



*far frontiers*  
tailored travel for today's explorer.

**YOUR ADVENTURE  
AWAITS**





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## Why travel with Far Frontiers Travel?

Fiona Brijnath's 35 year career in travel began with an extended journey through the Far East, island-hopping in the Philippines and Indonesia and exploring the beaches and hill tribes of Malaysia and Thailand. In the years since she has visited nearly every region in the world - her desire to be able to share first hand experiences with her clients driving her to keep on exploring.

Based in an idyllic rural setting in Devon, Fiona is justifiably proud of the reputation which **Far Frontiers Travel** has earned over the years and takes each and every booking personally. "I get tremendous satisfaction from crafting the best travel itineraries possible and in looking after my clients" she says. "It is wonderful that so many come back time and again and have become personal friends over the years. I hardly see it as work at all as I continue to live my passion for travel through my clients."

She has trekked in Nepal and Bhutan, journeyed across Tibet, covered the length and breadth of India by train, ridden in Mongolia and explored the great architectural ensembles of Central Asia. Further forays include places as diverse as Sri Lanka and Jordan, Pakistan, and Georgia, Morocco and the Maldives. Latterly she's toured Oman by landcruiser, sailed down the Nile, bargained in the souqs of Syria and made several winter visits to Russia. In her constant quest to develop itineraries that she knows her clients will enjoy, she has ridden gaucho style in Argentina and Chile, explored Peru, Bolivia and Costa Rica and toured the absorbing countries of Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Japan and Myanmar. Her polar travels include voyages in the Arctic and Antarctic, dog-sledging in Arctic Norway and Greenland and several visits to Iceland.

**So with Fiona's first hand knowledge of the world, her dedication to her clients and her wealth of ideas for unforgettable yet affordable experiences, why travel with anyone else?**



*“Travel is my great love, but I can't be out and about all the time so I relish the chance to pass on my best experiences to those explorers with a true desire to discover the world.”*

I am delighted to be sending you our **showcase brochure** and I hope you enjoy browsing through these fabulous destinations.

Our speciality is in putting together single and multi-country journeys that are precisely tailored to your desires and requirements, so I hope the sample itineraries on the following pages will whet your appetite and give you a feel for the quality of bespoke travel we can provide.

What we suggest here by no means represents the limit of what we can organise - we have many more itinerary suggestions or if you are just looking for a short break with a difference, we are full of ideas for perfect hotels in locations such as Spain, Morocco, Russia, the Middle

East and India. Through our polar travel division, **Arcturus**, we now offer exciting sea voyages and expeditions to the Arctic, Arctic Russia, Greenland, Norway, Iceland and the Antarctic. We tailor-make here too - do ask how best to combine a thrilling trip around South America with an Antarctic voyage, add on a tour of Iceland to your Greenland voyage or enjoy the treasures of Moscow and St. Petersburg en route to Kamchatka in the Russian Far East.

There is more on our website at **www.farfrontiers.com** but we believe the key to our success is personal service, so please do call us.

**Fiona Brijnath, Director**

**Footnote** As the avid traveller knows only too well, political landscapes throughout the world change on an almost daily basis and there will be occasions when we are not able to send you to a destination within this brochure due to political instability - we will update you at the time of enquiry.

**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Fiona Brijnath** on a recce trip in the **Maldives**; **Hanoi**, Vietnam; Piles of stones or **ovoo** hold significance for travellers in **Mongolia**; the peacock is the national bird of **India**; the blue city of **Chefchaouen, Morocco**.





## Not travelled with us before?

Quite simply you can expect a highly personal service. We like to talk to you in detail about the countries you'd like to visit, the experiences you'd like to have, and your special requirements. For every sample trip featured here we can provide a more detailed dossier, which will give you a fuller picture of what you might experience in a particular country.

As soon as we have a feel for what's in your mind, we will quickly come up with suggestions to enhance your experience and then hand-craft our discussions into a unique and memorable itinerary. Whether you want top end boutique accommodation, quirky old palaces or an off the beaten track experience which brings you close to life in rural communities, we like nothing more than the challenge of creating the perfect trip.

Once your itinerary is finalised to your liking, our personal service continues all the way through your holiday until your return - we are always on hand to answer any last minute queries or sort out any problems. And when you get back, we love to chat about your experiences, taking on board your feedback and hearing about any special highlights.

## Pricing

Every holiday we plan is unique so we will aim to work to a budget if you give us one, or if not your itinerary will come with a 'guide price' which usually includes international economy flights, private transport and guiding and accommodation in hotels to suit you. Our flexible approach enables us to work hard to match your budget - **why not call us to discuss your next trip?**

### Travel with confidence

All the flights and flight-inclusive holidays in this brochure are financially protected by the ATOL scheme. When you pay you will be supplied with an ATOL Certificate. Please ask for it and check to ensure that everything you booked (flights, hotels and other services) is listed on it. Please see the booking conditions on our website for further information or for more information about financial protection and the ATOL Certificate go to: [www.atol.org.uk/ATOL Certificate](http://www.atol.org.uk/ATOL%20Certificate).

Clients wishing to book their own international flights are financially protected by the TOPP (Total Payment Protection) scheme. Full details are given on the Far Frontiers Travel website under 'Your financial protection'.

Owned by **Far Frontiers Travel Limited** and operating as its polar division,

**Arcturus** is a small niche travel company and one of the foremost operators to the polar regions. Arcturus offers an unparalleled selection of extraordinary expeditions and voyages to the Arctic, Antarctic, Norway, Greenland, Iceland and some of the remotest parts of Russia.



**ARCTURUS**  
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**FRONT COVER, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Tsechu dancers in **Paro**; New **Atacama** road, **Chile**; UNESCO site **Machu Picchu**, **Peru**; **Samarkand's Registan**, **Uzbekistan**; Trekking in the **Pamir Mountains**, **Tajikistan**; **Vietnam's Do Temple** festival in **Bac Ninh Province**; the dunes of **Merzouga**, **Morocco**; Terrace farming, **Malaysia**; **Great Barrier Reef**, **Australia**; Picturesque **Calle Jaen** Street in **La Paz**, capital of **Bolivia**; **Geisha Girl**, **Kyoto**, **Japan**. **BACK COVER, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Clients **Laura Goulding** and **Anna Helsby** in **Kolkata**; Traditional dhow off the **Omani** coast; Colourful **Rajasthanis**, **India**; Sublime beaches of **South India**; **Almaty's Zhenkov Cathedral**, **Kazakhstan**; Water Buffalo, **Laos**. **CREDITS FOR PHOTOS ELSEWHERE IN THIS BROCHURE:** Arcturus, Jeff Ackley, Fiona Brijnath, Abhishek Hajela, the late Bruce Herrod, Katerina Kerdi, Paul Levrier, iStockphoto, Ian Stubbs, Mike Swigunski, Robert Thiemann, Paul Vincent, 123RF Stock Photo. **WATERCOLOUR MAPS:** Claire Baker.



# North Africa and the Middle East

## Morocco, Libya and Egypt

**M**orocco blends the best of Africa and Europe – lively cities, the heat and hassle of the bustling souk and a diverse cuisine of sensational flavours. Lose yourself in the maze of the medina where fire-eaters and snake charmers vie for attention with sellers of all manner of things. Morocco's High Atlas mountain range beckons with outstanding walks and day treks among Berber villages and the coast is wonderful at the height of summer.

The great Sahara Desert, hauntingly stunning, with its palm-fringed oases is inhabited by the nomadic Berber people of the Tuareg and their camels. This is just a small part of **Libya** – a land of contrasts where sea, mountain, plains and desert are all to be found. Come here for extraordinary prehistoric rock art, the unique desert city of Ghadames and its wealth of Roman and Greek antiquities.

**Egypt's** lush Nile flood plain allows one of the world's greatest ancient civilisations to flourish in what is essentially a desert. Some of the world's most important monuments are found here; the sphinx, the pyramids and the Valley of the Kings, whilst in modern Cairo, locals mix the latest designer wear with traditional long flowing robes. Cruise the Nile or dive at the Red Sea, head into the Sinai or White Desert or cross by ferry to Jordan.

## Oman, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia

**T**he Middle East is home to some of the most historically significant cultural sites in the world, but remains under-visited because of perceptions about safety. **Oman** offers the very essence of the Middle East: ancient hill forts, bustling fishing ports, fertile wadis and cities echoing with the muezzin's call. You'll find spectacular empty beaches and a complete lack of the over-westernisation that has affected some of its neighbours.

The Roman amphitheatre at Jerash, Madeba, City of Mosaics and of course Petra, the fabled 'rose red' city hewn out of rock 2,000 years ago, make **Jordan** a must visit if only once in a lifetime. Enjoy the traditional hospitality of the Bedouin people, camp in the stark desert landscape of Wadi Rum or dive at the Red Sea.

Cross the border into **Syria**, once so important to ancient trading routes to see its crusader castles, bustling souqs and foremost archaeological sites.

Extend your trip to Syria by crossing the border into **Lebanon**. See the spectacular temple of Baalbeck or take a week's tour by flying directly to Beirut.



Who doesn't need a weekend break to get away from it all? In our opinion, Moroccan riads (renovated old palaces and townhouses) provide the perfect base for relaxing as well as exploring labyrinthine city souks. Morocco is great for self-drive itineraries.

**WHAT NEXT:** Tourism to **Saudi Arabia** is on the increase and we aim to add this to our portfolio in the coming years.







## SAMPLE ITINERARIES

### Atlas explorer

Crossing the Atlas Mountains by car | 8 days

This superb self-drive journey starts in bustling **Marrakech**, where the choice of hotels ranges from grandiose art deco set in acres of fragrance-filled gardens to riads with leafy courtyards and trickling fountains tucked-away in the heart of the medina. Out of Marrakech, the traffic thins as the road twists up into the Atlas Mountains. Over the **Tizi-n-Test Pass**, the drive unveils dramatic, jagged peaks – dusted by snow in winter – before dropping down to the ochre-red city of **Taroudant**.

### Ancient Libya

Tripolitania and the desert | 8 days

Our week long itinerary is an introduction to the desert and architectural landscape of Libya. Arriving in **Tripoli**, head out to wander among the extraordinary ruins at **Leptis Magna**, then fly south to **Ubari** where your base for exploration will be an atmospheric desert camp.

### Gently down the Nile

Luxury cultural boat cruise | 8 days

Without doubt, the best way to explore the treasures of Egypt is in Agatha Christie style on the Nile. By felucca, you will visit **Elephantine Island**, the **Agha Khan Mausoleum** and **Kitchener's Island** – a botanical garden filled with exotic plants and trees. The cruise starts or ends at **Luxor**, one of Egypt's greatest tourist destinations, where for centuries people have visited the temples in the **Valley of the Kings** and the **Valley of Queens**. This tour stops and starts in **Cairo** to give you plenty of opportunity to see the **Pyramids at Giza** and the **Grand Egyptian Museum**.

**GUIDE PRICES:** Please ask for a quotation.

### OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- Moroccan weekend jaunts | 5 days
- From Fes to the coast | 10 days
- High Atlas traverse | 13 days
- Sahara Desert experience | 9 days
- Mt. Toubkal ascent | 8 days
- Tripolitania and Ghadames | 7 days

**DON'T MISS:** Dahabeyas – small 6-10 cabin traditional boats – the 'boutique' option for Nile cruising.

**FOR THE ACTIVE:** A dawn climb to **St. Catherine's Monastery** in the Sinai or trekking with mules in the High Atlas.

**TIP:** Morocco used to have a reputation for being a place where visitors got hassled. This has changed hugely. Now you might even have a 'Monty Python' moment: "Come on, ask me to buy a carpet!"

### BEST TIME TO GO:

**Morocco:** September to May  
**Libya:** Spring and autumn  
**Egypt:** September to March.

“We had a truly memorable trip to Jordan from start to finish and cannot thank you enough for putting it together so professionally and in such a short space of time. One of the best holidays we have ever had.”

