fishermen spin yarns about their time on the waves and bands strike up for sing-along sea-shanties. Many households cook up a pot of fish soup and open their home to visitors, who can judge which family recipe is the best in the village.

When: July 12-14th

● Regent Holidays' 8 day North Iceland Fly Drive, including flights, costs from £1,289 per person. regentholidays.co.uk 0177 280 0131

INTI RAYMI IN CUZCO, PERU

Wind the clock back more than 500 years and watch Incan civilization brought back to life. Inti Raymi, or the Festival of the Sun, was when Incans paid homage to the Sun God Inti. This heady mix of worship and sacrifices held during the winter solstice was how the Incans honoured Inti, so he would bring the sun back and crops could grow.

Today, the festival is again played out amidst the ruins of the ancient Incan capital in Cuzco. And while the sacrifices have been chopped, everything else is designed to be as faithful to the original ceremony as possible. Draped in red

and gold, pallbearers hoist the emperor and his golden throne on their shoulders in front of the Incan sun temple. He's joined by hundreds of chanting priests and face painted warriors dancing through the streets. The procession winds up to the Incan fortress at Sacsayhuaman, where the sacrifices are theatrically re-enacted and prophecies for the coming year read out.

When: June 24th

● *Rainbow Tours' 13 day Treasures of Peru tour, including flights, costs from £3,225 per person. rainbowtours.co.uk 020 7666 1304*



DESTINATION
JUST RETURNED

BIRDS AND BEASTS IN BRAZIL

Rainbow Tours' Latin America Expert, **Scott Mathias**, looks past the Amazon to find the world's largest wetland has fewer tourists and easier to find wildlife



DESTINATION JUST RETURNED



1

The sun is still sleeping when I'm awoken by a gentle knock on my door. It's 4:30am, and with the alarm clock ringing in my ears I slowly, sleepily remember that I'd agreed to an early morning kayak tour of the Pantanal wetlands. Then I remember the rest. As I shut off the clock and lurch through the door into

the clammy morning mist, it's crocodiles on my mind rather than canoes.

You see the Pantanal is full of them. This vast area of seasonal wetlands to the south of the Amazon jungle is criss-crossed by an extensive network of rivers and freshwater lakes. Often overlooked in favour of more famous and easier to reach rainforest, the Pantanal is one of the best destinations for wildlife spotting in all of South America – especially during the dry season (May to September) when the lakes recede and the animals congregate around the remaining water supplies. For crocodiles, it's essentially one big water park.

As my guide leads me carefully down to the banks of the river I can make out the shadows of these slumbering dinosaurs. Luckily it turns out I'm not the only one who doesn't want a close encounter, and, as we rustle through the reeds, they scatter into the distance.

With the crocodiles in retreat and my heart beating a little slower, I realise we are in complete and utter isolation. There are no other tourists, no light and

no noise – just our two canoes floating on the still waters. It's beautiful, but the silence is soon broken.

A SPECTACULAR SUNRISE

An orange hue creeps over the horizon and the Brazilian sun springs over the lake. This rainforest alarm clock announces the arrival of a new day to the thousands of animals that call this unique ecosystem home. Bird call shatters the silence as kingfishers break for the sky and macaws begin their day long chatter, while jaguar prowl and tapir grunt beneath the undergrowth.

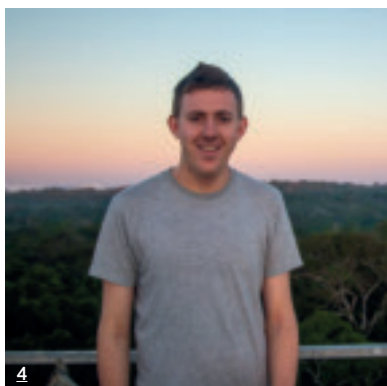
From the side of our canoe we spot a family of giant otters that has just stepped out from the marshy shallows. They reach nearly two metres in length, and as we paddle closer to get a better view a few sharp barks tell us to keep our distance. Such is the wealth of wildlife that the banks fast turn into a parade of mammals and birdlife. There are stork-like jabiru dipping their toes into the water, and before breakfast I have spotted Brazil's famous capybara as it scampered down to the river for an early morning drink.



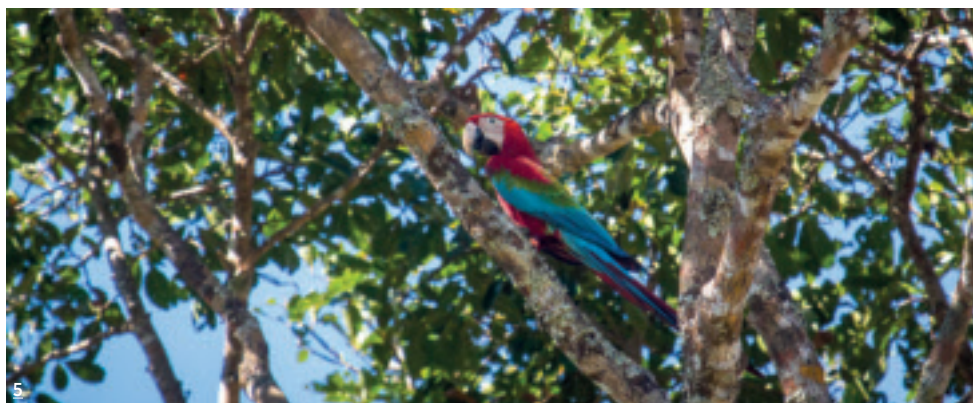
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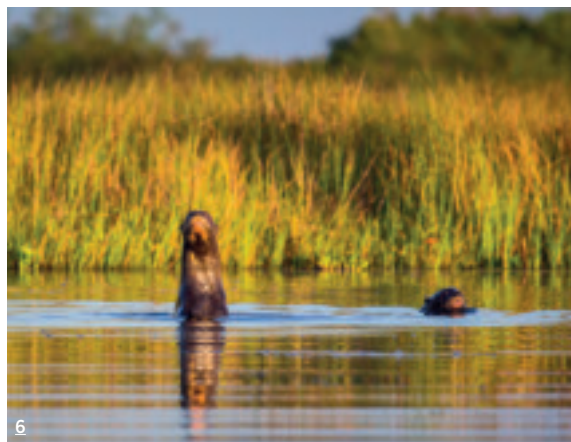


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1. In the canoe on the River Mutum
2. Blue Hyacinth Macaw
3. Native Pantanal Crocodile, the Yacare Caiman
4. Scott enjoys the Pantanal evening sun
5. Scarlet Macaw spotted in the trees
6. Greeted by Giant Otters in the river
7. The Rio Mutum Lodge



6



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“My trip through Brazil took me to Iguaçu falls, Rio de Janeiro and even the Amazon, but it’s the Pantanal and its wonderful wildlife that was the highlight”

After pulling in at the Rio Mutum eco-lodge, I reluctantly trade my canoe for a saddle and set off to explore the Pantanal by horseback. Horses play a vital role in the lives of the wetland communities and even to this day are used to round up cattle. Wading through wetland, savannah and scrubland, I’m introduced to colourful toucans, vibrant scarlet and hyacinth macaws and even a family of howler monkeys, hiding in the trees.

I’ve seen a lot as the sun starts to sag in the sky and we head for home, but I’m a little sorry not to have spotted Brazil’s iconic piranha. It turns out I needn’t have worried – this evening’s dinner hasn’t yet been caught. Instead, we’re handed rudimentary wooden poles, with a hook and a lump of meat. It turns out fishing for piranha is incredibly easy when you have half a pound of pork in the water. We pull the piranhas up, pass them on to the chef and tuck into them later in a salty soup.

Later, once the evening is well and truly underway, the air cools enough for us to return to the riverside once more. The massive crocodiles we side-stepped this morning are back on the banks. This time I think I’ll be a bit braver and get a little closer for a picture. As I take a step forward, one swivels his head and fixes me with a stare – this time it’s my turn to scuttle away.

● Scott travelled on Rainbow Tours’ Best of Brazilian Amazon and Pantanal tour, which costs from £4,160 including flights from London Heathrow for 12 nights, with 3 nights at Pousada Rio Mutum Lodge. rainbowtours.co.uk 020 7666 1304

On the Rails in Russia

AS THE TRANS-SIBERIAN EXPRESS RAILWAY APPROACHES ITS 100TH ANNIVERSARY, REGENT HOLIDAYS' TRAVEL EXPERT, **PETER WYBROW** JOURNEYS THROUGH SIBERIA ON THE TSAR'S GOLD

A regular public train traverses Siberia, crossing through miles of harsh landscape connecting Moscow and Beijing, but this was no commuter journey. Instead, in celebration of the Trans-Siberian Express Railway's approaching centenary, I was aboard the privately chartered Tsar's Gold on its voyage from Northern China to the Russian capital.

