

SUNDOWNER

FOR THE INSPIRED TRAVELLER • SUMMER 2024

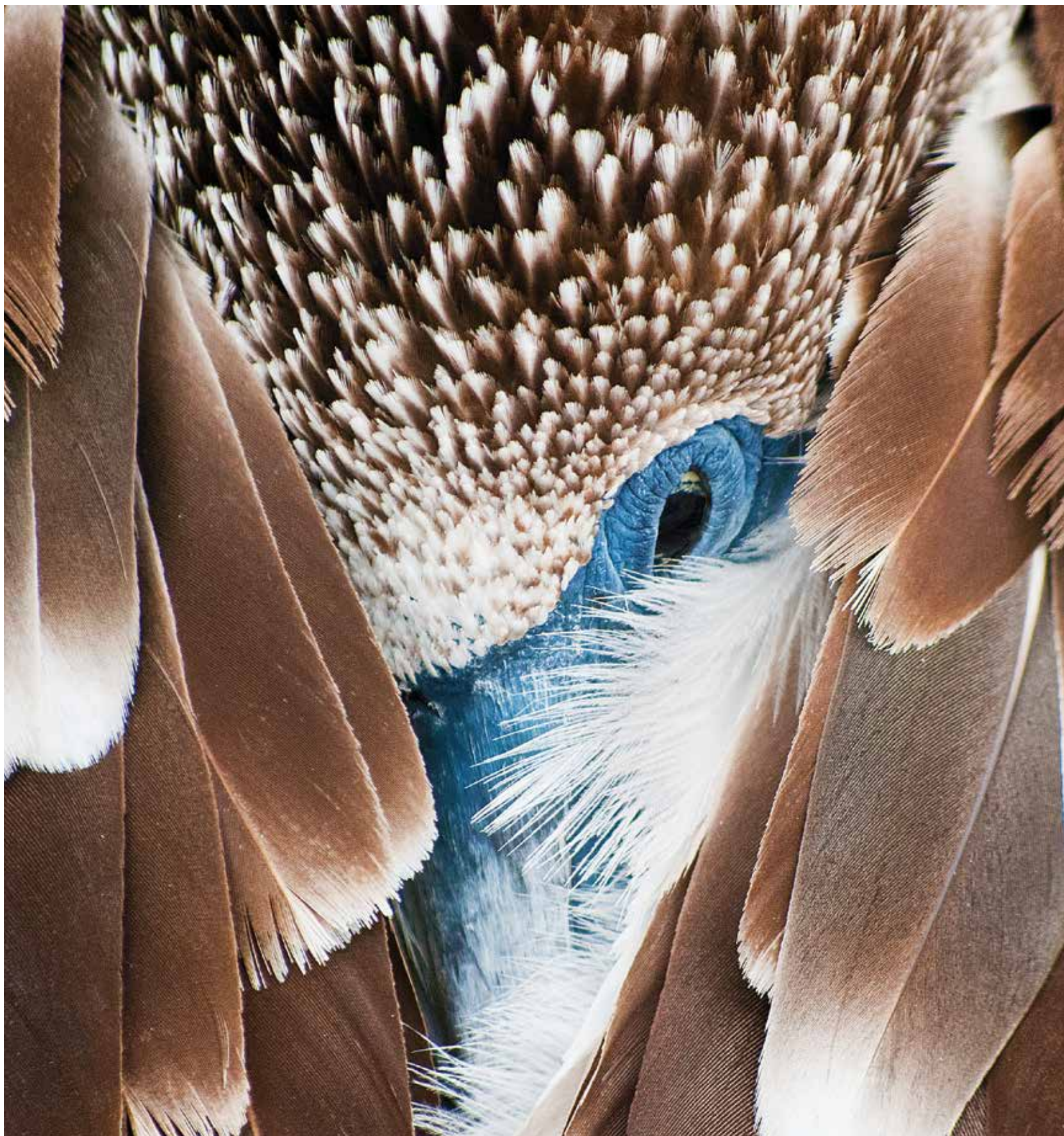
— INSIDE —

GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS

BOTSWANA

INDIA

CROATIA



Abercrombie & Kent

FOUNDER'S NOTE



WELCOME TO OUR **SUMMER 2024** ISSUE

For you, our southern hemisphere residents, spring has arrived and summer is just around the corner. And it's typically at this time of the year that our thoughts turn to future travel plans. If you're hoping to escape the Aussie winter or celebrating a milestone event, taking the family away on holiday or joining friends for a special adventure there are a host of enticing ideas in the pages ahead.

There are features on some of the world's natural showstoppers from Ecuador's wildlife-rich Galápagos Islands (page 28), where a water-based experience is a more environmentally responsible way of experiencing the archipelago, to the rare fauna of the Okavango Delta in Botswana (page 36) on a heart-warming, bond-strengthening mother-daughter safari adventure.

There are cultural enticements on a behind-the-scenes glimpse of Cairo's much-anticipated Grand Egyptian Museum (page 44), a walk-through of some upcoming arts events in Italy (page 50) and an Insider's Guide on India's princely state, Rajasthan (page 22).

Look for our always anticipated 2024 Hot List (page 56) as well as some hot new hotel openings (page 6) plus news from around the A&K world (page 4).

So whether you're sitting on a beach enjoying this latest issue or with a cup of tea in the garden, I hope we have provided abundant inspiration for future travels.

Bon voyage and Merry Christmas.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Geoffrey Kent".

Geoffrey Kent

Founder and Chairman Emeritus of the Abercrombie & Kent Group of Companies



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about my latest A&K adventures
[@geoffrey_kent](#)



Abercrombie & Kent

LUXURY TAILOR-MADE TRAVEL, JUST FOR YOU

2024 PORTFOLIO NOW AVAILABLE

From the wilds of Africa and the ancient wonders of India to the cultural splendours of Europe and South America, our Luxury Tailor-Made Journeys allow you to see the world exactly how you want to see it, on an itinerary fashioned for you and your companions by the experts. For over 60 years, Abercrombie & Kent has been a pioneer in the world of luxury travel, redefining the notion of what is possible on holiday and delivering travel experiences that change the way travellers see the world, and themselves. From the kinds of luxury accommodation you'll love to the landscapes we know you'll treasure and the specific cultural immersions you'll find rewarding, every moment is expertly curated to ensure a once-in-a-lifetime inspiring adventure that you'll never forget.

Visit www.abercrombiekent.com.au, call Abercrombie & Kent on 1300 591877 or talk to your travel advisor.



LUXURY, NATURALLY

Welcome to some of the most exclusive travel experiences and destinations in the world.

Owned by Abercrombie & Kent, Sanctuary Retreats was born in Africa with the launch of our first luxury safari camp, Sanctuary Olonana, in Kenya, in 1999. Today, we now operate lodges and camps in Botswana, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and most recently, Namibia. Building on our heritage of luxury adventure travel, we also manage and run five spectacular river cruise ships in some of the most amazing cultural and ecological sites in the world.

We promise adventure, enchantment, authenticity and ‘Luxury, naturally’, all delivered with a quiet, understated charm and understanding of place.

Find out more at www.sanctuaryretreats.com



CONTENTS

SUMMER 2024

FEATURES

- 28 **SHORE LEAVE**
Experience the Galápagos responsibly
- 36 **TIES THAT BIND**
A mother-daughter safari adventure in Botswana
- 44 **A CULTURAL GEM**
Cairo's much-anticipated Grand Egyptian Museum
- 50 **TRAVEL & THE ARTS**
Some of Italy's key cultural events and experiences for 2024

REGULARS

- 4 **NEWS**
Goings-on around the A&K world
- 8 **A&K PHILANTHROPY**
Inspiring youth in the Galápagos
- 16 **RECENT TRAVELS**
A photo essay: Croatia & Montenegro
- 22 **INSIDER'S GUIDE**
Rajasthan, India
- 52 **SPOTLIGHT ON: SRI LANKA**
5 exceptional ways to experience Sri Lanka
- 54 **A JOURNEY ILLUSTRATED**
The Great Migration Safari in Style
- 62 **NOTES FROM THE FIELD**
First-time experiences in Japan

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- 6 **IN THE KNOW**
Exciting new openings
- 10 **LUXURY SMALL GROUP JOURNEYS**
Expect the unexpected
- 14 **WISH YOU WERE HERE**
Colombia
- 20 **LUXURY EXPEDITION CRUISES**
The finest Luxury Expedition Cruise experiences
- 56 **HOT LIST**
Where you'll want to go in 2024



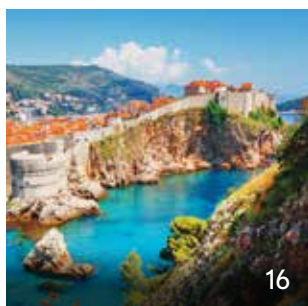
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6



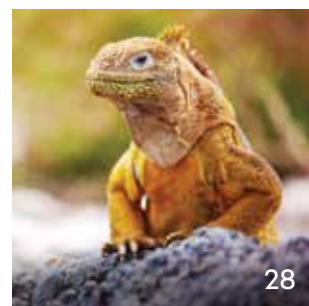
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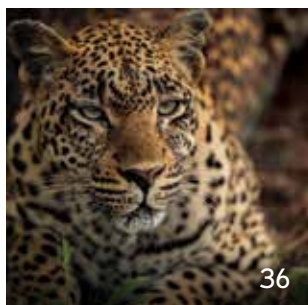
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22



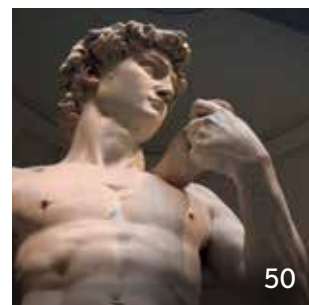
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36



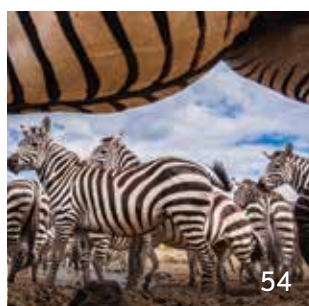
44



50



52



54



62

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On the Cover: Blue-footed booby,
Galápagos Islands (page 28).

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Abercrombie & Kent Australia, ABN 55005422999.

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A&K NEWS



COSTA RICA CALLING

We are excited to announce the opening of our first office in Central America – in conservation conscious Costa Rica. Our very own Kathie Sikkes, General Manager of A&K Australia Inbound, recently returned from San José where she assisted in the establishment of the new operation. On the ground in this biodiversity hotspot, our highly experienced team is seeking out the finest adventure activities and wildlife experiences so that you, our discerning guests, can encounter the finest this beautiful country has to offer.

WIMBLEDON 2023

For the first time, A&K was seen on the hallowed grass of the All England Tennis Club at this year's Wimbledon Championships sponsoring 10 Wimbledon matches, supporting a variety of players as they vied for the top trophies, including female player Marketa Vondrousova of the Czech Republic. Marketa succeeded in becoming the first unseeded Ladies' Singles champion in 60 years and A&K was super proud to be part of her journey.





FINE JEWELS & TIMEPIECES

A&K and Leonard Joel recently co-hosted guests at an exclusive Preview of Leonard Joel's Fine Jewels and Timepieces Collection in Sydney and Melbourne. Guests were given an overview of the collection by a Leonard Joel expert while A&K delivered an update on some of the hottest travel destinations of the minute including Saudi Arabia and The North Pole. Thanks to Pommery Champagne and Matt Bates from Elite Chefs and Handmade Parties and Events for delicacies on the night.

MELBOURNE SPRING EVENT

A mid-October gathering in the opulent art-filled Bromley event space saw Melbourne guests treated to a lavish lunch and travel inspiration from members of A&K's team around the globe. Hosted by Managing Director Deb Fox, there were updates from East and Southern Africa, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia and Crystal Cruises as well as news of upcoming office openings in Latin America plus insights to some of the important projects being supported by A&K Philanthropy.



MERCEDES-BENZ DRIVE DAY

In July, a handful of A&K guests were hosted by Mercedes-Benz Brisbane for a Drive Day to Maleny. Kicking off at the dealership with a full briefing, guests fuelled up on coffee and pastries. Behind the wheel of a range of Mercedes-Benz vehicles, guests then made their way to Maleny for lunch with a few scheduled stops along the way to swap cars and drivers. Test vehicles included the new SL63, a S450, a GLC63, and the Electric range including the EQS53 and EQE53.

IN THE KNOW

Stay ahead of the game and be amongst the first to stay in some of these exciting new accommodation options in a handful of the world's most remarkable locations.

SITATUNGA PRIVATE ISLAND, OKAVANGO DELTA, BOTSWANA

Reflecting the magical colours of the Okavango, the interiors of newly opened Sitatunga Private Island are suffused in a palate of misty greens, smokey greys and lustrous amber. Constructed entirely of recycled materials, sustainability is at the heart of this new arrival from the Great Plains team and the indigenous fishermen of the region have inspired the design with giant bamboo fishing baskets and reed traps forming key parts of the four sizeable suites. Named for the elusive aquatic antelope, this Réserve-Collection Safari Camp is one of the few locations where the sitatunga can be seen from camp and during water activities which form the focus of safari outings at this unique property.



HOTEL LA PALMA, CAPRI, ITALY

Capri's first hotel, originally built in 1822, has been transformed into an elegant and exclusive 50-room offering by the Oetker Collection. Just steps from the famous Piazzetta, the hotel sits at the beating heart of Capri. Its interiors, by renowned designer Francis Sultana, are simple and low key with a handful of lavish frescoes, tapestries and painted bucolic scenes which cleverly enhance the public areas. Rooms are accented in the muted coastal tones of Amalfi with wide balconies and terraces offering varying outlooks. The hotel boasts three restaurants, one with 360-degree views over Capri town, and bars, its own private beach club on the south coast, a signature spa and a beautiful pool and terrace overlooking the boutiques of Via Vittorio Emanuele.



VIETAGE, VIETNAM

Running north to south, connecting Hanoi with Ho Chi Minh City, the Reunification Express can now be experienced in luxury aboard the Vietage carriage. Launched by Anantara Hotels, this elegant carriage is hooked up to the train for the six-hour, 320 kilometre section linking Da Nang and Quy Nhon. With luxurious seating for just 12 passengers, the experience harks back to the era of vintage train travel with individual compartments that boast upholstered banquettes (converted to beds for the reverse overnight journey), large picture windows and rattan screens. A three-course meal is part of the experience plus unlimited beverages and a relaxing head and shoulder treatment.



&BEYOND PUNAKHA RIVER LODGE, BHUTAN

Deep in the lush Punakha Valley on the banks of the Mo Chu River sits spectacular &Beyond Punakha River Lodge, an intimate collection of luxury tents and suites set against a backdrop of verdant paddy fields and forested hills. Newly opened, this homage to traditional Bhutanese architecture is the perfect base for adventure in the valley which is home to one of the country's oldest and most revered structures, the Punakha Dzong. And to balance the range of vigorous outdoor activities, relaxation comes in the form of the streamside spa with its extensive range of indulgent treatments and wellness therapies.



FAIRMONT TAZI PALACE, TANGIER, MOROCCO

Expect right royal treatment at this historic palace hotel, once home to the local envoy of the Sultan of Morocco. Set in the hills above cosmopolitan Tangier, the Fairmont Tazi Palace is an oasis of tranquillity with far-reaching views over the city and surrounds. Landscaped grounds incorporate Andalusian style gardens plus a forest of eucalypts, olive groves and pomegranates while interiors evoke the glamour of the 1920s with a Mediterranean palate and respect for Moroccan craftsmanship. Aside from its luxurious 133 rooms and suites, there are seven vibrant restaurants and bars, a spectacular spa and a glorious outdoor pool.

For more information on any of these properties, please call A&K on 1300 591 877, or your local travel advisor.