Paul Crayford, Jordan

### The ancient kingdom of Jordan

Chauffeur-driven cultural tour | 10 days

An ancient land, yet a modern kingdom. First head north to **Jerash**, founded in 300 BC, for a unique city tour. Overnight at the **Dead Sea**, then follow the 5,000 year old **King's Highway**, via **Madeba** and **Mt. Nebo**, burial place of Moses, to the crusader castle at **Kerak**. These archaeological treasures are just a prelude to the awe inspiring tour of the rose red city of **Petra**, before continuing south for a night in a Bedouin camp in the desert at **Wadi Rum** with a four wheel drive desert safari. End your holiday at the **Red Sea** resort of **Aqaba**.

### Splendours of Syria

Syria north to south | 14 days

The romantic and remote crusader castle of **Krak De Chevalier** is a prominent reminder of Syria's historical tapestry of Roman, Greek, Byzantine and French influences. Not surprising then that **Damascus** is said to be the oldest continuously inhabited city on earth. On this truly cultural journey you will see many awe-inspiring sights as well as meet many friendly people. Syria can easily be combined with Jordan as **Amman** is only a day's drive from Damascus.

### Forts, wadis and souks of Oman

Cultural Oman | 10 days

Boasting more than 1,000km of pristine coastline, Oman offers superb marine life, ancient forts, fertile wadis and craggy mountain scenery in what is still an emerging tourism destination. A 10-day itinerary gives the ideal combination of beach relaxation with a colourful tour of the coast and interior taking in **Sur** and **Nizwa**.

**GUIDE PRICES:** Please ask for a quotation.

### OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- Jordan and the Sinai | 10 days
- Oman's Musandam Peninsula from Dubai | 7 days
- Treasures of Lebanon | 11 days
- Salalah and the Empty Quarter | 10 days

**TIP:** The **Musandam Peninsula** is just a 90 minute drive from Dubai – an easy way to combine the two countries.

**READ:** **Wilfred Thesiger's Across the Empty Quarter.**

### BEST TIME TO GO:

**UAE/Oman:** October to April  
**Jordan and Syria:** Spring and autumn  
**Lebanon:** Year round.



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** One of **Jordan's** best preserved desert castles, **Qasr Amra**; The Nabataean citadel of **Petra** in Jordan, a renowned archaeological site; The stunning gold funerary mask of **Tutankhamun** was excavated in 1925 by archaeologist Howard Carter and is a 'must-see' for all visitors to **Cairo's Egyptian Museum**; Camp under the stars in **Salalah, Oman**; A typical restored **Moroccan riad**, now a hotel; Traditional dhow off the **Omani** coast.



# Hidden Spain

If you are seeking a fabulous weekend break or a birthday or anniversary treat, look no further than **Southern Spain** and **Mallorca**. We can recommend some delightful small hotels and haciendas which we have hand-picked for atmosphere, interesting architecture and their proximity to areas of interest. Stay for a long weekend or as part of a longer holiday and enjoy the sunshine!

In **Andalucia**, think **Hacienda de San Rafael**. Situated about 45 minutes' drive from Seville, this beautifully restored former olive mill is set in the heart of sunflower farmland. The cobbled yard and bell tower are just some of the original features, with thoughtfully decorated rooms built around the courtyard in Andalusian style. Gorgeous garden casitas and a luxury villa with private pool await those looking for extra privacy. Spend your time riding, exploring or simply relaxing by the pool and end the day with a spectacular dinner served by candlelight in the old whitewashed barn. Close by, and worth a visit, are the Royal Andalusian Equestrian School and famous sherry houses of Jerez. The Sierra de Grazalema and Coto Donana National Park are superb for hiking and birdwatching respectively.

Another option is the magnificent cortijo (farmhouse) of **La Posada Del Torcal** which sits boldly on a hilltop with far-reaching views down to the coast at **Malaga** a few kilometres away. Each boutique bedroom has an en-suite bathroom and finca style decor. La Posada is a good base for hiking or cycling in the nearby El Torcal National Park, birdwatching, golf, riding, kayaking or simply relaxing round the pool. More energetic guests can make a day trip to Cordoba and Granada.

**Corral del Rey** is located in the heart of **Seville**, in the old quarter of Barrio Alfalfa, five minutes' walk from the Cathedral. The original 17th Century Casa Palacio has been meticulously restored and converted into a small private luxury hotel, with a vibrant bar and restaurant. Situated around the galleries of the central courtyard are six bedrooms, each



with creative design and state-of-the-art sound and vision system. There is a roof terrace, plunge pool and art gallery. Relax with a massage or beauty treatment or book a private guide and visit the best sights of Seville.

**Mallorca's** luxurious boutique **Valldemossa Hotel** is built on the old estate of S'Olivaret with truly magical Spanish ambience.

It has stunning views of the Tramuntana Mountains, valleys and olive groves below, and the historical Valldemossa Monastery is close by. The hotel has beautiful rooms and suites, indoor and outdoor pools, terraced gardens and an excellent fine-dining restaurant. **Please ask for a quotation.**



**TOP TIP:** For those with time to stay longer, we suggest combining **Corral Del Rey** with **Hacienda de San Rafael** - some 45 minutes' drive away. They are both run by the same family so continuity of their very personal service is assured.

**DON'T MISS:** Seville's immense cathedral- **La Giralda** and **Plaza de Toros de la Real Maestranza** - **Seville's** bullring. Make time also for the **Alcázar** (fortress) dating from AD 913. See the stunning performance of the unforgettable Spanish Lipizzaners in **Jerez**.

**DID YOU KNOW:** We have links with exclusive bull-breeding ranches and stud farms and family-owned sherry bodegas and can organise private visits.

**WHEN TO GO:** Spring and autumn are lovely, not too hot, not too cold

**JOURNEY TIME:** 1½ hours (direct)

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** The stunning **Plaza de Espana, Seville** built in 1929; **Corral Del Rey** is tucked away in old town **Seville**; Luxury boutique hotel **La Posada del Torcal**, 50 mins from **Malaga**.







# Turkish delights

## SAMPLE ITINERARIES

### Istanbul to Cappadocia

Mosques, palaces and cities - ancient and modern | 9 days

This itinerary showcases some of Turkey's most precious jewels. In **Istanbul** you'll visit the **Blue Mosque**, the lavish **Topkapi Palace** and the awe-inspiring **Hagia Sophia**, haggle with vendors in the **Grand Bazaar** and cruise on the **Bosphorus**. There'll be plenty of time to explore on your own too. Enjoy lush parks and waterside mansions, treat your taste buds to local specialities, and relax at the end of a busy day in a traditional **hammam**. Other stand-out attractions include the **UNESCO World Heritage Site of Troy**, the ancient city of **Kusadasi** and breathtaking **Pamukkale** as well as **Cappadocia's** 13th Century **Sultanhan Caravanserai**, one of the Seljuk architectural masterpieces.

### Travels in Eastern Turkey

From Istanbul to Anatolia's far east | 14 days

Many civilisations settled in **Eastern Turkey**, including Romans, Persians and Armenians, each leaving their mark. Explore their legacy on this tour which starts in the east at **Lake Van** and takes you through the breathtaking landscape of the little known eastern **Anatolian** heartlands. You'll visit some of this area's greatest historic sites, including the magnificent Ottoman palace of **Ishak Pasha**, the medieval ruined city of **Ani**, Seljuk and Mongolian monuments at **Erzurum** and the **Museum of Anatolian Civilisations** in **Ankara**.

### The grand tour

Turkey's cultural, historic and natural wonders | 13 days

**Istanbul**, **Pamukkale** and **Cappadocia** and the monuments of **Troy** and **Ephesus** are just the beginning of this in-depth journey which takes you from the **Byzantine** highlights of former **Constantinople** to central **Anatolia** and back. **Gallipoli**, **Ephesus**, **Pamukkale**, **Cappadocia** and the **Goreme National Park**, **Ankara** and **Bursa** will all stir and inspire.

**GUIDE PRICES:** Please ask for a quotation.

### OTHER SUGGESTIONS

■ Bodrum gulets - luxury yacht cruising | 8 days

**TOP TIP:** The dark and extraordinary **Basilica Cistern** is a marvellously cooling and calming experience, particularly at the hottest time of the day. Beware the slippery floor and steps - I suggest sensible footwear!

**DID YOU KNOW:** Begun in 532 AD, it took 10,000 people nearly six years to build **Hagia Sophia** cathedral. It has also been a mosque and is now a museum.

**BEST TIME TO GO:** Mid March to mid November.

Fiona's travel tips



*“Our guide demonstrated a fund of knowledge about the history and customs of the areas we visited. One member of our party remarked that he thought him the best guide he had ever come across. I would not disagree.”*

Sir Harold and Lady Walker, Eastern Turkey



Two great empires, the Ottoman and the Byzantine, are at the heart of Turkey's rich inheritance. Its amazing confluence of cultures offers visitors the very best of all worlds in terms of history, cultural heritage and thriving towns and cities. Turkish Airlines serves nearly 250 world-wide destinations non-stop from Istanbul and flights are good value, so the city makes for a great stop over.

Bestridding the divide where East meets West, Istanbul is an extravaganza of splendid mosques and opulent palaces, historical and contemporary museums, a bustling port, bazaars, invigorating hammams and fabulous food. Further afield remarkable experiences await, such as Cappadocia's underground cities, the moving history of Gallipoli, the ancient marvels at Ephesus and Troy and the geological phenomena of Pamukkale and Goreme.

**TOP:** Istanbul's UNESCO protected **Topkapi Palace** overlooks the **Bosphorus**; **LEFT:** Balloons over **Cappadocia**, a high plateau pierced by volcanic peaks; **MIDDLE RIGHT:** The basilica of **Hagia Sophia**, a former church and mosque in **Istanbul**; **BOTTOM RIGHT:** The **Sultan Ahmed Mosque** (known as the **Blue Mosque**) incorporates Byzantine Christian and Islamic elements.



# Remarkable Russia

## SAMPLE ITINERARIES

### Moscow and St. Petersburg

Cultural tour of Russia's art treasures and palaces | 7 days

Founded in 1703 by Peter the Great, **St. Petersburg's** unparalleled collection of historical art and architecture includes the **Peter and Paul Fortress**, burial place of the Tsars; the **Hermitage**, formerly the Winter Palace of Catherine the Great (fabled for its more than two million exhibits) and **Catherine Palace**, the gilded Rastrelli masterpiece at **Tsarskoye Selo**. It's only three and a half hours flying time from **London** and combines well with **Moscow** by comfortable overnight sleeper-train. Moscow, with its austere yellow-walled Kremlin, the colourful onion-domes of **St. Basil's Cathedral** and the murderous legends of Ivan the Terrible, offers a fascinating contrast.

### By train across Siberia

Russia, Mongolia and China by rail | 17 days

The **Trans-Siberian** is one of the world's great train journeys, an epic 8,045km ride crossing three countries and 11 time zones. From **Moscow** you traverse the vast forest tundra to **Irkutsk**, the capital of **Siberia** and setting-off point for **Baikal**, the world's oldest and deepest freshwater lake. Re-join the train bound for **Ulaanbaatar**, capital of Mongolia, where you can break your journey or continue the last 31 hours to **Beijing**. Alternatively you can continue eastwards, ending at **Vladivostok** on Russia's eastern seaboard, close to the border with China and North Korea.

### Cities of the Golden Ring

Medieval Towns of Russia | 11 days

**Rostov, Suzdal, Yaroslavl and Vladimir** are all historic towns which offer an unparalleled view of old Russia. Linked by road, this ring of medieval cities north-east of **Moscow** is a 'must' for the traveller in search of an absorbing experience. Your reward for the longer drives will be unspoiled towns, fabulous **orthodox churches**, imposing kremlins and remarkably few tourists. This tour lasting up to a week is best done as an extension to a stay in Moscow.

**GUIDE PRICES:** Please ask for a quotation.

### OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- Trek around the blue eye of Siberia | 11 days
- Bears, volcanoes and geysers of Kamchatka | 18 days
- Yamal Polar Express | 9 days
- The Venice of the North | 5 days



**DON'T MISS:** A magical night of Russian Ballet at **St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre** or the historic **Bolshoi Ballet and Opera House** in **Moscow**.

**READ:** **Simon Sebag Montefiore's Stalin: The Court of the Red Tzar** – for a fascinating insight into the deadly but informal power games played out behind the closed doors of Black Sea villas and Kremlin apartments.

