

SUNDOWNER

FOR THE INSPIRED TRAVELLER • WINTER 2023

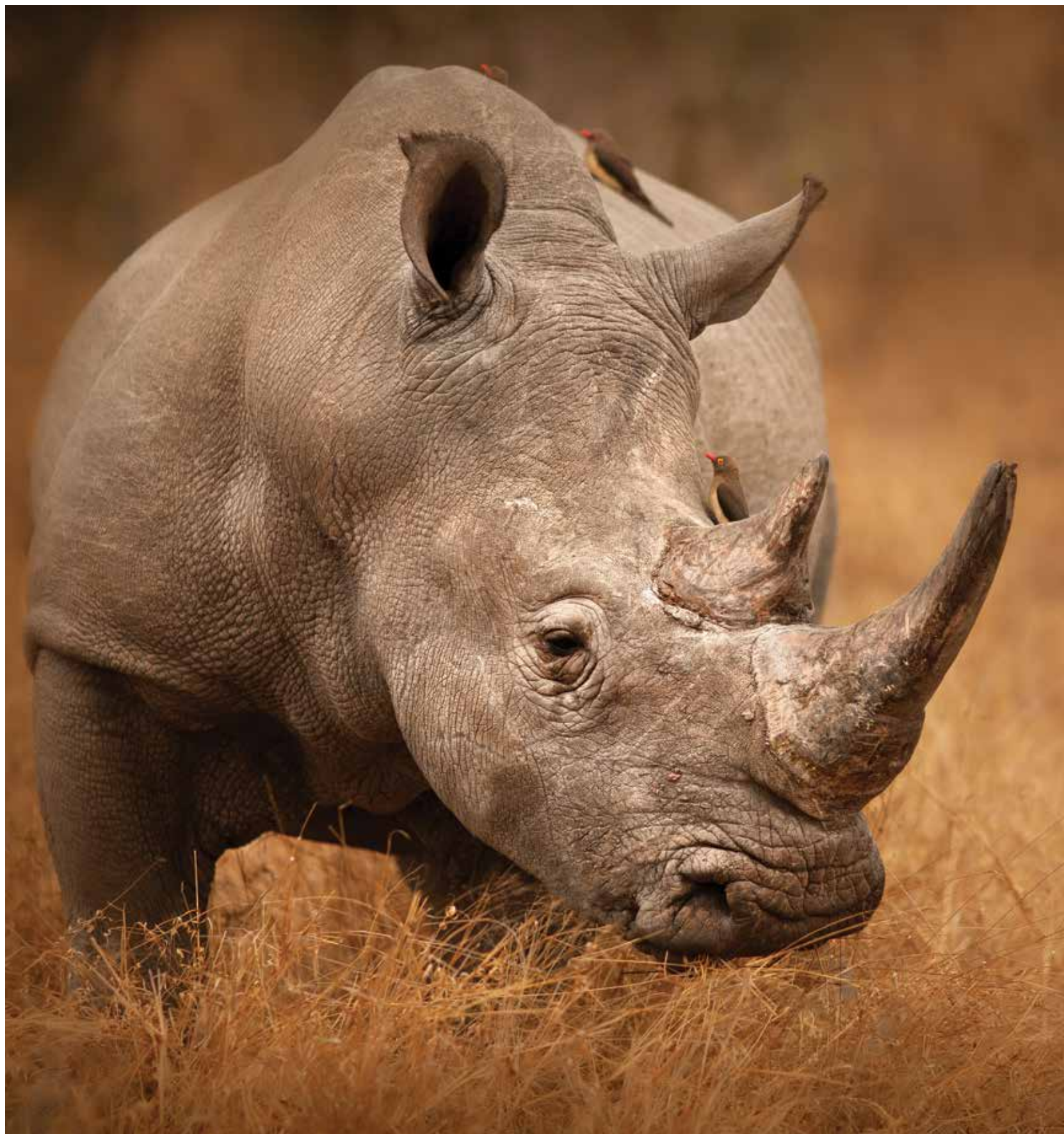
INSIDE

JAPAN

KENYA

SAUDI ARABIA

INDIA



Abercrombie & Kent

FOUNDER'S NOTE



WELCOME TO OUR **WINTER 2023** ISSUE

For many of you in southern climes, winter means short crisp days, crackling log fires, dressing for comfort, long lunches indoors, even snowbound activities. Domestic travel options in winter, though, are plentiful. There are Great Barrier Reef adventures, island hopping exploits, close-to-home ski trips, gourmet wine and food visits, outback wilderness escapes and bush walks galore. Further afield, Asia and the South Pacific islands beckon.

Many of you will also be planning distant jaunts to the northern hemisphere where summer awaits. I have myself enjoyed a springtime journey through the U.K. which coincided with the coronation. We were welcomed into castles and princely palaces, with specially curated private experiences laid on like clay-pigeon shooting, Scottish dancing, pipe band parades, access to private art collections and country gardens, illuminating insights to local characters, even a Harry Potter-inspired moment. Rule Britannia!

Inside this issue, I trust you will find some inspired travel ideas whether closer to home or far away. There is an Insider's Guide to Iceland (page 16) with its many Nordic attractions, a fascinating feature on how one wildlife conservancy in Kenya (page 28) is impressively saving the northern white rhino. There's a seasonal guide to Japan (page 22) and wildlife encounters in India (page 40) plus a forward-facing look at the new Saudi Arabia (page 34).

News from the A&K world reveals some epic new journeys with partner brand Crystal Cruises, an announcement of our new partnership in the Galápagos Islands (page 3) and one of our own discovers the breathtaking landscapes and rare wildlife of Namibia (page 12) where A&K has recently opened two exciting safari camps. There's a list of our Top 10 favourite cruises (page 52) and a review of our Wings over the World portfolio (page 46).

So, settle down in front of that log fire, with a warming beverage, and plan your next getaway with A&K.

Best wishes.

Geoffrey Kent

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



follow me on Instagram and hear
about my latest A&K adventures
[@geoffrey_kent](#)

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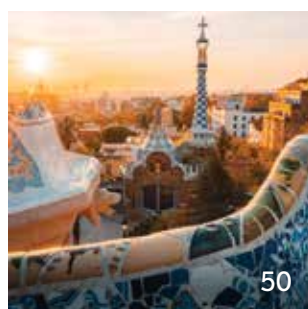
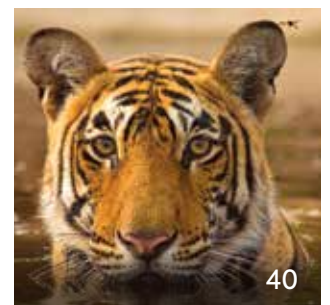
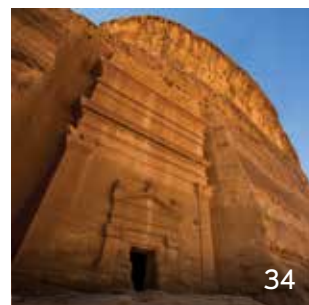
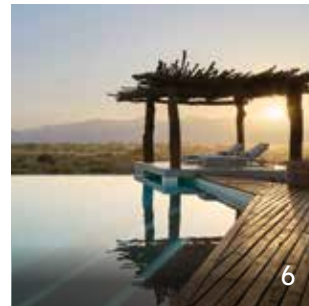
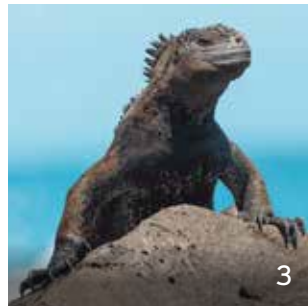
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CHECK US OUT

Follow A&K online for recent happenings, news and travel inspiration.



On the Cover: White rhinoceros, Ol Pejeta Conservancy, Kenya (page 28).

Our appreciation for imagery to: Sanctuary Retreats, A&K Philanthropy, Shutterstock, Getty Images, and all our partner airlines, hotels, vessels and properties.

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Abercrombie & Kent

LUXURY SMALL GROUP JOURNEYS

2024 PORTFOLIO NOW AVAILABLE

From the rare wildlife experiences of Botswana, to the ancient wonders of Egypt or India, our Luxury Small Group Journeys take you across the globe in consummate comfort and style. Travelling with intimate group sizes averaging 14 guests on expertly designed itineraries, you'll be guided by A&K's award-winning Resident Tour Directors and guides, stay in the finest accommodations and enjoy unrivalled insider access to the most iconic sites, often before the crowds arrive. With over 30 itineraries around the world, our Luxury Small Group Journeys are waiting for you to discover the world's most exquisite destinations.

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



A&K NEWS



A&K EXPANDS IN THE GALÁPAGOS

A&K is excited to announce the expansion of its portfolio in the Galápagos Islands with preferred partner, Ecoventura. A leader in sustainable travel, Ecoventura recently added 'Evolve', its third expedition yacht, to the fleet — collectively the newest and greenest in the islands. Carrying just 20 guests each, 'Evolve' and sister yachts 'Origin' and 'Theory', are the only vessels in the Galápagos to belong to the esteemed Relais & Châteaux collection.

Each yacht reduces fossil fuel consumption by more than 30%, with a stabilising system and cutting-edge bow design for smoother and faster sailing. State-of-the-art recycling machines located on the island of San Cristobal return 100 percent of all recyclable materials to continental Ecuador, allowing Ecoventura to meet its goal of ensuring no waste produced is sent to landfills in the Galápagos.

Together, A&K and Ecoventura make discovering the Galápagos Islands and its rare wildlife an unparalleled adventure. Individual cabin bookings as well as private entire vessel charters are available. Each yacht features 10 staterooms with full-length panoramic windows; à la carte dining; onboard concierge, fitness centre, sundeck and Jacuzzi and two onboard naturalists — one of the highest naturalist-to-passenger ratios in the region.

CRYSTAL SETS SAIL THIS EUROPEAN SUMMER

Recently relaunched as part of the A&K Travel Group, Crystal is beginning its inaugural cruising season this European summer aboard newly renovated ships Crystal Serenity and Crystal Symphony with 2023–24 voyages now available for booking. These spacious ships feature larger suites updated with artisanal finishes, cutting-edge onboard wellness and world-class complimentary entertainment and dining options, including world famous chef Nobu Matsuhisa and Umi Uma serving unique Japanese-Peruvian fusion fare. Personalised service and nearly one staff member per guest are signature benefits delivering an exceptional cruise experience, every time.

Crystal's new itineraries offer deep immersion in incredible locations throughout the Mediterranean, Northern Europe, Canada and New England, Alaska, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Asia and Australasia. Backed by A&K's unbeatable local know-how, Crystal takes you closer to the heart of each destination with outstanding insider access.



Small Group Journeys



Luxury Expedition Cruises



Tailor-Made Journeys

FIND YOURSELF SOMEWHERE AMAZING

At A&K, the notion of luxury travel is constantly being reimagined and so too is our portfolio. Through our new 2024 brochure collection we invite you to see the world in a new light and find yourself somewhere amazing. Download your copy at www.abercrombiekent.com.au, or call 1300 591 877 to find out more.

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

Whether plying the Southern Ocean, traversing the Arctic 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.



2 DEPARTURES



Wonders of Japan

14 days | Mar 27 & Sep 20, 2024

From \$33,070 pp twin

Explore Japan's coastal cities, mesmerising gardens and spectacular UNESCO World Heritage Sites. On our March departure, you'll also experience the magic of cherry blossom season.