A&K PHILANTHROPY

YOUTH PROJECT IN THE GALÁPAGOS

A&K Philanthropy is pleased to announce its partnership with Ecuador's Naveducando Foundation introducing young people from the Galápagos Islands to their local environment and teaching them their ethical responsibilities. Using a science-based curriculum, students spend five days on a boat "off-grid" in a fun and educational programme with instructors and naturalist guides being immersed in local wildlife, ecology, geology, history, conservation, sustainability and more.

The students also learn about personal responsibility and sustainable choices by working together to collect rubbish on island beaches. They study sand samples, uncover tiny plastic pollutants that harm the ocean environment and learn how they can respect the endemic wildlife and become better marine stewards.

Returning home transformed, these youngsters have made new friends and strengthened existing relationships. They have

developed a deeper, more respectful relationship with nature, and a better understanding of and appreciation for the intricate connection between humans and the planet.

Currently, a small number of students are nominated for the programme, based on academic achievement. The Naveducando Foundation is

working to eliminate merit-based considerations as selection criteria for participation in this transformative experience. AKP's support will assist with their goal of making the programme accessible to all seventh graders enrolled in the Galápagos school system every year, establishing it as a regular part of the curriculum.



To learn more about projects supported by AKP visit akphilanthropy.org



MOROCCO EARTHQUAKE EFFORT

The team at Abercrombie & Kent Morocco reacted swiftly after the tragic events of September 8th, when an earthquake hit the Marrakech-Safi region, southwest of Marrakech. After establishing that all A&K guests travelling in the country were safe, contact was made with their families to advise on the situation. Guests arriving over the ensuing days and weeks were also reassured and shown the utmost care. While major sites and attractions were largely unharmed, many villages in outlying areas were decimated. A team of A&K staff members was mobilised to distribute food, water and blankets to over 200 families in the affected areas under the direction of the local authorities.

Thanks to dedicated efforts, tourism in Morocco is gradually returning to normal. Most popular destinations, like Casablanca, Marrakech, Chefchaouen, Fes, and Rabat are welcoming visitors, and transportation services are running as normal.

LUXURY SMALL GROUP JOURNEYS

ENCOUNTER THE UNEXPECTED

From the rare wildlife experiences of Botswana, to Morocco's colourful souks and the ancient wonders of Egypt, discover unique and lesser-known locations while still exploring the eternal favourites on our

Luxury Small Group Journeys in 2024. Travelling with intimate group sizes averaging 14 guests on expertly designed itineraries, you'll stay in the finest hotels and enjoy unrivalled insider access to the most iconic sites, often before the crowds arrive. Resident Tour Directors and expert guides offer an enriching experience through their own intimate understanding of the destination and its culture, ensuring your trip is one you'll never forget. With over 30 itineraries across six continents, our Luxury Small Group Journeys allow you to discover the world's most exquisite destinations in unbridled style and comfort.





BOTSWANA SAFARI IN STYLE

Wild and remote, blessed with abundant wildlife and unashamedly luxurious lodgings, Botswana is a safari destination par excellence. On this flagship journey, you'll glide through the palm-fringed waterways of the beautiful Okavango Delta on a traditional dugout canoe, drive across rich floodplains on the lookout for predators and their prey, explore the elephant-rich Chobe National Park on land and by water, and marvel at the awe-inspiring Victoria Falls from several viewpoints. You're invited into a Zambian village to see the life-changing work being done there by A&K Philanthropy, and cruise along the mighty Zambezi River at sunset.

10 days from \$19,855 per person twin share
Departures available January–December 2024

KENYA & TANZANIA WILDLIFE SAFARI

From the cradle of civilisation to Africa's highest peak, internationally acclaimed wildlife reserves and a rich tribal culture, a journey to East Africa is full of theatre. On this unique safari adventure, you follow in the footsteps of pioneering explorers who also gazed across the savannah at the same extraordinary wildlife. You'll see elephants against the backdrop of snow-capped Mt Kilimanjaro, hippo snorting in the Mara River, predators on the prowl in the Serengeti, and birds of all shapes and colours gliding over the landscape. You'll travel in comfort in A&K's customised 4WD safari vehicles, with expert naturalist guides, and stay in comfortable, spacious lodges with ideal locations in the region's greatest parks and reserves.

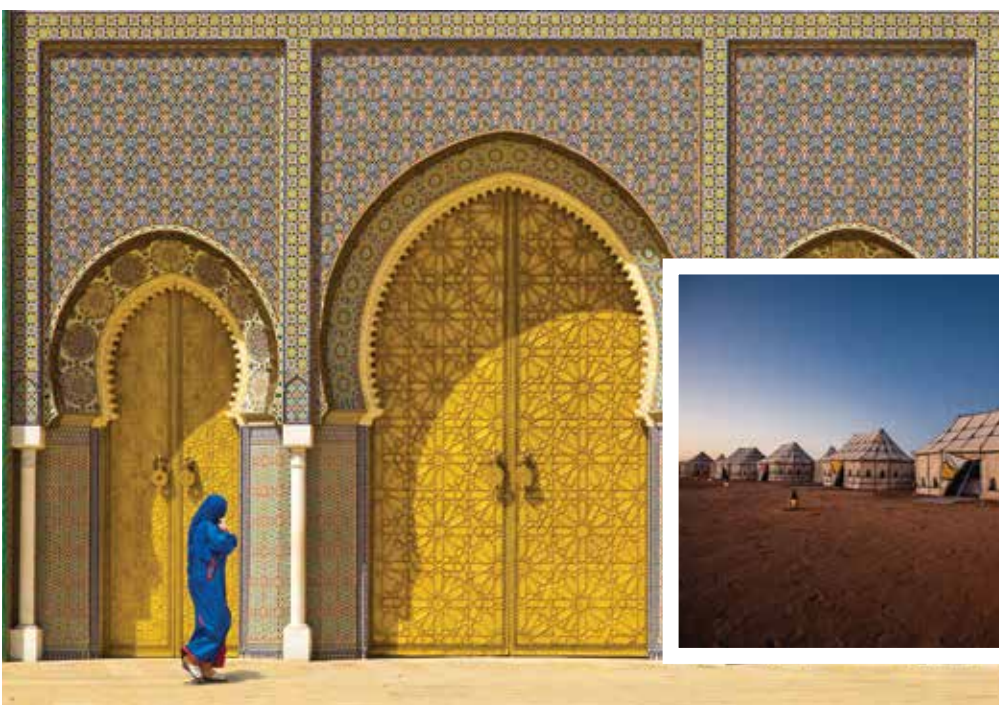
12 days from \$19,400 per person twin share
Departures available January–February & May–December 2024



SPLENDOURS OF MOROCCO

Uncover vibrant, colourful and exotic Morocco, jewel of North Africa and one of the world's most stylish and fascinating destinations. Journey from the coastal port city of Casablanca inland to medieval Fes, the Atlas foothills and the Saharan desert reaches, to sensuous, legendary Marrakech, where snake charmers, musicians, storytellers and acrobats bring Djemaa el-Fna Square to life. Explore labyrinthine souks full of treasures, savour mouth-watering cuisine, marvel at ancient medinas, bustling kasbahs and towering minarets, and relax in elegant hotels.

12 days from \$15,370 per person twin share
Departures available January–June & August–December 2024



TAJ MAHAL AND THE TREASURES OF INDIA

India is a lively land of vivid colours and endless activity. It is also a profoundly spiritual place with a proud heritage and extraordinarily diverse scenery. From the intense bustle of Mumbai and Delhi, you'll journey through the Rajasthani countryside and gain a fascinating glimpse into rural life. Stay at the country's most iconic hotels, some converted from royal palaces, travel deep into the wilderness in search of the elusive Bengal tiger, and observe priests performing an aarti ceremony on the banks of the Holy Ganges in Varanasi.

10 days from \$18,670 per person twin share

Departures available January–May & October–December 2024



CLASSIC JAPAN

On this extraordinary journey you will explore the iconic cities of Tokyo, Hakone, Osaka and Kyoto. Marvel at some of the country's most impressive gardens and glimpse magnificent mountain landscapes as you travel by bullet train. Be introduced to ancient Samurai traditions and visit sacred Shinto shrines. Take the opportunity to appreciate Japan's myriad arts and crafts, and meet a local artist and collector, and savour its extraordinary cuisine in local eateries, fine restaurants and street food stalls. Be amazed at a sumo wrestling bout, find respite in a classic onsen and rest up in a traditional ryokan — just a handful of Japan's cultural highlights.

9 days from \$20,190 per person twin share

Departures available March–May & September–November 2024



IMAGES OF INDOCHINA & ANGKOR WAT

Join this breathtaking journey to four of Southeast Asia's most intriguing destinations, each with their own world class attractions. Admire the breathtaking scenery of Halong Bay and its extraordinary limestone pinnacles, the tree-lined boulevards and colonial villas of Hanoi and vibrant Saigon. Marvel at the extraordinary ancient temples of Angkor and the sleepy pace of Luang Prabang. The adventure culminates in buzzing Bangkok where you'll soak up the river views at your landmark hotel. At every turn you'll enjoy the fresh flavours of the subtly spiced local cuisine and be warmly welcomed by some of the friendliest people on the planet.

13 days from \$18,110 per person twin share

Departures available January–April & September–December 2024



SPLENDOURS OF BUDAPEST, VIENNA & PRAGUE

From Budapest's neoclassical, eclectic and art nouveau buildings to Vienna's soul-stirring music and ornate streetscapes, and on to Prague's endless urban explorations — the splendours of this region are breathtaking. Discover the three most radiant cities in Central Europe and experience the grand artistic and cultural heritage of the Old World, exploring Baroque-era treasures with the finest local experts. Featuring exquisite food and wine, this immersive exploration will stay with you forever.

10 days from \$15,370 per person twin share

Departures available May–October 2024



ITALIAN TREASURES: ROME, FLORENCE & VENICE

With cultural riches aplenty, a deep respect for food and dining traditions, myriad architectural marvels, an extraordinary wealth of priceless art and artefacts and that inimitable *dolce vita* — few would disagree that Italy is one of the most rewarding destinations in the world. On this quintessential journey to the country's most iconic cities, view legendary masterpieces up close, experience unrivalled insider access at key historic sites, discover local tastes and treats and meet with artisans devoted to timeless traditions.

8 days from \$17,255 per person twin share
Departures available May–July & September–October 2024

PATAGONIA: THE LAST WILDERNESS

Embark on a journey jam-packed with outdoor adventure in some of the most rugged and breathtaking landscapes on the planet. Ease into the experience with an urban exploration of Argentina's cosmopolitan capital before venturing to the far south of the continent for a Patagonian immersion. Hike, ride and boat through glacial wonderlands, rich native forest and awe-inspiring alpine scenery. And visit traditional working estancias to see how the European settlers influenced today's pastoralists. Your journey finishes in the sophisticated Chilean capital, one of the world's most remarkably located cities.

10 days from \$19,955 per person twin share
Departures available January–March & October–December 2024



PERU: MACHU PICCHU & THE SACRED VALLEY

Experience the enduring heritage of the Incas as you explore the Sacred Valley and magnificent Machu Picchu. Sample Peruvian culinary delights and find out about its cultural impact on Peru and the world. Mingle with the residents of the Sacred Valley of the Incas and partake in a Pachamama ceremony. Discover Peru's rich musical traditions during a captivating private performance by an expert in Andean music, and enjoy a private lecture on Machu Picchu with a renowned scholar in Incan history before discovering the ruins for yourself in the company of a local expert guide, staying at the only hotel on site. This is a journey sure to inspire.

8 days from \$12,600 per person twin share
Departures available January–December 2024

For more information on any of these Small Group Journeys including prices for solo travellers, please call A&K on 1300 591 877, visit www.abercrombiekent.com.au or contact your local travel advisor.



COLOMBIA

COCORA VALLEY

Idyllically situated in the rolling green foothills of the Colombian Andes is the mystical Valle de Cocora, home to the world's tallest palm tree, the Quindio wax palm. An endangered species, this unusual palm, Colombia's national tree, can grow to a height of 60 metres and, unlike normal palm varieties, is found at elevations of up to 3,000 metres. Parrots thrive on the fruit of the wax palm with seeds regurgitated by larger birds helping the palms disseminate. Wandering through the misty hills of this cloud forest is an opportunity to learn why Colombia is the second most biodiverse country in the world.

OUR SUGGESTED JOURNEY

A&K's 14-day
'Colombia Revealed' is priced
from \$8,995 per person twin share.

For more information call A&K on
1300 591 877 or your local
travel advisor.

RECENT TRAVELS

Croatia & Montenegro

On a recent adventure skipping down the Adriatic coast from Croatia to Montenegro, A&K's Kathryn Pease made culinary and cultural connections in this dazzling part of the Balkans.





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Ravaged by years of civil war, the countries of the Balkan Peninsula have brushed off oppression and years of violence to emerge amongst Europe's most alluring destinations and a little further off the beaten path than their well-trodden Mediterranean neighbours. Croatia is especially captivating with a glimmering coastline, beautiful cities with long and fascinating histories, excellent food and wine and a rich artistic tradition with locals who are endearing and pleased to welcome visitors. Kathryn's well-

rounded journey took in museums and galleries, ancient ruins and important contemporary landmarks, flavoursome food, and a little Game of Thrones magic thrown in.

Kathryn pinpoints below what made her journey so special.

ZAGREB

Detouring from the coastal road, I discovered that the Croatian capital Zagreb is a cultural powerhouse with more museums per square foot than any other city in the world.

With a history stretching back to Roman times, the city is divided into parts: the thousand-year-old Upper Town, home to the iconic St Mark's Church, the Croatian parliament and museums and galleries set in cobbled streets still lit by gas lamps and the 19th century Lower Town which is abuzz with shops, restaurants, cafés, theatres and parks. The two are joined by the grand Ban Jelacic Square, recognisable from the grand statue of Count Josip Jelacic on horseback. Zagreb is also known for its expansive green spaces, eye-catching street art and open-air markets.

- 1: City walls, Dubrovnik
- 2: Ban Jelacic, Zagreb
- 3: Open-air farmers market, Zagreb
- 4: Croatia National Theatre & Gardens, Zagreb



7



5



6

- 5: Diocletian's Palace, Split
- 6: Sculpture by Ivan Mestrovic, Croatia's most famous artist
- 7: Dubrovnik cityscape
- 8: Our Lady of the Rocks, Kotor
- 9: Istrian white wine and white truffles
- 10: Baroque interior of Our Lady of the Rocks, Kotor

ZADAR

A lesser-known coastal city is Zadar with both Roman and Venetian heritage. It's said to be the oldest city in Croatia and is certainly one of the most scenic. The old town is easily explored on foot with highlights along the way including the 9th century St. Donat's Church and the Sea Organ, an art installation designed by local architect Nikola Basic, which converts the movement of the waves into music. Our visit finished with a tasting of maraschino, the cherry-flavoured liqueur first distilled here in 1821.

SPLIT

Further down the coast, the vibrant port city of Split, with its glittering seaside promenade and breathtaking mountain backdrop, is a bustling cultural centre. At its heart is Diocletian's Palace, one of the most impressive ancient Roman structures still in existence. Taking up half of the old city, the well-preserved remains give a sense of life during its heyday but equally what an important part of the city it is today with 3000-odd people living within the walls and its labyrinthine streets lined with bars, boutiques and restaurants.

DUBROVNIK

A fan of Game of Thrones, I instantly recognised Dubrovnik's Old Town as the location for King's Landing. Its fortified walls, jumble of Baroque buildings, narrow streets and terracotta rooves needed little digital enhancement to recreate the fictional city so it was a thrill to meander through its charming laneways and piazzas. An impromptu klapa (a cappella choir) performance in one of the courtyards after dinner was a memorable end to a day.