I had been unable to join the train at the start

of its journey in Beijing and opted instead to fly from Moscow to meet it as it chugged through Ulan-Ude. A disorientating five-hour flight, leaving at 9pm and arriving at 8am local time left me no choice but to hop aboard the Tsar's Gold riddled with jet lag. Famed for proudly displaying the largest known bust of Lenin in the town's square, Ulan-Ude sits slightly north of the Mongolian border and just to the east of Lake Baikal – our



DESTINATION JUST RETURNED

first stop. As the train rounded the southern tip of one of the largest lakes on Earth, our tracks aligned to a path following the shoreline and we had our first glimpse of the home of 1/5th of the world's freshwater.

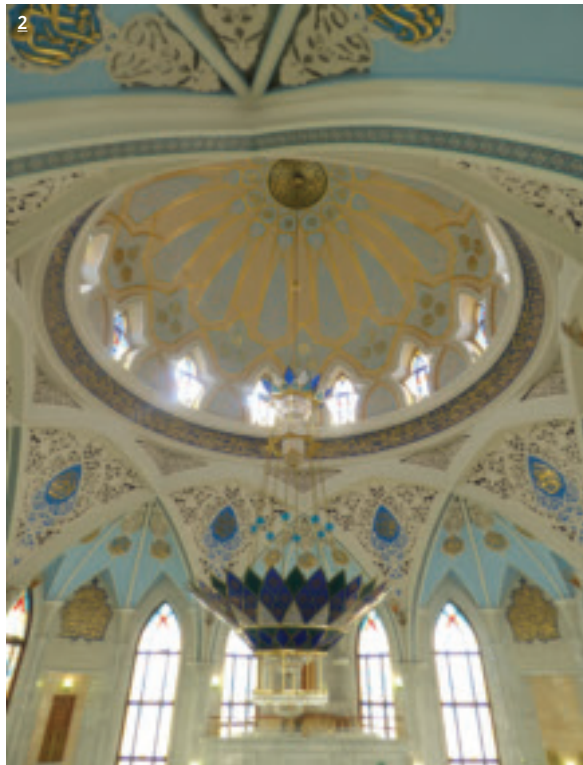
Lake Baikal is nothing short of spectacular. The vast expanse of silvery grey water is silently overlooked by snow-capped mountains and bordered by forest and smatterings of civilisation. It was late September but the trees had received the 'changing of the seasons' memo; autumn hung in the crisp air and the shore was decorated with rustling leaves of every colour, from vibrant reds and rusted oranges to deep golden browns.

FRONT OF THE TRAIN

Watching the scenery slip past the window from the comfort of the heated train interior was certainly a marvellous way to see the countryside, but my presiding memory of the trip was instead an afternoon spent on the thin platform that ran around the front of the locomotive. We hung over the barriers, faces turned to the sun, as we skirted around Lake Baikal, and childish dreams were fulfilled when I was allowed to sit in the driver's seat and pull the train horn.

As I watched my fellow travellers

"Lake Baikal is nothing short of spectacular. The vast expanse of silvery grey water is silently overlooked by snow-capped mountains and bordered by forest and smatterings of civilisation"





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- 1 Lake Baikal
- 2 Inside the Kul Sharif Mosque, Kazan
- 3 Kul Sharif Mosque illuminated at night
- 4 Skirting around Lake Baikal
- 5 Peter at St Basil's Cathedral, Red Square
- 6 The Kremlin, Moscow
- 7 Superior Compartment, Tsar's Gold



7



clench their teeth for an icy dip in the startlingly clear waters of the lake – an experience rumoured to add 5 years onto your life – I breathed a sigh of relief that I had forgotten to pack my swimming shorts. Instead, I turned my attention to the evening's entertainment – while most of our meals were served on board in dining carriages, tonight we were treated to a BBQ picnic on the shores of the lake.

Soon we were back in our carriages, gliding through an unusually early flurry of snow in the stark Siberian wilderness. The journey is a massive undertaking and a lot of time is spent on board, but the train itself was perfectly comfortable and carefully designed to retain a romance of a bygone era, complete with bars, dining cars and the option for en-suite rooms. I was, however, relieved to learn that our Russian tour guide, Svetlana, had a range of activities planned to keep us entertained and educated; from learning to speak a little conversational Russian at the bar to caviar and traditional vodka tastings.

IN TATARSTAN

We chugged on past traditionally Russian Irkutsk, through the pretty architecture of Novosibirsk and into Yekaterinburg, a university town with a refreshingly different, young and trendy demographic. But it was Kazan, perched on the banks of the Volga River, which stole the show for me. A collision of colourful architecture lines the streets of the pretty old Tartar capital and reflects the fascinating blend of Slavic Russian and nationalist Tartar peoples to which the city is home. Our tour took us to the walled limestone Kremlin that, in parts, dates back to the 17th century and now houses the enormous blue domes of the Kul Sharif Mosque. Between the government buildings and the disused armoury, pleasant green smatterings of grass complete the photogenic look, as

“The journey is a massive undertaking and a lot of time is spent on board, but the train itself was perfectly comfortable and carefully designed to retain a romance of a bygone era”

it towers over the over the man-made lake in the city centre.

Our final stop was Moscow where we joined the throngs of tourists after a week in our isolated tour group, to visit the beloved sights of the Russian capital. The immense fortified Kremlin and the Red Square are not to be missed by any visitor to Moscow and were the first items on our agenda, followed by the iconic, vibrantly painted St Basil's Cathedral – an impressive sight in the light of day, and magical illuminated at night.

With our final evening rapidly coming to an end, it seemed only polite that we attempt to use the 'conversational Russian' that Svetlana had taught us. And we did so in a bar, subjecting unimpressed locals to our newfound 'skills'. But before too long, the final whistle blew on our journey. Swapping screeching iron wheels on the rails for a pair of wings and a smooth tarmacked runway, we left Russia for our final homeward-bound leg of the journey.

● Peter travelled on the *Tsar's Gold* with Regent Holidays. A 15 night journey costs from £3,795 including flights from London Heathrow, with 9 nights' accommodation on board and 6 nights' hotel en route. regentholidays.com 0117 280 0131



DESTINATION
JUST RETURNED



INDIAN SURPRISE



WESTERN & ORIENTAL'S **KATE POPHAM** TAKES HER FIRST STEPS THROUGH INDIA

Look, down there... There's a man asleep on a haystack!' This was just one sight that came to be added to my list of 'Indian surprises' – unexpected encounters that captured my imagination as a first-time visitor to India. I'd spotted this farmer stealing a nap as we floated over the outskirts of Jaipur in a hot air balloon, passing farms, villages and quarries

below. Flying close to the ground, we watched mothers preparing children for school and saw the slow progress of farm workers cutting crops by hand in the early light of dawn. It was these snapshots of daily life that would prove to be as memorable as India's best-known sites.

From elephants hogging the hard shoulder to the classic vintage cars that swerved around them, Jaipur more than

delivered its share of Indian surprises. Even the city's famous colour was unexpected. It's no secret that Jaipur is known as the Pink City thanks to the facades and fortress walls painted in coral hues, but I hadn't anticipated the warm glow the colour throws over the city or the way it fades and follows the sun.

At Jaipur's heart is the City Palace, built in 1728 by Jai Singh and later added to by successive Maharajas





- 1 Shimla
- 2 Hawa Mahal, Jaipur's Palace of the Winds
- 3 Vintage car and driver in Jaipur

of Jaipur. The turrets, arches and colonnaded walkways around this impeccable complex of gardens and courtyards reflect Rajput, Islamic and European influences, and tell the tale of the forces that shaped the city itself.

Older still than the City Palace is the Amber Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage Site a short distance outside Jaipur. Set on the high ground with views stretching miles around, the fort is most frequently reached on the back of an elephant and offers yet more stunning architecture. Built to exacting standards of opulence, its walls are inlaid with precious stones and mirrors that glisten in the sunlight to reflect back rose coloured hues and shimmering floral patterns.



In India, colour is everywhere. Jaipur's state of Rajasthan is known particularly for the vibrant saris worn by its women, tones matched by the pyramids of exotic fruits and flower garlands sold on market stalls. Even the roads offer their own rainbow. Travelling to our next destination, Shimla, we passed a constant stream of brightly hand-painted trucks bringing the fresh harvest of blush red Himachal apples bumping down the mountain.

KING OF THE HILL

Shimla, situated 2,200 metres up in the Himalayan foothills, was established as the summer capital of the Raj in 1864 because of its temperate climate. Colonels and colonials could retreat up the hill when the temperature became too great; and in winter, even enjoy a dusting of snow.

My base in Shimla was Wildflower Hall. Perched on top of a ridge with

stunning views of the Himalayan ranges in the distance, it's no wonder this was a sought-after residence for Viceroy and top-ranking British officials like Lord Kitchener. The views may not have changed since the days of the Raj, but the luxurious comfort has only increased – the infinity hot tub after a day on the road was a welcome treat.

British colonial influence is evident in Shimla through its mock-Tudor buildings and its famous mountain railway which hugs the steep cliffsides.

With traffic barred from the city centre it's an easy place to spend a few days exploring the churches and lodges that look as though they have been lifted from the Cotswolds. Look closely enough and you might just stumble on another Indian surprise – a red postbox at the side of the road. But at its heart it's still very much Indian; from the clutch of impressive temples and breakneck bazaars, to the families



of macaques that play in the streets and trees.