NEW



South Pacific Cruise: Papua New Guinea & Solomon Islands

14 days | May 12, 2024

From \$27,520 pp twin

Venture to a spectacular wilderness resplendent with dramatic reefs and waterfalls, astonishing wildlife and Indigenous cultures.



Cruising the Seychelles & Coastal Tanzania

14 days | Mar 1, 2024

From \$24,605 pp twin

See Africa from a unique vantage point on an expedition from Zanzibar through the remote tropical paradise of the spellbinding Seychelles.

NEW



Cruising Greece, Turkey & Saudi Arabia

15 days | Oct 16, 2024

From \$36,915 pp twin

Cruise from the Aegean Sea to the Suez Canal and explore the ancient wonders of Greece, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt.

2 DEPARTURES



Cruising the Greek Isles

10 days | Jun 25 & Oct 1, 2024

From \$19,990 pp twin

Set sail on A&K's bestselling voyage to idyllic Greece, exploring ancient ruins, volcanic vineyards and hidden gems, as well as iconic Athens, Mykonos and Santorini.



Adriatic Voyage: Croatia, Montenegro & Greece

8 days | Sep 24, 2024

From \$17,685 pp twin

Discover the gems of the dazzling Adriatic on a luxury culture-rich cruise including Venice, Dubrovnik, Kotor and western Greece.



Italy Cruise: Hidden Treasures from Florence to Venice

12 days | Sep 13, 2024

From \$23,070 pp twin

Embark on an exciting and comprehensive itinerary that explores nearly the entire navigable coastline of Italy and visits its most unique ports.



Cruising Scandinavia & the Baltic Sea

10 days | Jul 25, 2024

From \$20,765 pp twin

Set sail on an all-encompassing luxury cruise to the historic cities and remote islands of six countries, enjoying visits with cultural experts along the way.



European Coastal Cruise: Portugal, Spain & France

10 days | Sep 21, 2024

From \$19,220 pp twin

A unique Western European cruise featuring WWII sites in Normandy, Bilbao's art scene, Porto's wine country and the cultural heritage of Spain.

Combine these three cruises into one Grand Mediterranean Voyage

Experience the Mediterranean in all its splendour and save up to 10% on A&K's Grand Mediterranean Voyage, a uniquely comprehensive 28-day expedition that combines up to three cruises encompassing five countries and countless kilometres of beautiful coastline.



Cruising the British Isles: Scotland, Ireland & England

14 days | Sep 10, 2024

From \$29,995 pp twin

Voyage beyond mainland Scotland, Ireland and England exploring ravishing coastlines, natural landscapes and historic treasures.



Arctic Cruise Adventure: In Search of the Polar Bear

15 days | Jul 29, 2024

From \$32,445 pp twin

Discover geological wonders and see the majestic polar bear in its natural environment on a voyage to remote Arctic islands.



North Pole Expedition Cruise: The Ultimate Frontier

18 days | Jul 10, 2024

From \$77,680 pp twin

Embark on the ultimate expedition to the North Pole aboard the innovative new luxury icebreaker, 'Le Commandant Charcot,' as A&K's award-winning team leads the way.



Antarctic Cruise Adventure

13 days | Dec 10, 2024

From \$23,830 pp twin

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

From \$38,445 pp twin

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

From \$39,215 pp twin

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

IN THE KNOW

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

OKAHIRONGO ELEPHANT LODGE, NAMIBIA

Perched on the banks of the ephemeral Hoarusib River in the rugged wilderness of Kaokoland sits the newly renovated Okahirongo Elephant Lodge, so remote it's best accessed by air. Its dramatic architecture is styled after the traditional Himba homes of the region, and with just seven suites and one private villa, your stay is guaranteed to be intimate and highly personalised. Few people have set foot in this extraordinary place and when you do, you'll likely encounter captivating (and rare) wildlife, including desert-adapted elephant, giraffe, ostrich and baboon. Explore the surrounding conservancy on morning treks and game drives and end each day with a memorable sunset.



BANYAN TREE ALULA, SAUDI ARABIA

Within the historic World Heritage site of AlUla lies this distinctive desert retreat. Surrounded by towering rock formations in the Ashar Valley, Banyan Tree AlUla is an oasis in this mysterious and uncharted destination. Expect breathtaking views from each of the light and spacious 47 tented villas, all decorated with handcrafted Arabian-inspired details and a canvas canopy that not only blends in with the natural landscape but echoes the very heritage of this ancient land. Some villas have private pools while all have fire pits for maximising cool desert evenings. There are two dining venues, the uniquely situated Rock Pool for a refreshing plunge and the signature Banyan Tree Spa which offers carefully curated wellness experiences that combine Asian traditions with local practices.



SIX SENSES ROME, ITALY

This brand-new addition to the Eternal City is Six Senses' first foray into Europe. Situated in an historic palazzo, the extensive restoration happily respects Roman traditions, crafts and materials while offering a contemporary urban escape in the city's beating heart. The 96 rooms and suites are decorated in warm chestnut tones, framed by travertine and cocciopesto, a traditional building material that comes from recycled bricks and tiles, with a choice of courtyard, street or church view and state-of-the-art in-room technology. The Six Senses wellness traditions continue here with spa treatments inspired by those of ancient Rome and menus in the two restaurants respecting Italian cuisine and the finest local ingredients.



COSME, A LUXURY COLLECTION RESORT, PAROS, GREECE

Modern, minimalist and elegant, Cosme, a Luxury Collection Resort is set in the picture-postcard Parian village of Naousa. Inspired by the whitewashed sugar-cube architecture of the Cyclades, the resort resembles a Greek village with a familial feel. Interiors are stylish, some rooms come with private pools, others with expansive sea views, and all with immensely comfortable beds and well-designed furniture. On arrival via the cool and inviting entrance, you'll immediately be struck by the framed Aegean views and the fresh sea breeze. Delve deeper and discover the private beach club, the indulgent spa and Parostia Restaurant with celebrated Greek chef Yiannis Kioroglou at the helm.



SOUTHERN OCEAN LODGE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Out of the ashes of the devastating Kangaroo Island fires of 2020, Southern Ocean Lodge rises again bigger and better. Opening in December 2023, the new lodge echoes the most beautiful design elements of its predecessor but with some surprising extras. There will be 25 guest suites and the ultra-premium Ocean Pavilion designed as a single residence or two separate suites plus a new infinity pool off the Great Terrace. Sensitively designed to blend seamlessly with the wildly beautiful landscape, Southern Ocean Lodge sits unobtrusively in its remote and secluded clifftop setting and harnesses breathtaking views over the Southern Ocean while providing a sophisticated and luxurious base for discovering the unique wildlife, gourmet attractions and scenic wonders that Kangaroo Island has to offer.

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



A&K PHILANTHROPY

FEEDING CHILDREN IN UGANDA

In Uganda, more than 8 million children attend primary school and only 33% of them receive at least one meal in school. Enabling children and young adults to fulfil their potential by providing a supportive learning environment, Abercrombie & Kent Philanthropy is in the process of supporting more than 3,500 children across 11 schools surrounding the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Uganda.

In most of these rural schools, parents cannot afford lunch for their children. The children must go home for lunch and some do not return for afternoon classes. Providing nutritious meals for

students at school is very important for them in many significant ways, including physiological growth, increased school enrolment, classroom concentration, in-classroom performance, learning and overall cognition.

In each of the schools, the lunch programme starts with construction of kitchens and storage where the food is kept and cooked. The program was piloted in Ntungamo; 10 kitchens still needed to be built. As of 30 May 2023, five of the construction projects were close to completion and the other five just beginning. Unfortunately, the building process

has encountered many unforeseen delays, due to challenges transporting materials.

Although the lunch programme has so far only been implemented in Ntungamo, some of the other schools immediately started registering more student numbers after announcing plans to introduce the programme.

Overall, the 11 schools saw an average 21% enrolment increase and teachers at Ntungamo Primary School have reported that since the lunch programme was implemented, students no longer fall asleep in class. This has resulted in improved classroom performance, with a 96% increase in examination performance.



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





SRI LANKA

SACRED ROCK TEMPLE

Venture into the heart of Sri Lanka's Cultural Triangle and discover World Heritage listed Polonnaruwa, an intriguing blend of Buddhist and Hindu archaeological monuments. One of the most impressive of these is the famous Gal Viharaya, or "Rock Temple", which dates to the 12th century and comprises four colossal statues of Buddha cut from one large piece of stone, each in a different position. The reclining statue depicting the Parinirvana position is one of the most intricately sculpted and visitors today can still clearly make out the pillow details and lotus symbols on the soles of Buddha's feet. This extraordinary site that nestles into a backdrop of lush vegetation is still a major place of worship for many Buddhists in the country.

WISH YOU WERE HERE



OUR SUGGESTED JOURNEY

A&K's 16-day
'Serendipitous Sri Lanka' is priced
from \$8,360 per person twin share.

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

RECENT TRAVELS

Namibia

On a return trip to Namibia, A&K's **Patrick Clementson** is newly bowled over by the vastness of the landscape and the rare wildlife that calls it home.





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When it comes to safari, A&K's own Patrick Clementson knows it better than most. He's seen the Great Migration multiple times in Kenya, tracked gorillas in Rwanda (twice), poled his way through the lagoons of the Okavango Delta, seen a pangolin in the wild — a rare sight, canoed through pods of hippo on the Zambezi, and so much more. And he's also a huge fan of Namibia which he's visited twice, most recently in October 2022. For Pat, Namibia represents what is rare and remote. Its photogenic landscapes are some of the most rugged on earth, its tribal

culture rich and fascinating and its animals some of the most intriguing thanks to their distinct ability to adapt to harsh and inhospitable conditions.

These images of Pat's illustrate some of the wonderfully unique aspects of Namibia which he cherishes.

NAMIBRAND NATURE RESERVE & SOSSUSVLEI

At over 200,000 hectares, the NamibRand Nature Reserve is one of the largest in southern Africa. Characterised by striking scenery,

its landscape has changed little over millennia with a mixed terrain of dunes and sandy plains, rocky outcrops and mountains, protecting a variety of wildlife including oryx, springbok, leopard, hyena, jackal, Cape fox and over 150 bird species.

To the south, lie the towering red dunes of Sossusvlei, some of the highest in the world, and the lifeless camelthorn trees of Deadvlei. The area lends itself to experiential adventure and there's plenty to do from quad biking expeditions and guided walks to e-bike trips, scenic flights and more.

- 1: Ballooning over the dunes of Sossusvlei
- 2: Deadvlei
- 3: Okahirongo Elephant Lodge, Purros Conservancy
- 4: Desert-dwelling giraffe and elephant, Purros Conservancy



- 5: Anderssons at Ongava, Ongava Game Reserve
- 6: White rhino, Ongava Game Reserve
- 7: Oryx, Great NamibRand Nature Reserve
- 8: Spectacular wildlife viewing, Etosha National Park
- 9: Quad Biking, NamibRand Nature Reserve
- 10: Himba portrait, Kunene River

Taking to the skies in a hot air balloon is a breathtaking way to see the scenery from a completely different perspective and gain an appreciation of the sheer vastness of the terrain. And photographers will spend hours capturing the perfect shot at Deadvlei where the sculptural silhouettes of long dead acacias rise from the sparkling white salt pans in contrast with the rusty red dunes beyond.