**BEST TIME TO GO:** Spring and Autumn are generally mild and dry and I particularly like winter when the golden domes sparkle against a backdrop of blue skies and majestic buildings are blanketed in snow.



Russia is full of superlatives – the largest country on earth, it spans 11 time zones, two continents and has the largest freshwater lake in the world. Prepare to be astonished by St. Petersburg and its palaces with their feast of imperial history and art treasures charting the excesses of the Russian court in the 18th and 19th centuries, and Moscow's Armoury Museum showcasing spectacular royal gifts and the priceless regalia of the Tsars and Tsarinas.

Away from the cities, the legendary Trans-Siberian train is an unforgettable experience, taking you across Russia's vast forests and endless steppes to the magical land of Kamchatka. Here, in an extraordinary landscape of volcanoes, towering mountains and tundra, you will find true nature abounding with fish and wildlife.



**TOP:** **Suzdal's Cathedral of the Nativity of the Virgin** is an easy visit from **Moscow**; **MIDDLE LEFT:** **St. Basil's Cathedral** has been part of the **Moscow Kremlin and Red Square UNESCO World Heritage Site** since 1990. **MIDDLE RIGHT:** **The Hermitage Museum** in **St. Petersburg** began life in 1764 with the purchase of a collection of Western European paintings by Empress Catherine II. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Russian military honour guards at the **Victory Day** parade, **Red Square, Moscow**.



“Coming back only makes me want to pull out my faded copy of Hopkirk’s ‘The Great Game’ and pore over dusty maps of the ‘stans’ for future trips. As I leave this magical region I’m already yearning for my next steaming dish of plov, sizzling shashlik kebabs, soft flat breads and plump soft walnut-stuffed apricots washed down with delicate bowls of green tea.”

Fiona Brijnath



**BOOKS:** Peter Hopkirk’s *The Great Game* and *Eastern Approaches* by Sir Fitzroy Maclean.

**BEST TIME TO GO:** The ideal time to travel is May to September, apart from Turkmenistan where the height of summer is better avoided.

**FOR THE ACTIVE:** For wild, remote, back to nature trekking Tajikistan is perfect.

**WHY NOT:** Start your journey in Azerbaijan and cross by local ferry from **Baku** into Turkmenistan, the hottest, driest and harshest of the stans, where **Ashkhabad’s** Sunday Market will be swarming with the dominant Turkmen tribe, the Tekke, resplendent in their extraordinary shaggy hats.



“At night the sound of bells was heard, faint and hard to distinguish in the distance. Slowly it grew clearer, and its rhythm betrayed the measured step of camels. It came nearer and nearer, and when the first bell passed our tent its sound was loud and piercing. The others followed in due order, and finally we heard the last bell of the last camel in the caravan. I listened, moved by these old familiar bells, the special melody of the caravan route for a thousand years past, around which the whole desert life of traveller, driver, merchant unfolds its varied and fascinating picture.”

Sven Hedin,  
The Silk Road, 1938

Little known and even less visited, the countries along the Great Silk Route provide spectacular surprises for the traveller willing to explore.

Steeped in trading history, **Uzbekistan’s** ancient cities are living museums of stunning architecture that evoke the romanticism of the silk trade. Its greatest treasure – the glittering city of Samarkand – lies at the junction of Central Asia’s ancient caravan routes.

**Turkmenistan** rightly deserves a place in camel caravan legends. With the world’s largest desert and a few highly fertile oases, it is sparsely populated by what are still essentially nomadic peoples.

**Tajikistan** has seen tourism begin to grow again after the end of the civil war in 1997. This mountainous country offers wonderful opportunities for outdoor adventure, with excellent trekking in the Pamir Mountains. It is a beautiful wilderness, renowned for its high summer pastures, wild flower meadows, lakes and rivers, and its backdrop of 5,000m peaks.

The most beautiful of the former Soviet Republics, **Kyrgyzstan** is an unexpectedly dramatic landscape of high mountains, endless plains and the crystal clear high-altitude lake of Issykul. The Tien Shan range is Central Asia’s premier mountaineering and trekking region, with dozens of peaks between 5,000m and 7,000m. Horses are still very much part of life, perhaps explaining the ubiquitous Kyrgyz fondness for fermented mare’s milk ‘kumis’, which is quite an acquired taste.

By far the largest of the ‘stans’, **Kazakhstan** has the Caspian Sea on its western side, the Aral Sea in its south-western corner, and a topography ranging from mountains to plains and deserts. The native Kazakhs, a mix of nomadic Mongol and Turkic tribes, have rarely united as single nation in the past.

“Wonderful that you can arrange for us to go wherever we want to go but with the confidence that your local partners will sort out any problems should they arise. The Savitsky Museum in Nukus was amazing and definitely worth a longer visit.”

Rosemary Steele,  
Wilderness botany tour to Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Stroll around stunning UNESCO Silk Road city **Khiva** in western **Uzbekistan** and you have over 50 historical monuments to choose from in the old town, **Itchan Khala**; Trekking in **Tajikistan’s Pamir Mountains**; The **Avenue of the Tombs, Samarkand, Uzbekistan**; **Zhenkov’s Cathedral, Almaty, Kazakhstan**; The history of Central Asia is closely tied to its nomadic peoples riding ancient trade routes across the Asian continent. A **Kyrgyz** horseman rests in pastures at **Karkara**.



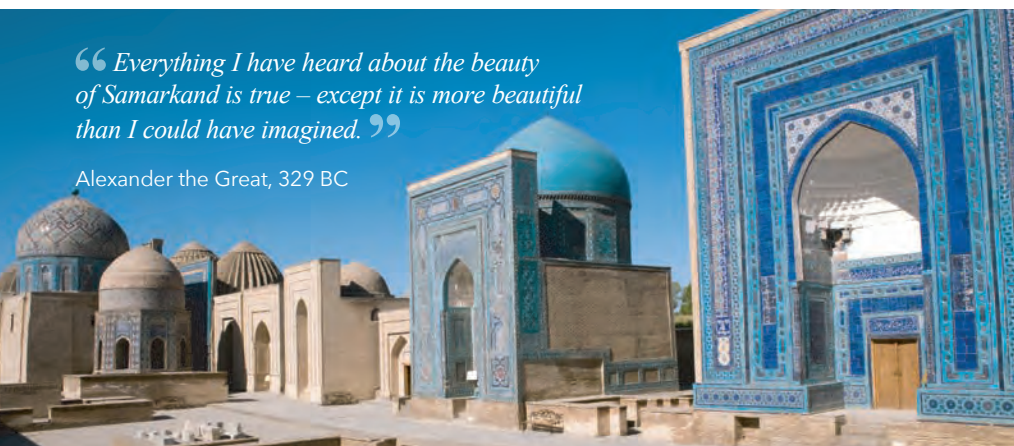


“These beautiful ancient lands with their Khanate cities and bazaars, unforgiving deserts and high, snow-capped mountains with lakes and lonely passes are memories we will treasure. Our guides were knowledgeable, helpful and fun, sharing their own family lives and culture with us, helping put all that we saw into a social context. The planning and organisation of our trip was faultless.”

Mr and Mrs Rob Aylott,  
Central Asia from Baku to Urumqi

“Everything I have heard about the beauty of Samarkand is true – except it is more beautiful than I could have imagined.”

Alexander the Great, 329 BC



#### SAMPLE ITINERARIES

##### Classic Uzbekistan

Khiva, Bukhara, Samarkand | 11 days

The highlights of Central Asia's ancient caravan routes and the spectacular silk road cities of **Khiva**, **Bukhara** and **Samarkand** are revealed in this fascinating tour. In Samarkand, the immense blue domes of the **Registan**, the most spectacular architectural ensemble in Central Asia, stopped many a traveller in their tracks. Here too, the 19th century 'Great Game' struck terror into the hearts of all its players, including two British officers, Conolly and Stoddart, who lost their heads in the great square in the summer of 1842 after weeks of hellish incarceration.

##### Trek in the wild Pamirs

Wilderness trekking in Tajikistan | 20 days

Tajikistan's **Pamir** mountain range is the least visited in the world, yet it offers some of the most magnificent landscapes, picturesque rural scenes, exhilarating trekking and genuine hospitality to be found anywhere on the planet. With a number of peaks of over 7,000m, the area is often called the 'roof of the world' and it has been on the **Great Silk Route** since the caravans first travelled to ancient Egypt, bringing sky-colored lapis lazuli to the country.

Best operated as a small private party, our fascinating itinerary incorporates 14 days of trekking including radial hikes and trekking peaks. It's a complete escape into glorious wilderness with steep rocky mountains, narrow valleys, silent fortresses, tiny villages and Tajik hospitality. You can see marmot, ibex, wolf, hare, brown bear, snow leopard, and the magnificent Marco Polo sheep.

#### THE GREAT GAME:

The **Great Game** refers to the 19th century battle for supremacy played out by the Russian and British empires for political dominance in Central Asia. While Russia spread east, swallowing up the Silk Route khanates of **Khiva**, **Bukhara** and **Samarkand**, Britain edged determinedly north towards the forbidden land of Tibet, with the aid of knowledge accumulated by fabled pundits like Nain Singh. The very centre of this political chessboard was the **Gilgit Valley**, where, high among the mountains, the borders of India, China, Russia, Afghanistan and Pakistan all converge.

**DON'T MISS:** Drinking green tea in **Bukhara's Lyiab-y-hauz** in the shade of an ancient mulberry tree, watching some of the elders sitting cross-legged on charpoys bent over a chess board.



#### Travels on the Silk Route

Overland from Uzbekistan via Kyrgyzstan to China | 34 days

A spectacular journey following the silk road thousands of miles from **Khiva** in the heart of Central Asia across China to **Beijing**. Journey by air, road and train, passing through rural markets and great Imperial cities, visiting tranquil pagodas, historic palaces and world renowned monuments along the way. We can also extend your trip to include the magnificent **Yangtse River**, the longest in China and Asia.

#### Trek in the Gissar Mountains

Uzbekistan trekking | 14 days

The rich fruit orchards, fast-flowing rivers and plunging gorges of southern Uzbekistan are the focus of this absorbing four-day trek, which follows a strategic line of ancient watch towers on the border with Tajikistan and offers distant views of snow-clad peaks.

Here, you will witness life in rural Uzbekistan at close quarters and enjoy steaming dishes of 'plov' (pilaf) washed down with fresh apple juice and followed by delicious orchard fruits. Also on the menu is Tamerlane's legendary cave where, in the 14th century, this fearless warrior trained his armies for battle.

#### Highlights of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan

Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, overland | 15 days

Compare and contrast the three most interesting republics or 'stans' that emerged from the former Soviet Union. Highlights will be **Samarkand's Registan Square**, where the three majestic Madrasahs are dominated by immense blue domes and lofty minarets said to hold up the sky, **Bukhara** where the Emir of Bukhara's brooding Ark played host to many a terrifying event and **Bishkek** in Kyrgyzstan, at the foot of the **Tien Shan Mountains**. Finish in **Almaty**, the delightful modern, tree-lined former capital of Kazakhstan, where you can savour all the colourful experiences of your journey with a traditional Russian banya at the **Arasan Baths**.

**GUIDE PRICES:** Please ask for a quotation.



## Classic Mongolia and the Naadam Festival

Mongolia is a frontier waiting to be explored. From **Ulaanbaatar**, drive into the foothills of the **Khentii Mountains**, where you can spend time walking and riding in the surrounding hills. Continue to **Karakorum** where Ghenghis Khan launched his fierce campaign to subdue Russia and China. The climax of your visit is the **Naadam Festival**, an enthralling celebration of the three manly sports of riding, wrestling and archery. Amid mounting tension, Mongolia's sturdiest countrymen pit their wits against each other for the glorious accolade of champion wrestler.

### Riding and camping in the Altai Mountains | 15 days

The **Altai**, Mongolia's highest mountain range, stretches south from Russia down the far west of the country into the **Gobi Desert**. Remote, barren and dramatic, this landscape of craggy peaks and deep valleys cries out to be explored on horseback. The riding route follows traditional nomadic stock routes where you'll hope to see the Eagle Hunters, ethnic Kazakhs who hunt with majestic golden eagles in winter. There are wonderful opportunities to camp, fish, walk and bird-watch in this timeless region.