EMBRACE THE EXPERIENCE

In the 2011 film, *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, Dame Judi Dench's character Evelyn comments about India 'Initially you're overwhelmed. But gradually, you realise it's like a wave. Resist and you'll be knocked over. Dive into it, and you'll swim out the other side.' She's right – and that is India's biggest surprise. Embrace the noise, the chaos and the colour and you'll have a fantastic time – and you'll probably be back.

There's a reason India is often referred to as a sub-continent rather than just a country. Its sheer size and variety of cultures, landscapes and experiences are impossible to encapsulate in just one visit. Don't be tempted to try and tick every box in two weeks – pick a few areas and explore them well. Once India captures your heart, you're sure to

want to return. And next time, you'll find yourself on a completely new holiday full of completely new surprises.

● Kate travelled to India with Western & Oriental. A 13 day tour visiting Delhi, Agra, Jaipur, Shimla and Mumbai, including flights and 3 nights in Wildflower Hall costs from £2,545 per person. westernoriental.com 020 7666 1303

- 4 Farm workers with their cart
- 5 Wildflower Hall in Shimla
- 6 Kate exploring Jaipur
- 7 Hot air balloon ride over Jaipur
- 8 Monkey in Shimla





Faroe Islands: Islands of Wings

Set in the forgotten reaches of the North Atlantic, **Fiona Halliday** braves the wind and water of the Faroe Islands to find a frontier landscape where birdlife remains unruffled by visitors

From the mouths of what looked like hundreds of rabbit holes dotting the shallow hillside came a low groaning, as if whatever was hidden inside was hungry. Was this the sound of the 'Huldafolk', the famous hidden people of the Faroes? A bright beak appeared from a burrow nearby and Harold, my stout Faroese guide, smiled. It was the famous Faroese puffin instead.

Mykines is the most westerly of the Faroe Islands and faces the great nothingness of the Atlantic. We stood

on the edge of the Lambi puffin colony: a bed of feathers below a sky filled with hundreds of puffins feeding. Suddenly, something broke the great wheel of flight overhead – I saw the menace of the great Arctic Skua, gliding silently past searching for an easy meal and sending the puffins plunging for cover. Stood on a wind-whipped rock in utter isolation, this was the first of several unceremonious encounters with birds I would enjoy in the Faroes.

FROM ARTIC TERNS TO TEACAKES

The Faroe Islands are a group of 18 volcanic islands of astonishing layered rocks topped with greenness, the final stepping stones of northern Europe. Though in the most tempest-tossed corner of the North Atlantic, there is a lingering balminess in the air, sweetened by the Gulf Stream. Their beauty is luminous yet austere.



1. Adult Atlantic Puffins on the island Mykines
2. Eurasian Oystercatcher, national bird of the Faroes
3. Wind and rain-battered cliffs
4. Gásadalur waterfall, Faroe Island
5. Tórshavn, capital of Faroe Islands



A holiday to the Faroes is not your typical safari; here you need fog lights and binoculars for the things to be seen are small and cling to the vertiginous side of a 300m cliff or the foaming surface of the sea. From Kittiwakes and Arctic Terns to Storm Petrels, Puffins, Gannets and Guillemots, all the great marine wanderers of the North gather here to breed. The British came here too briefly during WWII and left behind a few things including the airport, and a fondness for teacakes and fish and chips.

'We are crossing the Atlantic,' Harold remarks as we arrive at the tiny bridge that separates Mykines from Mykinesholmur, and who's name, Atlantarhavsbrugvin, takes longer to say than to cross it. Around us spectacular vistas open up and we find the Holmgjogv colony of kittiwakes shrieking dementedly at one another. He tells us about the albino

puffin that once lived here which had a special dispensation from being hunted.

MEETING THE TJALDUR

The boat ride to the unpronounceable cliffs of Vestmannabjörgini felt like a trip to Shutter Island. A German in a tweed hat remarked of the gloom: 'Finest mist I've ever seen!' in a spirited attempt at jollity, and we moored in a dark grotto where everything dripped. Despite making the journey over, as far as I could see there were few birds at Vestmanna. Jens-Kjeld Jensen, the Faroes' resident ornithologist has watched populations shrink since the 1970s. One catastrophic breeding season follows another; leaving seabirds everywhere in decline. Described as 'the canary in the mine', this loss indicates a more pervasive change as the North Atlantic enters an age dictated by rising sea temperatures.

I later stuck my head out of the window of my hotel room and spotted a nesting 'tjaldur,' the national bird of the Faroes. I could see its exquisite long, deadly beak for prying open and smashing molluscs, and the red rimmed eye. They say it arrives promptly, on the 12th of March and departs on the 12th of September, making it the only punctual thing on the Faroes.

We watched the mist lift from our respective perches. A sudden luminous blue stole over Tórshavn bay, the pearls of rain on the top of the bird's inky, dark head gleamed and the high cliffs of Nolsoy were revealed. That's the Faroes: crowned with wind and storm, beauty and stoicism.

● Fly direct to the Faroe Islands with Atlantic Airways. Departing twice weekly from Edinburgh, return fares to Vagar Airport start from £206 including taxes, charges and fees. regentholidays.co.uk

Six of the best train journeys

Iconic routes through spectacular scenery in our pick of the train trips where the journey is as much of an adventure as the destination



ROVOS RAIL – RAIL AND RIVER SAFARI IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The words 'African Holiday' often conjure up images of bouncing around in the back of a jeep, searching for exotic wildlife while sporting outfits that celebrate every shade of beige. But you don't have to be an intrepid explorer to marvel at Africa's natural beauty. Rediscover the romance of a bygone era aboard one of the classic locomotives run by Rovos Rail. Combine an exhilarating Zimbabwe safari, a stay at the colossal Victoria Falls and a cruise down the Zambezi River with a stylish journey through Eastern Africa. Set off from Johannesburg and watch scenic South Africa slide past the window, before rolling north through Botswana to cross the Tropic of Capricorn. Choice of beige, up to you.

● **Tour listing:** Rainbow Tours' 9 day Rovos Rail, River & Waterfall Safari Tour costs from £3,825 per person including flights and transfers. rainbowtours.co.uk 020 7666 7304

TREN CRUCERO – INTO THE ANDES BY TRAIN

Established in 1908 but only recently restored to service, Ecuador's coast to mountain rail route once brought pioneers to the country's hinterland.



ORIENT EXPRESS – VENICE, VERONA AND LAKE GARDA TO LONDON

Skip the train on the way in and fly to Italy to make the most of the vineyards that carpet the hills around Lake Garda. Tear yourself away from its beautiful shores to journey to Verona, the setting for Romeo and Juliet, and explore one of Italy's most romantic and elegant cities, before getting lost in the cobbled streets and canals of Venice. Sending shivers down the spine of Agatha Christie fans, few railways are more widely known than the Orient Express. The homeward stretch of this journey takes place in the beautifully restored vintage carriages of the Venice Simplon Orient express, whisking you back to London in luxury, via Paris.

● **Tour listing:** Western & Oriental's 11 day Venice, Verona and Lake Garda Tour costs from £3,695 per person including flights. westernoriental.com 020 7666 1303

Today, the fin-de-siècle designed carriages that are pulled in stretches by restored steam locomotives retain a sense of heritage, but the luxury armchairs and dedicated sightseeing veranda are aimed at giving visitors front row seats to the country's dramatic scenery. From the UNESCO listed capital of Quito, the train climbs through Andean foothills to take in snow-capped mountain peaks, mist shrouded volcanoes and magnificent valleys en route to coastal Guayaquil. The highlight is a dramatic 500m climb through a series of steep switchbacks known as the Devil's Nose.

● **Tour listing:** Rainbow Tours' 11 day Scenic Ecuador by Train Tour costs from £3,075 per person including flights and transfers. rainbowtours.co.uk 020 7666 7304



ROYAL RAJASTHAN ON WHEELS – DELHI TO RAJASTHAN

Designed to capture the opulence of the palaces that once dominated Rajasthan, the Royal Rajasthan is a five star stay on wheels. Intricate wood carvings and plush fabrics with Rajput motifs capture the region's style, while the silver service in the restaurant car and onboard spa let you live like royalty. During the tour you'll get a full-bodied taste of Rajasthan's mesmerizing landscapes and magnificent palaces, including India's beloved icon; the Taj Mahal. Starting in Delhi, take a culture-packed path through Jodhpur to visit the Meharangarh Fort, spot tigers at Ranthambore National Park, see Udaipur's lake palaces, explore Jaipur, Bharatpur and Chittaurgarh, and the oldest city in the world – Varanasi.