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KOTOR

Crossing the border into Montenegro was an unexpected surprise. With rugged mountains that sweep down to the Adriatic, the country has a dynamic topography dotted with picturesque villages and fortified towns. Our drive took us around the eastern edge of Boka Kotorska, Europe's southernmost fjord, towards the coastal city of Kotor, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A walking tour of Kotor town revealed a 12th century cathedral and Maritime Museum before a boat cruise past the Baroque Church of Our Lady of the Rocks built on an island in the bay.

FOOD & WINE

Reaping the benefits of a central location in Europe means Croatians enjoy bountiful produce from land and sea with culinary influences from the Mediterranean as well as continental dishes in the Austro-Hungarian style. Wherever we stopped, flavoursome cuisine was a given, whether in a Michelin-star restaurant, a village tavern, seaside picnic or neighbourhood eatery. Gastronomic stand outs were platters of oysters fresh from the fishermen in Mali Ston on the Pelješac Peninsula, an authentic rustic feast of slow cooked lamb on Brač Island and some excellent white wines from Istria and South Dalmatia.

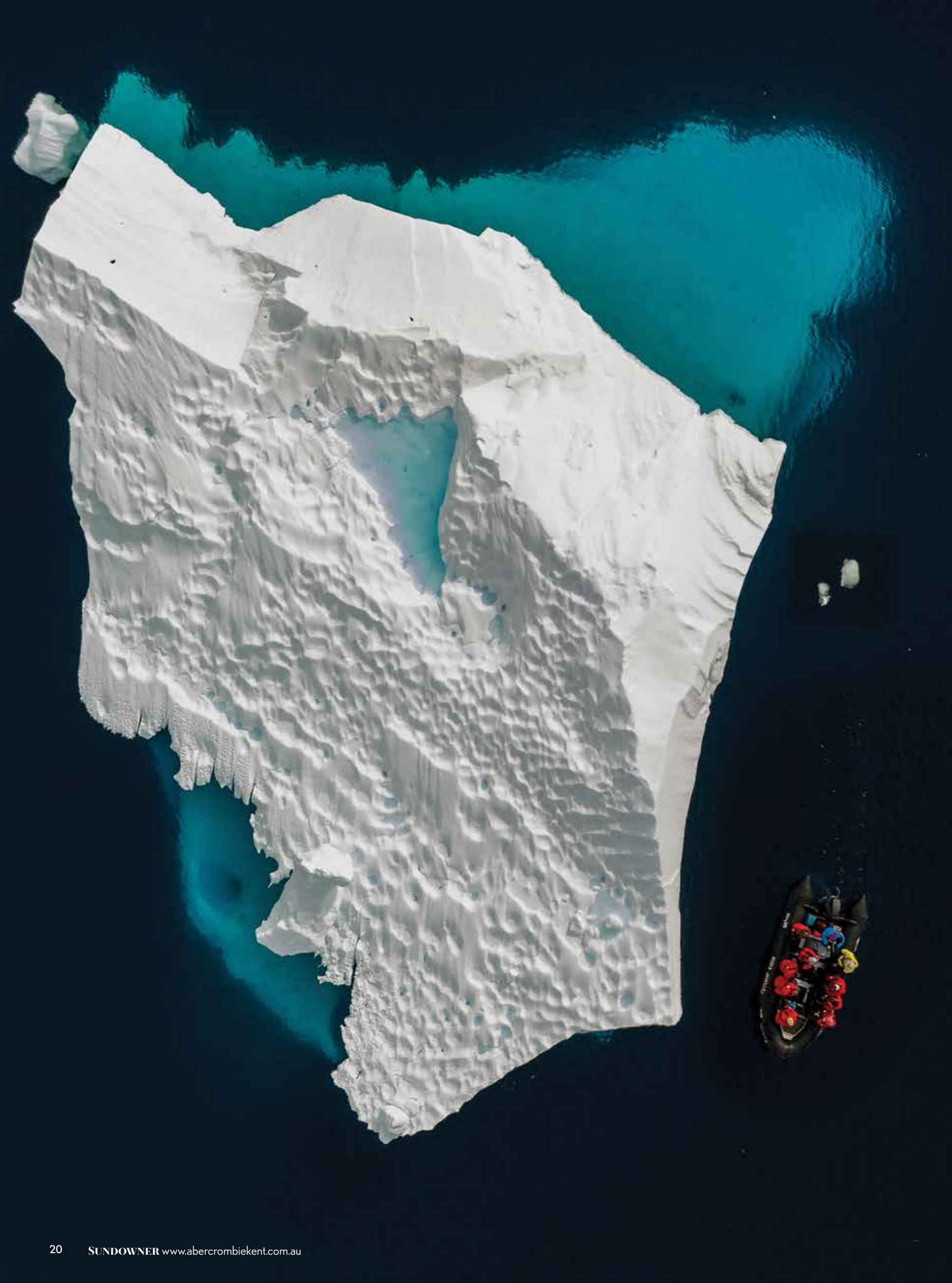


10

OUR SUGGESTED *Journey*

'Treasures of Croatia: A Luxury Small Group Journey'
8 days | Priced from \$12,110 per person twin share
Departs May-July & September-October 2024

For more information call A&K on 1300 591 877 or your local travel advisor



A&K delivers the finest luxury expedition cruise experience in the world.

Whether plying the Southern Ocean, traversing the North Pole in search of the polar bear, or exploring the idyllic Greek Isles, A&K Luxury Expedition Cruises reveal the far-flung corners of our planet as no one else can. Backed by an award-winning, expedition cruising legacy of over 30 years, we stake our reputation on every voyage – insisting on only the finest Expedition Team, vessels, excursions, planning and service. We limit our exclusively chartered vessels to no more than 199 guests, affording a private balcony with every stateroom and a peerless personnel-to-guest ratio of 1 to 1.3. And every voyage is truly all-inclusive, encompassing all excursions, meals, house drinks and onboard gratuities.

Please visit www.abercrombiekent.com.au or contact your travel advisor for more information.

Antarctic Cruise Adventure

13 days | Dec 10, 2024

Explore Antarctica and the Southern Ocean in the austral summer, enjoying wildlife encounters and stunning views of towering icebergs and massive glaciers.

Antarctica, South Georgia & Falklands: Holiday Voyage

19 days | Dec 20, 2024

Ring in the new year on a family adventure in the Southern Ocean, celebrating Christmas and New Year in the world's most remarkable wilderness.

Antarctica, South Georgia & Falklands Expedition

19 days | Jan 5, 2025

Explore the colourful Falkland Islands, unspoiled South Georgia with its rookeries of king penguins, and epic Antarctica.

North Pole Expedition Cruise: The Ultimate Frontier

18 days | Jul 10, 2024

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15 days | Jul 29, 2024

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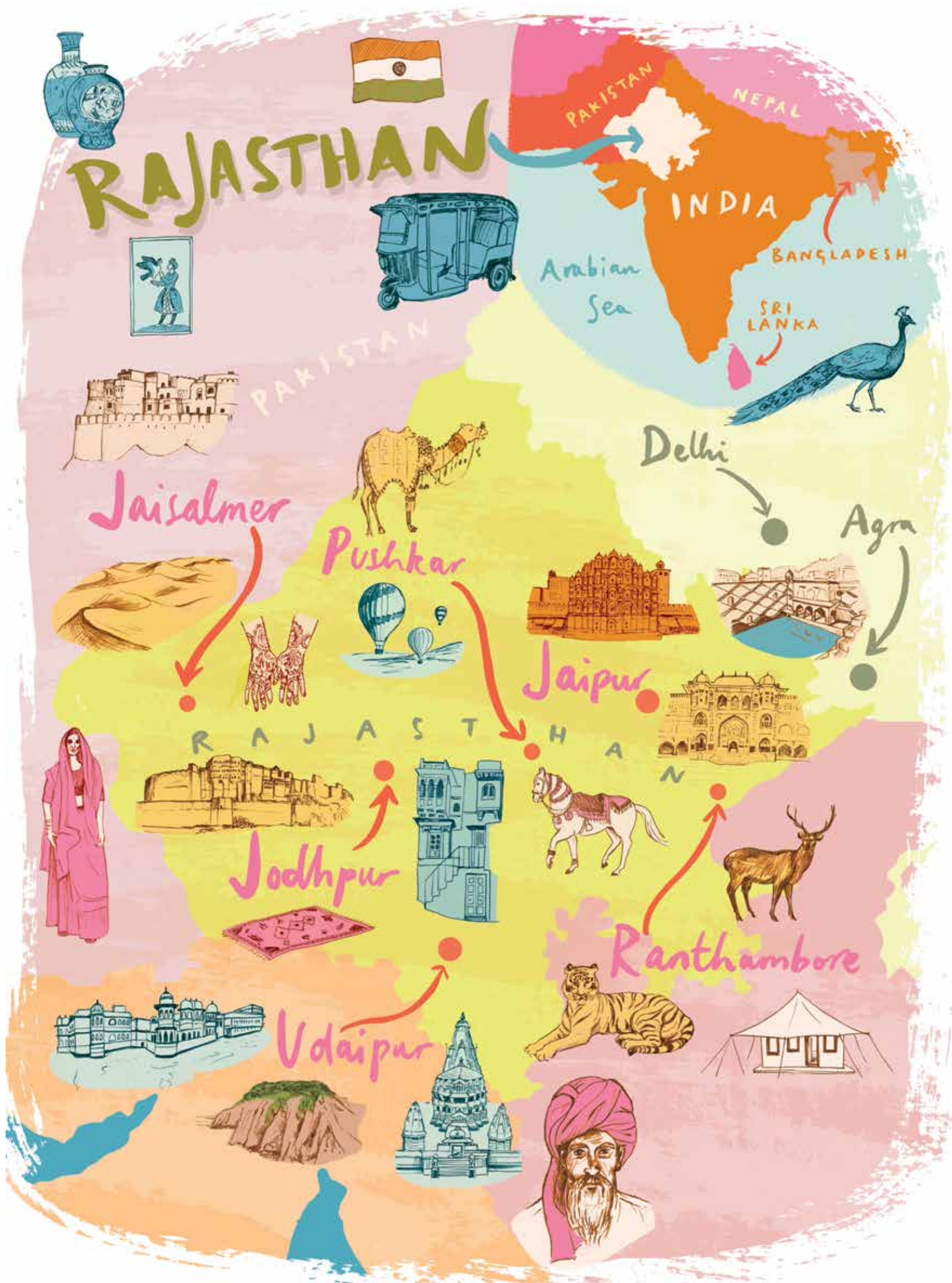
Adriatic Voyage: Croatia, Montenegro & Greece

8 days | Sep 24, 2024

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INSIDER'S GUIDE TO RAJASTHAN



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With its rich princely heritage and glittering marble palaces, Rajasthan is one of India's most captivating regions. Sprinkled with medieval forts and dusty mountain ranges, dreamy lakes and desert, there are rural villages here where life has changed little in centuries and bustling marketplaces where vibrant silks vie for attention with mounds of multicoloured spices and sparkling gemstones. Thousand-year-old Rajasthani temples teeming with pilgrims are a nod to India's many flourishing religions while pockets of wilderness away from the madding crowd conceal rare wildlife. Rajasthan is bewitching and its diversity makes it a magnet for any discerning traveller seeking an exotic Indian immersion. You'll be simply spellbound.

JAIPUR

Rajasthan's 'Pink City' Jaipur is its state capital. Characterised by the warm terracotta hues of its architecture, the city boasts an opulent abundance of palaces, a multitude of vibrant bazaars, street food and culinary delicacies aplenty plus a rich tradition of art and crafts. It's a city to get lost in, to explore on foot, or by rickshaw, or to simply pause over a warm chai and take stock as life passes you by. There's more than enough to keep you enthralled for at least three or four days.

DO

Flowers at dawn

Early risers are rewarded with a sensory blast of colour and perfume at Jaipur's vibrant flower markets. Florists and temple-goers alike make a bee line for the mounds of golden marigolds, ruby red roses and fragrant jasmine lit up in the dawn light. Photo opportunities abound.

Heritage Bike Tour

Pedal through the narrow lanes of Jaipur's old city on a morning exploration as the city awakens and architectural wonders are revealed ahead of the crowds. Get a unique perspective on this bustling metropolis and be part of the spiritual *aarti* ceremony at Govind Dev Ji Temple dedicated to Lord Krishna, the main deity of the city.

Anokhi Museum

Housed in a restored haveli, this museum provides fascinating insight to the art of hand-block printing, from old traditions to contemporary design. The collection comprises a rich repository of clothing and home furnishings dating from the early 1970s to the present day as well as some historic textiles. Master artisans demonstrate the intricate craft of block printing on site, even inviting you to try your hand at it.



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DINE

Bar Palladio

Iridescent blue, like the plumage of a peacock, the sumptuous interior of this chic Jaipur bar in the Narain Niwas Hotel is a fantasy of custom-printed florals and festooned ceilings, jali lamps, marble floor tiles and boldly painted alcoves. Blending artfully with its Moghul-inspired décor is an Italian menu and cocktail list influenced by some of Europe's finest institutions.

Paro

New Jaipur hotspot, Paro, pulls a hip crowd. Whether it's the flickering candles, swaying chandeliers or the Indie beats, this captivating rooftop lounge exudes sophistication and has a cocktail menu to match with infused gins and spicy spirit blends artfully emphasising local flavours. The food too is an innovative, and tasty, play on Indian culinary traditions.

STAY

RAAS Rajmahal Palace

With a storied history, Jaipur's RAAS Rajmahal Palace has been

converted from regal retreat to contemporary sanctuary effused with colour and an eclectic design aesthetic. Blush pink, emerald green and aqua blue wallpapers and prints are a bold backdrop for traditional artefacts and ancestral heirlooms, and the 13 palatial sized rooms and suites blend classic and cutting-edge with ease. There are also magnificent gardens plus a stunning Art Deco-style swimming pool.

SHOP

Khanoom

Socially conscious, stylish ceramics are the specialty in this Jaipur pottery studio where traditional botanical motifs are given a modern makeover. Each piece is handcrafted by local artisans using clay from Bikaner, hand-painted and custom glazed before going on display or being shipped to customers.