Overland desert tour | 15 days

A classic journey for the intrepid overland traveller - journey by train from **Beijing** to **Ulaanbaatar** before driving south by jeep to Ghengis Khan's ancient capital at **Karakorum**. Staying in comfortable ger camps along the way, the journey takes in the ruins of **Ongiin Hiid Monastery** as a prelude to the vast semi-arid **Gobi Desert**.

**GUIDE PRICES:** Please ask for a quotation.

- **Trekking in the footsteps of Ghenghis Khan | 15 days**

- The reindeer herders of Hovsgol | 19 days
- Shape, shades and colours of the Gobi | 15 days

**WHAT TO EXPECT:** It is not uncommon for drivers to stop at 'gers' – they are not lost but like to get local and seasonal information on travelling through regions with no roads.

**DON'T MISS:** An absolute highlight is the annual **Naadam Festival** in mid-July, which celebrates the traditional sports of riding, wrestling and archery.

**TAKE WITH YOU:** Everything from T-shirts to thermals. The weather changes constantly, especially in the mountains and you can expect everything from hail to sunshine. For riders a sheepskin 'seat-saver' will do just that!



*“I wonder if this gives some idea about which I am still dreaming. A landscape that can be harsh and unforgiving but so, so beautiful. Nomadic peoples living hard, simple lives, happy with their freedom and a nature which they know and love. Wild horses, fermented mare’s milk and strange hard cheeses hanging inside little round felt gers that are home to families of six to ten people.”*

Mrs Gretta Robertson, Mongolia

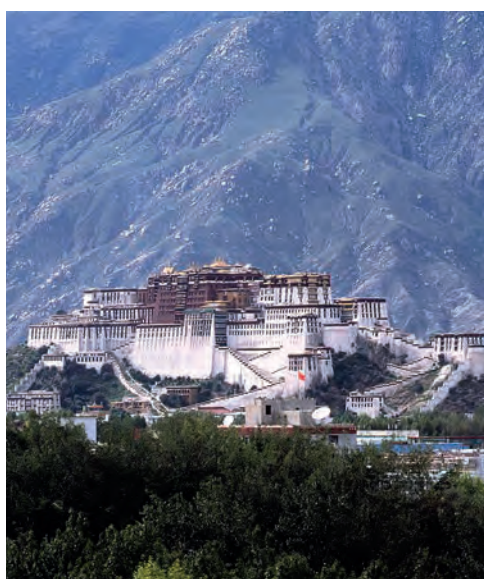


Mongolia's harsh windswept plains and the starkly beautiful Gobi desert are a revelation to intrepid travellers. Renowned for the legendary warrior Ghengis Khan, whose Golden Horde swept across Asia in the 12th century, Mongolia has many traditions that live on in the nomads of today. Horses still play an important part in an essentially timeless lifestyle where migrations between summer and winter pastures of years ago, and many children still learn to ride. My personal travels have taken me from desert to horse and train. Who better, then, to handpick the best of the weather.



**TOP: Mongolia** is the most sparsely populated independent country in the world, with a population of only around 3.5 million people. It is also the world's second-largest landlocked country after Kazakhstan. Around 30 per cent of its population are nomadic or semi-nomadic and the predominant religion is Tibetan Buddhism. Horses play an integral part of life here. Ethnic groups include eagle hunters and reindeer herders.





*“Unarmed, save for the elegant but far from lethal sword which is worn with full-dress diplomatic uniform, Younghusband rode at the head of his Mission through the city-gates. Above them, now for the first time in full view, towered the fabulous bulk of the Potala, golden-roofed, white-walled, taller than St. Paul’s Cathedral. Its central building, the private quarters of the Dalai Lama, was painted a deep crimson. Sanctuaries were shrouded by yak-hair curtains, eighty feet long and twenty-five feet wide, which cascaded down the precipice-like walls. Upon its terraces and stairways hundreds of monks, dwarfed by the height, perambulated or lounged, scratching themselves, in the sun.”*

Peter Fleming, *Bayonets to Lhasa*

The experience of crossing the immense Tibetan plateau with its awesome views of the world’s most famous mountains is perhaps only equalled by cresting one of its many 5,000m passes. The Tibetan struggle against over 65 years of Chinese occupation is well known internationally, but has not changed much of the culture or history of this Himalayan ‘Shangri-La’. Behind the Han Chinese facade, Tibet is still a land of red-robed monks and lamp-filled monasteries, sky burials and desolate-yet-dramatic landscapes that have bred a fiercely independent people faithful to the Buddhist tradition. There is no need to be a hardy trekker to appreciate Tibet’s charms, peaceful monasteries and breathtaking mountain: the vistas are accessible to everyone.



**TOP:** Villages are few and far apart once you head out of the capital, **Lhasa**;  
**BOTTOM LEFT:** Now a museum, **The Potala Palace** was the chief residence of the Dalai Lama until 1959.  
**TOP RIGHT:** Both men and women wear long thick dresses (chuba). The men wear a shorter version with pants underneath, the style varying between regions.



## SAMPLE ITINERARIES

### Journey across Tibet

Overland Lhasa to Kathmandu with Everest Base Camp option | 13 days

This journey begins with a magnificent flight across the great Himalayan range to **Lhasa**, where you spend three full days sightseeing and acclimatising before heading across the vast Tibetan plateau along some of the highest, wildest roads in the world towards **Gyantse**, with its old fort and massive **Palkhor Monastery**. The drive across the central Tibetan plateau to the grassy meadowlands of the **Tingri Plain** yields stunning views of **Everest**, **Cho Oyo**, **Lhotse** and **Makalu**.

For those with a yearning to see Everest at close quarters, we highly recommend an extension of two to four days by jeep or on foot to **Rongbuk**, and finally to **Everest Base Camp** (northside) at 5,200m, which affords spectacular views.

### Central Tibet trek

Moderate trekking from Ganden to Samye | 16 days

Beginning with a spectacular flight to **Lhasa**, this five-day trek will take you into some of the hidden parts of inner Tibet. The route offers a beautiful high-altitude journey over the passes of **Shuga La** (5,240m) and **Chitu La** (5,040m) along a trail passing through nomadic shepherds’ camps on hillsides dotted with marmot dens. On reaching **Samye** (3,595m) there will be time to pay homage to its monastery and visit **Tsedang** before boarding the flight back to **Kathmandu**.

**GUIDE PRICES:** Please ask for a quotation.

### Other suggestions

- Beijing to Kathmandu overland across the Roof of the World | 22 days
- Mt. Kailash pilgrimage | 19 days
- Trek Khangsung and North Face of Everest | 28 days

### FOR THE ACTIVE:

Try mountain biking across the Tibetan Plateau - you’ll need to be fit!

**MY FAVOURITE PLACE:** Sitting among Tibetan monks listening to early morning chanting.

**READ:** *The Epic of Mt. Everest* by **Frances Younghusband**; *Trespassers on the Roof of the World* by **Peter Hopkirk** and *Younghusband: The Last Great Imperial Adventurer* by **Patrick French**.

**BEST TIME TO GO:** April to October.





# Indian Subcontinent



*“ We did lots of family history things which made us feel we were not just tourists but were also tracing our roots. We seemed to be the only European tourists in many places and that made me feel we were well and truly off the main tourist beat. ”*

Catherine Baines, India



No other country, it is said, can awaken the senses like **India**. Just nine hours' flight from the UK, India is compelling for its diverse geography - the towering peaks of the Himalaya and the golden beaches of the south give any traveller more than enough choice.

In no other single country can you luxuriate in a Maharajah's palace, trek remote mountain trails, seek the elusive Royal Bengal tiger, pamper yourself with an Ayurvedic treatment or enjoy the serene tranquillity of backwaters in your own private houseboat. Rapidly changing, and yet clinging to its ancient past, India is ideal to explore at any level.

**Sri Lanka** packs sweeping beaches, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, historic tea plantations and fragrant spice gardens into what is a very tiny island nation. With an astonishing breadth of cultural, historical and nature experiences within easy driving distance of each other, it is not difficult to see why Sri Lanka is hard to beat as a destination.

As a stand-alone destination or in combination with a cultural tour of Sri Lanka, **The Maldives** are perfect. Combining the ultimate paradise of white sands, turquoise seas, and year-round warm temperatures with some of the best diving in the world and hotels that cater for every form of relaxation imaginable, all you need do is choose how secluded and pampered you want to be.



**TOP ROW FROM LEFT:**  
The Taj Mahal, Agra; Namgyal Tsemo Monastery, Leh. Ladakh first opened up to foreigners in the 1970s; Men in Allahabad;

**MIDDLE ROW FROM LEFT:**  
Bengal tiger; tea picker in Sri Lanka, a skilled job; classical Indian Bharatanatyam Dance, Tamil Nadu; FAR RIGHT: The Maldives

## WHEN YOU ARRIVE:

We have a great in-country team who will be there to meet you at each airport, hotel, border or train station, so the first-time visitor will never feel overwhelmed.

**READ:** William Dalrymple's *City of Djinns*, *City of Joy* by Dominique Lapierre and *Liberty or Death* by Patrick French.





## SAMPLE ITINERARIES

### Forts and palaces of Rajputana

Varanasi, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur, tigers and the Taj Mahal | 17 days

**Rajasthan**, Land of Princes, is justifiably India's best known region. The sights here are unsurpassed and so are its **Heritage Hotels** – a unique collection of ancient forts and royal palaces now restored to their former glory whilst retaining much of their original charm and atmosphere. Beautiful and contrasting architecture combined with changing natural scenery make this tour of Rajasthan's highlights difficult to miss.

### By riceboat on the backwaters of Kerala

Spice trails, jungles and waterways of South India | 18 days

India has a split personality: worlds away from the hustle and bustle of the busy north, the south offers you the most serene of experiences. Life here is extremely relaxed amid a landscape of lush green palms and paddies which thrive on plentiful rain. No sojourn in India is complete without a visit to a tea garden and a national park. You visit both, roving north to **Nagarhole National Park**, which borders **Kerala** and once encompassed forest reserved for the Maharajah, and climb steep hair-pin bends to the old British capital at **Ooty** before embarking on a private rice boat journey in Kerala's backwaters.

### Classic Ceylon

Cultural tour of Sri Lanka | 13 days

Sri Lanka is an island of lush green tea gardens, rolling hill country and verdant jungle, all embraced by palm fringed beaches and the balmy waters of the Indian Ocean. This tour takes in the highlights, but leaves plenty of time for relaxing on Sri Lanka's beautiful beaches. Visit an **Elephant Orphanage** before driving north to tour the 11th century capital of **Polonnaruwa** and the ancient rock citadel of **Sigiriya**. Enjoy cultural dance performances in **Kandy** and step back a century in **Nuwara Eliya**, the very British 'garden city'. Finally, head to one of many **National Parks** to spot deer, sambhur, crocodile and elephant, before relaxing at your beach hotel.

### Darjeeling and Sikkim

Mountains, monasteries and tea gardens | 11 days

This overland journey leaves **Delhi** for the green terraces of **Darjeeling**'s tea gardens, where the **Himalayas** rise up in the distance and on clear days you can see **Kangchenjunga** (8,586m), the world's third highest peak. From here the road leads to **Sikkim**, a former independent kingdom opened to foreigners only in the early 1980s, which retains its air of mystery. With its cultural mix of Tibetan, Mongolian, Nepalese and Indian people, Sikkim's pristine environment offers superb landscapes, lush vegetation and up to 600 species of orchids in the lowland areas. Visit a number of ancient monasteries before returning to Delhi via **Kalimpong**.

### Discover Ladakh

Leh to Manali by Jeep | 17 days

The diminutive and remote Kingdom of **Ladakh**, perched high in its own mountain range between the mighty **Karakoram** and **Himalaya**, is politically part of India, though emphatically Tibetan in appearance. The capital, **Leh**, stands at 3,400m, crowned by the imposing ruined palace of the former royal dynasty. The surrounding barren hills form an unusual moonscape dotted with gumpa (monasteries) and refreshingly green irrigated valleys. Arriving by air, we have incorporated a four-day drive out (rigorous but essential for the true adventurer), which will take you from Leh via the **Zaskar Highway** to the forested hills and orchards of the **Kulu Valley**, before returning by air to **Delhi**.