● **Tour listing:** Western & Oriental's 11 day Royal Rajasthan on Wheels Tour costs from £3,599 per person including flights. westernoriental.com 020 7666 1303

TRANS-SIBERIAN ON THE TSAR'S GOLD - MOSCOW TO BEIJING

The world's greatest train journey stretches 7,865km and has been attracting adventurers with ambition for more than a century. While the Great Wall and Red Square are the grandstand attractions at either end, it's the experiences in between that stand out. Stop at the Siberian village of Listvyanka to explore the stunning shores of Lake Baikal, a UNESCO listed lake set amidst foreboding cliffs and ancient forest. Across the border in Mongolia spend time with a nomadic family in Terelj National Park, and get to know a way of life unchanged for centuries. Enjoy this grand route from Moscow to Beijing (or vice versa) in equally grand style aboard the deluxe Tsar's Gold private train.

● **Tour listing:** Regent Holidays' 14 day Moscow to Beijing Trans-Siberian Railway Tour Costs from £1,950 per person. regentholidays.co.uk 0117 280 0131



THROUGH PERSIA BY TRAIN – IRAN

This unique train journey takes in ancient citadels and Persian palaces, travelling across lands where some of

the world's greatest kingdoms once rose and fell. Voyage from Kerman, the ancient trading city set in the heart of the desert and grand Persian paradise gardens of Shiraz, to the Golestan Palace and spectacular bejewelled Qajar throne in Tehran. In between you'll explore the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Pasargadae and Persepolis, including the perfectly preserved bas relief carvings and crumbling palaces. Other highlights include the stunning blue domed Shah Mosque overlooking Esfahan's grand square, as well as the sprawling gold-topped Haram shrine complex in Iran's holiest city, Mashhad.

● **Tour listing:** Contact a Regent Holidays Travel Expert for 2016 tour dates and pricings. regentholidays.co.uk 0117 280 0131



Turkey to Iran A JOURNEY *THROUGH ANCIENT* PERSIA

Welcomed by dignitaries and drums,
Tom Chesshyre is on his best behaviour
as he becomes one of the first British
travellers to cross the border on the
Istanbul to Tehran train



DESTINATION TURKEY AND IRAN

A

sign in the ticket office of Iran's Khoy station has been put up in readiness for our visit: "We heartily welcome honourable tourists." It is close to midnight. Drummers and pipers are playing. Officials in olive uniform line the platform.

We – the honourable tourists – disembark our red, white and blue Turkish State Railways train to have our passports checked. As we enter a waiting room, the officials board the train to check that all is indeed honourable (no stashes of booze on board; alcohol is banned in Iran).

A few minutes later, after a flurry of thumps of stamps on passports, we are in! We've crossed the Turkey-Iran border and are on our way to visit some of the globe's most famous, but little visited, archaeological sites and marvellous ancient Persian cities.

There's a buzz among the 65 passengers. The train has been chartered for our journey and it feels as though we are stepping into a secretive world that is opening up just for us. Starting in Istanbul we are to cover about 2,700 miles, looping beyond Tehran to Isfahan and Shiraz, before ending in Iran's capital.

It has to be one of the world's greatest train journeys and now that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has given the green light to safe tourist

travel in Iran it seems likely that many more trains will cross into Khoy in the dead of night.

The Turkish segment of the trip acts as an appetiser – a tasty one – to the main course of Iran. After taking in Istanbul's Blue Mosque, Hagia Sophia and Topkapi Palace we board the train and travel through the night, waking to eat breakfast as the snow-capped peaks of Mount Erciyes pass by and stopping not long after to visit Cappadocia.

The otherworldly landscape of caramel-orange fairy chimneys and caves opens up. The hilltop castle of Uchisar overlooks 12th century churches at Goreme and circular stones still guard the underground cities – put there hundreds of years ago to be rolled across to prevent attack by marauding invaders.

Our train chugs on. The scenery turns mountainous and rugged and sheer cliffs plunge into deep valleys as we weave through jet-black tunnels. Our journey through this moonscape follows the muddy River Euphrates and we disembark as our train is sent by ferry across the vast expanse of Lake Van.

So to Iran; via the pipers and drummers of Khoy. Our first daylight view of the "axis of evil" is of a soft pink light rolling across undulating grassland and rose-hued mountains.

Eventually, we arrive at Zanjan to visit the breathtaking brick dome of the Oljeitu Mausoleum. Outside, anti-internet placards line the streets – one depicts a satellite dish connected to a grenade as though it might destroy anyone who logs online. Along with omnipresent images of Ayatollah Khomeini, leader of the revolution against the Western-backed Shah, there is no mistaking that we have entered a country where tension still hangs in the air.

We clatter onwards overnight to Yazd to visit the Towers of Silence. These circular stone structures, created





- 1 Men resting inside covered arches of Allahverdi Khan Bridge over the Zayandeh River at Isfhan
- 2 Women by entrance to the Jame Mosque at Yazd, Iran
- 3 Preserved bas relief carvings, Persepolis
- 4 Jame Mosque at Yazd, Iran
- 5 Tom in Turkey
- 6 Spices at Zanzan market, Iran

as early as 1500 BC by followers of the Zoroastrian way of life, stand on hillocks overlooking the city. Zoroastrians, of which there are about 20,000 still in Iran, believe that instead of burying their dead, bodies should be left in the open to be devoured by vultures.

Hitting the rails again, Isfahan is our next destination – and what a place. The central bazaar is set around a huge square and the city is filled with beautiful arched bridges that cross the dried beds of the River Zayandeh. Mosques with soaring blue domes and labyrinthine interiors are dotted around the periphery of a jamboree of stalls, some selling luxurious carpets.

Isfahan and Shiraz are, on the surface at least, remarkably laid-back, attractive cities and though Shiraz is without its famous wine, some locals suggest illicit alcohol does exist. The archaeological highlights of Pasargadae and Persepolis are not to be missed. The rows of soldiers in the walled palace of Darius the Great, (for a while home to Alexander the Great) have astoundingly preserved curly beards and beady eyes – making them one of the wonders of the ancient world.

Then, before we know it, we are whizzing up to Tehran to take in ancient palaces and see the National Jewels Museum – home to the world's largest pink diamond and possessions of former Shahs – and our 2,700 miles are up.

A series of indelible images is etched in our minds. We have visited one of the planet's most troubled regions, seen the sights, behaved honourably (we hope), and watched the world go by – from our train windows.

● Tom travelled through Persia with Regent Holidays. A 15 night Highlights of Iran tour, journeying from Tabriz to Shiraz costs from £3,495, including flights from London Heathrow. Visit the Regent Holidays website for 2016 tour dates. regentholidays.com 0117 280 0131





Sit back and spa in Vietnam

Forget picking just a few of your favourite treatments, at these all-inclusive spa stays in Vietnam you can spend your holiday working through the full menu

FUSION MAIA DA NANG

You know when your hotel hands you a pair of bamboo sandals on arrival that the next few days will be dedicated to relaxing. Set amidst tropical gardens and waterfalls and perched on the beachfront, the Fusion Maia is a complete retreat. There are sixteen spa treatment rooms and two outdoor



massage pavilions, as well as saunas, steam rooms and beauty salons. You can choose two free spa treatments during each day of your stay, and there is plenty to pick from; herbal foot baths for aching feet, an aromatherapy facial for your skin or a coconut envelope wrap for that full body refresh.

The commitment to make you unwind is continued in the rooms. Simple but sleek interiors feature designer cut teak furniture, while each villa gets its own private courtyard, garden and pool. When you're ready to share stories of the day's treatments, head for Vietnamese and Asian tapas at the Tonic Lounge or top notch western food at the Five Dining Room. If you do manage to peel yourself away from the pampering, the hotel offers a complimentary shuttle bus to see the heritage town centre in Hoi An.

Don't miss: The infinity pool that stretches out over the South China Sea is very special.



WESTERN & ORIENTAL IS A FUSION RESORT EXPERT. ENJOY FREE NIGHT
WHEN BOOKING A STAY AT THE FUSION RESORT



FUSION RESORT NHA TRANG

Built on the sand dunes of Vietnam's stunning south central coastline, Fusion Resort Nha Trang makes the most of its beautiful natural surroundings. There are uninterrupted sea views from across almost the whole property, while the ocean facing villas have hammocks where you can watch the water lap beneath your outstretched legs.

It is this backdrop that makes the spa experience here so special – and it's very special indeed. Again, you'll enjoy your choice of two

spa treatments a day. The spa philosophy here is locally influenced, so you'll find signature treatments that combine elements from Cham culture with Ayurveda techniques. The massages, facials and other experiences are also often combined with naturopathy based on locally grown herbs and essences. All inclusive spa breaks and kids usually don't mix, but the Fusion Nha Trang is well set up to pamper the little ones in your life just as well. With a water slide, trampoline and zip line, the kids club is one of the best in the region.

Don't miss: The hotel can arrange for scuba diving or a PADI course for beginners so you can enjoy the stunning sea life.



WHY DA NANG?

While the skyscrapers are rising in Vietnam's third biggest city, Da Nang is still best celebrated for its long stretches of boardwalk and beach life; from seaside spots lined with beer tents to hidden coves where you wade into the waves. It also has a growing reputation as a culinary destination. Few cuisines have turned more taste buds in recent years than Vietnamese and Da Nang has some fantastic culinary courses where you can learn the difference between your cao lau and cha ca. You are also down the road from one of the country's most handsome heritage towns, Hoi An. It's well preserved and atmospheric mix of French villas, Chinese ancestral halls and Japanese bridges tell the story of a fishing port that once attracted merchants from across the world.