IDLI

IDLI is where French sensibility meets India craftsmanship thanks to the genius of French homewares and fashion designer, Thierry

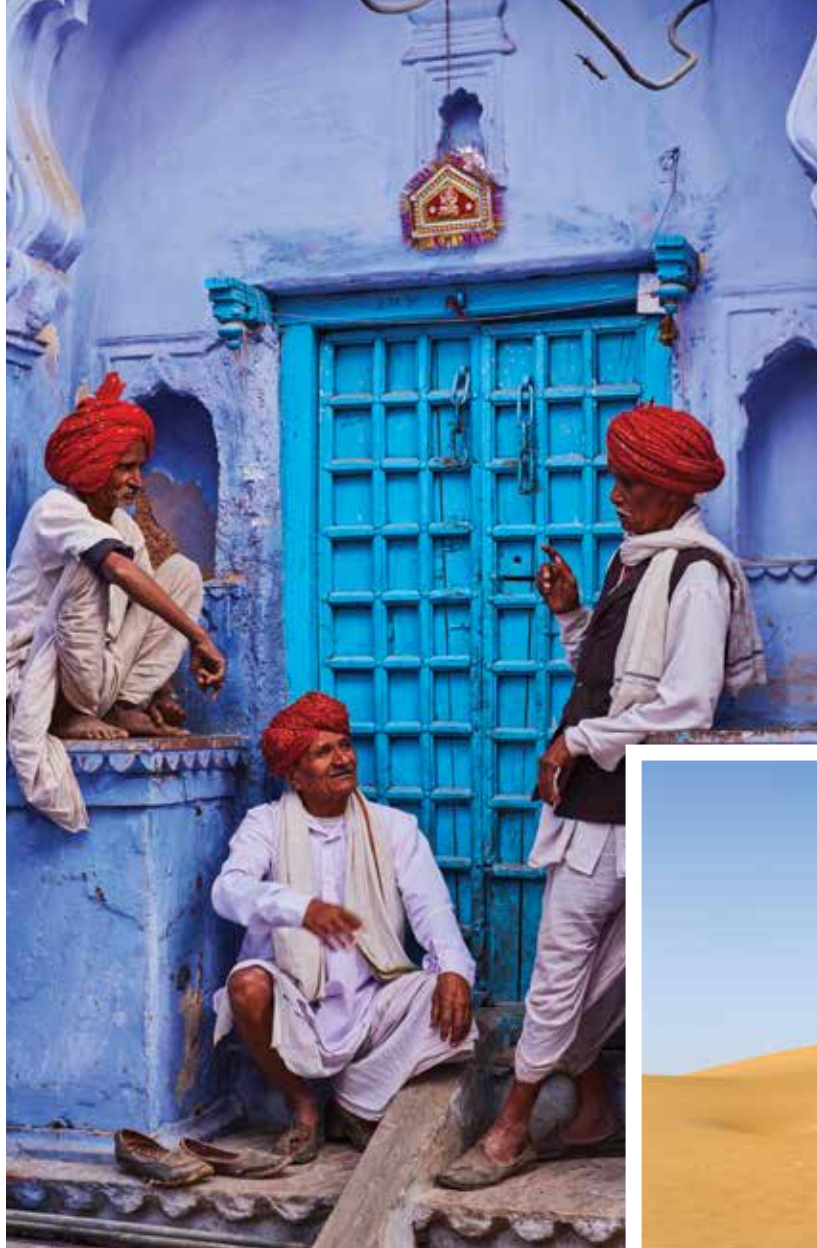
Journo. Like his own aesthetic, his playful Jaipur boutique is quintessentially French yet flavoured with elements of the east. Striped awnings, painted trompe l'oeil canopies, paper lanterns and tropical foliage are a flamboyant nod to the exotic. And individual rooms beautifully showcase designer clothing, and accessories, furniture and homewares.

Supporting artisans

Respecting the myriad techniques of traditional Indian handicrafts, lifestyle store Nila House, the brainchild of UK philanthropist Carole Bamford, offers up a selection of handcrafted products for sale as well as archives, a library and work spaces to encourage creative collaborations between local and visiting artists. Sought after items include rugs, patterned plates, jewellery, shirts and linen.

JODHPUR

From the sands of the Thar Desert, Jodhpur emerges - a cluster of indigo-coloured



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houses tumbling down a hillside sheltered by the looming 15th century Mehrangarh Fort above. This is the 'Blue City', painted in various shades of indigo to denote the residences of high-caste Brahmins. Sunrise or sunset are prime times to visit the fort while the medieval alleyways below are worth exploring any time of the day or night for trawling the markets, snacking on street food and shopping for textiles and semi-precious stones.

DO Sacred Spirits

If you find yourself in Jodhpur in February, be part of the Sacred Spirits Festival, an annual celebration of divinity and spirituality through soulful music. Held at the Mehrangarh Fort over three days, there are performances of Indian classical instruments such as the mohan veena, cristal baschet, mridangam and the Carnatic violin, folk bands and Sufi singers plus some global influences.

DINE

Shikar Dinner

Step back in time to the heady days of the Raj, when shikar (hunting) was the sport of the day and many a night was spent out in the wilderness. Recreating this experience, you are invited to embrace the stillness of the desert night on a starlit adventure in your own royal encampment. Arriving by camel cart, a torchlit path leads to a crackling bonfire where bolstered silk cushions on traditional charpai are the perfect place to recline with a glass in hand while folk musicians and dancers entertain and a tasty barbecue dinner is served.

STAY

Raas Jodhpur

This stylish boutique hotel has been cleverly designed around an 18th century haveli at the base of Mehrangarh Fort showcasing Rajput architectural elements throughout. With some of the city's most contemporary rooms and showstopping views, it's the perfect choice for design-lovers and shopping enthusiasts just steps away from

some of the best textile stores and boutiques in Jodhpur's old city.

JAISALMER

Awash in golden hues, the desert city of Jaisalmer is located in the far west of Rajasthan. At its heart is the thriving medieval fort where narrow streets conceal traditional havelis, colourful shopfronts, residences for its 3000 or so inhabitants and seven beautiful Jain temples from the 15th and 16th centuries.

DO

Ghost village

Just 17 kilometres west of Jaisalmer lie the ruins of Kuldhara. According to legend, the village was abandoned some 300 years ago after a cruel local ruler threatened to exert his power by marrying one of the village girls against her will. In her support, the community left their ancestral homes and vanished. It is said, before doing so, that the villagers put a curse on the place preventing anyone from settling there again. To this day it remains forsaken and has an air of desolation for those exploring its crumbling ruins.

- 3: Bar Palladio, Jaipur
- 4: RAAS Rajmahal Palace, Jaipur
- 5: Gadi Sagar, Jaisalmer
- 6: Handcrafted ceramic plate, Khanoom, Jaipur
- 7: Jodhpur, the 'Blue City'
- 8: Shikar dining at Mihir Garh, Jodhpur
- 9: Women carrying water jugs, Jaisalmer



10

- 10: Royal Bengal tiger, Ranthambore
 11: Sheesh Mahal restaurant at the Leela Palace Hotel, Udaipur
 12: SUJÁN The Serai, Jaisalmer
 13: Taj Lake Palace, Udaipur
 14: Bhil tribesman, Udaipur
 15: Bougainvillea Art Gallery Udaipur
 16: Embroidered handbag by Vipul Shah



11



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STAY

SUJÁN The Serai

Inspired by the Rajput caravans of old, this luxurious tented camp sits amidst 100 acres of indigenous desert scrub east of Jaisalmer. A member of esteemed Relais & Châteaux, there are just 21 white canvas tented suites complete with colourful textiles and rugs, campaign-style furniture and en suite bathrooms. The SUJÁN spa offers treatments in enclosed gardens and dining is a combination of local delicacies and western selections from daily changing menus that are meticulously planned using the freshest ingredients.

RANTHAMBORE

Fifty years ago, this former hunting ground of the Maharajahs of Jaipur was proclaimed a tiger reserve, and a few years later a national park. Today, Ranthambore is one of the largest and most renowned tracts of wilderness in northern India, famous for its wildlife, including the Royal Bengal Tiger which sits at the apex of the food chain. The park is also home to a good population of leopard as well as sloth bear, hyena,

jackal, caracal, deer and antelope plus around 270 bird species. The forests, lakes and grasslands of Ranthambore are best explored on guided 4WD safaris.

STAY

Oberoi Vanyavilas

Luxury tents with finely embroidered canopies, sumptuous bathrooms and private walled gardens with their own sun decks set the benchmark at Oberoi Vanyavilas which is situated on the edge of Ranthambore National Park. Waterlily-filled ponds, expansive lawns and shady trees give the camp an added air of space and its large swimming pool surrounded by colourful tasseled parasols is the perfect retreat after a day on safari. Dining is a treat with fresh produce coming straight from the camp's kitchen garden while the spa offers a range of indulgent holistic therapies.

UDAIPUR

Often described as India's most romantic city, Udaipur is most famous for its dreamy lake, its glistening marble palaces and the misty hills of the Aravalli Range.

Smaller than some of its Rajasthani counterparts, its narrow alleyways invite exploration while a restful cruise on the lake reveals islands, palaces and close-up views of the mansions and bathing ghats which line the water's edge.

DO

Heritage Walk

The narrow lanes of Udaipur's Old City hemmed in by the 16th century city walls are easily explored on foot and provide an insight to a bygone era as well as important traditions that endure today. Marvel at grand havelis (mansions) belonging to Mewar nobility, peruse market stalls in the bustling bazaar and admire brightly coloured frescoes on whitewashed facades before finishing at the intricately carved 17th century Jagdish Temple.

Country hike

Interact with friendly villagers in the countryside around Udaipur and admire the scenery on a 10-kilometre hike through the hills. Encounter members of the Bhil tribe, one of the oldest indigenous groups, as well as



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farmers who have descended from the warrior Rajput clan and admire a temple dedicated to Lord Shiva.

DINE

From the Rooftop

Mesmerising views are front and centre at Udaipur rooftop bar and restaurant, Taro. Dishing up curated cocktails and Mediterranean fare in sophisticated surrounds, this is the place for sundowners, tasty treats, dj beats and a cool vibe.

Sheesh Mahal

With a prime lakefront location, open-air Sheesh Mahal at the Leela Palace Hotel has some of Udaipur's most in-demand tables where you'll dine on a feast of regional fare washed down with a glass or two of the sommelier's top recommendation. While the food is outstanding, you'll be hard pressed not to be distracted by the glittering view.

STAY

Raffles Udaipur

Situated on a 21-acre private island in the middle of Udaipur Sagar Lake, Raffles Udaipur is a picture of tranquillity surrounded by

manicured gardens and fountains with 180-degree views of the surrounding hills. An East-meets-West aesthetic distinguishes the interiors with murals, handcrafted wooden chests and artwork produced by local craftspeople. Just 101 rooms provide guests with all the expected conveniences while Raffles aficionados will relish Udaipur's take on the Writers Bar and Long Bar.

Taj Lake Palace

Brought to fame in the Bond movie *Octopussy*, the Taj Lake Palace is one of the most photographed hotels in the world. Like a mirage, it sits in the middle of Lake Pichola, seemingly afloat, its gleaming, white marble façade topped by domes, arches and gilded detail. Bedding down in this opulent former summer palace, you'll feel like royalty with a bevy of attentive staff to wait on you hand and foot.

SHOP

Boho Bags

Hollywood celebrities and royalty alike covet the intricately embroidered handbags from Udaipur-based designer Vipul Shah.

Featuring mirror work, tassels and fringes in a spectrum of striking hues, these bags are one of a kind but they also represent Vipul's endeavours to preserve and sustain some special traditions of the Indian handicraft heritage.

Bougainvillea

This lavish contemporary art gallery showcases and celebrates the works of respected artists from various parts of India and abroad. Paintings, print drawings and sculptures by young and upcoming artists are exhibited as well as works by some of the region's most recognised talents.



16

OUR SUGGESTED *Journey*

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Shore Leave:

GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS

The Galápagos archipelago is one of the most extraordinary places to see wildlife – and increasingly, one of the most popular. **Sarah Marshall** swims against the tide of overtourism, and discovers a way to experience the islands more responsibly, without the crowds.





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Previous pages: Marine iguana
 1: Male great frigatebird
 2: Hot tub on the sundeck, *Evolve*
 3: Up-close with Galápagos sea lions, Española Island
 4: Deluxe stateroom, *Evolve*
 5: Ecoventura's *Evolve*

ECUADOR

A lava lizard races across the barren slopes of Bartolomé Island, scampering so fast its feet barely touch the ground. By mid-morning the carpet of ash, heated by the sun, has already reached near-molten temperatures.

So small that clouds simply pass over, this volcanic outcrop of craters and cones rising from the Pacific Ocean receives less than 7mm of rainfall per year. “The only things living here are rocks,” jokes nature guide Antonio Adrian, as he leads us along a raised platform. “Stick around long enough and you’ll see them walk towards the ocean.”

On closer inspection, however, there are so many signs of life: tiny insects seeking shade and safety beneath

scalesia shrubs; clever cacti thriving on nutrients extracted from the dust.

Finding ingenious ways to survive in difficult conditions is central to life on the Galápagos. Igniting Charles Darwin’s interest when he first sailed here in 1835, this ever-evolving archipelago of wild wonders continues to amaze visitors today.

In 2022, almost 268,000 tourists visited the Galápagos according to data released by the Galápagos National Park, rising from 204,295 in 2015. And the biggest leap – an estimated rise of 80% – has been the number of tourists staying on land, on one of the four inhabited islands.

Although measures have been put in place to curb overtourism, pressure



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on the UNESCO World Heritage Site is undoubtedly increasing. With more and more travellers expected in the years to come, it's not only the wildlife which has to find new ways of navigating the archipelago.

Bucking the recent trend for land stays, I'd chosen to travel on an expedition yacht. One of 76 vessels currently permitted to operate multi-day trips, *Evolve* is the newest addition to the Ecoventura fleet. Part of the Relais & Châteaux portfolio, along with sister ships *Theory* and *Origin*, it's one of the most sustainable luxury yachts in the region.

Onboard, ensuite bedrooms have floor-to-ceiling windows perfect for viewing frolicking sea lions

in the water. On the top deck, a barman mixes sunset cocktails, while gastronomic four-course meals made with at least 50% of ingredients sourced locally are prepared in the dining area below.

Beyond the swish interiors, however, what sets *Evolve* apart from other ships is privileged access. No more than ten guests are ever assigned to one guide (a figure much lower than the national park's sixteen-to-one recommendation) and itineraries feature some of the best landing spots in the Galápagos. Operating since 1991, Ecoventura secured permits for top sites and time slots years ago, long before many other vessels appeared.

My seven-night tour of the southern and central islands started in San

Cristóbal, following a two-hour flight from Guayaquil on the Ecuadorian mainland. One of three inhabited islands in the archipelago, its busy restaurant-lined harbour was an introduction to the extraordinary ease with which humans and animals have learned to live side-by-side. Marine iguanas clung to brick walls, sea lions lazed on park benches, and hopeful pelicans hovered above fishermen unloading their hauls.

Before setting sail, we crossed the highlands to reach a giant tortoise breeding centre. In low-lying clouds and thick mist, the landscape almost disappeared, explaining why 16th century sailors named this archipelago 'the Enchanted Islands'. At that time, an estimated half a million tortoises roamed the volcanic



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outcrops, each population specially adapted to their surroundings. But following successive years of hunting, only 10,000 remained by the time a national park was created in 1959.

Seventy years later, that number has risen by 50% due to conservation efforts.

"The project on San Cristóbal has been so successful, they've decided to stop breeding tortoises in captivity on this particular island," explains nature guide Sophia Darquea, as we watch one of the final batches of thumb-sized babies cluster together in pens.

Regardless of human intervention, life in the Galápagos is thriving. Walking through a forest of native scalesia trees, I tune into a symphony of birdsong: yellow warblers practise pieces unique to the island, while small ground finches sing their little hearts out to serenade a mate. Equally enthralled, a curious San Cristóbal mockingbird chick almost perches on my shoulder – a reminder of how intimate wildlife encounters in these islands can be.

In any month of the year, there's something happening in the Galápagos. I'd specifically timed my visit to witness one of the avian



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world's greatest spectacles. From mid-April, waved albatrosses gather on Española – the southernmost island – to perform a repertoire of extraordinary courtship displays.

Sailing overnight, we arrive to find the black basalt cliffs of Suarez Point bathed gold by the morning sun. All Ecoventura landings are timed to avoid crossing paths with other ships, meaning only 20 of us are ashore. With so few people, the sense of discovery is amplified: waves crash louder; the air tastes saltier; the scarlet shells of Sally Lightfoot crabs beam brighter on white-sand shores.



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“Look at that swagger,” gasps Antonio, when we catch sight of our first albatross. Bowing his head side to side, a male is searching for his mate, engaging in a series of balletic bill-clattering dances to see whether she is ‘the one’. Struck by Cupid’s arrow, the lovers are oblivious to our presence - even though we are sitting only a few metres away.

Above us, doves and mockingbirds mob a predatory Galapagos hawk. On the horizon, blue-footed boobies stomp proudly, like school children showing off their shiny new shoes.

“I always thought birds were a bit boring,” admits one member of our group in a hushed whisper. “But I’ve never seen anything like this before.”

Both land and sky serve as an arena for impressive displays, but what lies below the ocean is equally entertaining. Almost every day of our journey there is an opportunity to snorkel. All different in terrain and species, each location is a merry-go-round of colourful activity: parrot fish dock into cleaning stations for spa treatments, puffer fish snack on sand dollars, and penguins fire past so fast I almost miss them in a monochrome blur.