KAOKOLAND & THE PURROS DESERT CONSERVANCY

Harsh, wild, desolate, and dramatically beautiful, Kaokoland in the northwest of Namibia is widely considered one of Africa's last

true wilderness areas. And centred around the ephemeral Hoarusib River in Kaokoland, Purros Desert Conservancy is a remarkable example of how wildlife and tourism can be sustainably maintained for the benefit of the local community.

East of the Skeleton Coast and south of the Kunene River, nature here is shaped by the desert climate. Rainfall is extremely low, with coastal fog generating occasional moisture to recharge plants and animals. The river acts as an oasis attracting wildlife to its permanent springs and wooded valleys while beyond mountains and dunes beckon. Significantly, it is the only

place in the world where elephant, black rhino, lion, giraffe, zebra and springbok coexist in a desert environment.

In addition to the animals, there's an important anthropological element to Kaokoland — the Himba. These semi-nomadic pastoralists, who settled in the region around 500 years ago, continue to maintain their unique way of life thanks to the area's remoteness, herding livestock, producing arts and crafts and resin-harvesting for essential oils. The women and children of the tribe are easily identified by their red ochre-coloured skin, handmade jewellery and intricately braided hair and a visit



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to the local village offers a fascinating insight to their customs and practices.

Sanctuary Retreats' Okahirongo Elephant Lodge and Okahirongo River Lodge are the perfect places to base yourself for an adventure in this wild and remote part of Namibia.

ONGAVA GAME RESERVE

In Northern Namibia, Ongava is an extraordinary conservation story that began in the 1990s when four largely unproductive cattle ranches were combined and returned to nature. More than 30 years on, the 30,000-hectare reserve which lies to the southwest of Etosha

National Park, is a haven for large concentrations of wildlife including lion, leopard, giraffe, rhino, Hartmann's Mountain zebra, oryx, kudu, steenbok and much more.

A handful of boutique camps offer a strong connection to this unique place, respecting the conservation legacy created before and the important work of future generations. Anderssons at Ongava is one such example, an intimate safari camp that treads lightly on the land, accommodating just 18 guests with a firm focus on conservation science, field-based research in addition to luxury home comforts and a phenomenal wilderness experience.



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OUR SUGGESTED *Journey*

'Namibia Desert Discovery' Tailor-Made Journey

13 days

Priced from \$30,235 per person twin share

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

ICELAND



NORWEGIAN
SEA



Gígjökull
glacier



Gulfoss
Falls



LANDMANNALAUGAR

REYKJAVIK

HUSAFELL

Thingvellir
National Park

GOLDEN
CIRCLE



SOUTH SHORE

HELLA

Blue
Lagoon



ATLANTIC
OCEAN

INSIDER'S GUIDE TO ICELAND



1



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For take-your-breath-away scenery, thunderous natural wonders, a vibrant culinary scene and quirks aplenty, Iceland ticks all the boxes. This cool Nordic nation sits sedately in the North Atlantic, some 280 kilometres off the Greenland coast, and right where the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates start to detach. This geological phenomenon explains the country's abundance of geothermal activity from its gently steaming fissures and explosive volcanoes to its bubbling geysirs and hot baths. A year-round destination, you can explore Iceland's mountain meadows, black sand beaches, waterfalls and sparkling fjords with the backdrop of winter's dancing Northern Lights or the endless daylight of summer's Midnight Sun. Read on for some ideas of things you'll want to do when you visit.

1: Aurora Borealis above Hallgrímskirkja Church, Reykjavik
2: Blue Lagoon

REYKJAVIK

Nearly every Icelandic adventure will begin in the capital, Reykjavik. This charming seaside city of around 300,000 people is a hive of cultural activity with a vibrant music scene, a full calendar of festivals, art galleries and museums aplenty and an innovative cuisine. Easily explored on foot, wander past pretty painted houses, through the bustling streets, along the waterfront, through parks and gardens and admire the iconic architecture, all of which is reason enough to spend at least a couple of days here.

DO

Reykjavik Food Walk

Discover why Icelanders are rightly proud of their food on a walking food tour of the city. With a knowledgeable guide, stop in at five or six of the city's stand out dining locations from small family-run eateries and top-notch restaurants to secret local hangouts. Taste traditional favourite dishes from

grass-fed lamb, fish stew and hot dogs to Icelandic ice cream and skyr with fresh berries.

VIP Blue Lagoon

After a day of exploration, enjoy a secluded health-giving soak in the bubbling, mineral-rich waters of the Blue Lagoon. Exclusive access to the Retreat means you'll enjoy the experience in privacy with a heavenly treatment in the Spa of the Volcanic Earth to complete the indulgence.

DINE

Sumac

Inspired by the nostalgic atmosphere of Beirut, Sumac is a lively fusion restaurant with concrete walls, leather banquettes and a charcoal grill where Icelandic ingredients are given a Middle Eastern twist. Food is rustic and flavoursome with the shared mezze platters highly recommended alongside the grilled lamb ribs with grapes, lentil and almonds and the plaice with chermoula, tomato and raisins.



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Icelandic Ice Cream

Ice cream in Reykjavik is famous, and delicious. And Omnom Chocolate and Ice Cream Shop at Hólmaslóð 4 is legendary. Choosing from the many colourful and adventurous creations will be tough so you'll likely need to make more than one trip.

Kopar

Treat yourself to some creative Icelandic cuisine in this rustic and welcoming harbourside restaurant. Menus here change with the season and are inspired by the flavours of Iceland. Wooden beams, exposed brick, cascading foliage and warm lighting are a fitting backdrop to the inventively plated dishes which ingeniously combine a range of ingredients and cooking methods. Stone crab soup or smoked char might start you off, while grilled goose breast or crown of lamb with black garlic may follow.

STAY

The Reykjavik EDITION

Located in the historic heart of downtown Reykjavik by the Old Harbour, this relative newcomer to the city hotel scene is a refreshing addition. Exuding laid back luxury and sophistication, the cosy interiors use basalt, oak and lava to reflect the Nordic landscape with bespoke furniture, faux fur rugs and locally crafted artworks setting the scene. Rooms frame beautiful views, and some boast outdoor terraces. Dining is a treat here too with Tide from Michelin-star chef Gunnar Karl Gíslason offering a modern Icelandic seafood-focused menu. A rooftop terrace is the perfect spot to view the northern lights and there's even a secret speakeasy-style bar and underground club.

Parliament Hotel

One of the newest hotels to open in Reykjavik, Iceland Parliament

Hotel, Curio Collection by Hilton has an excellent location in the main city square. A light, airy and contemporary entrance welcomes guests to this cleverly combined amalgamation of new and old which showcases Icelandic contemporary art, design and history. The 163 guest rooms have an Art Deco feel and in-house restaurant Hjó Jóni promises diners a true culinary adventure while a beautiful spa offers traditional hot tubs, sauna, steam baths and an array of treatments.

GOLDEN CIRCLE

Iceland's foremost attraction, the Golden Circle, is a 300-kilometre-long route brimming with stunning landscapes, powerful geysers and extraordinary waterfalls and as well as offering outstanding photo opportunities, gives interesting insight to Iceland's geological history. The area comprises three of the most stunning locations in southwest



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Iceland — Thingvellir National Park, the Geysir Geothermal Area and Gullfoss Waterfall.

DO

Buggy Rides

Zoom through Iceland's unique, vast and often moon-like landscapes by buggy. Feel fully secure in an ATV equipped with robust roll cage and 4-point seat belt. After a full briefing, head off-road past lakes and mountains admiring the rugged and breathtaking scenery along the way.

Icelandic horses

Said to be more curious, intelligent and independent than other breeds, the Icelandic horse first arrived aboard Norse settlers' ships between 860 and 935 AD. No other breed of horse has ever been allowed into the country so it remains one of the purest breeds in the world and the only one to possess five gaits. Short, sturdy and thick-coated, these

friendly animals are well suited to the often harsh Icelandic conditions. So, saddle up for an unforgettable guided ride through hills and forests.

Snowmobile adventure

For an adrenalin rush like no other, jump aboard a snowmobile for a thrilling charge across Langjökull glacier, Iceland's second largest. You'll be suitably dressed for the conditions allowing full unbridled exhilaration on your adventure across the icy landscape.

Intercontinental Snorkelling

Snorkelling (and diving) the crystal-clear waters of the Silfra fissure is one of the world's great underwater adventures. The crevice opened in 1789 due to tectonic movement within Thingvellir National Park and the water can take up to a century to reach the fissure. This long filtration process results in the water's extreme clarity and drinkability. Snorkel

through the clearest water on Earth between the tectonic plates which are so close you can almost touch them.

DINE

Greenhouse tomatoes

Fridheimar is one of Iceland's most productive tomato farms with a restaurant inside a greenhouse. Some 10,000 plants produce four varieties of tomato which are successfully grown here thanks to the abundant geothermal power. Lunch menus include Caprese salads, mussels in red sauce and a famous tomato soup, as well as Bloody Mary varieties galore. There are also regular Icelandic horse shows on the farm.

STAY

Hotel Ranga

Warm and inviting, this log cabin style hotel is reminiscent of a traditional hunting lodge with a beautifully remote location by the salmon-filled East Rangá River.

- 3: Strokkur Geysir, Geysir geothermal area
- 4: Langoustines, Reykjavik food walk
- 5: The Reykjavik EDITION
- 6: An icy treat, Omnom, Reykjavik
- 7: Tomatoes on the menu at Fridheimar
- 8: Icelandic horses
- 9: Gullfoss Waterfall





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Local artworks and Icelandic quilts adorn the shared spaces while rooms are cosy and comfortable with incredible views of Iceland's legendary Hekla volcano and twin glaciers Eyjafjallajökull and Mýrdalsjökull. Modern Nordic cuisine showcasing local produce is served up in the hotel restaurant while outdoor geothermal hot tubs with volcano views are the ultimate drawcard.

Torfhus Retreat

Cool and understated, this rustic eco-lodge 15 minutes from the Great Geysir has been built in the tradition of the old Icelandic Torfhouses crafted from local stone, reclaimed wood and turf. Powered entirely by geothermal and hydroelectric energy, the retreat is rightly proud of its sustainable credentials which also include locally sourced, or reclaimed, materials and furnishings and living turf rooves. Views over volcanic plains to snow-capped mountains and the Langjökull glacier beyond are breathtaking with a basalt hot tub for each guesthouse. Meals are creative, yet traditionally Icelandic, using the finest, and freshest, local produce.

SOUTH SHORE

Stretching from the greater Reykjavik area in the west to the magnificent Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon in the east, this part of Iceland is blessed with myriad natural attractions including mesmerising waterfalls, volcanoes, glaciers and black sand beaches, some with giant basalt sea stacks.

DO Ice Cave

Located on the south coast of Iceland, next to an active volcano and beneath the Kötlujökull glacier, Katla ice cave is a huge and ancient natural-carved wonder. The glacier is known for its multicoloured layers of ice and black ice which makes the ice caves here quite unique. Katla cave is underground and accessed on foot with a guide. During your hike, take note of the black ash from centuries of volcanic eruptions, the older layers of blue ice and the trapped air bubbles.

Glacier hike

For incomparable views, strap on crampons and hike onto Solheimajokull glacier, an outlet

glacier of the vast Mýrdalsjökull icecap. Unlike other glaciers, this one is not surrounded by tall mountains which means the views of the south coast are unimpeded. More intrepid hikers may choose to climb (with ice axe) one of the many ice walls in the vicinity.