**GUIDE PRICES:** Please ask for a quotation.

## The Maldives

Roughly 200 of the islands are inhabited and offer a number of exclusive hotels and hideaways ranging from the smallest Robinson Crusoe-style islands with just a handful of rooms, to luxurious spas with villas built on stilts over the ocean. Choose the island that suits you and spend a glorious week of total relaxation after your private tour of Sri Lanka.



## OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- On the trail of the Bengal tiger | 15 days
- Rajasthan and the Backwaters of Kerala | 18 days
- Himalayan tea house trekking with Shakti lodges | 8-11 days
- Trek across Zaskar, Ladakh | 30 days
- Rajasthan by luxury train | 9 days
- Kaziranga and the land of the Nagas | 19 days
- By boat on the Brahmaputra and the Hoogli | 14 days
- Kashmir – paradise on Earth | 16 days

**BEST TIME TO GO:** Most of India is at its best from October to March, except **Ladakh** which is a summer destination. Visit Sri Lanka from September to April and the Maldives from December to April.

**DON'T MISS:** Ladakh's festival season in July and August when the colourful gompas are especially vibrant.

**FROM DELHI:** The great British hill station of **Shimla** makes a superb extension from Delhi.

**GETTING AROUND:** I love to travel by Indian trains. It's a great way to meet the locals and I've often been invited to share food or conversation with ordinary families sharing my compartment. Also you can't beat simply looking out of the window for a snapshot of daily life in the rural villages.

**FOR THE ACTIVE:** India combines well with **Bhutan**, **Sikkim** and **Nepal** for great trekking.

Fiona's travel tips



## SAMPLE ITINERARIES

### Cross the land of the Thunder Dragon

West to east drive across Bhutan | 17 days

Mystical Bhutan is a virtually forgotten kingdom, sandwiched between India and Tibet in the very heart of the Himalaya. Landlocked, and still with relatively limited tourism, much of its magic and charm lingers despite the arrival of the 21st century. Just one tarmac road crosses the country from west to east. Along it unfolds a tale of extraordinarily diverse scenery, peoples and their customs.

### Journey into Central Bhutan

Gentle trekking and cultural tour | 18 days

This relaxing itinerary combines an excellent introduction to Bhutan with a gentle three-day hike from the agricultural heartland of **Bumthang**. Your journey from **Kathmandu**, via dramatic mountain flight to **Paro**, will include all the main highlights before you reach Bumthang in central Bhutan. Maximum altitude on the trek is 3,400m. The route takes you through rural villages with visits to simple monasteries where you can chat with friendly monks. Apple orchards, wide valleys and working farms all form part of this extremely enjoyable trek.

### The Chomolhari trek

Trekking in western Bhutan | 15 days

The **Chomolhari** region in western Bhutan is one of the most pristine and ecologically untouched regions of the country. Here, bears, takin and feral sheep roam undisturbed and the semi-nomadic people of Tibeto-Burmese origin live in the high summer pastures tending their herds of yak. During this eight-day trek you will enjoy breathtaking landscapes and spectacular views of snow-capped ridges as you approach Chomolhari, Bhutan's second-highest mountain (7,314m). Be prepared for some tough days, as one or two are quite long and arduous and reach relatively high altitudes of up to 4,907m, but you will be more than rewarded for your efforts.

**GUIDE PRICES:** Please ask for a quotation.

### OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- Trek Lunana | 28 days
- Darjeeling, Sikkim, Bhutan by road | 16 days
- Haa Valley trekking | 15 days
- Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet: Jewels in the Himalayan crown | 19 days
- The Druk Path trek | 15 days

**FESTIVALS:** Festival dates vary according to the lunar calendar, so all itineraries will be individually crafted.

**MOST MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE:** Having to abandon my vehicle due to a landslide and walk ten very wet, dark kilometres through rainforest with only fireflies to guide the way.

**TOP TIP:** The interior of Bhutan's monasteries are officially closed to foreigners. Combine Bhutan with **Sikkim**, where the monasteries are open to all, for an all-round appreciation.

Fiona's travel tips



The 'Land of the Thunder Dragon', a remote and tiny kingdom, is one of the last 'untouched' cultures in the world where the Bhutanese people wear national dress and build their houses in traditional style, and every small town is dominated by an enormous fortified monastery or 'dzong'. Trekking here is superb - thick rhododendron forests, lichen-clad and carpeted with flowers in spring, with empty trails used mostly by local monks and herders.

Our travel experiences extend across the breadth of the country, so we can impart our first-hand knowledge of the less-visited eastern regions. We specialise in mapping out exciting itineraries to combine Bhutan with India, especially Sikkim, to provide superb contrasts in one memorable trip."

*"My visit ended with a three day trek through the Gangtey Valley and time to reflect on my return to this wonderful country and its friendly open people, all made possible through Fiona and Far Frontiers Travel. Bhutan is truly magical and to anyone planning to go I would say, do it."*

Ian Stubbs, Nepal and Bhutan



**TOP:** Masked dancers at **Paro Tsechu** (festival). **BOTTOM LEFT:** Built in 1692 on a cliff in the upper **Paro Valley**, **Taksang Dzong** is also known as the **Tiger's Nest Monastery**. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Bhutan has numerous trek routes ranging from the easy 3-day **Gangtey Trek** to the extremely tough 27-day **Lunana Snowman Trek**.



# Discover Nepal



Home to Everest, Annapurna, Cho Oyu, Dhaulagiri and many other fabled peaks over 8,000m, Nepal has long been every mountaineer's dream destination. Largely without roads, Nepal is best explored on foot, and has rightly earned a reputation for outstanding trekking.

Less well-known, perhaps, are the amazing opportunities for river-rafting, wildlife spotting in Nepal's national parks, and exploring virtually undiscovered border regions such as the mysterious kingdom of Mustang. Kathmandu itself is a fascinating mix of old cobbled squares lined with ancient temples, roadside bakeries and the chaos of hundreds of rickshaws, bicycles, and cows mingling with backpackers and Sherpas alike.

Whether you are a serious climber or just drawn by the majesty of these mountains, Nepal's dramatic scenery never fails to impress; nor do its people.



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** Trekking at **Kangchenjunga** (8,586m) - the third highest peak in the world; The noble face of a **Nepalese** man of the mountains with his prayer wheel; **Pashupatinath Hindu Temple** in **Kathmandu** on the banks of the **Bagmati River**; the **Nepalese** people are renowned for walking great distances in the mountains carrying heavy loads.

We offer a great variety of trekking routes and wildlife options, interesting pilgrimage itineraries, the best rafting and the most magical cultural sites in Nepal. On trek we can book you tents, tea houses or, in some places, luxury lodges. We work with an excellent in-country team and will ensure you get solid advice before you go and a first-class personal service when you get there.

## SAMPLE ITINERARIES

### Classic Nepal

Trekking, rafting and elephants | 14 days

All the highlights of Nepal together with some wonderful surprises: The adventure begins with several days in colourful **Kathmandu** before a breathtaking mountain flight to **Pokhara** to start the original 'Royal Trek'. Enjoy fantastic views of **Dhaulagiri**, **Annapurna** and the 'fishtail' spire of **Machhapuchare**. Finish off with some rafting and a thrilling rhino safari before returning to the hustle and bustle of Kathmandu.

### Parchemo and the Rolwaling Valley

Trek from Rolwaling to Khumbu | 27 days

The **Rolwaling Valley** runs east-west between the **Tamba Kosi** and the **Khumbu Himal**, close to the Tibetan border. **Parchemo** (6,187m) rises above the **Tesi Lapcha** pass (5,750m) which connects Rolwaling with **Khumbu**. Being able to cross this tough pass, one of the finest watershed crossings in the Himalayas, is really something special for the adventurer as it was previously closed to foreigners. The descent through **Thame**, **Namche Bazaar** and the other Sherpa villages is a delightful way to end the journey.

**GUIDE PRICES:** Please ask for a quotation.

## OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- **Everest Base Camp** teahouse trek | 17 days
- **Annapurna Sanctuary/Annapurna Base Camp** | 21 days
- **Trek Island Peak** | 24 days
- **Kangchenjunga trek** | 29 days
- **Trek in the Kingdom of Mustang** | 20 days
- **Lamjung Himal trek** | 16 days
- **Langtang, Gosainkunda and Helambu** | 21 days

**FOR THE ACTIVE:** Options for mountain biking and trekking peaks.

**MY FAVOURITE PLACE:** **Kalar Pattar** (5,700m) for its amazing views of Everest and sense of achievement - it's worth the climb!

**BEST TIME TO GO:** October to April.

Fiona's travel tips



# Far East and Indochina

## Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia

**Thailand's** superb natural beaches, emerald rice fields and forested hillsides are beautifully complimented by its ancient temples and bejewelled palaces. Bangkok, vast and chaotic, is vibrant and a feast for the senses, the northern cities of Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai provide great opportunities to explore the culture of the hill tribes and enjoy some unexpectedly fine trekking, whilst the beaches in Phuket and Koh Samui are some of the best in the world.

Step over the border into **Malaysia** and you can walk for miles under an unbroken canopy of green in its fantastic national parks of primal forests. Such a contrast with Kuala Lumpur, the colonial capital with its gleaming steel and glass towers and superb shopping.

And finally to **Indonesia**, the largest archipelago in the world, comprising more than 17,000 islands and so much to experience – exquisite dance to brooding volcanoes, unforgettable temples and verdant rice paddies. Some of Indonesia's most famous inhabitants include orang-utans, the Komodo dragon and the one-horned rhino.

## Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam

Stunning natural scenery, astonishing temples, memorable architecture and some great surprises once you are off the beaten track all await.

In addition to its legendary temple complex at Angkor Wat, **Cambodia's** cultured cities tempt with their wonderful French colonial features and remote trekking. In **Laos**, Luang Prabang has been designated a World Heritage Site. **Vietnam** is a land full of contrasts where, in the cities, modern high-rise and ancient historical buildings rub shoulders and the rural countryside varies from delta to hill-station, imposing citadels to simple farming villages, lush paddy fields to glorious empty beaches. Vietnamese cuisine is especially notable and varied, with some 500 traditional dishes.

We have superb partners in all three countries in well-coordinated offices so we can put together multi-country, linked itineraries with ease. The options are just too numerous to mention here. Call us with your desires and we will deliver your dreams!



*“In my early days of travel, I spent six weeks journeying around Indonesia. Orang utan jungle trekking in Sumatra, summiting the crater rim of Java's Mt. Bromo at sunrise, enjoying a massage on the black sand beaches of Bali's northern shores and buying batik in the narrow fragrant alleys of its southern villages are just some treasured experiences... Witnessing the crawling jungle spectacle of the Komodo dragons and the glorious cobalt crater lakes of Kelimutu on Flores. I travelled by local ferry and rickshaw – truly great memories.”*

Fiona Brijnath







“One of my favourite experiences was spending an afternoon cycling along rural Vietnamese lanes, watching the farmers digging in the fields, ducks being herded into pens, pigs scratching at the dirt in the back yard, women hanging out their washing. It was like an ordinary scene from our local village, with a Vietnamese twist! Being on a bicycle, with a large straw hut to keep the sun off, I felt like part of the scenery.”

Fiona Brijnath

## SAMPLE ITINERARIES

### Islands and highlands of Indonesia

Rice paddies, palaces and volcanoes | 17 days

Visit three of Indonesia's most diverse islands, **Java**, **Bali** and **Sulawesi**, each with its own unique character. On Java visit **Yogyakarta** to explore the **Grand Palace**, witness exquisite **Ramayana** dance and roam the unforgettable **Borobudur Temple**. **Mt. Bromo**, brooding in Java's far eastern corner, also deserves a visit as the island's largest active volcano. Bali brings green rice paddies, shaping a terraced landscape which is centuries old. From here fly to Sulawesi, where the mountainous region of **Toraja** plays out exotic funeral rituals and reveals its mysterious 'hanging graves', housing effigies of the dead. Since Indonesia's beach hotels are among the best in the Far East, you should seriously consider a few days' relaxation at the end of your journey.