11

- 6: Snorkelling with a Galapagos sea lion
- 7: Champagne welcome, *Evolve*
- 8: Waved albatross courtship display
- 9: Galapagos tortoise
- 10: Sally lightfoot crab on a lava rock
- 11: World-class cuisine, *Evolve*





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Taunting us with acrobatic displays, agile sea lions rouse whoops of applause from young children, and when a pod of 30 bottlenose dolphins approaches, even seasoned Galápagos-goer Sophia can't disguise her squeals.

"Of course, our marine area is vulnerable and we have problems," she later tells me back on the ship, listing illegal fishing, pollution, invasive species and climate change as threats. "But we are dealing with it." Millions of dollars have been spent removing goats and rats from the islands and in January 2022, the marine protected area surrounding the islands was extended to the maritime border with Costa Rica.

On Santa Cruz, the most developed island, I am reminded once again of how closely animals and humans have learned to depend upon one another. In exchange for protecting the environment and building fences high enough to allow tortoises to pass underneath, several farmers have been given the right by authorities to charge visitors for access to their land.



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Walking through one of the farms, I find tortoises mud bathing, mating and feasting on fallen passionfruit. All around me birds are singing from branches draped in healthy lichens.

In that moment, any problems and concerns dominating headlines feels very distant. After all, as Darwin wrote in his field notes: "The natural history of this archipelago is very remarkable: it seems to be a little world within itself." 🌿

- 1: Brown pelican, Bartolomé Island
- 2: Island exploration
- 3: Playful bottlenose dolphins

OUR SUGGESTED *Journey*

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TIES THAT *Bind*

Travelling with her mother on safari was, for **Sarah Marshall**, a happy opportunity to spend time together, exploring familial bonds and seeing the natural world through different eyes.





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BOTSWANA

By passing a cluster of fresh leaves lovingly left by his mother, an elephant calf made a beeline instead for her belly. Almost three years old, he no longer needed milk. The action of suckling was simply for bonding.

Throughout the animal kingdom, the relationship between a mother and her child is remarkable. For some it only lasts a matter of months, but elephants commit to a lifetime. Regardless, it's a connection stronger than steel, often defended until death.

Humans aren't too dissimilar. For most of us, our mothers will always be the number one person in our lives. But as we get older, busier and priorities change, so too can family ties.

For the last few years, my mother and I had discussed booking a big holiday, exploring together but also setting aside time to enjoy each other's company. Given we both love animals and consider David Attenborough a demigod, a safari was the obvious choice. Watching wildlife also requires patience, something blatantly lacking in our own relationship.

But where to go amidst Africa's ample choice of safari locations? And what place would allow Mum and I time to properly reset, refresh and appreciate anew each other and the world around us? It seemed to me that Botswana was the obvious choice. The safari model there is highly regarded for its environmental approach to conservation and its commitment to low volume tourism.

Camps and lodges are smaller and more ecologically minded, animals are in rich abundance and the experience is a slow paced one. Perfect for quality mother-daughter time.

Easing into the adventure, we started at Sanctuary Chobe Chilwero, set on the edge of Chobe National Park. A short drive from Kasane airport, the easily accessible camp was the ideal toe-dipping wilderness experience for my mum who had never been on a safari before. Electric fences kept predators out, but mongoose and bushbuck were still able to wander right up to the front of our suite.

Originating in the highlands of Angola, Chobe River is the focal point of the park. Welcoming us with a smile as sparkling as the late afternoon sunshine, guide Lets took



Previous spread: Elephants at sunset, Moremi National Park
1: Yawning hippo, Chobe National Park
2: Sunbathing crocodile, Chobe National Park
3: Sanctuary Chobe Chilwero
4: Elephant viewing on a game drive

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us on a gentle boat ride. So still we almost missed it, a Nile crocodile lay motionless on the shore, lazily lifting one eye as we approached.

“The sunshine helps aid digestion,” explained Lets, detailing the reptile’s diet which – ominously – could include us. “He might look harmless, but he could kill you with a death roll.”

No longer a regurgitation of facts and figures snatched from Wikipedia, guiding has changed significantly in Africa, concentrating more on interpreting behaviour. Mum was instantly enamoured; she’d found her African Attenborough.

“He’s very knowledgeable, isn’t he?” she whispered, while carefully edging away from the croc.

A major water source, the Chobe River attracts 120,000 elephants – the highest concentration in the world. Transfixed by the near silence of their mighty footsteps and low rumblings almost indecipherable to the human ear, being in the midst of a breeding herd was exceptionally calming. We watched them crossing the water, falling into line one after the other like a well-oiled military machine, the smallest trailing along behind.

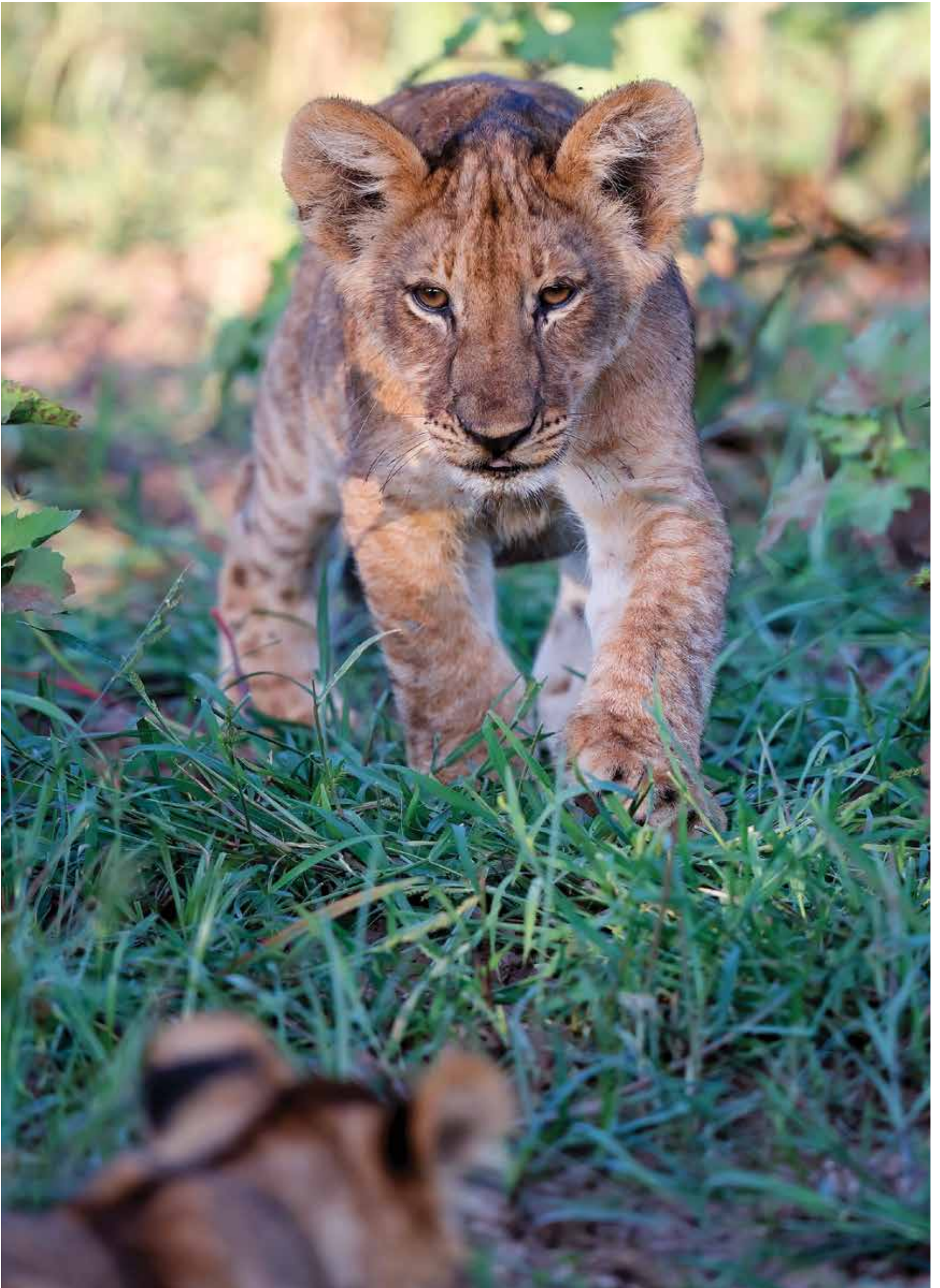
Their nurturing behaviour appealed to my mother’s own maternal instinct. “Look how they care for the babies,” she cooed.

Falling in love with wildlife on safari is easy, but the logistics of moving around are a bit more complicated. At 75, with a history

of slipped discs, getting in and out of a vehicle was challenging for my mother. But Lets and his team made sure everything ran smoothly, providing a stepladder along with a stash of blankets to keep her warm on chilly mornings. “I feel like the queen!”, she laughed as we set out on a game drive.

Chobe can be busy during peak season, demanding some clever planning. To avoid crowds, we left camp at 7am, slightly later than a normal morning drive would, and took one of the two new routes opened in the park this year.

In the past when I’ve been on safari, I’ve always been in a hurry to see the apex predators and with them a kill. But, inspired by the elephants, I was learning to slow down and take my





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- 5: Lion cubs, Moremi National Park
- 6: Sanctuary Stanley's Camp
- 7: Sundowner, Moremi National Park
- 8: African jacana chicks on water lillies, Moremi National Park

time. Although I've seen hundreds of lilac-breasted rollers, and barely register run-of-the-mill impalas these days, mum's wide-eyed enthusiasm made them shine in a new light. She learned to compromise too. After a couple of days and the tenth stop to look at a flock of guinea fowl, she'd perfected the art of taking iPhone photos in a moving vehicle as we zoomed along.

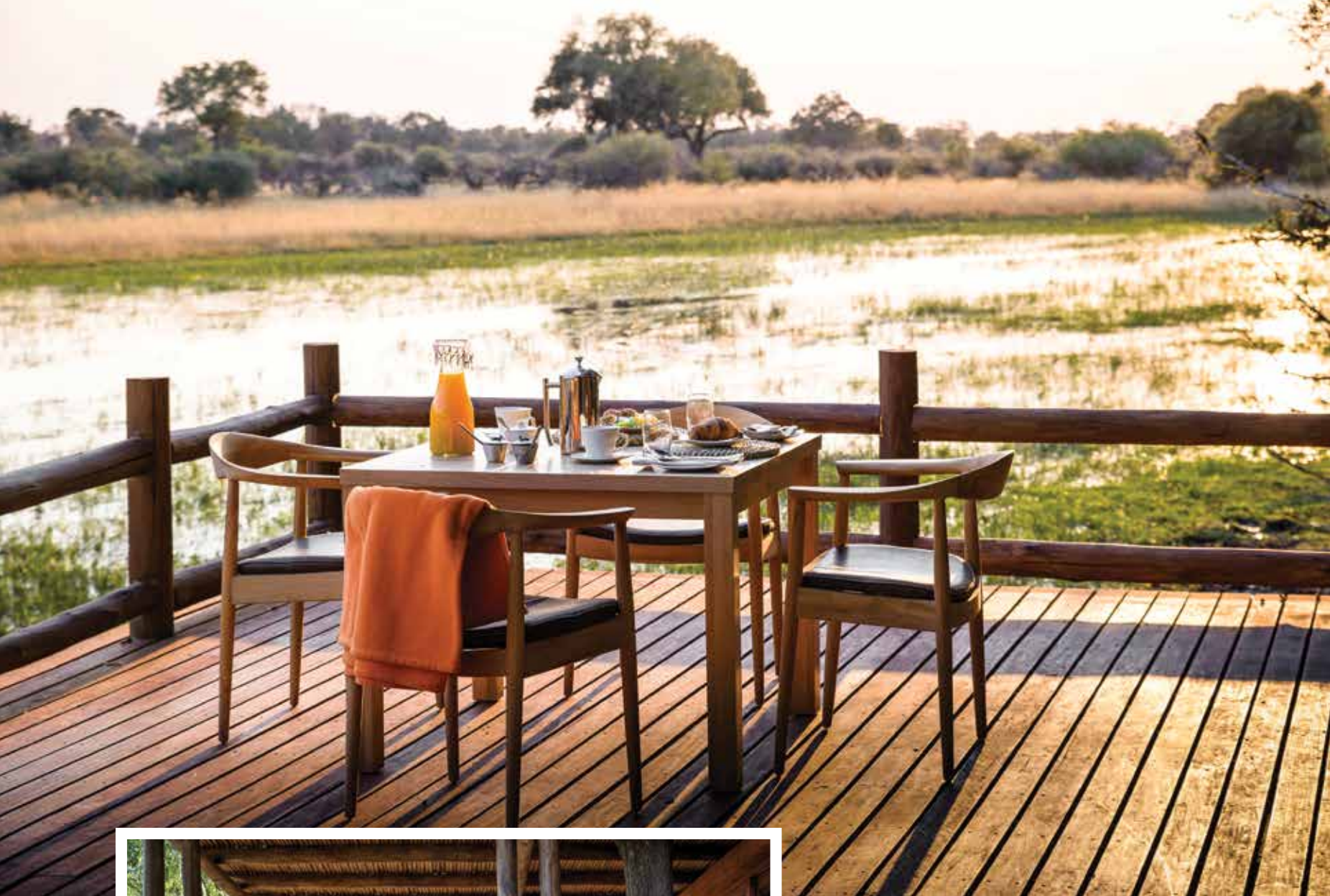
By the time we reached our second camp, we were both safari pros. A light aircraft flight (most of which, mum

filmed) took us to Sanctuary Stanley's Camp, one of two tented camps occupying a private concession on the border of Moremi National Park in the heart of the Okavango Delta.

Below-average rainfall in Angola meant the water-level downstream, that annually floods the Okavango, was surprisingly low, with more dry land than usual for animals to roam. Although it proved a little more challenging to locate wildlife, our guide, Temeo, triumphed on every drive.

"We'll need to be patient," he forewarned us, when we arrived at a lion's den tucked behind thick croton bushes. Tiny lion cubs had been sighted several days previously, but we'd need their mothers to return if we wanted to catch a glimpse.

As we waited, I calculated I'd spent more time with my mum in the past few days than I had done in years. Yes, there were several things that annoyed me: her poor time keeping, dithering indecisiveness and the constant fiddling around with bags.



9

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But the real root of these irritations was the realisation that I'm no different.

We see joy in the same things too. When the cubs finally emerged, rolling from the bushes and scampering on stumpy little legs, we sat transfixed until the sun went down.

The cycle of life is constantly turning in Africa's wild spaces. Alongside new beginnings, there's inevitably death. When Temeo spotted a baby elephant keeled over in the grass, we

were all perplexed about what might have happened. Less than 24 hours later, we returned to find his final resting place empty. Following a trail of intestines, blood stains and a dead hyena, we found two male lions devouring the remains. Grimacing at the gore, mum concluded: "I think I prefer the baby animals."

Wildlife is abundant across Botswana, but the highest concentration can be found on Chief's Island in the heart of Moremi. When water levels rise,

animals retreat to the largest island in the Delta, once the exclusive hunting grounds for the local chief.

Sharing 1000 square kilometres of mopane woodland and sandveld with only one other property, Sanctuary Chief's Camp felt exhilaratingly exclusive. Aside from the apartment-sized suites with verandas overlooking a floodplain, the game viewing was first class.

Our guide, Skye, had a sixth sense for reading the landscape. Every



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birdcall, baboon squeal and impala snort were clues to finding a predator. We observed elephants shaking palms with their tusks pieces of cutlery for digging into the buffet.

Trailing a thousand buffalo was a highlight. In a cloud of dust and confusion, two elderly lionesses succeeded in bringing down a calf separated from the herd as two sub-adult male lions looked on.