WHY NHA TRANG?

Set on the South Vietnamese coastline, Nha Trang can boast a sweep of soft golden sand beaches and inviting water. But it's a town and region that really rewards the adventurer. Step beyond the bay and the breakwater and you'll

find a clutch of tropical islands waiting to be explored. Join one of the boat tours headed for the coral reef, where you can drop anchor and snorkel with bat fish and seahorses. The dive sites in the area are also some of the best in Vietnam. Back in town you'll

find Nha Trang hopping at night. From stylish boutiques in rescued French maisons serving up lemon and basil hinted cocktails, to glitzy glamour spots that attract the country's movers and shakers, the nightlife here is said to have no rival.

OFFERS, FREE DAILY SPA TREATMENTS AND 10% EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT
NHA TRANG OR FUSION MAIA 45 DAYS IN ADVANCE

DESTINATION
SÃO TOMÉ & PRÍNCIPE





IMPRESSIONS OF PRÍNCIPE

Mike Unwin gets caught up in the magic of Africa's second smallest country

“Leve, leve,” implored my guide Carlos, as I stumbled and sweated up the steep hillside from the beach. This local expression, also conveniently spelt out on his T-shirt, translates as ‘easy does it’. In the sweltering equatorial humidity it was sound advice. And it struck me, as I slumped down among the huge buttress roots of an oka tree, that it was also an apt description of life on Príncipe. Nothing much seemed to happen in a hurry here.

I confess that I had barely heard of my bijou island destination before I boarded the plane. For the record, the independent state of São Tomé and Príncipe lies in the Gulf of Guinea, some 300 kilometres off the coast of Gabon. Príncipe is the smaller, more northerly

and much the less populous of two main islands, home to around five per cent of the total 188,000 population. Arriving by air – a 30-minute hop from São Tomé – ramped up the sense of adventure, as the Jurassic Park-style panorama of jungle-clad volcanoes swung into view below and we banked down to the red-earth airstrip.

Bom Bom Island Resort, my home for the week, lies on the northern tip of the island. With its thatched chalets overlooking two white-sand beaches, and its wooden boardwalk snaking out to a tiny islet, where the restaurant perches over a glittering reef, it had the allure of a Caribbean hideaway. But wandering the shoreline, I soon found any Caribbean comparisons fell away. There was simply nothing else there:

DESTINATION SÃO TOMÉ & PRÍNCIPE

1. The wild, tropical coastline of northern Príncipe
2. Príncipe green snake – a harmless reptile endemic to the island
3. Flying fish drying on the racks at Praia Abade

no water sports, marina or luxury spa, just a succession of empty crescent beaches, punctuated by steep jungle headlands. One morning's walk led me to the impossibly picturesque Praia Abade, a small fishing village, where the men fixed nets, perched on their dugout pirogues, while the women laid out salted flying fish on the racks and pigs rooted beneath the coconut palms. It felt utterly removed from any other world.

Naturalists have described São Tomé and Príncipe as an African Galapagos. And, as I caught my breath on that jungle headland, the archipelago's unique biodiversity was in abundant evidence. We're not talking Big Five here: marooned from the African mainland, large mammals are in short supply. But fauna and flora of a subtler appeal, much of it endemic, give Príncipe a special significance. Amid the forest greenery I watched Príncipe golden weavers constructing their intricate nests, spied Dohrn's thrush-babblers foraging for insects among the canopy and admired the jewel-like brilliance of a fly-past Príncipe Kingfisher. None of these species occurs anywhere else on Earth – and neither does the Príncipe green snake, whose elegant emerald coils slipped discreetly through the understorey below me.

More familiar wildlife includes the African grey parrots that winged raucously over the forest and the



white-tailed tropicbirds that wheeled around the impressive volcanic outcrop known as Jockey's Cap. Pointing out beyond the breakers, Carlos explained that humpback whales cavort in these waters on migration. And later, when we scrambled down to the two kilometre stretch of beach known as Praia Grande, we found the amphibious landing-craft

tracks of huge green sea turtles that had hauled out the night before to lay their eggs.

LOST LINKS TO LISBOA

But Príncipe is not only about beaches and wildlife. The islands have a fascinating history, which extends from the murky depths of the slave trade – by which they were first populated – to independence in 1975. Today this story is embodied in the grand old plantation estates, known as roças (pronounced 'hossas', with a guttural 'h'), of the Portuguese colonials. Each was once the centre of a thriving community. Today they are fallen monuments of colonialism: greenery from the surrounding forest spills over their crumbling walls, as though impatient to reclaim the land, while the descendants of the old workforce have now taken up residence inside.

At Roca Sundry I found the grand house still carefully preserved, part of a UNESCO heritage project that embraces the whole island. Here my guide Rita





- 4. Children play on old plantation machinery at Roca de Sundy, a former Portuguese sugar and cacao estate.
- 5. Beach-combing at Bom Bom resort turns up a shore crab
- 6. The fishing village of Praia Abade, northeast Principe
- 7. Chalets at Bom Bom Resort
- 8. The huge buttress roots of an oka tree

Alves, a Portuguese anthropologist working with the local community, explained how the colony grew rich on sugar, coffee and cacao, with labour imported from Angola and Cape Verde. She pointed out the old drying kilns for the cacao pods, the stables, the hospital and the overgrown railway track built to transport produce down to the coast for export. Straying from one cobbled pathway, I found children clambering over an ancient steam engine – now a museum-piece jungle gym. The place seemed to encapsulate the island's extraordinary history: the ruined grandeur of its Portuguese past buttressed with the tin-roofed make-do of its African present.

This island's unique blend of nature and history was evident in its very flora, which offered a seamless continuum of the genuinely wild and the once-cultivated-gone-wild. Thus, as we tramped among the buttress roots and lianas of what felt like virgin rainforest, Cau pointed out the swollen pods of cacao trees, the tendrils of pepper

plants and the pungent, over-ripe stench of fallen jackfruit, over which ants and butterflies swarmed.

By the end of my week – one in which I'd hiked beaches, snorkelled with octopuses, dined on the fresh produce of forest and ocean, meandered through village and street market, and bumped by 4WD into the jungle interior – I was feeling thoroughly steeped in the island's magic. But there was still one treat to come.

On my final night, I returned to Praia Grande with a small group of conservation volunteers. We scrambled down the forest slopes through a scuttling army of land crabs to the moonlit sands, where we soon found what we were looking for: a fine stippling revealed where a clutch of green turtle eggs had hatched moments earlier. Had we missed them? Not quite. Carlos emerged into the torchlight, holding up a flipper-flailing hatchling between thumb and forefinger. We admired the exquisite little creature for a minute then released it. "Leve leve," I murmured, as it

scrambled down the runway of our torch beams towards the surf.

● Mike Unwin travelled to São Tomé and Príncipe with Rainbow Tours. An 11-day holiday costs from £2,150 including flights, accommodation and transfers. rainbowtours.co.uk 020 7666 1304





Texture *of* Iceland

The only restaurant in the UK where you can try some Icelandic cooking, **Rory Boland** finds out what Michelin starred Skeyr tastes like at Texture

This is my second encounter with an Icelandic volcano. The first was sat in an airport while Eyjafjallajökull rained fire and smoke across Northern Europe and grounded the continent's planes. The second is more satisfying. In proof revenge can be sweet or savoury, I'm tucking into lava salt. I'm eating a volcano. With the consistency of gunpowder and about the same bite, the lava salt and sour dough bread starter at Texture is a glimpse of what's to come – bold, but never extravagant, Nordic cooking with flashes of Icelandic inspiration.

From a first glance you might not notice the Icelandic touches at Texture. Hidden inside a Georgian townhouse, the English exterior gives way to an urbane and grown-up interior of metallic lamps and smart brown lounge chairs. But from the glass cabinet stuffed with driftwood, to the discreet bottle of Brennivin stowed behind the

bar, the hints are there, before paintings of lava erupting in the main dining room give the game away.

The menu here leans heavily on fish, although lamb and suckling pig also make an appearance. The pick of my starters from the tasting menu, (after I've reluctantly released the bowl of lava salt), is a collection of soft pink, red and yellow Lancaster heritage beetroot. Earthy, sweet and soft the crumbly texture of the goats' cheese that they're served with is every bit as satisfying as the balance of sharpness it adds.

TASTE AND TEXTURE

Unsurprisingly, given the name, texture has been given as much thought as flavour by the kitchen. The crackling skin of roasted succulent pork belly is twinned with a smooth, tart apple purée and crispier strands of red cabbage, while gently smoked salmon fillet is paired with the crunch of diced



green apple and laced with a hit of wasabi – each bite not only offers a new flavour but differing consistency and a slightly different experience. The cod, the highlight of any Icelandic menu, is reliably brilliant. The barely beans bring balance to the texture, while the almonds and capers mixed in give it an earthy, licked with flame flavour that lasts.