### The Eastern and Oriental Express

Singapore to Bangkok by luxury train | 15 days

Explore **Singapore**, Malaysia and Thailand in unashamed luxury by rail, capturing the spirit of travel in olden days. Board the regal **Eastern and Oriental Express** amid the clean-cut elegance of Singapore, and settle into your sumptuous accommodation. Over three days the train wends its way north from Singapore through the rubber plantations of Malaysia, past the tropical island of **Penang** and on into Thailand, where soon the terraced paddy fields give way to the vibrant Thai capital **Bangkok**. The train also goes to Laos.

**GUIDE PRICES:** Please ask for a quotation.

### OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- Bridge over the River Kwai | 8 days
- Northern Thailand and the Golden Triangle | 10 days
- Bangkok, Chiang Mai and the beach | 11 days
- Kuala Lumpur and the Cameron Highlands | 11 days
- Best of Taman Negara National Park and Langkawi | 12 days

**DON'T MISS:** Indonesia's extraordinary prehistoric Komodo dragons.

**FOR THE ACTIVE:** Hill tribe trekking by elephant.

### BEST TIME TO GO:

**Thailand:** November to March  
**Malaysia:** October to May  
**Indonesia:** April to September.



### Vietnam's Mekong Delta and beyond

The very best of Vietnam | 17 days

This programme embraces Vietnam's key scenic and cultural highlights: Enjoy the mountain highlands and cool hill station temperatures of **Sapa**, staying in local homes and trekking into the hills to visit hill tribes and their colourful markets. Explore some of **Halong Bay's** 3,000 spectacular limestone outcrops by boat. Cruise on the **Perfume River**, take a bike ride into the tranquil countryside at **Hoi An** and end at the **Mekong Delta**, Vietnam's fertile 'rice-bowl'.

### Indochina explorer

Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, cultural tour by air | 23 days

This trip starts in Laos - an entrancing country with hill-tribe villages, temples and beautiful countryside. Cambodia is renowned for its art and architecture - no visit here would be complete without a tour of the magnificent temple complex at **Angkor**. In Vietnam explore from south to north with the bustling markets in the **Mekong Delta**, the modern and colonial mix of **Saigon**, Hue's old imperial capital and an absorbing journey by Chinese-style sailing junk in **Halong Bay**.

### Treasures of Laos

Laotian highlights | 11 days

The crown jewel of Laos, and the starting point for this itinerary, is **Luang Prabang**, perhaps the best-preserved traditional city in South East Asia. You will be charmed by this delightful UNESCO World Heritage city, known for its serene vats (temples) and classic architecture before taking a journey by traditional wooden riverboat to visit the famous caves of **Pak Ou**. The mysterious **Plain of Jars** in the north ends your tour of this wonderful country - relaxed, quietly contemplative and still less visited than its neighbours.

**GUIDE PRICES:** Please ask for a quotation.

### OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- Journey on the Mekong by Pandaw | 15 days
- Vietnam Northwest Frontier trekking | 15 days
- Hill tribes and temples of Cambodia | 15 days

**FOR THE ACTIVE:** Kayaking in **Halong Bay**.

### MY FAVOURITE PLACE: Luang Prabang

- sitting cross legged on the pavement at dawn watching the silent procession of orange-robed monks coming down the street towards me during the giving of alms.

**BEST TIME TO GO:** November to March.



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** Festival dancer, **Indonesia**; Tea grows well in the highlands of **Malaysia**; Buddhist monks giving alms in **Luang Prabang, Laos**; **Angkor Wat, Cambodia** one of the wonders of the world; **Vietnam**, a place of temples and ancient traditions such as the Do Temple festival in **Bac Ninh Province**.



# China Experience

## SAMPLE ITINERARIES

### Cultural China

Beijing, Xi'an and the Yangtse River | 15 days

Stretching 5,200km from the confluence of the **Heilong** and **Wusuli** rivers in the east to the **Pamir** mountains in the west, China is so vast and varied that it is virtually impossible to see everything in one visit. This itinerary is perfect for any first-time visitor. Starting in **Beijing**, you visit the 15th Century **Forbidden City**, which served as the residence of the 24 emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties, then on to **The Great Wall**, an hour's drive from Beijing. In **Xi'an** you will see the world-famous army of **Terracotta Warriors**, silently guarding the tomb of Qin Shi Huang Di. The last stage of your journey is a cruise of the **Yangtse River**, ending at **Suzhou**, the Venice of the East.

### Great Wall trekking

Gentle trekking | 12 days

Enjoy a different perspective on the world's most populated country from the shadow of the **Great Wall of China**, which winds nearly 9,000km from east to west across desert and mountain, grassland and plateau. More than 2,000 years old, some sections are now in ruins or have entirely disappeared. After flying to **Beijing** and pausing to take in the essential sights, you will be driven out to the wall to start the trek. Each day commences in a different location and you will walk for three to five hours before returning at night to a local hotel or guesthouse.

### Overland across the roof of the world

China, Tibet, Nepal overland | 22 days

This grand tour takes you on an extraordinary journey from the densely populated cities of China, westwards along the old Silk Route, before turning south into the rarefied air of Tibet, one of the most sparsely populated locations on earth. You will be richly rewarded for the long overland drive – not only by your first glimpse of the magnificent 1,000-roomed **Potala Palace** which dominates old-town **Lhasa**, but much later, having crossed the 5,000m passes of the **Central Tibetan Plateau**, by a grand photographic view of **Mount Everest** with stupas (dome-shaped shrines) and the mani walls (made from inscribed stone tablets) in the foreground.

**GUIDE PRICES:** Please ask for a quotation.

**TOP TIP:** For those looking for something akin to the **Trans Siberian** train but without time for the long journey, take the 31 hour journey from **Beijing** into Mongolia.

**TAKE WITH YOU:** **Patience.** Travelling in China can be frustrating due to the language barrier.

**BEST TIME TO GO:** The best times to visit are spring and autumn.



China can be difficult to appreciate fully without some local knowledge. We'll help you plan the perfect itinerary for your visit, and ensure that excellent English-speaking guides are available to enhance your experiences.



Long recognised as the origin of much of our early civilised culture, China is successfully overcoming the effects of the much more recent Communist era. Fortunately there is still much to appreciate in this vast and diverse country: the Terracotta Warriors, over 7,000 soldiers, horses and chariots unearthed in a vast archaeological dig; the fabled city of Shanghai; the mighty Yangtse River and the three gorges, and of course, the Great Wall. Initially constructed in 475 - 221 BC as a series of earthworks erected to keep out invaders from the north, the early wall has now virtually crumbled away, however impressive sections rebuilt in the Ming Dynasty remain.

This vast country experiences enormous regional differences in climate owing to its complex topography, with an almost mind-boggling cultural diversity to match. With so much history, ancient and modern culture, and stunning scenery spread across such a large area, China is worth visiting two or three times.



**TOP: The Great Wall** has a total length of around 8,852km (5,500 miles) and comprises sections of actual wall, trenches and natural defensive barriers such as hills and rivers.

**BOTTOM LEFT:** The picturesque water towns near **Shanghai** are well worth a visit.

**BOTTOM RIGHT: The Terracotta Army** of warriors and horses dates from 210 BC and was discovered in 1974 by local farmers near Xi'an, Shaanxi province.





“Thanks for doing another excellent job in arranging such a hugely enjoyable and successful trip. It's certainly further increased our appetite for adventurous exotic travel outside the major tourist destinations and we look forward to planning our next trip with you.”

Andrew Mounstephen and Suzanne Waterer, Myanmar

After the election of a democratic government in 2010, travel to Myanmar grew exponentially. Cut off from the outside world in 1962, its borders only reopened in the mid-1990s, and many areas are little-changed. Nevertheless, tourism locally responded impressively to the surge in visitors – knowledgeable guides with excellent English and hotels – comfortable and often luxurious. The obvious gems are Mandalay, the temples of Bagan, Inle Lake and the mighty Irrawaddy, around which much of life still revolves. You'll find cool British hill stations, elephant camps, teak and brass river cruisers and a barefoot paradise in the Mergui Archipelago in the far south.

More than all its gilded temples, Myanmar's crowning glory remains its people. Despite all they have endured, they are peaceful and tranquil – always with a ready smile, a gentle bow and a helping hand.

#### OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- Mandalay to Bagan by brass and teak boat | 10 days
- Exploring ancient Arakan | 11 days
- Chindwin and the Upper Irrawaddy by boat | 25 days

**TOP LEFT:** Myanmar has many beautiful flower markets. **TOP RIGHT:** There are about 500,000 Buddhist monks in Myanmar and most young Burmese men spend time living in a monastery at some stage during adolescence. **BOTTOM:** Intricate gilded rooftops can be found in most towns.



# Mystical Myanmar

## SAMPLE ITINERARIES

### All Burma

Yangon, Mandalay, the Irrawaddy and Inle Lake | 18 days

Explore Myanmar's many dimensions, from its timeless landscapes and temples to its more recent colonial past. You'll stay in **Yangon** (formerly **Rangoon**) with its magnificent **Shwedagon Pagoda**, visiting the **Golden Rock** at **Bago** and the **Htauk Kyant War Memorial**. From **Mandalay** you travel to the hill station of **Pyin oo Lwin** and take an overnight cruise on the **Irrawaddy River** to **Bagan** where you'll tour spectacular temples, then fly to **Heho** and drive via **Pindaya** to the hill station of **Kalaw** to visit tribes and ride elephants. After a fascinating train ride, end your journey with a boat trip across idyllic **Inle Lake** with its famous leg rowers, floating farms, villages and markets.

### The Golden Land

Sail Mandalay to Rangoon | 14 days

Sail through the cultural heart of 'Middle Myanmar' on a shallow-drafted **Pandaw** ship, hand finished in brass and teak. The landscape varies from the lush teak plantations around **Prome** to the desert country south of **Bagan**. Visit a number of small villages and towns and see local agriculture and manufacturing. Remote from the modern world, these places offer a glimpse of a timeless, lost Myanmar far from the usual tourist trail. We also visit several monasteries and temples of historical interest. Colonial character and a friendly atmosphere predominate on this luxury trip.

**GUIDE PRICES:** Please ask for a quotation.

**TOP TIP:** Wear shoes that slip on and off easily – you'll have to remove them when you visit a pagoda or other sacred site.

**MUST DO:** A river voyage on one of the brass and teak ex-flotilla boats that ply the **Irrawaddy** and **Chindwin** rivers.

**BEST KEPT SECRET:** The unspoiled **Mergui Archipelago** is a perfect end to an exploration of Myanmar or the definitive beach holiday on its own accessed from **Bangkok**. Here, stay on tiny **Macleod Island**, a heavenly teardrop in the Andaman Sea.

**BEST TIME TO VISIT:** October to March. (December to February are the coolest months).

**BOOKS:** *The River of Lost Footsteps: A personal history* by **Thant Myint-U**; *The Glass Palace* by **Amitav Ghosh**; *Letters From Burma* by **Aung San Suu Kyi**; *Burmese Days* by **George Orwell**; *The Piano Tuner* by **Daniel Mason**.

Fiona's travel tips



## SAMPLE ITINERARIES

### Best of Japan

Cities and culture in comfort | 16 days

Experience the very best that Japan has to offer including futuristic **Tokyo**, cultural **Kyoto** and iconic **Mt Fuji**, together with a visit to **Hiroshima**, one of Japan's most vibrant cities, and **Miyajima Island** with its famous floating torii gate.

Much of your travel will be by comfortable train and highlights include a trip high into the **Japan Alps** to visit the well-preserved mountain town of **Takayama**, continuing on to **Kanazawa** and the famous **Kenroku'en garden**, one of the country's top three gardens.

You'll have the chance to try your hand at Japanese cuisine, attend a sumo training session, visit fish markets, traditional townhouses and much more.