“They might be old, but they have experience,” said, Skye, wistfully.

Glancing in my direction, mum smirked knowingly.

As the years pass, a role reversal between parent and child is inevitable. I may have made all the arrangements, carried the bags and completed various online digital check-ins for our holiday. But in the wilds of Africa, I’d learned a valuable lesson: at any age, a mother always knows best. 🐾

- 9: Breakfast by the lagoon, Sanctuary Chief's Camp, Chief's Island
- 10: Sanctuary Chief's Camp suite
- 11: Cape buffalo, Chief's Island
- 12: Fine dining, Sanctuary Chief's Camp
- 13: Author Sarah Marshall and her mother on safari
- 14: Leopard, Chief's Island

OUR SUGGESTED *Journey*

'African Waterways' Tailor-Made Journey

9 days

Priced from \$15,935 per person twin share

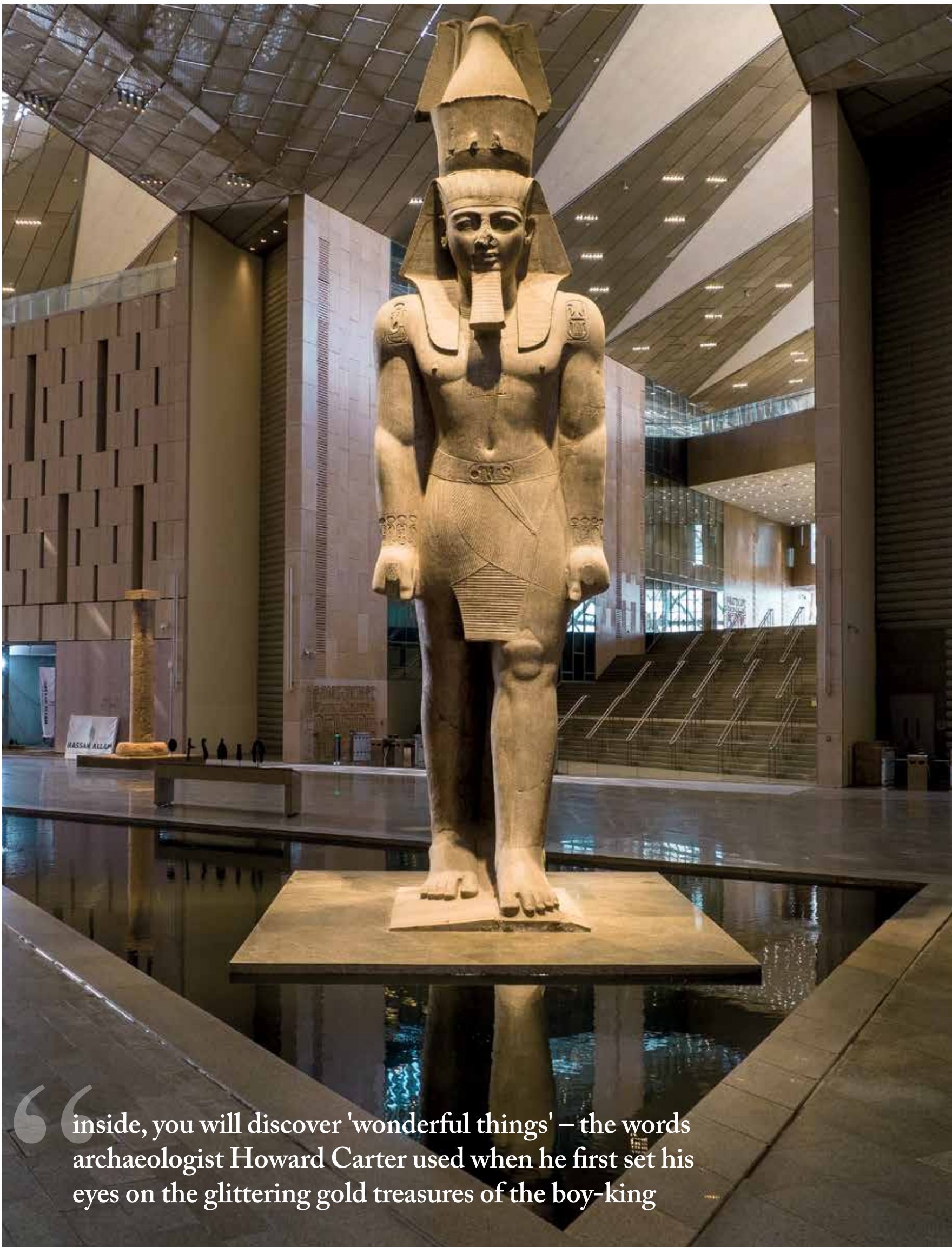
For more information call A&K on 1300 591 877 or your local travel advisor



A CULTURAL GEM

Be one of the first to visit Cairo's hotly anticipated Grand Egyptian Museum, the architectural wonder that has been dubbed the Fourth Pyramid and the final resting place for the golden treasures of Tutankhamun. By **Janet Brice**.





“inside, you will discover 'wonderful things' – the words archaeologist Howard Carter used when he first set his eyes on the glittering gold treasures of the boy-king



2

EGYPT

An architectural wonder fit for a pharaoh is the only way to describe the new Grand Egyptian Museum. Like the Great Pyramid, which stands two kilometres away across the desert, the billion-dollar project has taken more than 20 years to complete.

Dubbed 'the fourth pyramid', this cultural complex is devoted to Egyptology, bringing the ancient civilisation to life with more than 55,000 artefacts, housing the entire collection of Tutankhamun treasures along with highlights such as the Solar

Boat of Khufu, a wooden ship built to carry the pharaoh to the afterlife.

When it opens, the GEM will be the world's largest archaeology museum, as well as the centrepiece of an entirely new cultural destination. Irish architects Heneghan Peng designed the landmark; in one of the biggest architectural competitions in history, the firm beat 1,500 entries from 83 countries and was assigned the task of constructing a cultural hub to complement the only remaining wonder of the ancient world.

Previous spread: Tutankhamun's Death Mask

1: Statue of Ramesses II in the entrance of the Grand Egyptian Museum

2: Exterior of the Grand Egyptian Museum

GEM in numbers

2 km

from the pyramids of Giza

♦♦♦

20 years

from design to final
construction

♦♦♦

6 million

visitors predicted
per year

♦♦♦

10 km

west of central Cairo

♦♦♦

5,000

Tutankhamun artefacts

♦♦♦

55,000

Egyptian artefacts on show

♦♦♦

2002

ceremonial cornerstone
was laid down

♦♦♦

40-metre

atrium height

♦♦♦

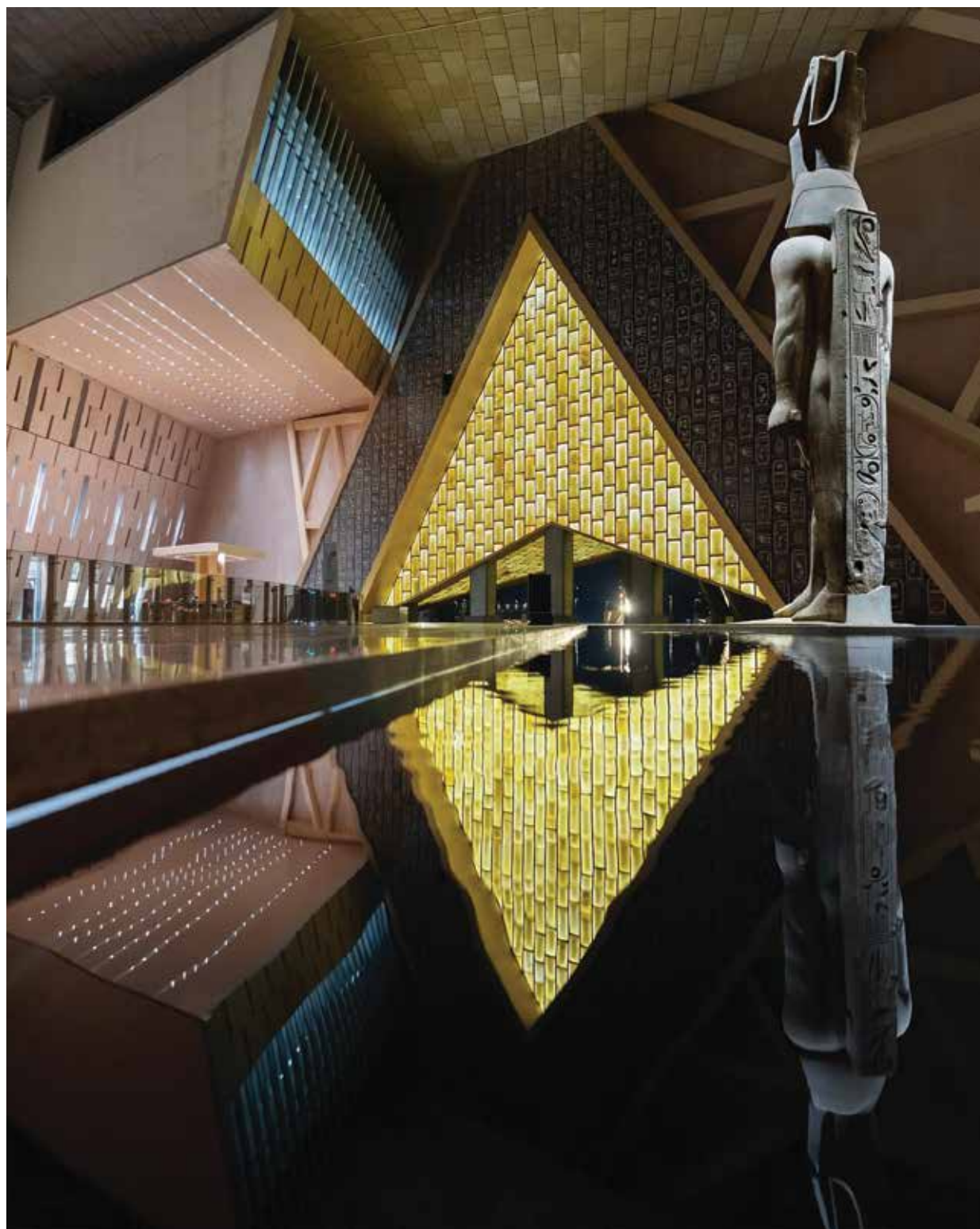
50-hectare

site

♦♦♦

\$1-billion

project cost



3

Its scale is awe-inspiring. The entrance hall is so vast that you could park a Boeing 747 in it, and the main exhibition halls are the size of six football grounds. The expansive floor-to-ceiling windows allow dramatic, uninterrupted views of the pyramids of Giza.

LOST TREASURES NEVER SEEN BEFORE

Inside, you'll discover 'wonderful things' – the words archaeologist Howard Carter used when he spied the glittering gold treasures of the boy-king Tutankhamun in 1922.

For the first time, visitors will be able to view the 5,000 objects that were unearthed from the pharaoh's tomb from the iconic death mask

and gold sarcophagus to his paper-thin funerary sandals and grand chariots. Since the discovery, most of the artefacts were displayed at the cramped Egyptian Museum in Cairo's Tahrir Square while a small number toured the world, but the full collection has never been exhibited together. And they will be given pride of place in two galleries covering 7,000 square metres.

ARCHITECTURAL CHALLENGES

During the design and construction process, architects were challenged by the location, the sandy terrain and the 50-metre difference in level between the desert plateau and the city 10 kilometres away. Despite the slope, the floor is perfectly pitched

at the same level as the pyramids and the museum stands proudly between the level of the Nile Valley and the plateau. According to Heneghan Peng, the design uses the level difference to construct a new 'edge' to the plateau, a surface defined by a veil of translucent stone that transforms from day to night. The dramatic roof is a sequence of concrete and glass wings, and the façade is adorned with motifs that reference the pyramids; it is set in a desert garden of hundreds of palm trees.

PRE-OPENING TOUR

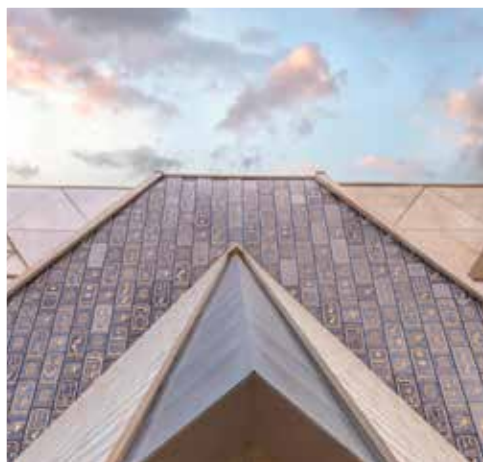
A&K is in the fortunate position of being able to arrange a private site tour of the museum prior to its official opening with an expert

3: Entrance foyer, the Grand Egyptian Museum

4: Conservation Laboratory

5: Obelisk in the forecourt

6: Entrance to the Grand Egyptian Museum



6



Award-winning architect Róisín Heneghan

Róisín Heneghan is co-founder of Heneghan Peng Architects along with Shih-Fu Peng. She was shortlisted for Architects' Journal's Woman Architect of the Year.

What set your design for the GEM apart from the competitors?

We established a strong visual relationship from the museum to the pyramids.

How do you feel now it is about to open to the public?

It will be interesting to see how people react to the design.

Can you tell us more about the window overlooking the pyramids?

One of the most important aspects of the design is that as the visitor enters the permanent exhibition galleries, they have this special view from the museum to the pyramids. The glass is set back so that the surrounding city is screened as much as possible and there is an unfiltered relationship across the desert to the pyramids.

How did you bring light into the museum?

The roof is folded so that there is controlled north light to the galleries.

What is your favourite part?

The top of the stairs and looking towards the pyramids because here the distraction and noise of the city are muted, the proximity of the pyramids is felt and there is a sense of being in a special place.

Why do you think the GEM is a game-changer?

The museum offers the space to display this vast collection. There are conservation workshops that are equipped to look after the work and safe storage. There are spaces for learning, for education, for children and adults but what we found very interesting is that this collection will now be seen in the shadow of the pyramids.



4

GEM guide. You will enjoy the space to view the colossal granite statue of Ramesses II above you in the atrium and the hanging obelisk which welcomes guests at the entrance. Look closely for the rare cartouche of the great pharaoh. Glimpse the work being carried out in the Conservation Centre and join the curators from the wood conservation laboratory who will give you an insight into their work. One tricky task was to remove the paraffin wax which had been sprayed on by Howard Carter to preserve them. Other highlights include the Merneptah Pillar and statues of the great King Senusret I.

THE BILBAO EFFECT

While most of us will be drawn to GEM for its headline artefacts,

the museum is much more than a cultural hub. It will be served by a new purpose-built international airport and will also include a convention centre, hotel, shopping malls and movie complex. GEM is considered a prestige project which looks set to regenerate the country in a way the Guggenheim Museum, designed by Frank Gehry, put Bilbao on the world map. Its titanium exterior and huge windows

are just as much a masterpiece as the artwork housed inside. The construction of the museum transformed the city and is known as the 'Bilbao effect' which other countries aim to follow. While Egypt is poised to reclaim its rich past for a bright economic future, we will be lucky enough to immerse ourselves in its 'wonderful things' when the GEM finally opens its doors. 🏛️

OUR SUGGESTED

Journey

'Nile in Style' Tailor-Made Journey

9 days

Priced from \$10,930 per person twin share

For more information call A&K on 1300 591 877 or your local travel advisor



TRAVEL & THE ARTS

Home of some of the world's great architectural movements, the mighty Renaissance plus a long list of influential artists, Italy is a haven for the arts. Here we list some of the key events and experiences that you might want to add to your calendar in 2024.