Dream trail

National Geographic has named the Laugavegur trail in Iceland's southern highlands among the best hikes in the world. Taking four days, the trail goes from Landmannalaugar to Thorsmork passing many beautiful waterfalls, multi-coloured rhyolite mountains, ancient lava fields and glaciers. Its raw landscapes are said to have been the inspiration for Tolkien's Middle-earth, the fantasy land of *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*.

- 10: Reynisdrangar cliffs, Vikm South Coast
11: Torfhus Retreat, Selfoss
12: Colourful Landmannalaugar
13: Katla Ice Cave

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Japan

FOR ALL SEASONS

While many travellers may design their holiday in Japan to coincide with the iconic cherry blossom season, **Jane Knight** discovers there's so much more. And in every season.





- Previous pages: Spring view of Chureito Pagoda and Mt. Fuji with cherry blossoms
 1: Vine bridges of Iya Valley, Shikoku
 2: Fields of flowers, Furano, Hokkaido
 3: Pristine white beaches at Okinawa
 4: The steaming waters of a traditional onsen
 5: Ropeway at Owakudani Volcanic Valley, Hakone

JAPAN

Temples framed by cherry blossom and Mount Fuji rising from a carpet of pink — with images like these, it's no wonder most people think Japan is best visited in Spring. Yet, I was fortunate enough to see the country ablaze in its autumnal hues and realised that it not only gives New England a run for its money in leaf-peeping season but that it's so much more than a single season country.

Here are my top picks for what to see when.

SUMMER

When it's sizzling in the cities, it's time to hit the hills for some cooler air. From the Japanese Alps to the slopes of Mount Fuji (yes, you can climb it) there's plenty of higher ground to choose from.



We set our sights on the isolated Iya Valley on Shikoku, the smallest of Japan's main islands, where traditional vine-rope bridges are slung across deep rocky gorges. Although we only drove three hours from the ferry port, spiralling up a road flanked with vertiginous pine-covered slopes, it felt like we'd travelled to a Japan that time forgot.

From our kominka (converted farmhouse) we gazed out as mist licked the mountain tops, swirling into the valley below. Made from wood with sliding doors and futons to place on tatami mats at night, our hillside eyrie also had modern comforts — the same high-tech loos as luxury hotels, underfloor heating or air conditioning and a local lady who appeared once evening fell to conjure up a delicious meal. All we had to do was admire the view.

For a different kind of relaxation, we hit the archipelago of Okinawa, made up of 160 islands. Full of white-sand beaches lapped by seas alive with fish and manta rays, there's snorkelling and diving aplenty here but don't limit yourself to the coastline. On Iriomote, there are waterfalls to hike to and mangroves to explore by canoe; and on idyllic Taketomijima, hitch a ride on a water buffalo cart through the beautifully preserved car-free village.

The main island of Okinawa is a must-see for martial arts fans. This is the birthplace of karate, where we particularly enjoyed testing the speed of our punches in the superb interactive museum. It's also one of the world's blue zones, whose people are renowned for their longevity. A largely plant-based diet is heralded as one of the reasons along with a good dose of sunshine, a strong connection



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to friends and family and a clear purpose in life.

Or try: Hokkaido for hiking in remote national parks, hot springs and stunning multi-coloured fields of flowers.

AUTUMN

Here on the hilltops of Hakone is a statue by Joan Miró. Over there is one by Henry Moore. And there's a whole pavilion dedicated to Picasso. This outdoor sculpture park has art you can crawl down or climb up, with a riot of autumnal colours your backdrop. We admired the view as we bathed our feet in a hot foot bath, with water that bubbled up from below the ground.

The Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park in the mountains is renowned for

both its hot springs and its natural beauty. It's also easily accessible from Tokyo — a quick buzz on the bullet train followed by a more sedate zigzag along mountain lines connecting villages and sights.

Among these is Owakudani, a collapsed mountain crater reached by cable car that on a clear day has great views of Mount Fuji. Some call it Hell Valley and it's easy to understand why when you smell the sulphurous air puffing up from steaming vents. The bubbling hot springs are used to cook black eggs (said to add seven years to your life) as well as to supply nearby onsen.

A soak in one of these hot baths is a must, ideally during a stay at a traditional ryokan (inn). Here, after a relaxing immersion, my son and I each donned a kimono before a



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traditional kaiseki ryori dinner and a blissful night's sleep on our futons.

A totally different experience awaited the next day — the spa theme park at Yunessun, with separate pools for bathing in water mixed with sake, green tea, coffee or wine! These are



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- 6: Japanese macaque grooming in volcanic hot springs, Hokkaido
- 7: Hot sake
- 8: Ice sculptures at Sapporo Snow and Ice Festival
- 9: Historic Higashiyama district in spring, Kyoto
- 10: Red-crowned crane in Hokkaido

not the places for a quiet soak. At the coffee pool, said to be “good for fatigue, relaxation and beautiful skin”, we watched, bemused, as people screamed to have buckets of coffee thrown over them. Yet by the time we reached the wine pool, we were joining in, shouting to have a giant bottle of wine sprayed on us.

Or try: Hiking or cycling in the Japanese Alps, taking in the stunning autumnal colours along the way.

WINTER

They swoop and dance across the snow. Intricate mating dances look like a choreographed ballet with wings as the red-crowned cranes pirouette and preen amid a landscape of white. You don’t need to be a die-

hard twitcher to appreciate the show put on by these Japanese icons in the marshes of eastern Hokkaido.

Easy to reach by bullet train from the capital, this northerly island may have temperatures that plummet to the minus 20s, but it takes on a beautiful Narnia-esque air in winter, its hills dusted with snow. It has plenty of attractions up its icy sleeve too. This is where wallowing in a hot onsen really comes into its own, as well as warm sake. In addition to wildlife, there’s superb skiing in Niseko in the shadow of Mount Yotei, a doppelganger for Mount Fuji.

And if you time your visit for the first week of February, you can visit the famous Sapporo Snow Festival. More than two million visitors flock

here to see the sculptures carved from snow — in previous years, dragons and orangutans, tuk-tuks and bridges and the world’s most iconic buildings have all featured. There are giant snow slides and an ice-skating rink too. For a broader cultural overview, visit the Hokkaido Museum and chart the history of the island’s indigenous people, the Ainu.

The food in Sapporo is outstanding too with seafood, dairy and fresh vegetables all locally produced or sourced. Crab is especially famous here with up to six local varieties, presented in many creative and delicious ways. I recommend finishing your crab meal with one of the city’s famous cream puffs, washed down with a glass (or two) of its namesake ale.



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Or try: Observing, up close, Japan's ice monkeys bathing in the hot springs of the Jigokudani National Park, four hours north of Tokyo.

SPRING

Still want to see Japan in springtime? There's one golden rule — avoid Golden Week, from the end of April into the first week of May, when the whole nation is on holiday and on the move. You're most likely to see the sea of sakura (cherry blossom) from the end of March through to mid-April, but it can be difficult to pinpoint its exact timing. Key viewing spots include the Imperial Palace gardens in Tokyo, and the Golden and Silver Pavilions in Kyoto, the former capital. Here, be sure to walk along the two-

kilometre-long Philosopher's Path, which follows a canal lined by hundreds of cherry trees.

For somewhere a little quieter, venture to the mountain town of Takayama, with its atmospheric old streets and laneways lined with cherry trees. Or, visit outside the main season: the flowers bloom as early as late January in Okinawa in the south and explode into pink in May in Hokkaido in the north.

Or try: Forget flowers and venture a couple of hours east of Kyoto to Komaki. A fertility festival is held here on 15 March every year, during which a giant wooden phallus weighing almost 400kg is paraded through the streets. 🍷



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BACK FROM *the brink*

Ol Pejeta conservancy in Kenya is striving to save one species of rhino from extinction — with the help of man's best friend, reports **Janet Brice**.







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KENYA

Previous pages: Park ranger with northern white rhino, Ol Pejeta Conservancy

1: Tracking dogs, Ol Pejeta

2: Female elephant and calf, Ol Pejeta

3: Young cheetah on the lookout, Ol Pejeta

4: Guided bush walk, Sanctuary Tamarare

Do you know the difference between a black and a white rhino? For the opportunity to see first-hand how the eating habits of each species has shaped its distinctive look, travel to the foothills of the Aberdare Hills in the shadow of Mount Kenya. You will not only discover the answer but witness one of the most incredible conservation stories in Africa.

Home to the last two northern white rhino on Earth, Ol Pejeta is a private wildlife conservancy that straddles the equator and has provided a haven for endangered animals since 2004. Here, the two female white rhino and 140 critically endangered black rhino co-exist in safety as they roam Kenya's Laikipia Plateau.

Thanks to round-the-clock security, which I will come to later, the white rhino, with their broad straight mouths and square hairless upper

lip designed for grazing, are free to safely enjoy the abundant Ol Pejeta grasses at will. Whereas the smaller black rhino, with its more pointed upper lip designed for browsing, forages leaves, shoots and branches on the 36,420-hectare not-for-profit estate.

BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY

Since 2008, a rapid response dog unit reinforces anti-poaching efforts across the conservancy. From puppies to protectors, man's best friend is going beyond the call of duty to guard the rhino population with a 100 per cent success rate.

Rhino conservation operations are performed by two units — a general rhino monitoring and management unit (rhino patrolmen) and a specialised anti-poaching unit serving the main security arm of the organisation that are members of the National Police Reserve (NPR).

The two units operate seamlessly — the patrolmen undertake general wildlife surveillance and collect monitoring data during the day while the NPR operates predominantly at night and is responsible for rhino protection.

“You can't conserve without security,” said Ol Pejeta's Daniel Mwaniki of the dog team. He explains the K9 unit is made up of six dogs which include two bloodhounds and four Dutch Malinois. Each dog is trained for a certain role, and they currently have three trackers; two search and one assault.

The trackers follow the scent of poachers for two to three days while the search dogs look for weapons, and the assault dog is used if there is an ambush. An elite dog can adapt to all three roles.

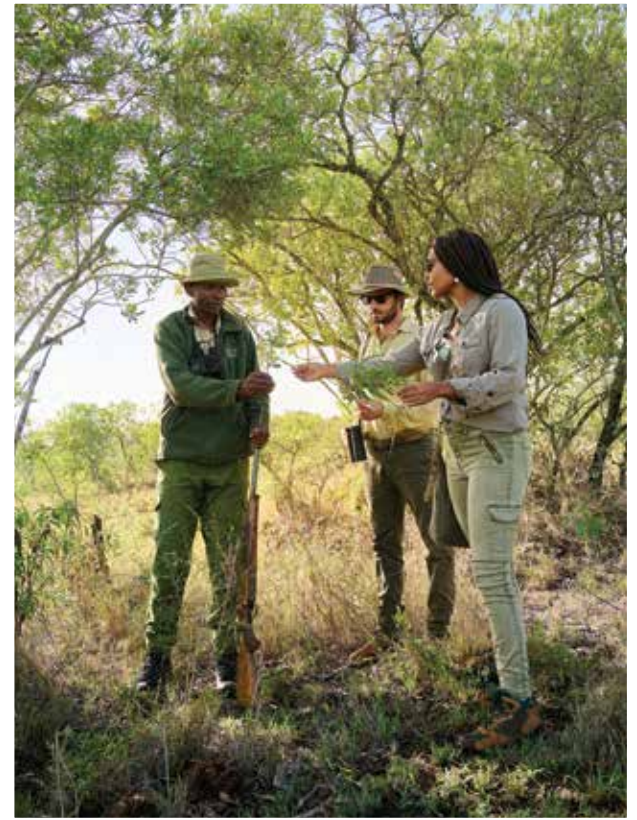
“Our main work is at night — as poachers work at night — so we use



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those dogs as they are better at seeing than us. A dog can also smell and see more than human beings, so it is very good to have a dog,” said Mwaniki.