### Zen Japan

Meditation, temples and monks | 12 days

Following an action-packed exploration of old and new **Tokyo**, this itinerary takes you up into the **Japanese Alps** for a stay in **Yudanaka**, home of Japan's famous snow monkeys. After a spiritual stay in **Kyoto**, where we arrange a zen meditation lesson, your next stop is the UNESCO World Heritage village of **Koya-san**, including an unforgettable stay in a **shukubo** (temple lodging) and a chance to watch the monks chant. Your journey ends in **Osaka**, the food capital of Japan, and its most lively city.

**GUIDE PRICES:** Please ask for a quotation.

### OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- The Japan Alps | 15 days
- Gardens of Japan | 14 days

**DID YOU KNOW:** The characters that make up **Japan's** name mean '**sun-origin**', which is why it's sometimes referred to as the '**Land of the Rising Sun**'.

**GETTING THERE:** Flying time direct from the UK is under 13 hours.

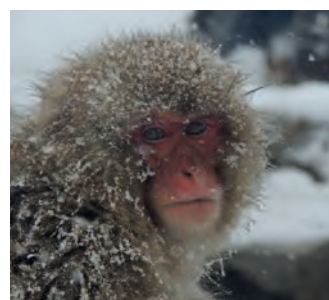
**GETTING AROUND:** Japan's travel infrastructure is among the most advanced in the world, symbolised by its futuristic bullet train. The network these trains serve is highly efficient and covers most of the country.

**BEST TIME TO GO:** Autumn for the colourful foliage and Spring (March and April) for the cherry blossom (Sakura) in **Kyushu**.

**DO'S AND DON'TS:** Always remove your shoes on entering a Japanese house. Never leave your chopsticks sticking up out of a bowl of rice or other dish – this is how rice is offered to the dead at Buddhist funerals.

**TOP TIP:** Bow when greeting someone – it's the customary salutation, although shaking hands is becoming more common during business meetings with Westerners.

**TOP:** A **geisha** is a traditional entertainer and hostess, skilled in Japanese performing arts. **BOTTOM LEFT:** The **Nachi Fire Festival** is held annually in July in a picturesque setting. **MIDDLE:** Japanese Macaques or Snow monkeys can be found in **Nagano** or **Hakodate**. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Tea grows in the shadow of **Mt Fuji**.



Japan is a land of astonishing contrasts: From antiquated temples and kimono-clad geisha girls hurrying between traditional tea houses in Kyoto, to lightning-quick bullet trains carrying sharp-suited businessmen between the high-tech cities of Tokyo and Osaka, this is where the past meets the future.

Despite being the tenth most populous nation in the world, Japan possesses vast and dramatic areas of rural wilderness with forests covering around 73 per cent of its territory, rolling mountains, over 200 volcanoes and nearly 7,000 islands all providing the perfect backdrop for tourism and recreation.

Those who visit the 'Land of the Rising Sun' can look forward to a trip of endless discovery, packed with gourmet experiences, indulgent spa treatments, modern art, pop culture and heritage trails leading to towering castles and mist-shrouded mountains. One important point to note is that in recent years Japan has suffered from lack of capacity in terms of decent hotels and guides so if you want to visit we urge you to book well ahead.

For a fascinating insight into old Japan, let us organise tea with a geisha, or a stay in a Ryokan – a traditional Japanese inn where you sleep on a futon and enjoy onsen or hot spring baths.

*“We have just returned from a fantastic holiday! All aspects were brilliant. Japan is an amazing country, and we've seen so many amazing parts of it, thanks mostly to your organisation. All three of us are very glad we decided to go through Far Frontiers Travel. We found it rather difficult to think of anything that could be improved on! We have many happy memories of our time in Japan, thank you so much.”*

Emily Thomson, Japan







South Korea is a captivating blend of modernity and tradition, offering the visitor a unique experience that spans futuristic cities, tranquil countryside, and a rich cultural heritage. From the bustling streets of Seoul, where futuristic skyscrapers stand alongside royal palaces, to the coastal charm of Busan, with its breathtaking beaches and vibrant markets, Korea offers an incredible variety of experiences. Gyeongju, known as the "Museum Without Walls", transports visitors back in time with its UNESCO-listed temples and tombs, while the volcanic beauty of Jeju Island promises nature lovers an escape like no other. With an advanced transportation system, including the world-famous KTX high-speed train, travellers can explore the entire country efficiently and comfortably. Whether you're a history buff, a nature enthusiast, or a foodie eager to savour Korean cuisine, South Korea offers an unforgettable adventure.



**TOP:** Gyeongbokgung Palace, Seoul was built in 1395 as a royal residence; **BOTTOM LEFT:** Haedong Yonggung Temple in Gijang-gun near Busan, South Korea's second city; **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Changing of the guard at the palace.

## SAMPLE ITINERARIES

### Seoul, the DMZ and Sokcho

Introduction to South Korea | 11 days

Rising from the ashes of the Korean War is the buzzing capital of **Seoul** where tradition rubs shoulders with ultra modernity. Here you'll explore the city, strolling through tranquil gardens, taking in temples and thronging markets, ascend the **Sky Observatory** and delve into Korean culinary delights with a cooking class. Next explore the tunnels and watchtowers of the **Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)**, the mysterious and highly fortified line between the free South and communist North and try to gain a deeper understanding of the history that binds these two greatly differing nations. Heading northeast, in **Sokcho** you'll discover a coastal city with beautiful natural scenery and fresh seafood. Enjoy a scenic hike in nearby **Seoraksan National Park** and there is time for surfing before ending with **UNESCO** Protected **Hwaseung Fortress** in **Suwon** and a return to **Seoul** for the flight home.

### Beaches, volcanoes and UNESCO sights of the south

Seoul, Silla Kingdom Journey and Jeju | 13 days

On this longer tour, you'll see **Seoul** and the **DMZ** before journeying south east to **Gyeongju** one of South Korea's most historically rich and culturally significant cities and capital of the ancient **Silla Kingdom** (57 BC - 935 AD). **Busan** is South Korea's second-largest city and a major coastal destination known for its beaches, seafood, and vibrant culture. Your final stop is **Jeju Island** in the **Cheju Strait**, known for its stunning natural beauty, unique volcanic landscapes, and distinct local culture - a great location for hiking and other outdoor adventures before you head home.

**GUIDE PRICES:** Please ask for a quotation.

## OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- South Korea - North and South Combo | **15 days**
- Culture and Hiking: East Coast Adventure | **15 days**

**DID YOU KNOW:** Korean cuisine is globally renowned, and visiting Korea means indulging in authentic flavours. From sizzling Korean BBQ and comforting bibimbap to flavourful street food in bustling night markets, there's something for every palate.

**WHEN TO GO:** It's a four -season country. Spring for cherry blossoms. Summer for festivals and beachside escapes. Autumn for picture-perfect landscapes. Winter for snowy mountain resorts, skiing and hot springs.

**GETTING AROUND:** It's safe, clean, and tourist-friendly with a low crime rate and a reputation for hospitality, English-friendly services and an efficient public transportation system.







# South America



## Peru and Ecuador/The Galapagos

The world-renowned mountain citadel of Machu Picchu perched atop the cloud forest and Lake Titicaca with its floating reed islands simply must be visited by any traveller to **Peru**. Strongly threaded through the spectacular wild scenery is the ancient Inca and Spanish-conquistador heritage. Enjoy the cobbled streets and glorious cathedrals of Cusco, the densely packed museums in Lima, take a flight over the mysterious Nazca lines, or head out to the dramatic Colca canyon with its soaring condors. If you can, take time out to witness the extraordinary biodiversity of the Amazon Basin.

**Ecuador's** charms include vibrant indigenous culture, colonial architecture, other-worldly volcanic landscapes and dense rainforest. Almost always mentioned in the same breath are the **Galapagos Islands**, some 1,000km west of the mainland, with their unique wildlife such as the giant tortoise, the blue-footed booby, the waved albatross and marine iguanas – so unaccustomed to human presence that they are completely unphased by visitors.

## Bolivia, Chile and Argentina

**Bolivia**, Latin America's highest and most isolated country, has dramatic Andean landscapes and a wealth of unexplored surprises – from the colonial splendour of Sucre to the silver mines of Potosi and Salar de Uyuni, the largest saltpan in the world. Lake Titicaca, famous for the floating reed islands of the Uros Indians, is an undisputed highlight. Think Bolivia, think untouristed. It really is.

By contrast, **Argentina** boasts cultured cities and countryside ranging from rainforest to vineyards. It is known for its tango and polo, rough-riding gauchos, political heroine Eva Perón and the best steaks in the world. The Iguazu Falls, El Calafate's magnificent glacier, whale watching and Tierra Del Fuego – it's an exciting mix.



For keen riders a stay on an Argentinian working cattle ranch is a must – ride trails, round up cattle, take bird walks and taste fine wines at **Estancia Cerro Guido** in Patagonia and at **Estancia Los Potreros** in the Cordoba hills you can also play golf, take a polo lesson or watch a thrilling chukka or two. As a complete contrast, head off to Bolivia's **Salar de Uyuni** in a unique Airstream camper, one of several exciting camping options.

**Chile** occupies a thin strip of land between the Andes and the Pacific, stretching 4,200km from desert to glacier. It is a stunningly beautiful country where one can experience both the lush wine-growing regions around Santiago and the harsh wilderness of the Cape Horn fjords. For sheer drama, the granite peaks in the Torres del Paine National Park are breathtaking.





“We appreciated the flexibility in planning our itinerary and sound advice based on experience. We were impressed throughout by your local reps – especially during the very difficult conditions with flooding in San Pedro de Atacama.”

Andrew Cox and Adrienne Fryer,  
Chile and Southern Argentina

#### SAMPLE ITINERARIES

##### Highlights of Peru

Inca Trail, Lake Titicaca and the Amazon | 19 days

Peru – a country of superb archaeological sites, beautiful landscapes and abundant wildlife. The lost city of **Machu Picchu** surrounded by the vivid green of the Amazon cloud forest is a memorable vision. Our suggested itinerary allows you to see all the highlights, including the floating reed islands of **Lake Titicaca**, local markets, rafting, trekking and the **Manu Biosphere Reserve** – 1.8 million hectares of pristine forest deep into the heart of the Amazon Jungle.

##### In Darwin's footsteps

Ecuador and the Galapagos | 15 days

We start in **Quito**, Ecuador's capital, surrounded by snow-capped volcanoes. Explore the rich colonial architecture, churches, monasteries and museums and later head out to **Cotopaxi National Park**. Then it's a road trip with glorious mountain scenery, overnighting in haciendas, to visit the colourful **Otavallo** market. Our ultimate goal is the **Galapagos Islands**, discovered by Darwin in 1835. The ideal way to explore the unique wildlife and ecology of this volcanic archipelago is in the intimate surroundings of smaller vessels. We offer a full range from tall ships of classic elegance to luxury yachts and catamarans.

**GUIDE PRICES:** Please ask for a quotation.

#### OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- Trek the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu | 14 days
- Mountain lodges of Peru | 12 days
- Peruvian Andes and the Galapagos | 16 days

**FOR THE LESS ACTIVE:** If you don't want to trek the whole Inca Trail, take the train and hop off early to enjoy a wonderful day's walk instead.

**MY FAVOURITE PLACE:** (Once I had got over a slight vertigo moment), sitting atop **Wayna Picchu** watching the cloud drift over the ruins of **Machu Picchu** spread out below me.

#### BEST TIME TO GO :

**Peru:** April to October, **Ecuador:** October to June, **Galapagos:** year-round.

Fiona's  
travel tips

#### Lake Titicaca and 4WD Bolivia experience

Uyuni, Laguna Colorada and the Lake | 15 days

Our visit to this landlocked Andean country brings together a blend of Spanish colonial influence and stunning scenery. Visit **La Paz**, the world's highest capital city, venture down a working mine, picnic with the indigenous peoples of **Lake Titicaca**, see the pre-Hispanic relics of **Tiwanaku** and enjoy a boat trip to the **Islands of the Sun and Moon**. Some of the most memorable sights that Bolivia offers can be found at **Salar de Uyuni** and on an undisputedly rugged 4WD journey south to see flamingo lakes and weird desert rock formations.