Almonds, capers and glasses of Chardonnay confirm that the Icelandic connection only runs so deep. Chef Agnar Sverrisson tells me 'I think it would be very difficult to run an Icelandic restaurant in London or to offer any traditional Icelandic dish. We have a much greater influx of different cultures here, and that's what defines the food culture. My menu blends modern European food with Scandinavian influences and the best in British produce. But I do use some fantastic Icelandic ingredients, such as lamb, cod, langoustines, skyr and seaweed.'



'I do use some fantastic Icelandic ingredients, such as lamb, cod, langoustines, skyr and seaweed'

If there is a definitively Icelandic dish, it's found on the dessert menu. Skyr is a national obsession in Iceland – a thick yogurt-like softy cheese that locals consider close to super food. At Texture it comes served on a bed of crumbled rye oats – fold these into the creamy Skyr for a sweet crunch. A little like the restaurant itself, it's light, subtle but full of flavour.

Type Icelandic restaurant UK into Google and Texture isn't just the number one result, it's the only result. They may not be flying the Icelandic flag from the roof or slicing up shark in the kitchen, but the dishes at Texture are a sympathetic and nuanced introduction to the best bits of Icelandic cooking. And they have volcanoes on the wall.

How much: Despite the Michelin star over the door, prices at Texture are reasonable. Mains start at £30 and a full dinner will stretch to around £80 with wine. The set menu at lunch offers the best value with three courses for £33.

34 Portman Street, London, W1H 7BY,
020 7224 0028
Order Regent Holidays' Iceland Summer Brochure.



CHEF'S SPECIAL

ONE DISH TO TRY IN YOUR RESTAURANT AND WHY?

Anjou pigeon, which is our signature dish and has been on the menu from day one.

THE ONE DISH YOU ALWAYS EAT WHEN YOU GO HOME?

Icelandic fish stew, (plokkiðskur).

IF YOU COULD EAT AT ONLY ONE RESTAURANT IN ICELAND, WHICH ONE WOULD IT BE?

Lava restaurant. It has stunning views over the Blue Lagoon and the food showcases the wild spirit of Icelandic nature.

YOUR FAVOURITE PLACE IN ICELAND AND WHY?

Blue Lagoon. Because it's set in the pure heart of the Icelandic landscape and it offers a quite unique experience and opportunity to energise, relax and forget the stress.



Introducing ITC luxury travel

Established in 1974, ITC Luxury Travel pioneered the concept of luxury travel in the UK, and over 40 years on we're still leading the way. We started out as Caribbean Connections, sending UK clients on luxury Caribbean holidays unlike any that had come before, including chartering Concorde to Barbados in 1988! A passion for our Caribbean heritage still runs through the core of ITC, and today we're proud to offer the same uncompromising standards across a whole world

of luxurious locations from intimate paradise islands in the Indian Ocean to family-friendly beach resorts in Europe.

We remain privately owned, and our unrivalled experience and close relationships with the world's finest hotels mean ITC Luxury Travel can tailor bespoke trips to suit your every need. Above all, we're passionate about travel and about bringing you incredible holidays filled with special memories that are guaranteed to last a lifetime. Below are four of our favourite stays for 2016.

BARBADOS

SANDY LANE

One of the most sought-after hotel stays in the world, Sandy Lane remains a byword for superior service and elegant style. Inspired by the grand plantation houses of Barbados, the hotel is carved in colonial style; from the shady verandas of its Palladian façade to the cooling marble interiors. Yet this atmospheric old world architecture hides all the best additions of today, such as in room iPads that let you pull the curtains closed or order room service and speakers built into the bathroom. But, despite the palatial surroundings and 21st century luxuries, it remains the exemplary service that sets Sandy Lane apart. Whether you're being served up signature Bajan dishes on your private veranda, stretching out for massage in the Romanesque spa or just collecting cocktails on the powder fine beach you'll find staff that know what you need before you know you need it.



Find out more about these luxury hotels, or any of the other exceptional stays that ITC Luxury Travel offers around

MALDIVES

ONE&ONLY REETHI RAH

Whether you're staying in a villa stood on stilts over crystal clear lagoon waters, or those that open up to their own private beach and panorama of the Indian Ocean beyond, the One&Only Reethi Rah offers utter seclusion in unsurpassed luxury. Palm shaded private decks, infinity pools and wrap around hammocks are just some of the reasons you'll struggle to wander far from your villa. A personal Villa Host is also on hand to tend to your every need, leaving you free to find your perfect slice of paradise on the six kilometres of coast or opt for private dining marooned on a secluded sandbank at sunset. If you do want to add a little adventure, you can take to the warm waters to try kayaking and scuba diving, or soar through the skies paragliding.



DUBAI

ONE&ONLY ROYAL MIRAGE – THE PALACE

Dubai has established itself as the destination for unabashed hotel extravagance and The Palace is one of the most extravagant stays in town. Ornamental arches, terracotta tiling and other Arabian influences give the hotel a regal appeal, while all rooms offer uninterrupted views over the shimmering Arabian Gulf. Guests at the Palace benefit from access to the wider One&Only Royal Mirage resort, with an impressive array of amenities. Lay back and relax on the one-kilometre sandy beach or try your hand at deep-sea fishing, water sports or golf. Indulge at the luxurious One&Only Spa and Oriental Hammam and take your pick of the eight fine restaurants on offer, ranging from Mediterranean to Moroccan cuisine. The resort is also well set up for families, with a dedicated kids club where your little ones can learn to camel ride, try their hand at sand sculpting or even spend the evening Arabian camping.

TENERIFE

THE RITZ-CARLTON, ABAMA

Known as the island of Eternal Spring, Tenerife squeezes out more sunshine than anywhere else in Spain and the Ritz Carlton Abama will make sure you enjoy every last drop. You can watch the sun bounce across the sparkling Atlantic panorama over breakfast on your own personal balcony, or head to one of the seven heated swimming pools scattered beneath the hotel's tropical palm trees. When you've had enough of clifftop views of the ocean, step aboard the hotel funicular to reach its own exclusive sandy cove and the Atlantic waves. And it's not just the sun that dazzles at this five star property. The Spanish and Japanese restaurants have both earned a Michelin star, while the 18-hole golf course has a string of admirers and awards.



Go wild with Born Free

From rescuing imprisoned lions to protecting the remaining eastern lowland gorillas, the Born Free Foundation helps thousands of animals find better lives. **Celia Nicholls** from Born Free shares some of her favourite stories about animals they've helped



From small beginnings, Born Free has grown into a global force for wildlife protection and conservation. Described by *The Times* as 'Big enough to make a difference, but small enough to care' the Born Free Foundation was founded by Virginia McKenna OBE and Bill Travers MBE in 1984 with their son Will Travers OBE, following Virginia and Bill's starring roles in the classic film *Born Free*.

Today, headed by Will, Born Free is an international wildlife charity working throughout the world to save animals' lives, stop suffering, rescue vulnerable individuals and protect threatened species. We campaign on key animal welfare and conservation issues, such as opposing the ivory trade and sport hunting, run major international projects devoted to protecting rare animals, from

turtles to tigers, while our emergency teams rescue individual animals from lives of misery and mistreatment.

None of this would be possible without the fantastic help of our supporters and friends. Rainbow Tours is committed to responsible travel and for the second year running they are giving anyone who books a holiday to Africa or Latin America before March 31st 2016, a free Born Free animal adoption.

Through Born Free's unique animal adoption programmes members of the public adopt an individual animal or family and help look after them. This is a wonderful way to support everything we do.

You can sponsor your favourite animal from the Born Free adoption list. Below are just a few of our favourite stories about animals helped by our adopters.

FRIENDS WE HELPED

Animals like Ewok the baby elephant and his mum Emily Kate, who live in Kenya with their wild family. Ewok's grandmother was Echo the matriarch elephant, made world-famous in the BBC's acclaimed 'Echo of the Elephants' series. Today Emily Kate's little sister Esprit is on hand to help out with baby-sitting, while adopters help keep the family safe from ivory poachers.

Meanwhile in India, Roque the magnificent tiger lives at Born Free's tiger sanctuary in Bannerghatta. It's hard to believe he's the same animal as the tiny terrified cub rescued by the charity from a Spanish pet-shop back in 1998. Today Roque enjoys life in his spacious forest enclosure and adopters help provide his daily food and care.

Beautiful Dolo the lion was kept on a 1-metre chain in Ethiopia for four long



Born Free supports the brave rangers who risk their lives to keep these gorillas safe from poachers.

In Niger, adopters help protect the rarest giraffes in the world. Despite being well adapted to the dry climate and sparse vegetation, habitat loss and conflict with people over local crops means just 400 survive. Our adopters help us keep them safe, and support the team working to ensure giraffes and local communities can live happily together.

Some of Born Free's animals are closer to home. Kyriakos is a stunning brown bear who lives at the Arcturos sanctuary in northern Greece. Wild-born, Kyriakos was just a four month-old cub when his mother was killed in Greece. Fortunately he and his twin brother Manolis were rescued by a kindly shepherd and now live at a sanctuary, supported by his adopters.

years. Starving and lonely, his desolate roars echoed around the town and his mane was rubbed off by the chain around his neck. But in 2007 Born Free rescued Dolo, and today he lives with Safia a feisty young rescued lioness at our Ensessakotteh sanctuary in Ethiopia. Here they have recovered from their ordeals and receive expert care and nourishing food thanks to their adopters.