“Ol Pejeta has the highest number of black rhinos in East and Central Africa and without this security team, there would not be a single rhino left so this team is the pillar of conservation,” he said.

The Ol Pejeta dogs were originally trained and classified by the organisation Animals Saving Animals (ASA). Founded in July 2016, ASA now provides specialist anti-poaching dogs and handler training to conservancies and national parks throughout the world.

HAVEN FOR WILDLIFE

Ol Pejeta not only focuses on saving the second-largest land mammal but prides itself on being at the forefront of conservation innovation.

It manages a successful livestock programme despite the challenge of having one of the highest predator densities outside the Masai Mara.

The conservancy is home to the endangered African wild dog, oryx, cheetah, and bat-eared fox. Ol Pejeta also supports the people living around its borders, to ensure conservation translates to better education, healthcare, and infrastructure for the next generation of wildlife guardians.

VISION BECOMES A REALITY

So how did a working cattle ranch become a role model for rhino conservation?

In 2003, Ol Pejeta was purchased by Fauna and Flora International with a US\$15 million donation from the Arcus Foundation, founded by American philanthropist Jon Stryker. Working with Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, the money helped to

secure the open savannah and convert it to a national land trust ensuring the protection of its existing wildlife. The foundation also gave US\$12 million to fund capital and development costs at the conservancy.

Six years later the white rhinos arrived in Kenya from Dvůr Králové Zoo in the Czech Republic. There were originally four: Najin, Fatu, Sudan, and Suni. All previous breeding attempts had been futile, and the hope was that the climate and rich grasslands of the Kenya highlands would provide them with more favourable breeding conditions — but the rhinos did not produce any offspring.

In 2014, Suni died of natural causes. His death left Sudan as the only northern white male in the world capable of breeding. In early 2015, checks by vets from the Czech Republic dealt another blow — neither of the females was capable of



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5: Family enjoying views over the Ewaso Nyiro River

6: Bat-eared foxes, OI Pejeta

7: A mounted encounter with northern white rhino, Sanctuary Tambarare, OI Pejeta

natural reproduction, and in 2018, Sudan died.

However, there is hope for the future as vets have now concluded that artificially assisted reproduction is a possibility. The future of this subspecies, which used to inhabit parts of Uganda, Chad, Sudan, the Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, now lies in the development of in-vitro fertilisation and stem cell technology that has never been attempted in rhinos.

OI Pejeta Conservancy together with Dvůr Králové Zoo is now raising funds to stop the northern white rhino from becoming extinct.

NATURE TRAILS

During a visit to OI Pejeta, you can join nature trails with camouflaged shelters discreetly dotted along the

Ewaso Nyiro River which allow close-up observation without disturbing the wildlife. Enjoy close encounters with wallowing hippos, and sightings of more than 500 species of birds including the Great egret. Guides will also introduce you to the indigenous plants and explain their values in local medicine. Other activities you can enjoy within the conservancy include nocturnal night safaris, lion tracking and horse riding.

As they say in this part of the world: "Take nothing but photographs, leave

nothing but footprints, kill nothing but time."

Conservancy remains at the heart of OI Pejeta and partnering with international veterinary experts ensures data is gathered regularly on each animal. Steps like this ensure their organisation remains a role model for rhino conservation. Let's hope one day we will see a northern white rhino calf placing its broad, wide lip on the grass of this East African savannah. 🦋

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STAY WITH A&K



SANCTUARY TAMBARARE

Experience Ol Pejeta when you stay under the yellow hue of the fever trees at Tamarare where boutique-meets-bush.

A&K's expert guides will lead you daily on safari to spot Africa's iconic species. On your return, you can relax in one of the 10 contemporary canvas tents. Enjoy your own Out of Africa moment sleeping under flowing white curtains offset by Maasai-inspired artworks. Floor-to-ceiling windows frame the landscape which can be viewed from the super king-sized beds. Despite being deep in the bush, the camp's chef prepares freshly cooked bread and salads.

Days can be spent on bush walks, horse riding, or on a cycle safari. You can also embark on a night drive to see the more nocturnal leopard before returning to camp and toasting your day with a sundowner at the boma.



SANCTUARY OLONANA

The recently refurbished Sanctuary Olonana in the Masai Mara is the perfect lodge to complement your stay at Ol Pejeta.

Sanctuary Olonana, set by a scenic riverbank, boasts new, glass-fronted suites, sumptuous interiors, opulent marble-and-slate bathrooms, and private decks.

You can while away lazy afternoons by the pool, in the spa or out on the scenic sundeck and dine alfresco in the new restaurant before enjoying a sundowner. With a Gold rating from Ecotourism Africa, Sanctuary Olonana maintains a high ecological standard.

Enjoy the artisan craft workshop onsite and visit nearby villages to meet the Maasai. Highly knowledgeable guides lead expeditions through the Masai Mara in open-sided four-wheel drives where you can spot the Big Five.

SUNDOWNER SPOTLIGHT

JUSTIN HEATH

CEO of Ol Pejeta



How are you working to save the black rhino from extinction?

Ol Pejeta's black rhino population was established between 1989 and 1993 within a 9,700-hectare sanctuary, then known as Sweetwaters Game Reserve (SWGR). The founding population comprised 20 black rhino: 15 from Solio Game Reserve, four from Nairobi National Park and one from Lewa Wildlife Conservancy.

By 2006, SWGR had attained its carrying capacity (50 rhino) thereby necessitating habitat expansion to incorporate 20,234 hectares. The expansion led to the sanctuary we have today.

In 2007, 27 black rhino were introduced with the aim of invigorating the genetics of the existing population while addressing the prevailing sex bias of the source population. By 2013, the population achieved its 100th rhino and attained International Union for Conservation of Nature Key 1 population status.

Since inception it has grown at a rate of about six per cent per annum on average — one per cent above the nationally recommended rate. The population currently stands at 165 black rhino.

What are the top three things people should see when visiting Ol Pejeta?

1. The northern white rhinos and Baraka the blind black rhino
2. Mount Kenya, at dawn, while on a safari drive
3. How we integrate East Africa's largest Boran cattle herd and use it to improve our biodiversity and fund our conservation efforts

What are your plans for the future?

Our first key objective is to create and implant a viable embryo and have a pure northern white rhino calf born.

We also want to secure an additional and contiguous habitat for the black rhino. We are exploring how we can use our partnerships in embryo technology and apply that to other endangered species. All of these are supported by robust revenue streams from tourism, livestock and fundraising and enabled by our teams who keep the dream alive.

Over the next seven years we are landing two large projects: solarisation of all our power needs, shifting away from diesel and a water masterplan that will allow us to catch and make more effective use of the rainfall we receive. For 100 years, Ol Pejeta has relied on the Ngobit River for its needs. This now sadly runs dry for much of the year, a fact very much evident when guests cross the elephant bridge. Without water we cannot provide a home for all the endangered species we protect.



OASIS OF ANCIENT & FUTURISTIC *Wonders*

Once secluded and authoritarian, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is modernising at a rapid rate with an impressive vision for the future making it a must-see for the discerning traveller.





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SAUDI ARABIA

Previous pages: Tomb of Liyhan Son of Kuza, Hegra, AIUla

1: Maraya Concert Hall, AIUla
©Visit Saudi

2: Elephant Rock, AIUla

3: Habitas AIUla

4: Traditional ceramics, AIUla Old Town

While it's universally recognised that Egypt and Jordan are home to most of the Middle East's blockbuster sites, it's less widely known that Saudi Arabia has some equally impressive, and certainly as important, ancient relics — with a fraction of the visitors. And, although a prominent destination for millions of people who make the annual pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca, this enigmatic kingdom has been a road less travelled for western visitors, until recently.

With the ushering in of new political and social freedoms thanks to the government's Vision 2030 and a quickly evolving tourist infrastructure, including simpler visa requirements, Saudi Arabia is now a highly sought-after destination appealing to travellers

seeking breathtaking landscapes, jaw-dropping archaeological sites, innovative hotels and a rich historic legacy.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the largest country in the Middle East. Lying between the azure reefs of the Red Sea and the warm waters of the Persian Gulf, it is fringed by the Empty Quarter (Rub' al-Khali), the largest sand desert in the world. Natural wonders abound from the sweeping red dunes of Al Nafud Desert in the north to Al Wahbah Crater in the west, with its floor of dazzling salt. There are soaring, juniper-clad mountains in the southwest, the largest oasis in the world to the east (with over two million date palms) and untouched coral reefs in the glistening waters of the Red Sea which lap the western shores.

The country's rich heritage has been shaped by its location on important trade routes and by Islam, which originated here. In recent years, this homeland of the Bedouin has undergone a significant cultural transformation, evolving centuries-old customs to fit the contemporary world.

Saudi Arabia is a study in contrasts — ancient, ruined towns and fortress-like villages, old merchant homes and mosques sit alongside modern souks and contemporary art installations, soaring skyscrapers and futuristic shopping centres. And the planned Neom giga-project in the country's northwest will be an even starker contrast to anything seen before. A futuristic green urban mega-development, projected to cost US\$500 billion, the region will set a standard for



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sustainable living accommodating nine million residents in The Line, a 160-kilometre-long linear car-free city with a mirrored façade to be powered by renewable energy and an emphasis on green spaces and walkability. This ground-breaking vision alongside its ancient attractions, makes Saudi Arabia a destination to tick off now, and well into the future.

Staying true to its pioneering spirit, Abercrombie & Kent was one of the first luxury tour operators to set up operations in Saudi, opening an office in Riyadh in 2022. This means A&K's team on the ground is perfectly positioned to constantly research new experiences, keep up-to-date with the fast-moving pace of progress in the industry, and beyond, and stay informed of the rolling opening of new hotels and lodgings.

At the same time, local expertise allows doors to be opened and privileged access given to individuals and personalities in-country who can give visitors unique insight to life in the new Saudi Arabia.

SPOTLIGHT ON SAUDI

From the palm-fringed port of Jeddah to the treasure trove of rock-carved tombs at AlUla and the sleek skyline and ornate mosques of Riyadh, here are some of Saudi's unmissable sites:

ALULA

Home to one of the kingdom's finest UNESCO World Heritage Sites, AlUla is located deep in the desert of the northwest. Named amongst *Condé Nast Traveller's* New Wonders of the World for 2023, this extraordinary site is poised to

rival Jordan's Petra, another legacy of the Nabataean civilisation. Its ancient, cliff-carved tombs, mudbrick dwellings, stunning natural rock formations and canyons reflect its important oasis location on the incense route and 7,000 years of human civilisation.

There's plenty to explore here. Start off at Hegra, the second city of the Nabataean Kingdom after Petra, a thriving cosmopolitan hub in the 1st century BC, which is brimming with highly decorated rock-hewn tombs dating back some two thousand years.