#### Glaciers and gauchos

Highlights of Argentina | 15 days

This itinerary brings together some of Argentina's extraordinarily diverse experiences. Starting in **Buenos Aires** with its excellent theatre, fine restaurants and gaudy flea markets, you'll move south-east to **Peninsula Valdes** and its sea lions, whales and penguins. Further south still is **Tierra del Fuego**, whence the Antarctic beckons. Turning north the towering majesty of the **Perito Moreno** glacier looms above and you head to warmer climes, including **Mendoza** at the foothills of the Andes, home of the Argentine Malbec grape. Finally, thrill to the thundering roar of the **Iguazu Falls** as you take a sturdy walkway over the plunging water.

#### Patagonia and Atacama

Chile trek and desert combination | 15 days

This journey highlights the most extreme environmental contrast imaginable: Chile's mountainous **Patagonia** and the 'moonlike' **Atacama desert**. Explore Patagonia's **Torres del Paine National Park** on horseback and undertake the demanding 10-day 'circuit', camp, stay in refugios and access remote areas by boat or complete a five or seven-day walk. This is a landscape of immense batholithic pinnacles, soaring 'horns' and jagged turrets dwarfed by densely glaciated and barren surroundings. Combine this with an exhilarating visit to the geysers, salt flats, volcanoes, flamingos, and the **Valley of the Moon** in northern Chile's **Atacama Desert**.

**GUIDE PRICES:** Please ask for a quotation.

#### OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- Riding with the gauchos | 14 days
- Aconcagua ascent | 19 days
- The Torres Del Paine trek | 10 days
- Wildlife cruise round Cape Horn and southern fjords of Patagonia | 12 days
- The Cordillera Real trek | 22 days
- By expedition boat to Antarctica | 23 days

**DON'T MISS:** Enjoy a cocktail at sunset on the edge of Bolivia's **Salar de Uyuni** while chef prepares a delicious dinner then bed down in your Deluxe Airstream Camper. Your private camp is sublime and the view from the loo is to die for!

**TOP TIP:** See **Lake Titicaca** and its floating reedbed islands from the Bolivian side – it's much less visited than from Peru.

#### BEST TIME TO GO:

**Chile:** October to April **Bolivia:** April to September. **Argentina:** October to April.

Fiona's  
travel tips

“A single glance at the landscape was sufficient to show me how widely different it was from anything I had ever beheld.”

Charles Darwin, The Voyage of the Beagle  
12 December 1832



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** **Bolivia** has desolately beautiful drives; **Cusco, Peru** – the historic capital of the Inca Empire is a World Heritage Site; **The Galapagos Islands** house nearly 9,000 species; many nearly unchanged since prehistoric times; **Chile's** barren and dramatic **Atacama** Desert has large numbers of **Chilean** Flamingos; **Argentinian** gauchos are skilled horsemen; **Peru's** lost city of the Incas, **Machu Picchu** is a 15th century citadel perched on a mountain ridge at 2,430m.



## SAMPLE ITINERARIES

### National parks, soft adventure and beach

Highlights of Costa Rica | 16 days

Our two-week itinerary includes some of the most scenic areas of Costa Rica. Arriving at **San Jose**, first up is an incredible wilderness lodge with a thrilling raft both in and out of the lodge set deep in pristine rainforest. Then head to the **Caribbean Coast** with its maze of canals and waterways in **Tortuguero National Park** and then to **Arenal** with its impressive volcano, biking and zip wires and extraordinary views of the volcano. Your next destination is **Manuel Antonio National Park** for more incredible wildlife, beaches and coastal scenery and finally head south to the stunning **Osa Peninsula**. Far less visited - it combines incredible coastline, spectacular wildlife, great snorkeling, diving and natural scenery.

### Hike, bike and camp your way across Costa Rica

Costa Rica Trek Coast to Coast | 14 days

Embark on the adventure of a lifetime as you journey across Costa Rica from coast to coast on a trek that will immerse you in the heart of the country's stunning landscapes. Travel through lush rainforests, over towering mountain ranges, and along pristine beaches, offering a truly authentic experience of Costa Rica's incredible biodiversity. With each step, you'll discover vibrant wildlife, cascading waterfalls, and breathtaking vistas. Whether you're an experienced hiker or an adventure-seeker ready to challenge yourself, this coast-to-coast trek promises unforgettable moments and a deep connection with the diverse ecosystems that make Costa Rica a global treasure.

**GUIDE PRICES:** Please ask for a quotation.

### OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- Surf, Zip and Raft Adventure - Guanacaste | 12 days

**GETTING THERE:** At certain times of the year there are direct flights from the UK.

**DON'T MISS:** The **Osa Peninsula**. It takes a bit of getting to but you will be rewarded with fewer visitors and one of the most biodiverse places on the planet. Also **Cano Island** for the best snorkelling and diving in the country.

**WHEN TO GO:** Visit year-round as climate varies by location. In the lowlands the dry season is December - April and rainy season May - November. At higher elevations like **Monteverde** or **Arenal** it can be cold in the evenings.

**TOP TIP:** Listen out for the extraordinary sound of the howler monkey at dawn and dusk - their calls will send a shiver down your spine!

**ADD ON:** Ask us about adding **Colombia** or **Panama** to your holiday.

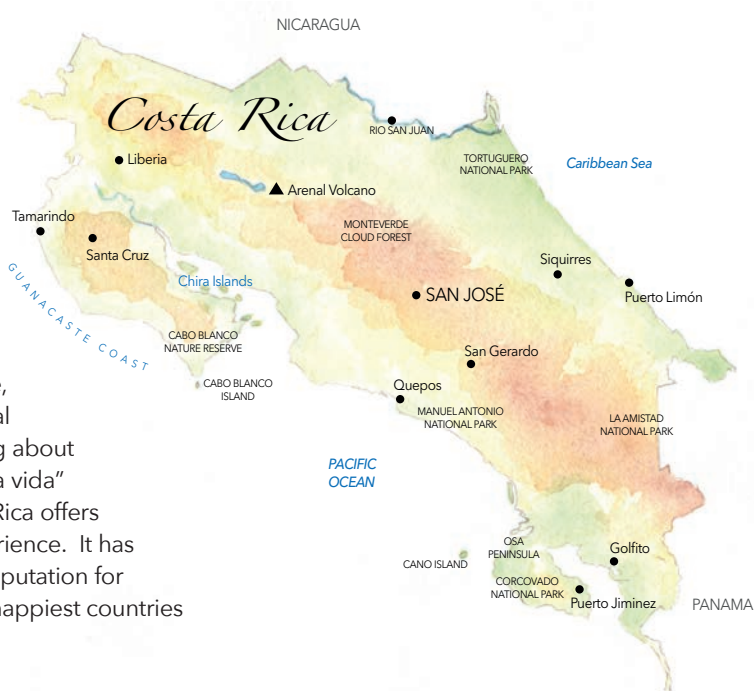


Costa Rica is a stunning destination known for its incredible biodiversity, lush landscapes, and vibrant culture. Located in Central America, it offers the visitor a unique blend of adventure, relaxation, and natural beauty. From pristine beaches along both the Pacific and Caribbean coasts to dense rainforests, majestic volcanoes, and abundant wildlife, Costa Rica is a paradise for nature lovers and outdoor enthusiasts.

The country leads on eco-tourism, with numerous national parks and reserves that protect its diverse ecosystems. Hike through cloud forest, explore waterfalls, go zip-lining through the jungle, or take part in thrilling water sports like surfing and white-water rafting. Costa Rica is also home to a wealth of wildlife, including howler monkeys, sloths, toucans, and turtles.

Beyond its natural wonders, the country boasts a rich culture that blends indigenous traditions with Spanish colonial influences.

Whether you're exploring vibrant cities like San José, enjoying traditional cuisine, or learning about the country's "pura vida" way of life, Costa Rica offers an enriching experience. It has a well-deserved reputation for being one of the happiest countries in the world.



**TOP:** Spending time in a national park is one of the highlights of visiting **Costa Rica**; **BOTTOM LEFT:** Rafting in and out of **Pacuare Lodge** makes for a thrilling experience; **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Zip wires give a perspective of life in the tree canopy.



# Amazing Australia and New Zealand



Australia is a remarkable continent of huge differences - untouched deserts, ancient rainforests, mystical Uluru, world class wine country, the mighty Outback, the idyllic Barrier Reef Islands as well as stylish and sophisticated cities.

It's wild, vast and untouched, yet cosmopolitan, cultural and cool. It's beautiful and ancient, offering limitless unforgettable experiences and unique wildlife and landscapes. You'll be dazzled by Australia's pristine coastline of surf beaches and technicolour coral reefs while the Outback, silent and splendidly isolated, beckons with a thrilling mystery.

Whether you're looking for a tropical paradise, luxury escapism or an epic overland adventure, we've a portfolio that includes everything from rustic B&Bs to superb luxury lodges, small group walking tours to high flying helicopter sightseeing and private boats to remote wilderness experiences. And, if you're looking for the perfect restaurant for a special occasion or need tickets to a sporting event, we'll do our very best to nail them for you.



**ADD ON:** We have superb partners and top notch guides in **New Zealand** too so do ask if you would like an extension to the **North** or **South Island** after your holiday in **Australia** or if stand-alone **New Zealand** is on your radar.

## OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- Kangaroo Island, Flinders walks and Lord Howe | **20 days**
- Melbourne, Great Ocean Road, Tasmania and Sydney | **21 days**

**TOP:** A climb of **Sydney Harbour Bridge** makes for a heart pounding start to your **Australian** adventure; **BOTTOM LEFT:** **Capella Lodge** sits above Lovers Bay on World Heritage-listed **Lord Howe Island**, NSW; **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Passionate Northland **Māori** leader **Hone Mihaka**, New Zealand.

## SAMPLE ITINERARIES

### Australia's highlights

Australia's natural wonders and icons | **16 days**

This is a tour with expert guides who are passionate about their local turf. Having spent a few days in **Sydney**, sailing in **Sydney Harbour** and discovering the city, you'll fly to the **Red Centre** where you will stay very close to **Uluru (Ayers Rock)** in your tent-with-a view whilst the rock seems to change colour by the minute. Then on to a safari lodge inspired by Africa but very much Australian in flavour - delicious food, rustic but very comfortable accommodation and top quality guiding among the flood plains of the Top End.

You spend the last days of your journey on the coast around the **Great Barrier Reef** enjoying the **Daintree Rainforest**. A stay at **Lizard Island** is the ultimate splurge and gives meaning to the expression 'save the best for last'! Dive, snorkel or simply relax in your hammock...

This itinerary is best in Australia's winter months with the most perfect time being May to September.

### Red Centre, reef and rainforest

Culture and active nature | **21 days**

Start your trip with the sights and sounds of **Sydney**. Then on to the **Red Centre** to witness the glory of its vastness and cultural richness.

The **Top End** of the **Northern Territory** is a spectacular area rich in Aboriginal culture and home to huge quantities of wildlife and prolific birdlife. There are thousands of square kilometres of national parks, World Heritage wetlands, remote cattle stations and sheer wilderness criss-crossed by huge rivers, rugged gorges and expansive valleys. Here you stay on a family-run working cattle station and fly to **Kakadu National Park** where a local guide will collect you for two days of Aboriginal art and culture among the stunning escarpment scenery.

You'll spend the last days of your journey in **Port Douglas** - an up-market resort town offering an array of galleries, restaurants and touring options, including **Great Barrier Reef** cruising, jungle surfing, river snorkelling and wildlife sanctuaries.

**GUIDE PRICES:** Please ask for a quotation.

**GETTING THERE:** Flying time to Sydney is 22 - 24 hours and many airlines operate daily flights.

**TIME DIFFERENCE:** +8 to +11 hours, depending on the time of year.

**GETTING AROUND:** Australia has a good network of domestic flights, is an easy place to self-drive a hire car or we can arrange drivers/guides. Charter flights cut out long drives and make travel connections smoother - and a helicopter safari is one of the best ways to see the **Kimberley** region! For a different experience try the famous **Ghan Train** from **Darwin** to **Adelaide**.

**WEATHER:** The best time to visit the southern part of the country is from October to March, while Northern Australia is lovely from April to September.

Fiona's Travel Tips



**Great journeys are life-changing** - seeing more of the world is also a **voyage of self-discovery**. We have the first hand knowledge to help you realise your dreams, however far away they lie...



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