PUCCINI OPERA FESTIVAL

In 2024, the Puccini Opera Festival will celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the death of the great maestro, Giacomo Puccini, one of Tuscany's favourite sons. Staged each summer in Torre del Lago's Gran Teatro all'Aperto during July and August, the festival will see six titles performed from 12 July to 24 August 2024:

- 12 & 19 July: **Le Villi** and **Edgar**
- 13 July & 2 August: **Manon Lescaut**
- 20 July-22 August: **La Bohème**
- 26 July-24 August: **Tosca**
- 3-23 August: **Turandot**

VENICE BIENNALE

The theme of the 60th Venice Biennale will explore the notion of the foreigner with a central focus on those on the margins, namely exiles, émigrés, and outsiders. "Foreigners Everywhere," will run from 20 April to 24 November 2024 and Queensland-based, Indigenous artist Archie Moore has been selected to represent Australia. Moore is known for his large-scale installations that reveal the tensions between personal and official histories of Australia's colonial past as well as issues of identities, intercultural understanding and racism. When you visit the event with A&K, insider

access can be arranged to pre-show cocktail parties and special events hosted in historic venues across the city.

RAVELLO FESTIVAL

Taking the Amalfi Coast by storm every summer during July and August, the Ravello Festival is one of Italy's best-loved music events. Originally formed as a tribute to Wagner, following his visit to the town in the 19th century, today, it's a well refined tradition with an enviable programme of jazz, art shows, dance, photography and classical music which takes place in different venues around Ravello. The main venue is the spectacular Villa Rufolo with the stage set *en plein air* amidst the glorious gardens which slope down towards the coast. In this captivating and atmospheric setting, concerts start around 4am timed to catch the magnificent sunrise.

Dates: July-August 2024

UMBRIA JAZZ

Held annually since 1973, Umbria Jazz in Perugia has become one of the most important jazz festivals in the world. Set against the backdrop of this beautiful historic town surrounded by Etruscan, Roman and medieval walls, the festival attracts top acts in jazz and contemporary music along with emerging talents who perform here every year in various open-air and indoor venues from art



galleries and gardens to gothic palazzos. Over the years a who's who of music legends have performed at the festival from B.B. King, Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis to Tony Bennett, Lady Gaga and Elton John.
Dates: 12-21 July 2024

ROME VENICE FLORENCE

Works of art in themselves, these three cities are eternal favourites for enthusiasts of art, music and architecture. Rome's ancient monuments make the entire city an open-air museum while important artworks from the likes of Caravaggio, Bernini, Canova and Titian line the walls of the extraordinary Borghese Gallery. In Venice, Peggy Guggenheim's extraordinary collection of 20th century American and European art is exhibited at her former palazzo on the Grand Canal and in churches and cathedrals around the city, great works from the Renaissance and Baroque periods abound. And finally, Florence, considered by many to be Italy's art capital, where magnificent art and architecture abound. Within its medieval walls lived the most famous Renaissance artists and masterpieces such as Michelangelo's *David* and Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, plus many others attracting admirers year-round. 📸

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Clockwise from left: Michelangelo's *David*, Florence; Lorenzo Quinn's *Support*, 2017 Venice Biennale; dome of St Peter's Basilica, Rome; Ravello Festival.

WORLDWIDE ART FAIRS IN THE FRAME

London Art Fair 18-22 January 2024
 Cape Town Art Fair 16-18 February 2024
 The European Fine Art Foundation (TEFAF) Maastricht 9-14 March 2024
 Art Paris 4-7 April 2024
 Sydney Contemporary 5-8 September 2024

OUR SUGGESTED *Journey*

'Rome to Venice: A Connoisseur's Italy' Tailor-Made Journey
 9 days
 Priced from \$20,760 per person twin share

For more information call A&K on 1300 591 877 or your local travel advisor

SPOTLIGHT ON: SRI LANKA FIVE WAYS

It's hard to believe that a compact island, smaller than Tasmania, can boast such diversity. But this pearl in the Indian Ocean with its cultural and ethnic diversity is a dazzling concentration of World Heritage sites, rich cultural traditions, lush forests and tea plantations, golden beaches and food that's just out of this world. It was this combination that so impressed A&K's **Chloe Kurts** on her first visit there and here are some ways to experience it yourself.





1 FOR TRAILBLAZERS

Hike the Pekoe Trail, the first of its kind taking walkers through breathtaking terrain in Sri Lanka's Central Highlands from the ancient lakeside city of Kandy to Nuwara Eliya in the heart of tea country. The 300-kilometre-long trail has 22 stages which can be done as short sections, or as part of a multi-day experience and it can be curated to suit along with a variety of handpicked accommodation choices. Along the way, visit tea plantations that grow world famous Ceylon Tea, explore historical and cultural Kandy, take an exhilarating train ride to Ella, trek through forest reserves home to endemic wildlife or take a Sri Lankan cooking class. This is one of Asia's best kept secret



2 FOR REST & REPOSE

Glorious new spiritual sanctuary Kayaam House has just opened in a secluded location on a golden beach just out of Tangalle on the island's south coast. Wellness is a key part of what Kayaam is all about, with rest and recovery high on the guest experience list and with just eight rooms you know it's going to be special. Décor is simple but sophisticated with antique pieces and planter's chairs contrasting with colourful abstract artworks and splashes of turquoise and teal. An outdoor yoga pavilion, infinity pool and spa scream wellbeing and the chic, Geoffrey Bawa-inspired restaurant and bar are your backdrop to the finest and freshest Sri Lankan cuisine.



3 FOR THE ART ENTHUSIAST

Sri Lanka's arts are colourful and unique ranging from jewellery, masks, lacquerware and music to pottery, textiles, painting and architecture. On a curator-led visit to one of Colombo's largest contemporary art galleries you'll admire works by leading and emerging artists and learn how the gallery collaborates on exhibitions internationally. At Barefoot Gallery, an inspirational platform for artists, musicians, poets, and filmmakers, explore the important contribution that owner Babara Sansoni has made to art and fabric design. And the legacy of renowned Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa, the father of Tropical Modernism, is revealed on visits to some of his great masterpieces where his unique creativity and artistic flair shine.



4 FOR GARDEN LOVERS

Horticultural enthusiasts will easily lose themselves in Kandy's wonderful Royal Botanical Gardens. Established in 1821, their purpose was, primarily, to introduce coffee and various other tropical plants of economic importance to the region. In the 1870s they played a pivotal role in establishing the country's flourishing tea industry and became one of the greatest Botanical Gardens in the British Empire. The gardens are home to some 4000 plant species from vast tropical trees in the arboretum to many endemic, and some extinct, varieties, medicinal plants as well as the palm collection and the Orchid House where some 300 varieties flourish. A&K's visit is guided by a resident botanist.



5 FOR THE GOURMET TRAVELLER

Food is one of the great joys of a trip to Sri Lanka, its moniker 'Spice Island' giving some hint of what to expect. At the centre of the spice trade for centuries, the country, and indeed its cuisine, has been heavily influenced by the many who visited from the Dutch, Portuguese and British to Arabs, Malays, Moors and Indians. From hoppers, curry, rice and sambal to curd and treacle, the culinary array is mouth-watering and A&K's specialist food walks are a great way to experience the assortment. Another standout is a traditional Kamatha meal at Uga Ulagalla where guests work with home cooks and old world ingredients to produce revered royal recipes dished up in the middle of lush paddy fields.

For more information about including any of these in your Tailor-Made Sri Lanka Journey, please call A&K on 1300 591 877 or your local travel advisor.

a journey illustrated

THE GREAT MIGRATION SAFARI IN STYLE

PLANNING YOUR TRIP

WHAT?

The Great Migration Safari in Style:

A Luxury Small Group Journey

14 days

Price from \$30,365 per person

WHEN?

Regular departures year-round (except April and November).

INCLUDES

13 nights luxury accommodation; maximum group size 18 guests; extensive game viewing as detailed throughout with professional safari guide; services of English-Speaking Resident Tour Director; private arrival and departure transfers; small group transfers and transportation elsewhere; flights Arusha/Tarangire and Ngorongoro/Serengeti/Masai Mara/Nairobi; breakfast daily; 12 lunches and dinners; entrance fees.

FOR MORE INFO

Please call A&K on 1300 591 877 or your local travel advisor.

Witness Kenya's and Tanzania's spectacular wildlife on a flagship two-week safari, with game drives through the region's most abundant national parks and private reserves. Opportunities abound for viewing the Great Migration, one of the natural world's most extraordinary wildlife phenomena, in the world-famous Masai Mara and Serengeti National Park. You'll bed down in handpicked boutique camp and luxury lodge accommodations and explore alongside safari guides whose in-depth tracking expertise leads to amazing wildlife encounters. There are also immersive cultural experiences on a visit to a traditional Maasai village and getting around is easy with convenient flights along the way.

Day 1: Arrive Nairobi, Kenya

Begin the safari adventure in the Kenyan capital, jumping off point for safaris in East Africa.

Accommodation: Hemingways Nairobi

Days 2-3: Amboseli National Park

At the foot of Africa's highest peak, Mount Kilimanjaro, sits Amboseli National Park, where spectacular wildlife abounds including an impressive elephant population. Watch the big herds roam the dusty plains and get close-up viewing from your safari vehicle.

Other animals which you may sight are Cape buffalo, zebra, wildebeest, hippo, hyena and, occasionally, lion.

Accommodation: Tawi Lodge

Days 4-5: Tarangire National Park, Tanzania

Cross the border into Tanzania and fly to Tarangire National Park for a tented camp experience at eco-friendly Sanctuary Swala where large tents on raised decks under umbrella acacia trees overlook a water hole. Morning and afternoon game drives reveal a stunning concentration of animals – herds of elephant, impala and zebra, as well as leopard and tree-climbing lions. A Chef's Table experience in camp is a highlight with a cooking demonstration of local dishes.

Accommodation: Sanctuary Swala

Days 6-7: Ngorongoro Crater

Ride Like a Local by tuk-tuk in a nearby village and learn how Tanzanians live today cultivating rice and bananas which are on sale in the colourful market. And tailor your own experience on a forest walk with a traditional Maasai healer, a village bike ride or high tea with the artist-in-residence at your coffee farm accommodation.

An exceptional wildlife experience is included at the UNESCO World Heritage listed Ngorongoro Crater where an abundance of wildlife roams within the walls of an ancient caldera and it's possible to encounter every member of the Big Five in a single day.

Accommodation: Gibb's Farm

Days 8-10: Serengeti National Park

Fly to the endless plains of the Serengeti National Park, which plays host to the annual Great Migration, when millions of herbivores trek across the plains in search of water and fresh grass. Safari adventures over the coming days may reveal giraffe, wildebeest, cheetah, buffalo, elephant and far more on morning and afternoon game drives.

Accommodation: Four Seasons Safari Lodge Serengeti

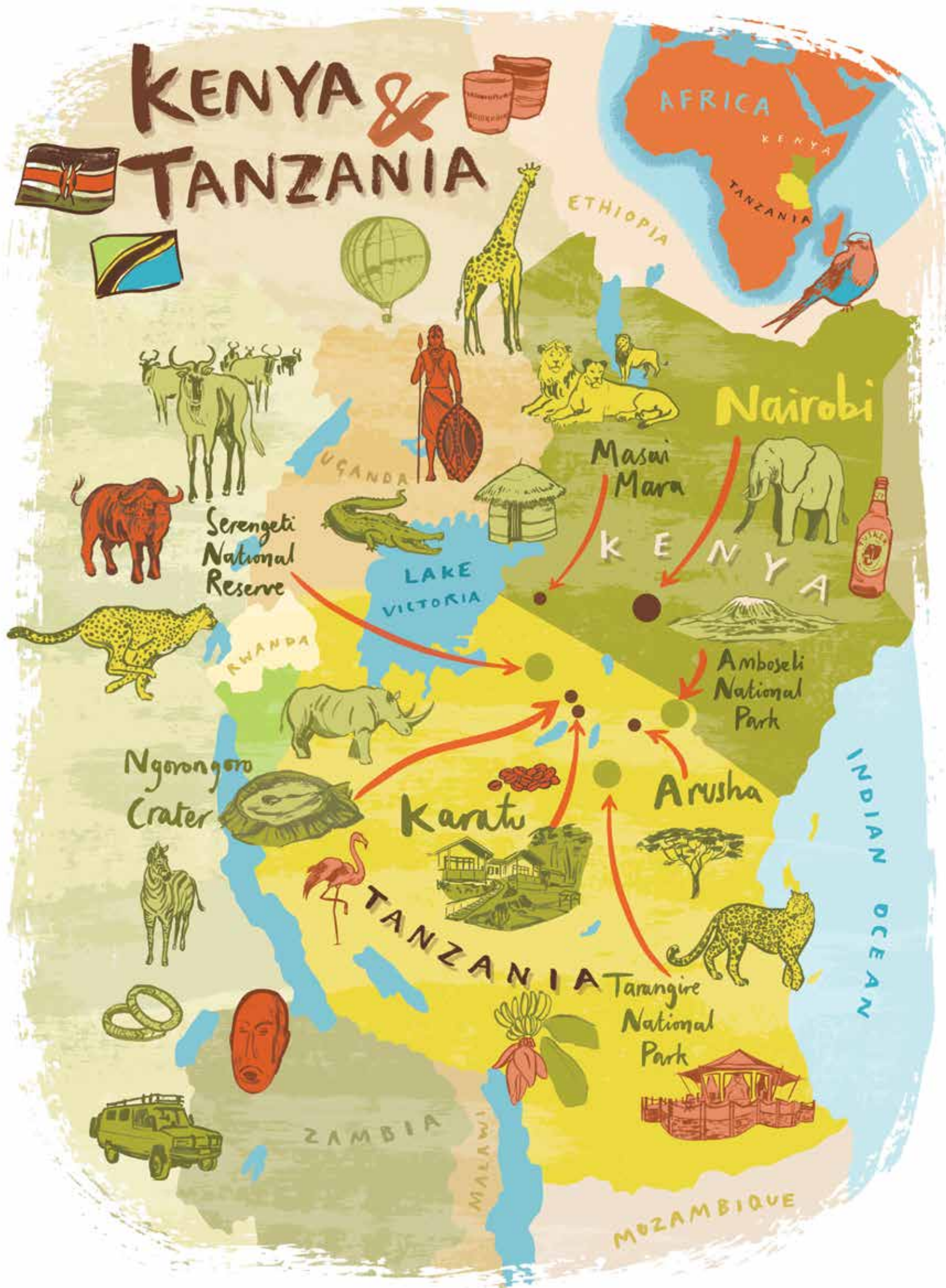
Days 11-13: Masai Mara Game Reserve, Kenya

Fly across the Kenyan border to the Masai Mara and your exceptional safari lodge on the banks of the Mara River. Morning and afternoon safari outings across the open savanna, woodlands and tree-fringed rivers are rewarded with sightings such as a leopard retrieving a kill from an acacia, an elephant protecting its young from a lion, herds of zebra, wildebeest and gazelle. Along the riverbank, watch crocodiles basking in the sun, hippos wallowing and monkeys sparking mischief overhead. And connect with local Maasai when you visit a village and primary school supported by A&K Philanthropy.

Accommodation: Sanctuary Olonana

Day 14: Depart Nairobi

Fly back to Nairobi and enjoy the afternoon at leisure in a comfortable dayroom. In the evening, transfer to the airport for your departure flight.



A full-page background image showing a person riding a camel across sand dunes at sunset. The sky is filled with large, colorful clouds in shades of orange, pink, and blue. The sand dunes are in the foreground, with ripples visible in the sand. The camel and rider are silhouetted against the bright sky.

THE 2024

Hot List

It's that time of the year again when our in-house travel professionals read the stars and gaze into their crystal balls for a sign of the destinations that are going to excite you, the discerning traveller, over the coming year. And the 2024 inventory is a striking selection of places both bold and breathtaking that will appeal whether inveterate aficionado of art and ancient history, intrepid trailblazer seeking extreme adventure, wildlife enthusiast or committed eco-warrior.