AlUla's Old Town is also a must-see with its labyrinthine alleyways connecting a sprawl of ancient houses built out of mud and stone, many now restored. Stroll along the Incense Road, lined with market stalls selling



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- 5: Al Rahma Mosque, Jeddah
- 6: Shangri-La, Jeddah
- 7: Historic city centre of Al Balad, Jeddah
- 8: Riyadh's Kingdom Centre and city skyline
- 9: Old City, Diriyah, Riyadh
- 10: Traditional Saudi loom weaving

fresh fruit and produce, local arts and crafts plus cafés, open-air eateries and street art installations.

In Dadan, formerly the Lihyanite capital, admire the Lion Tombs. These 2,500-year-old burial niches were carved directly into a cliff face and are guarded by relief-sculpted lions.

Maraya, the world's largest mirrored building, is the centrepiece of AlUla's growing cultural scene set in the desert canyon of Ashar Valley. Designed to blend into the surrounding landscape, it rises from the sand like a mirage and plays host to a range of cultural events from concerts to art residency programmes and arthouse films. With specially curated events throughout the year, be sure to check the calendar for what's on during your visit.

Stay: Habitas AlUla

Nestled within an ancient oasis in the desert canyons of the Ashar Valley, Habitas AlUla is a unique eco-retreat surrounded by sandstone cliffs and palm groves. Its minimal-impact footprint embraces sustainable design practices with accommodation in pre-fabricated tented villas which use organic materials and blend into the surrounds. Each villa comes with its own e-bike and some have telescopes to make the most of the clear night skies. For a different vibe, choose to stay in one of the resort's Airstream campers and dine from the on-site food trucks.

JEDDAH

Saudi's second city, Jeddah is the cosmopolitan gateway to Mecca sitting at an historic crossroads where pilgrims and traders once

gathered. Today, this palm-fringed port on the Red Sea coast is one of the most welcoming cities in the Middle East. Meander through its atmospheric old quarter, a World Heritage site, through tight alleyways between ancient coral-stone merchants' houses, clove-scented traditional bakeries, coffee shops and into the vast Souq al-Alawi. Admire the many restored mansions breathing new life into this ancient heart of the city.

Stay: Shangri-La Jeddah

Positioned on the Jeddah waterfront, the luxurious Shangri-La Jeddah affords guests uninterrupted views of the Red Sea with floor-to-ceiling windows inviting the outdoors in, and stylish interiors reflecting the endless blue of the sea and the golden sandy beaches beyond.



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Restaurant choices abound with plenty of innovative dining options and a dedicated Kids' Club allows parents the space to relax. The Spa at Shangri-La combines Asian traditions with cutting-edge techniques presenting an appealing menu of therapeutic and results-driven treatments.

RIYADH

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia's capital city, is a fascinating blend of old and new. This once humble oasis town is today a sprawling city and a melting pot of atmospheric souks, museums and ancient architecture. Soaring skyscrapers dominate the skyline while wide tree-lined streets and futuristic buildings jostle for attention with glitzy shopping malls. The iconic Kingdom Centre, one of the capital's tallest and most famous buildings, is a gleaming, glass-

covered monolith which sweeps up into twin spires connected by the skybridge — an unmistakable feature of Riyadh's skyline.

Stay: Four Seasons Hotel Riyadh

The sophisticated Four Seasons Hotel Riyadh is located over 20 floors within the Kingdom Centre offering easy access to the famous skybridge. Hotel interiors bring authentic Saudi heritage and craftsmanship to life and all 274 spacious rooms boast marble bathrooms and remarkable vistas. Spa facilities are available and an eclectic array of restaurants.

For a little extra magic, book a private candle-lit dinner at the Kingdom Centre's high-altitude skybridge: three gourmet courses paired with the ultimate view over glittering Riyadh, and a professional photographer on hand to capture the experience. 📸

TRAVEL RESPECTFULLY

There are a number of social and religious customs that should be respected when visiting Saudi Arabia. The country is dry, with no alcohol served (even in hotels), and some prescription medications are prohibited. Conservative dress is observed at all times without exposing shoulders and knees. Revealing garments should not be worn. Many women in the country wear head coverings, though this is not compulsory for visitors, unless visiting a mosque.

OUR SUGGESTED *Journey*

'Highlights of Saudi Arabia' Tailor-Made Journey

8 days

Priced from \$17,235 per person twin share

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



TIGER TIGER *burning bright*

The forests of India offer rare wildlife encounters, *Jungle Book* surprises and lavish nights spent under canvas in breathtaking locations.

Amidst tall stands of teak and gently swaying grass, a fleeting apparition is discerned: a flash of auburn with dark vertical streaks and a pair of glinting eyes able to spy chital in the darkest depths of night. I am in luck, it is what I have journeyed to India to see — a Royal Bengal tiger. Is she stalking the terrain on the scent of her quarry, radar-like ears pricked for a tell-tale alarm call? Or simply seeking shelter from the midday sun? And — asking on behalf of an old poet — ‘what immortal hand or eye could frame her fearful symmetry’?

While the lion is king of the African savannah, in India, the mighty tiger rules — and it’s among the star attractions of any wilderness experience here. Tiger numbers in India are said to be over 3,000 with 53 tiger reserves spread across 75,000 square kilometres. Celebrating 50 years this year, the incredibly successful Project Tiger has been instrumental in pulling back this mighty creature from extinction. But while animal numbers are healthy, habitat quality, ecosystem integrity and community conservation are some of the critical issues being managed today to safeguard the species.

For wildlife enthusiasts, India is an exciting alternative to the more traditional safari destinations with an abundance of protected wilderness areas, extraordinary biodiversity and its own Big Five — Asiatic leopard, Asian elephant, one-horned rhino, Asiatic lion, and — of course — the Bengal tiger. And a look to the skies is just as fruitful; flamingos are pretty in pink, Indian rollers dazzle with iridescence, and rose-ringed parakeets sport a fetching green. All this colour should come as no surprise in the native land of the peacock.

A&K has brought its pioneering luxury safaris beyond its Kenyan homeland, as far as the grizzly-galumphed pines of Canada, the whale-breached waters of Antarctica, and indeed India — whose characterful animals so inspired Rudyard Kipling. Gone are the days when the privilege of admiring India’s wildlife meant making do with the bare necessities. Today, a bevy of chic safari camps open their canvas doors to the discerning traveller, affording privileged access to some of the country’s 106 national parks.

Here we showcase India’s perfect pairings: Parks and camps that promise adventure by day, luxury by night.



RANTHAMBORE & AMAN-I-KHAS

Named after the 10th century tumbledown fort at its southern edge, Ranthambore is where the maharajahs of Jaipur once hunted for leisure. In 1973, Indira Gandhi's government transformed this part of rural Rajasthan into a tiger reserve. Today, Ranthambore's forests, lakes and grasslands can be explored on guided 4x4 safaris — best timed between October and May. As well as tiger, leopard, marsh crocodile, sloth bear, sambar deer, and some 250 species of nesting bird can be seen here.

On the periphery of Ranthambore lies Aman-i-Khas, accommodation fit for a maharajah. Its 10 air-conditioned tented suites are dotted through brushwood forest with a sophisticated Mughal-inspired scheme by acclaimed hotel designer Jean Michel Gathy. There is a dining tent, spa, and even a swimming pool which evokes the country's traditional stepwells.



JAWAI BANDH & SUJÁN JAWAI

Surrounded by the sun-cracked scrub of the Pali district, Jawai Bandh glitters like an oasis. Umaid Singh, then-Maharajah of Jodhpur, commissioned this dam in 1946, and it's now a habitat for a variety of eye-catching animals. Leopard — considered holy guardians by the local Rabari people — roam the area, as do hyena, jungle cat, crocodile and sloth bear. Here too you will find a variety of birds, from steppe eagle to greater flamingo.

Placing you in prime position to enjoy this wilderness experience is Suján Jawai, a member of the esteemed Relais & Châteaux group. This 10-tent luxury safari camp sits amidst shrub-tufted granite and sun-beaten forest. Guests can enjoy wilderness drives, horse-riding experiences, and nature walks with Rabari herdsmen, whose striking red turbans threaten to upstage even the spottiest of leopards.



PENCH & JAMTARA WILDERNESS CAMP

The setting of Kipling's *The Jungle Book* is an amalgam of the real and the imagined, but several mentions of 'Seonee' place the fables partly within the wilds of Madhya Pradesh — home to Pench National Park. The story's main animal characters — Shere Khan, Baloo and Tabaqui — are anthropomorphised versions of tiger, sloth bear and jackal, all found in this sprawling teak forest and grassland. Gaur, sambar and nilgai also graze the area, while some 285 bird species may be spotted overhead.

Close to Pench, Jamtara Wilderness Camp luxuriates under the canopy of a splendid banyan tree. Ten en suite tents with roll-up fronts and reclaimed-wood flooring overlook the forest. In addition to thrilling safari expeditions, guests can enjoy walks in the nearby village of Jamtara, unwind with a book from the library, or sleep under the stars on a machaan — an observation platform in a tree (traditionally used by hunters).



KANHA & BANJAAR TOLA

Kanha is another excellent tiger reserve close to modern-day Seoni that can claim the Kipling connection. Established in 1955, it is the largest national park in central India and teems with animal and birdlife. A safari here can easily reveal tiger, leopard, jackal, sloth bear, Indian fox, dhole, gaur, and about 300 different bird species — from the Lilliputian green bee-eater to the Brobdingnagian red-headed vulture. A first for India, Kanha even has its own animal mascot: Bhoorsingh the Barasingha.

Banjaar Tola is a Taj property set in an enviable riverside position overlooking Kanha and surrounded by forest, meadows, and a seasonal lake. This safari lodge encompasses two camps of nine tented suites, all featuring locally crafted furniture and bamboo floors. Both camps boast a swimming pool, lounge, and dining area — where guests can sample farm-to-fork cuisine that showcases tribal flavours.





NAGARHOLE & EVOLVE BACK KABINI

Nagarhole (literally 'cobra river' in the local language) was once a hunting ground for Mysore royalty. In 1999, it was declared India's 37th tiger reserve, and is now one of the best safari destinations in the south of the country. This lush landscape of deciduous forest is home to Asian elephant, leopard, tiger, jungle cat, gaur, chital and sambar deer. In the canopy overhead, look out for bonnet macaque, grey langur and flying squirrel, as well as 250 species of bird.

Hidden away on the banks of the nearby Kabini Reservoir, you'll find Evolve Back Karuba Safari Lodge. Its design inspired by the Hadis, or tribal villages, this picturesque resort in Karnataka is a clever blend of traditional crafts and modern comforts with bold, sweeping vistas. After a day of wild adventure, guests can enjoy a cool dip in the infinity or family pool, a book with a view at the reading lounge, or a relaxing, revitalising ayurvedic treatment.



KAZIRANGA & DIPHLU RIVER LODGE

Kaziranga is a playground for pachyderms. This national park in the northeast Indian state of Assam hosts two thirds of the world's population of greater one-horned rhino, as well as being a home for Asian elephant. UNESCO designated the park a World Heritage Site in 1985, and it continues to be an important breeding ground for several at-risk species. Guided tours by 4WD take guests through the jungle, grasslands and wetlands to admire its diverse resident wildlife.