Mugaruka and Chimanuka are formidable gorillas living wild in the mountain rainforests of Democratic Republic of Congo. Rare eastern lowland, silverback gorillas, both are powerful adult males. But Mugaruka lost a hand in a poacher's cruel snare and, unable to defend his family, now mostly lives alone. Conversely, Chimanuka lives together with his large family, a 'harem' of females and their offspring. Since 2000, with the help of gorilla adopters

Here they roam the woodlands, explore the undergrowth and take time out from the midday sun with a dip in one of the forest's many pools.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Adopt a Born Free animal for just £2.50 per month and help keep them safe. Visit bornfree.org.uk/rtadopt or call 01403 240170. With a FREE cuddly toy, personalised gift pack and regular magazine updates, this unusual present lasts all year!

Or by booking your African holiday with Rainbow Tours before March 31st 2016, you can receive your very own adoption for FREE, with Rainbow Tours donating on your behalf! Visit rainbowtours.co.uk/travel/the-born-free-foundation

bornfree.org.uk/rtadopt

WHO YOU CAN ADOPT

Cheetahs
Chimp
Dolphin
Hyenas
Leopards
Marine turtle
Moon bear
Orca
Polar bear
Wolf pack
Find the full list at bornfree.org.uk/rtadopt



The best family stays in Asia

The chance to share muddy puddles with an elephant, walk on the seabed or see a Balinese blockbuster in these top resorts for you and your kids

BALI MANDIRA, BALI

WHEN ONLY SUN, SEA AND SAND WILL DO

This Bali beach resort has a prime location on Legian Beach, a ribbon of white sand rolled into pancake smoothness by the warm waves from the Indian Ocean. While the kids craft castles from the sand, you can enjoy drinks with umbrellas and almost uninterrupted sunshine. The resort itself is spread over 5-acres of landscaped tropical gardens and includes a kids pool and club, as well as an adults only pool and the chance to learn how to make Balinese handicrafts or swing your hips to the rhythm of Barong dancing.

Accommodation; The superior family rooms at the Mandira offers a pair of interconnected rooms with either double or single beds, while Pool Club villas offer the same but with your own private pool.



ANGSANA LAGUNA PHUKET, THAILAND

YOUR VERY OWN FAMILY PLAYGROUND

Named Best Family Resort by WTM for two years, this resort on the Andaman seafloor has an almost endless shopping list of activities. You'll find it hard to keep hold of your kids each morning as they make a break for the excellent Tree House kids club – which

has everything from climbing frames to clamber along to a dedicated arts room for splashing face paints on. There is a 323 metre free form pool that snakes around the complex to explore, and a lazy river to drift down. Adults can escape to the deckchairs in the Xana beach club, learn how to master a green curry with local chefs or embarrass themselves and the kids with their favourite songs in dedicated karaoke rooms.

Accommodation; Take your pick from a number of interconnected suites and rooms, or pick a two bedroom loft for some more space, or discover the family friendly Laguna Premier

GRAND MIRAGE RESORT & THALASSO, BALI

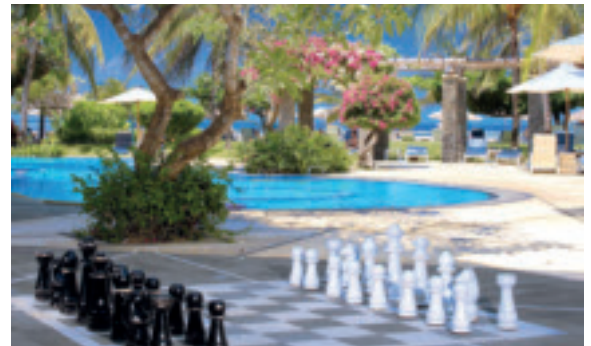
FOR GROWN UPS



If they've outgrown the kids club and refuse to build sandcastles with you anymore, you can still impress your soon to be grown-ups with the parties and shows at the Grand Mirage. Balinese buffets on the Mirage's private beach feature Kecak dancing and fire breathers, as well as the best in Balinese food. For something more spectacular the hotel can set you up with tickets to 'treasures of the archipelago' - Bali's blockbuster show featuring, Hollywood special effects, smoke and mirror illusions and

death defying aerial acrobatics. Back at base there are a host of water sports to tempt you into the warm waters of the Indian Ocean, including their unique Seawalker experience where you can simply slip on a diving helmet and play spotting Nemo with the coral reef fish beneath the waves.

Accommodation; Choose from views over the water or the tropical greenery with deluxe sea view rooms and deluxe garden view rooms that can sleep two adults and two children.



ELEPHANT HILLS, THAILAND

BEST TO GO WILD

Safely splashing in their wellington boots with a hose in hand, the highlight of any trip to Elephant Hills for kids will be the chance to have a water fight with an elephant as these gentle animals get bathed. This luxury tented accommodation is buried in the rainforests of southern Thailand, and apart from stomping around in the mud with the local wildlife there are also family friendly hikes into Khao Sok National Park and the chance to canoe down the Sok River and look for macaque monkeys swinging through the trees and flying lizards gliding overhead.

Accommodation; Don't let the word tent put you off - at Elephant Hills that means crafted wooden beds, hot water showers and most of the comfort you'd find in a hotel room.



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Secret Islands

Other Shores goes in search of the world's best undiscovered islands, for those who prefer a holiday out of the ordinary



GOING GUADELOUPE



Dipped in French culture and rolled in the Caribbean sun, Guadeloupe tends to get overlooked for the polished Parisian resorts found next door in Martinique. But if you're willing to sacrifice some of the Gallic sophistication, here you'll find the same incredible landscapes without the crowds. Shaped like butterfly wings, the Guadeloupe archipelago's two main islands are as stunning from the air as they are with your feet planted in the white sands of their beaches. Lush green mangrove forests carpet the islands and coral reefs teeming with exotic marine life lie just feet from the shore – all you need is a snorkel and a sense of adventure.

Head to Grand Terre, the eastern island, and you'll never be far from the beach. Its southern coast is wrapped in sand and there are ample opportunities to wade into the warm waters before dropping into a deckchair with a

glass of rum in your hand. But it's the western island of Basse Terre that is the Cinderella of the two. The land swells and falls across mountain tops and thick rainforest ripples around the coastline, while the steam of La Soufrière volcano provides a dramatic backdrop.

TRAVEL INFO

Travel time 11.5 hours (via Antigua or Paris)

Best time to go The Caribbean is a brilliant destination year-round, but for the best weather visit between November and May

Top tip Time your visit to coincide with carnival celebrations – January, February and March.

A 7-night Guadeloupe Getaway is from £1,434 per person including flights.
westernoriental.com 020 7666 1303

MID-ATLANTIC DRIFTING IN THE AZORES

Blink and you'll miss them. These nine tiny islands stranded halfway across the Atlantic Ocean might be little more than blips on the map, but their unique location and weather make for landscapes like no other. From stunning opalescent lakes to sulphurous thermal baths and the world's longest lava cave, the Azores are the prime location for a spot of island-hopping through untouched paradise.

Year round balmy climates – temperatures rarely drop below 13°C even in the winter months – and fertile volcanic soil allow lush green vegetation and colourful native flora to flourish. Roads and fields are lined with hydrangea spanning



bright shades of blue and pink, and rhododendrons, sweet peas and gladioli cover the islands. Off the coast, follow in the footsteps of BBC and National Geographic camera crews and set off in search of the wild pods of bottlenose, common and spotted dolphins and sperm, pilot and beaked whales that patrol the Atlantic waters.

TRAVEL INFO

Travel time 4 hours

Best time to go Visit from April to September for great weather and direct flights from the UK

Top tip For the best wildlife sightings, the mighty blue whale migrates through the archipelago between February and April. A 5-day tour of the Azores is from £595 per person including flights. regentholidays.co.uk 0117 280 0131



Explosive adventures on Réunion

While many travellers are drawn to the wildlife of neighbouring Madagascar or the beaches of nearby Mauritius, Réunion remains a relatively unexplored island adventure. Set alone and adrift in the middle of the Indian Ocean, this spit of land certainly feels suitably far flung. The rocks that tumble down to meet the sea mix with coral reefs and the sloping white sandy beaches cradle them to create a welcome mat of white froth from the waves that roll along the coastline.

But it's in the interior where the vistas truly hit their stride. Canyons carve through an apron of greenery, yawning to reveal cascading waterfalls that bubble into the crystal clear lagoons below. Despite these dizzying drops, forests cling to every rock and ravine before disappearing from view amidst mist dipped clouds. And the best is yet to come. Pull on your walking boots for a 12km trek to the peak of the rumbling Piton de la Fournaise volcano. This shield volcano is one of the most active in the world and the landscape that surrounds it has been turned into

a palette of burnt umber, smoky topaz and jet black.