From Central America to the Asian steppe, Africa to the Indian subcontinent and Europe to the North Pole, this is A&K's always anticipated Hot List for 2024.



KENYA

Long-time safari stalwart Kenya is a firm favourite of wildlife enthusiasts, and with good reason. Kenya's wildlife is its singular drawcard and the country has more than 40 national parks and conservancies dedicated to safeguarding its natural treasures. This noble tradition empowers local communities, manages important wildlife corridors and protects its rich natural resources. When you travel with A&K you'll reap the benefit of more than 60 years' experience curating adventures in Kenya, with outstanding safari opportunities in private conservancies and national parks where the animals are front and centre and breathtaking landscapes the natural backdrop.

OUR SUGGESTED JOURNEY

A&K's 11-day 'Wildlife & Warriors' is priced from \$24,880 per person.



ZAMBIA

Famously home of the walking safari, Zambia boasts great tracts of pristine and untouched wilderness where the animals are the star attraction. The country has also maintained low density lodgings and limits on visitor numbers making the safari experience here one for the more adventurous traveller. From the expansive and diverse terrain of the extraordinary South Luangwa National Park, home to elephant, buffalo, lion, hippo and more, to the Lower Zambezi where the river is a drawcard for animals both big and small, and the mighty Victoria Falls, there are exciting safari and adventure options aplenty.

OUR SUGGESTED JOURNEY

A&K's 11-day 'Best of Zambia' from \$19,765 per person.



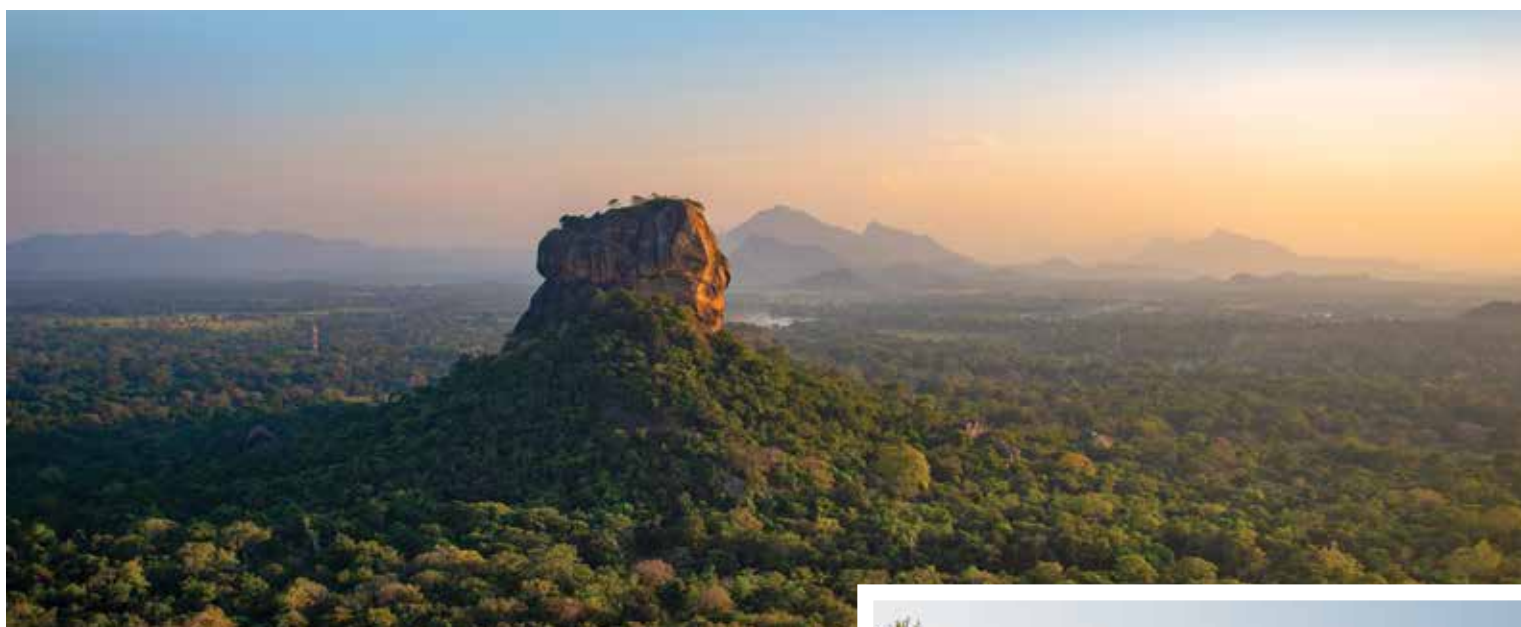


MOROCCO

Boasting a rich history dating back to the Phoenicians, diverse and dramatic landscapes and a vibrant creative scene, Morocco has limitless appeal. Roman ruins and Moorish cities are counted amongst its World Heritage listed attractions while bustling bazaars and colourful kasbahs overflow with traditional crafts, textiles and creative characters. Consistently tasty cuisine is dished up in kitchens and eateries across the country and an array of some of the world's best and most atmospheric hotels endlessly amaze the discerning traveller. Morocco is exotic and surprising in equal measure and rightly deserves its hot list credentials.

OUR SUGGESTED JOURNEY

A&K's 12-day 'Kasbahs & Caravans' from \$16,440 per person.



SRI LANKA

Famous for its lush tea estates, golden beaches, flavoursome cuisine and ancient World Heritage sites, the charmingly compact teardrop-shaped island of Sri Lanka is also known as the home of Tropical Modernism. This singularly Sri Lankan style of architecture, attributed to the late, great Geoffrey Bawa, drew inspiration from classical Sri Lankan buildings and techniques emphasising open spaces, local resources and indigenous traditions. On an A&K journey to this beguiling nation, visits to some of Bawa's architectural accomplishments will be certain highlights.

OUR SUGGESTED JOURNEY

A&K's 13-day 'Serendipitous Sri Lanka' is priced from \$9,835 per person.



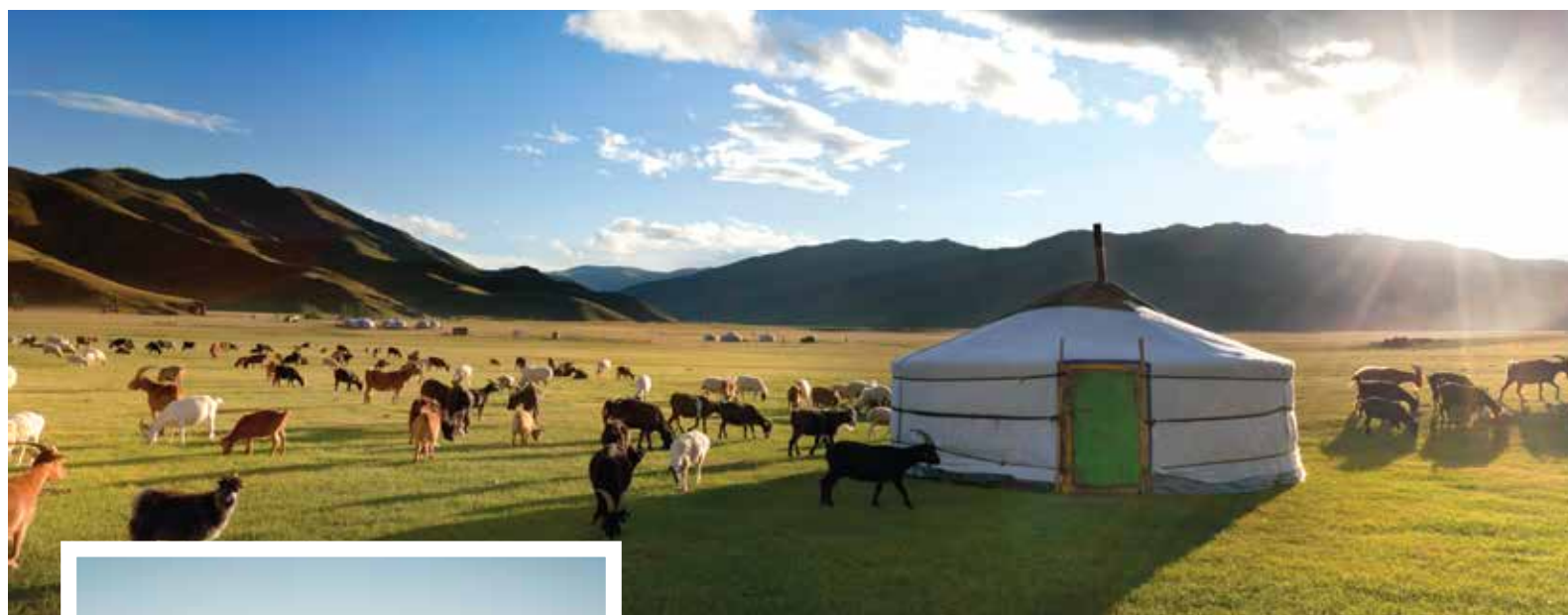


INDIA

Eternally adored by discerning travellers the world over, India always intrigues. From the mighty river Ganges to the Himalayan peaks, the verdant backwaters of Kerala to Rajasthan's desert reaches in the north, its terrain is vast and varied. There are thousands of years of history to explore from the ancient caves of Ajanta and Ellora to Khajuraho's temple complexes, Mughal palaces and forts plus relics of the British Raj. Over a thousand festivals take place there every year reflecting the deep religious beliefs which infuse life and there is rare wildlife in pockets of wilderness the country over. Quite simply India is always in fashion.

OUR SUGGESTED JOURNEY

A&K's 12-day 'Wings over India' from \$58,455 per person.



MONGOLIA

Vast, remote and hauntingly beautiful, Mongolia has preserved age-old traditions of horsemanship, herding and hunting which are celebrated annually in a number of stirring festivals paying homage to the unique legacy of its people. At the Golden Eagle Festival, Kazakh horsemen demonstrate their skills with the prized Golden Eagle over two thrilling days of celebration and competition. The Naadam Festival, celebrated most impressively in the capital Ulaanbaatar, is a colourful spectacle of archery, wrestling and horse racing. And in the Gobi Desert, the Thousand Camel Festival, showcases the endangered Bactrian camel and the role it plays in the lives of the local nomadic community.

OUR SUGGESTED JOURNEY

A&K's 10-day 'Mongolia: Naadam Festival & the Khan Legacy - A Marco Polo Small Group Journey' is priced from \$22,385 per person.



PORTUGAL

While Iberian heavyweight Spain continues to outdo its bijou neighbour on size and scale, Portugal is a hidden delight. Utterly entrancing, it has a rich design heritage with ancient walled towns and mountaintop palaces aplenty. It boasts sunny landscapes, delicious food and earthy wines plus a bevy of beautiful beaches, vineyards, olive groves and cellars to explore. Its eclectic capital, Lisbon, is one of Europe's most underestimated and you'll be more than welcomed by the friendly and effusive locals.

OUR SUGGESTED JOURNEY

A&K's 9-day 'Portugal Revealed' is priced from \$13,855 per person.



SLOVENIA

It will surprise many to know that this tiny alpine country in central Europe is a biodiversity hotspot with the highest concentration of animal and plant species per square kilometre in the world. And while known for its mountains, forests and lakes, it's one of the few places on Earth where you can ski in the morning and bask on an Adriatic beach in the afternoon. Highly regarded for its sustainability practices, Slovenia is also renowned for its gastronomy and the production of orange wine (skin-fermented white wine) and while traversing the highways and byways, expect a bevy of medieval castles, clifftop villages and forested slopes for miles.

OUR SUGGESTED JOURNEY

A&K's 12-day 'Best of the Balkans: Slovenia to Croatia' is priced from \$14,315 per person.



COSTA RICA

With one of the most enlightened conservation policies in the world in one of the most biodiverse areas on the planet, Costa Rica is a naturalist's paradise. Its rainforests, beaches, volcanoes and mangrove swamps support a fascinating variety of wildlife from nesting green turtles at Tortuguero National Park and the squirrel monkeys of Corcovado National Park, to the canopy-dwelling two-toed sloths of Manuel Antonio and green iguanas on the Nicoya Peninsula. It is also heaven for all you eco-adventurers out there with copious adrenaline-pumping activities on offer — canopy tours, volcano hikes, zip-lining, white water rafting and more.

OUR SUGGESTED JOURNEY

A&K's 10-day 'Costa Rica Encounter' from \$15,395 per person.



NORTH POLE

Shrouded in ice and snow, teeming with seabirds and mammals and one of the world's most remote regions, the North Pole is considered by many to be the final frontier. But an expeditionary cruise with A&K makes this icy realm adventurously accessible. The epic journey navigates the Arctic Sea from Norway's northernmost archipelago deep into the pack ice to achieve the holy grail of polar exploration — 90 degrees north, an experience realised by very few. And where nature is at its most unforgiving, the expedition with A&K is anything but: plush suites, gourmet cuisine, inspiring shore excursions and an award-winning expedition team are all part of the exceptional experience aboard Le Commandant Charcot.

OUR SUGGESTED JOURNEY

A&K's 18-day 'North Pole Expedition Cruise: The Ultimate Frontier' Departs July 2024 with prices from \$77,680 per person.



For more information about these destinations and suggested journeys, please call A&K on 1300 591 877 or your local travel agent.

notes from the field

JAPAN

Travelling from Honshu to Kyushu, first-time visitor to Japan, A&K's **Siobhan Pemberton** had some surprising first-time experiences which she shares with readers here.



Siobhan Pemberton

Travel Specialist
A&K Australia

UNDERGROUND ONSEN

Checking in to Hotel the Mitsui Kyoto was like stepping into a modern version of a traditional Japanese teahouse with airy and sophisticated rooms that skilfully incorporate natural materials with artisanal touches. A stunning courtyard garden brings the harmony of nature to the site while bathing underground in the onsen was a beautiful meditative end to my day.



JAM 17

This super cool bar and restaurant sits on the 17th floor of Tokyo's Kabukicho Tower joining Pan Pacific's Bellstar Hotel and Hotel Groove Shinjuku. Head out to the outdoor terrace for 360-degree views of downtown Shinjuku and sample their Ne10 craft gin infused with Naito Togarashi pepper, which was historically grown in the Shinjuku area.



VILLAGE OF SECRET KILNS

Wandering through the cobblestone streets of Okawachiyama, a charming town in the mountains of northwest Kyushu, I noticed pieces of porcelain embedded in the town walls which I learnt signified its importance as a centre for fine porcelain. During the Edo period (1603-1867), the best artisans were employed here by the ruling family who kept them isolated from the outside world to preserve their exclusive style.

NINENZAKA & SANNENZAKA

I felt like an extra in ‘Memoirs of a Geisha’ strolling through Ninenzaka and Sannenzaka in Kyoto, two traditional streets close to Kiyomizu temple, where traditional wooden shopfronts and tea houses line the atmospheric cobbled streets. Go early before the crowds and seek out some typical Kyoto crafts, homewares and local sweets.



OWN BRAND SAKE

Kyoto is famous for its sake brewing. During its heyday, there were over 300 sake breweries in the city, but that number has dropped to just three — including Sasaki Brewery — which was naturally the choice for our visit. Made from four ingredients: rice, water, yeast and a mould called koji, the sake production process was explained in detail before we were invited to hand label our own bottle as a special memento. Kanpai!



RYOKAN DINING

Dressing up to dine in a traditional yukata was part of the experience at Chagokoro no Yado Warakuen, our charming ryokan in Ureshino Onsen where we feasted on fresh seafood from the Genkai Sea, ‘hot spring tofu’, an Ureshino specialty, and the highlight - local beef from the Saga prefecture, one of Japan’s premium wagyu brands characterised by its marbling.



OUR SUGGESTED *Journey*

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12 days

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