A rustic retreat on the edge of Kaziranga, Diphlu River Lodge sits on the river's edge with 12 thatched-roofed cottages, raised on stilts, which are inspired by the local Mishing architecture and reflect the spirit of Assamese culture. In addition to jeep safaris, dolphin-spotting cruises on the Brahmaputra River, elephant experiences and traditional Assamese dance performances are all on offer.



OUR SUGGESTED *Journey*
'India's Tiger Lands' Tailor-Made Journey
12 days
Priced from \$10,390 per person twin share

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

SPOTLIGHT ON: PERU FIVE WAYS

Lima, the Sacred Valley and Machu Picchu are three of Peru's most iconic destinations each boasting rich cultural appeal, impressive monuments and ancient ruins, world-renowned food and charming guesthouses, along with exceptional artisan-made goods. But it's also the legacy of the country's complex history and its welcoming spirit that impressed first-time visitor, A&K's **Faye Hoskins**.





1 FOR TRAILBLAZERS

Moray and Maras, both in the heart of the Sacred Valley, can be considered two of Peru's hidden gems. The beautiful circular Inca terraces of Moray, at an elevation of 3,500 metres, are well off the tourist trail. Built from stone and in immaculate condition, Moray was believed to have been an experimentation space in which Incas could test various crops at different levels (each layer with its own microclimate). Alternative theories suggest it was the site of a water temple. No matter your view, spend time walking around the huge earthen bowl before moving onto Maras to view the many pre-Incan salt pools, from which Peru's famous pink salt is harvested. Trekking here yields spectacular rewards with jaw-dropping views, photo opps aplenty and friendly encounters with locals — not to mention salty snacks!



2 FOR THE GOURMET TRAVELLER

Peru's capital, Lima, is also South America's culinary capital with a diverse food scene thanks to a variety of influences — the country's Incan heritage, Spanish colonial rule and the influx of Japanese migrants in the late 19th century. Native ingredients coupled with newly introduced staples mean Peru's cuisine is always big on flavour but also driven by sustainability. Most visitors will be taken with the national dish ceviche — raw fish marinated in citrus and a hint of chilli — and the national drink, pisco sour. In the hip neighbourhood of Barranco, chef Penélope Alzamora shares her secrets with guests on preparing the perfect ceviche and pisco sour in her elegant kitchen. Fine diners will also seek out some of the hot city eateries, like Central, Maido and Astrid y Gaston which regularly appear on the world's best restaurant lists. Be sure to book well in advance.



3 FOR REST & REPOSE

Serenely situated among ruined Inca terraces in the Sacred Valley between Cusco and Machu Picchu, explora Valle Sagrado evokes the cosiest of ski lodges with roaring fires and the earthy scent of wood seducing guests upon entering the Scandi-chic converted hacienda. The hotel's spa — now called the Pumacahua Bath House — was once a 17th-century manor house, owned by a local freedom-fighting hero, and will have you swiftly unlacing your hiking boots and indulging in some restorative treatments. Here at 2,900 metres above sea level, it's all about the views and the surrounding valleys which can be explored with guided expeditions, captivating treks and engaging encounters with the locals.



4 FOR AUTHENTIC VILLAGE LIFE

A peaceful place, once the Machu Picchu-bound tourists on the Inca Trail have passed through each morning, the town of Ollantaytambo is full of vibrant textiles and friendly locals. It's the best surviving example of Inca city planning and has been inhabited since the 13th century. The narrow cobblestone streets are framed by irrigation channels, which carry water from mountaintop to town, and quaint buildings. Locals welcome travellers into their homes, where women weave naturally dyed colourful cloth made from llama and alpaca wool. And while it's mesmerising to watch the weavers at work, don't miss some of the town's important ruins: the Inca fortress, temple and the towering Wall of the Six Monoliths.



5 FOR MODERN-DAY EXPLORERS

No trip to Peru is complete without a visit to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Machu Picchu. Getting there is part of the experience aboard the stylish Belmond Hiram Bingham train, a stately way to arrive at the royal Incan citadel. For the more adventurous, trekking the Inca Trail is a highlight: rambling across the mountainous landscape, breathing in the wild Andean views, admiring cut-stone ruins and herds of curious llama along the way. Shrouded by mist, flanked by foliage, and perched above the Urubamba River in a narrow saddle between two peaks, Machu Picchu has been on most travellers' wish lists since American explorer Hiram Bingham stumbled upon it in 1911. Visits are enlivened by knowledgeable guides, who'll take you off the very beaten track to discover the best photo-spots.

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

WINGS OVER THE WORLD

A&K's Wings Over the World journeys are the epitome of luxury travel, combining our timeless luxury small group travel experience with the convenience of privately chartered flights between destinations, allowing you to see and discover more than you ever thought possible on a single itinerary.

From the iconic cultural and ancient marvels of Europe, Latin America, India and the Middle East to the extraordinary wildlife of Africa, travel with intimate group sizes averaging 12-15 guests alongside an A&K Resident Tour Director, relax in remarkable five-star accommodations and experience the incomparable advantage of insider access. This is the Abercrombie & Kent way, ensuring a journey that showcases each destination at its luxurious, inspiring best.



WINGS OVER SOUTHERN AFRICA

Experience the best of Southern Africa on this epic adventure: mighty Victoria Falls, the game-rich Okavango Delta and the towering dunes of Sossusvlei in Namibia as well as inspiring, cosmopolitan Cape Town — all on one incredible itinerary made possible by the time-saving convenience of privately chartered air.

14 days

Departs 14 September & 5 October 2024

From \$81,530 per person twin share



WINGS OVER EAST AFRICA

Experience highlights of three East African countries on a single luxury journey made possible by private air, encountering mountain gorilla and chimpanzee in Uganda, tracking iconic wildlife in Tanzania's Serengeti and witnessing a true natural spectacle on departures timed with the Great Migration's appearance in Kenya's Masai Mara.

11 days

Departs 23 August, 10, 24 September & 5 October 2024

From \$64,300 per person twin share



WINGS OVER ISRAEL, JORDAN & EGYPT

Explore three classic Middle East destinations in less than two weeks thanks to the flexibility and convenience of privately chartered air, journeying from Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Masada to Petra and Wadi Rum, and onward to set foot inside the tomb of King Tutankhamun, touch the paws of the Sphinx and cruise for four nights along the Nile.

13 days

Multiple departures January-April & September-December 2024

From \$81,530 per person twin share



WINGS OVER SPAIN & MOROCCO

Explore Spain and Morocco by privately chartered air to discover how the Moors shaped the region's iconic architecture and incredible cuisine on a luxury journey that features several UNESCO World Heritage Sites, a stay at A&K's Exclusive Desert Tented Camp, and a private flamenco performance at a palace in Seville.

13 days

Departs 16 April & 8 October 2024

From \$69,225 per person twin share



WINGS OVER ITALY & ITS ISLANDS

Immerse yourself in Italy's sun-splashed Mediterranean vibe on an easy-going luxury journey from Rome's Renaissance art and classic cuisine to rural Puglia and the storied islands of Sardinia and Sicily, exploring local cultures, wines and favourite dishes along the way, and smoothly accessing these far-flung locales via exclusive private flights.

11 days

Departs 17, 24 June, 9 & 16 September 2024

From \$63,070 per person twin share



WINGS OVER EUROPE'S ICONIC CAPITALS

Savour unforgettable experiences in four of Europe's most celebrated capitals, exploring London, Paris, Rome and Athens alongside expert local guides and enjoying exclusive insider access to the cultural and culinary treasures of each timeless destination on one seamless luxury journey made possible by private air.

12 days

Departs 12 June, 1 & 15 September 2024

From \$76,915 per person twin share



WINGS OVER THE MEDITERRANEAN

Discover ancient and modern wonders throughout the Mediterranean, from the art and history of Portugal and Spain to the seaside charms and delights of the Amalfi Coast, with a three-night sojourn in scenic Dubrovnik.

13 days

Departs 11 June, 3 & 17 September 2024

From \$58,455 per person twin share



WINGS OVER GREECE & TURKEY

Discover the historic and cultural riches of the ancient world by private chartered air, from the glories of Athens and Istanbul, to the Minoan culture of idyllic Crete and the wonders of Cappadocia, and following historic paths to experience the local life of yesterday and today, up close.

12 days

Departs 6 May, 10, 24 June & 2 September 2024

From \$61,530 per person twin share

WINGS OVER INDIA

Explore India's treasures, from the splendidly beautiful Taj Mahal to the palaces of Jaipur. Witness the sacred aarti ceremony on the banks of the Ganges in Varanasi and seek out the elusive Bengal tiger in Ranthambore National Park, all while staying in some of the country's most iconic and luxurious hotels.

12 days

Departs 9 October & 13 November 2024

From \$58,455 per person twin share



WINGS OVER ARGENTINA, CHILE & BRAZIL

Discover three vibrant nations, experiencing their people, cultures and culinary treasures firsthand, including fine wines, on an active, immersive journey that explores Mendoza's winelands, Patagonia's epic landscapes and stunning Iguazu Falls, all made possible by private chartered flights that dissolve the distances between destinations.

12 days

Departs 15 January, 14 February, 9 October & 5 November, 2024

From \$68,455 per person twin share



WINGS OVER MEXICO

Immerse yourself in Mexico's diverse culture and discover its rich history on a journey from bustling Mexico City to the verdant rural landscapes of Oaxaca, where indigenous roots are still strong, and to the imposing Mayan ruins of Palenque and Chichen Itza, all made easily accessible by privately chartered air.

12 days

Departs 11 January, 1 & 15 February 2024

From \$53,070 per person twin share

For more information on any of these Wings Over the World Journeys, please call A&K on 1300 591 877, visit www.abercrombiekent.com.au or contact your local travel advisor.

a journey illustrated

JOURNEY AROUND SPAIN

PLANNING YOUR TRIP

WHAT?

Journey Around Spain

14 days

Price from \$23,480 per person

WHEN?

The European spring and autumn are the best seasons for exploring Spain when the temperatures are mild, the sun is shining and the summer crowds are absent.

INCLUDES

13 nights luxury accommodation; extensive sightseeing as detailed throughout with private English speaking guides; private transfers and transportation; first class rail travel Barcelona/Madrid/Córdoba; economy class flight Seville to Bilbao; breakfast daily; two dinners; entrance fees.

FOR MORE INFO

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

Discover the many flavours of Spain on an extraordinary journey through sun-drenched landscapes and vibrant, buzzing cities. Visit the country's most iconic spots and discover a warm and friendly culture, imposing palaces, a colourful history and mouth-watering food. From the striking architecture of Gaudí in Barcelona to Madrid's finest art collections, the sherries of Jerez to the vineyards of the Rioja, San Sebastián's tasty pintxos to the Moorish wonders of Andalucia, you'll find beauty everywhere.

Days 1-3: Arrive Barcelona

Arrive into the Catalan capital, Spain's second city, and your grand neoclassical hotel. Touring includes the masterpieces of Catalonia's most famous architect, Antoni Gaudí: the Casa Mila with its wave-like façade; the impressive but still unfinished La Sagrada Familia and Parc Güell, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of his most colourful creations.

Perhaps admire Barcelona from a different perspective on an optional evening side car jaunt through the city streets. Venture into the heart of the old city – the medieval Gothic Quarter – where narrow, labyrinthine streets and quiet squares reveal treasures like the magnificent 13th century Cathedral. Step inside the Picasso Museum, where some of the painter's earliest works are housed.