While Réunion remains a department of France, the country has a classical colonial mix of cultures. You'll hear French and Creole on the streets, while Chinese and Indian arrivals have created a diverse heritage – no better experienced than with a Chinese inspired bouchon dumpling, stuffed with French style duck and spiced with local vanilla.

TRAVEL INFO

Travel time 15.5 hours (via Paris or Mauritius)

Best time to go Visit from May to November to take advantage of the best weather

Top tip Take a helicopter flight over the island for an unforgettable view of the landscape.

A 16-day Réunion Island Self Drive itinerary is from £2,450 per person including flights.

rainbowtours.co.uk 020 7666 7304

Top Tours for 2016

Our holiday experts pick their favourite trips for the next twelve months, from steamboat cruises to orang-utans

RAINBOW TOURS

CONQUER PATAGONIA AND SAIL THE END OF THE WORLD

Home to striking mountain ranges, vast plateaus and untouched barren wildernesses, Patagonia stretches across southern Chile and Argentina and boasts some of the continent's most spectacular natural landscapes. You'll explore the Los Glaciares National Park and Glaciar Perito Moreno, one of the most accessible ice fields in the world, before sailing through the legendary Straits of Magellan at the very bottom of the Earth.

● *Rainbow Tours' 15 day Patagonia in Depth tour, including flights, costs from £5,350 per person. rainbowtours.co.uk 020 7666 1304*

MEET THE WONDERFUL WILDLIFE OF ECUADOR AND THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

Set against a dramatic backdrop of mountains and volcanoes in the Ecuadorean Andes, wander the cobbled streets of Quito and enjoy its blend of colonial, indigenous and ancient cultures. Just a short flight away are the Galapagos Islands,



whose dramatic volcanic landscapes are bursting with unique flora and fauna, from blue-footed boobies and marine iguanas to sea lions and giant tortoises.

● *Rainbow Tours' 11 day Simply Galapagos tour costs from £4,765 per person. rainbowtours.co.uk 020 7666 1304*

REGENT HOLIDAYS



EXPLORE LUSH RAINFORESTS, AND MEET THE ORANG-UTANS OF BORNEO

Dive into Borneo's unique blend of native forest communities, romantic Asian roots and European colonial ties. Visit traditional Iban longhouses in Sarawak, trek the muddy jungle trails of the remote Danum Valley and snorkel the turquoise seas, before spending a day at the Sepilok Orang-utan Rehabilitation Centre where orphaned endangered orang-utans are reintroduced into the wild.

● *Regent Holidays' 14 day Highlights of Borneo tour, including flights, costs from £2,975 per person. regentholidays.co.uk 0117 283 0131*

SEARCH FOR THE NORTHERN LIGHTS IN ICELAND, THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

Uncover Iceland's natural wonders on a tour that explores the best of the southwest, including the crashing Gullfoss waterfall in Thingvellir National Park and explosive Strokkur geyser. Have your fill of vast icebergs, colossal glaciers and lava field landscapes and, after dark, venture into the still Icelandic countryside or settle down into your hot tub, in search of the world's most spectacular light show, the Northern Lights.

● *Regent Holidays' 8 day Northern Lights Explorer Small Group tour, including flights, costs from £1,749 per person. regentholidays.co.uk 0117 283 0131*



WESTERN & ORIENTAL



CRUISE THE DEEP SOUTH ON THE AMERICAN QUEEN STEAMBOAT

Step aboard the American Queen steamboat in Memphis to cruise down the Mississippi River. This is a unique way to explore the history and musical heartlands of the USA's Deep South. Stop off along your journey to tour vast mansion houses in plantation country, whiz through the Louisiana swamps and tour Graceland in Memphis. Final destination? The Big Easy, New Orleans.

● *Western & Oriental's 9 day American Queen Steamboat tour, including flights, costs from £2,839 per person. westernoriental.com 020 7666 1303*



DISCOVER ANCIENT RUINS AND THRIVING TOWNS IN CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM

No visit to Asia is complete without experiencing the spectacular sunrise over the astounding ruins of Angkor Wat, before stepping into the jungle and discovering hundreds of ancient lost jungle temples. Visit Phnom Penh, the Cambodian capital, as well as

Ho Chi Minh and Hoi An in Vietnam to see how different these two countries are. Walk the lively markets of Hanoi and swim amongst the floating islands of Halong Bay, in Vietnam.

● *Western & Oriental's 12 day Essential Cambodia and Vietnam tour, including flights, costs from £2,749 per person. westernoriental.com 020 7666 1303*

TAKE YOUR SEAT...

SPORTING CALENDAR 2016

The ITC Luxury Travel family have been creating luxury holidays since 1974 and in 1989 our passion for luxury travel and sports came together with the establishment of ITC Sports Travel; creating sporting packages to top fixtures worldwide, including cricket, rugby, Formula One, golf and tennis. In 2009 ITC acquired the well-established company Horse Racing Abroad (HRA) offering horse racing enthusiasts' holidays to some of the best races across the globe.

January

Australian Open, Tennis
J & B Met, Cape Town - HRA

February

Las Vegas Sevens, Rugby
Italy v England, 6 Nations, Rugby

March

France v England, 6 Nations, Rugby
Hong Kong Sevens, Rugby
The Dubai World Cup - HRA

April

US Masters Golf, Augusta

May

Spanish Grand Prix, Formula One
Monaco Grand Prix, Formula One
French Open, Tennis
Coolmore - HRA

June

Wimbledon, Tennis

July

British Grand Prix, Formula One
Hungarian Grand Prix, Formula One
Polish Derby, Warsaw - HRA

August

Grosser Preis Von Berlin - HRA
US Open, Tennis
Festival Weekend in Deauville - HRA

September

Ryder Cup Golf, Minneapolis

October

Qatar Prix de L'Arc de Triomphe - HRA
Velka Pardubicka Steeplechase - HRA
The Breeders Cup, Kentucky - HRA

November

Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, Formula One
The Melbourne Cup - HRA
The Breeders Cup, Kentucky - HRA

December

Dubai Rugby Sevens
South Africa Rugby Sevens

Not forgetting we can also tailor-make packages to almost any sporting event worldwide! Our Sports Travel Specialists can arrange everything to make your trip more than just a sports holiday; including exclusive hosts, prestigious hospitality and premium event viewing with the opportunity to experience the destination in the ultimate style and luxury.

Call our Sports Travel Specialists on 01244 355 548
or visit www.itcsports.co.uk for more information

YOUR 2016/17 CRICKETING CALENDAR

November - December 2016

India v England, Cricket (5 Test matches)

January - February 2017

India v England, Cricket (ODI's & T20s)
West Indies v England, Cricket (3 ODI's)

April 2017

Ireland v England, Cricket (ODI's)

Win

- The new ultra-compact GoPro Hero4 Session camera
- Features 1080p60 video and 8MP photo capture

WIN A NEW GOPRO HERO 4 SESSION ACTION CAMERA WORTH £159

What better travelling companion could you ask for than one that simply and spectacularly captures your adventures in crystal clear high definition? Though it may be tiny – 35% smaller and 40%

lighter than other HERO4 cameras – GoPro's latest addition to its award winning family, the HERO4 Session, packs all the power of GoPro into its most compact camera yet.

Its rugged, robust design eliminates the need for a separate housing, while a single button powers on the camera and starts recording automatically. Waterproof up to 33 feet, take the Hero4 Session scuba diving, surfing or kayaking and put its versatility to the test by filming the highs and lows of your hiking trip through mountainous terrain, or capture a stunning tropical sunset at the beach using time lapse mode.

Whatever your flavour of adventure, from extreme conditions and action

packed sports to relaxing amongst beautiful golden coastlines and exploring colourful coral reefs, the Hero4 Session is ready for everything. With 1080p60 video and 8MP photos, the HERO4 Session delivers the professional video quality and powerful image capture that has become synonymous with the GoPro name.

HOW TO ENTER

Enter by 30th April 2016
at [westernoriental.com/
goprocompetition](http://westernoriental.com/goprocompetition)

WESTERN & ORIENTAL



TERMS & CONDITIONS

1. Entrants must be 18 years and over. 2. A winner will be drawn at random on the closing date of 30 April 2016. 3. No cash alternative will be given. 4. By entering the competition you are agreeing to hear from ITC Luxury Travel Group Limited again. 5. Employees of ITC Luxury Travel Group Limited and GoPro are not eligible to enter this competition. 6. ITC Luxury Travel Group Limited may use information relating to the prize for marketing or promotional purposes, including use of the winner's name. 7. Personal information of entrants will always be used in accordance with the ITC Luxury Travel Group Limited Privacy Policy. 8. Competition is open to UK residents only. 9. Except as otherwise required by applicable law, ITC Luxury Travel Group Limited is not responsible for any loss or damage associated with you entering into these terms and conditions, competition, or the provision or any aspect of the prize or any act or omission of any other person or party, and all warranties, conditions and representations (of any kind) not expressly set out in these terms and conditions are hereby excluded (except in the case of fraud).



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New destinations for 2016: Chicago and Montreal

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We look forward to welcoming you onboard.