Accommodation: El Palace Hotel

Days 4-5: Barcelona – Madrid

Travel by rail west to the Spanish capital and discover this sophisticated city on a privately guided walking tour including the Palacio Real or the treasured artworks of the Museo del Prado, widely considered the richest collection of European art. Spend a fun evening, like a local, exploring celebrated tapas bars with a connoisseur.

There are touring options aplenty: a visit to the splendid fortified city of Toledo; a walking tour of enchanting, and historic, Segovia; a mouth-watering food tour of Barrio de las Letras, the 'literary quarter'; or time wandering the mid-19th century streets around the María Guerrero Theatre, lined with some of the capital's hippest boutiques, vinotecas, bars and fusion restaurants.

Accommodation: Hotel Orfila

Days 6-7: Córdoba – Granada

Take the train south to Córdoba, one of Spain's oldest cities where a walking tour through the flower-filled streets of the Jewish Quarter reveals the city at its best including the extraordinary Mezquita. After lunch continue to Granada where you'll marvel at the magnificent Alhambra, a World Heritage site and the most perfect example of a medieval Muslim palace in the whole world.

Accommodation: Hospes Palacio de Los Patos

Days 8-10: Granada – Seville

En route to Seville stop in Ronda where you are free to explore this old Moorish town built around a deep gorge. Onwards to Seville where the 15th century Cathedral is a highlight and the impressive Moorish tower, La Giralda. Visit the Alcazar, a magnificent 14th century Mudejar palace and wander through the narrow, flower-filled streets of Barrio de Santa Cruz.

Dive deeper into Andalucia on a day trip to Jerez de la Frontera, famous for its sherry, brandy, and its horses. Explore the old Moorish town and visit the Royal Andalusian School of Equestrian Art for a performance or training session. Complete the experience with a sherry tasting.

Accommodation: Alfonso XIII Hotel

Days 11-13: Seville – Bilbao – San Sebastián

Fly north to Bilbao where the Frank Gehry-designed Guggenheim Museum awaits. Jeff Koons' "Puppy", wearing a coat of flowers, welcomes visitors to the world-famous institution. Later, wander the streets of the historic Old Town then head east along the coast to San Sebastián, Spain's culinary capital. Let a local introduce you to pintxos – the Basque country's answer to tapas – on a tasty behind the scenes tour. And visit the Balenciaga Museum at Getaria with the option of a seafood lunch in this charming fishing village. The vineyards of Rioja beckon with a tour of the beautiful Marqués de Riscal winery, the walled town of Laguardia and Logroño.

Accommodation: Hotel Maria Cristina

Day 14: Depart Bilbao

Transfer to Bilbao Airport for departure.

Spain



CANTABRIAN
SEA



GETARIA



FRANCE



BILBAO

SAN
SEBASTIAN



RIOJA
WINE
REGION



BARCELONA



MADRID

PORTUGAL



TOLEDO



CORDOBA



SEVILLE



JEREZ



GRANADA



RONDA



MOROCCO

MEDITERRANEAN
SEA



TOP 10

Cruise Adventures

Cruising is one of the most rewarding ways to discover the world and its great waterways. Whether ocean-going liner, shallow-drafted canal barge, luxury river cruiser or ice-hardened expeditionary vessel, cruising offers boundless benefits: your cabin or state room a luxurious home away from home; plentiful and delicious meals included in the tariff; expert guides or lecturers accompanying you on day trips and shore excursions and coordinating enriching experiences along the way; a team of professional staff and crew alert to your every need and myriad opportunities to meet and engage with fellow passengers. And, you only have to unpack once. So, from ocean voyage and island-hopping to river adventures and polar expeditions, here are A&K's Top 10 Cruises to float your boat.



THE NILE, EGYPT

Timeless and eternal, the Nile River is the very lifeblood of Egypt supporting and sustaining the communities which have populated its banks for millennia. Civilisations have come and gone and each has left their mark making a cruise down this mighty waterway a journey through history. On A&K's Nile cruises, sail in sheer luxury stopping en route with your onboard Egyptologist to discover extraordinary ancient tombs, temples and ruined cities.

A&K's 9-day 'Nile in Style' priced from \$8,770 per person.



THE NORTH POLE

One of the most inaccessible regions on Earth, the North Pole is the holy grail for adventure travellers. To get there it's a journey from northern Norway deep into the Arctic pack ice. As the innovative new icebreaker, Le Commandant Charcot is expertly navigated through the marginal ice zone, guests keep a look out for seals, whales, a host of seabirds, even the elusive polar bear. On this unique, fully chartered expedition, you'll become one of the very few to reach 90 degrees north, a once-in-a-lifetime accomplishment.

A&K's 18-day 'North Pole Expedition Cruise: The Ultimate Frontier' departs 10 July 2024 priced from \$77,680 per person.





ANTARCTICA

In the world's southernmost reaches is a realm of snow and ice, home to rare flora and fauna and oceans teeming with marine life. This is Antarctica and the best way to experience it is on board an expeditionary cruise with A&K, pioneers of polar voyages for over 30 years. On our exclusively chartered cruises, unique experiences are guaranteed, vast penguin colonies sought out, rare glacial formations admired and remote research stations visited, all in the company of A&K's award-winning Expedition Team.

A&K's 13-day 'Antarctic Cruise Adventure' departs 10 December 2023 and 2024 priced from \$18,855 per person.



MEKONG RIVER

The longest river in Southeast Asia and the 12th longest on earth, the Mekong River flows through six countries: China, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Onboard luxurious river ship Aqua Mekong, cruises operate between Cambodia and Vietnam through the picturesque lower Mekong basin with expert guides curating insightful shore excursions bringing to life the area's rich heritage, traditions and history.

A&K's 10-day 'Journey on the Mekong' priced from \$8,930 per person.





INDONESIA

Natural wonders, breathtaking scenery and rich cultural diversity make the volcanic island chain of Indonesia paradise for an ocean-going adventure. And cruising in the pristine East Indonesian Archipelago, long-range explorer yacht, Aqua Blu, ventures to the region's most prized destinations, including Komodo National Park with its prehistoric native dragons, the Spice Islands and Raja Ampat, where unmatched marine diversity is on show at the best dive and snorkel sites on Earth.

A&K's 'Bali to Komodo: Island Discovery' is an 8-day small ship cruise. Please call for more information.



GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS

Nearly one thousand kilometres off the South American landmass lie the Galápagos Islands, an enchanting archipelago teeming with rare and unusual flora and fauna. Brought to fame in 1859 by Charles Darwin in his seminal work, *On the Origin of Species*, the Galápagos Islands have been luring inveterate travellers to their shores keen to uncover the curiosities first observed there by Darwin. Cruising is the very best way to explore and there are a wide range of vessels to choose from.

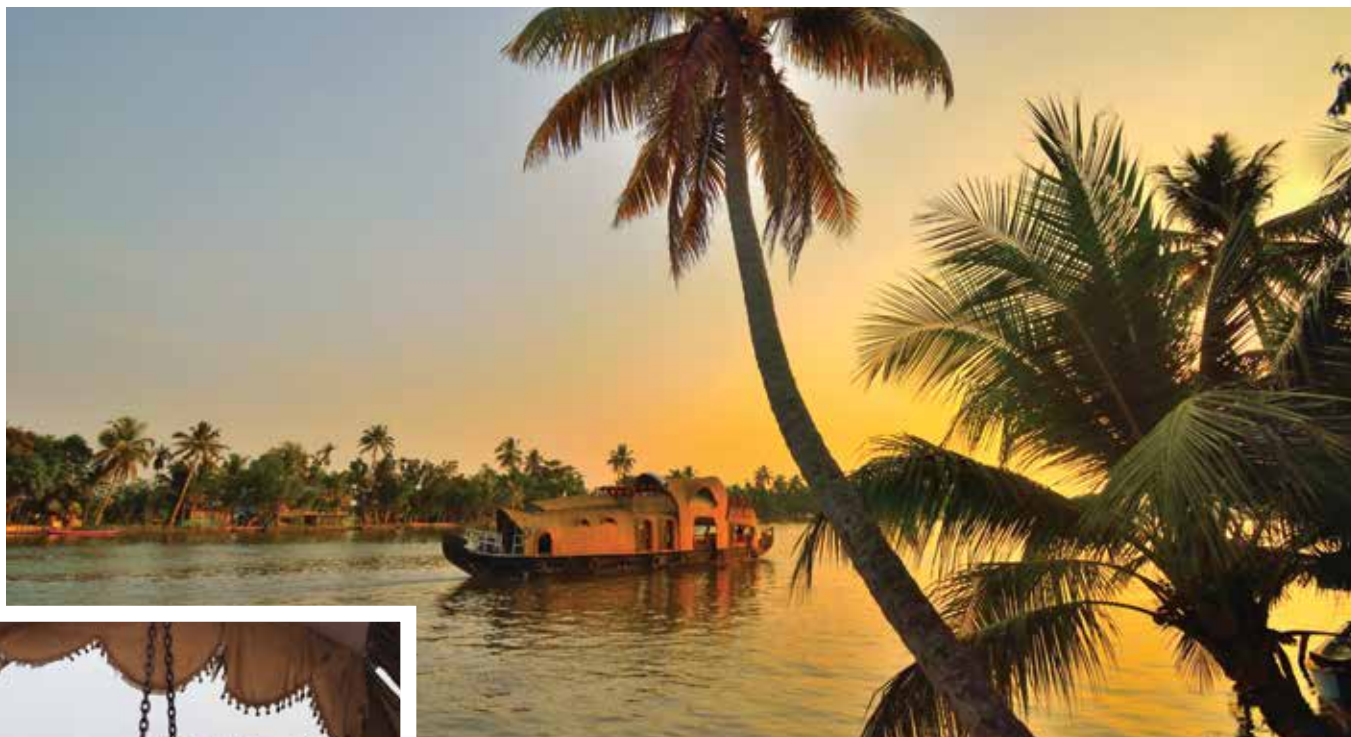
A&K offers a range of Galápagos Island cruises from 4 to 14 days. Please call for more information.



CANALS OF EUROPE

Gliding gently down a tree-lined canal in the heart of Europe aboard a perfectly fitted out luxury barge, complete with captain and crew, is one of life's most captivating (and relaxing) experiences. From a vantage point on deck, or in your cabin, soak up the scenes of rural France, Italy, Britain or the Netherlands. Exquisite meals of market fresh produce are dished up daily reflecting the culinary influences of the region you're travelling through. Specially curated shore excursions highlight the locale and its attractions.

A&K's La Belle Epoque cruises in Burgundy priced from \$7,590 per person.



KERALA BACKWATERS

Picture a rose-hued sunset dancing on palm-lined waterways, egrets and kingfishers aloft, locals fishing from the banks and the glimpse of a temple through lush green vegetation. This is classic Kerala. And a cruise on the backwater canals reveals an enchanting slice of life in this beautiful part of India. Barges once used for transporting goods are now converted into dreamy homes afloat with your own chef delivering top-notch Kerala cuisine.

A&K's 9-day 'Essential Kerala' priced from \$3,870 per person.





THE AMAZON

Deep in the heart of the Peruvian Amazon lies the Pacaya Samiria National Reserve, one of the world's largest protected flooded forests. Amidst extraordinary biodiversity, it is here that Delfin Cruises, a prestigious member of Relais & Châteaux, operates three luxury vessels each offering immersive rainforest adventures. The ships accommodate between eight and 44 guests with experienced guides on hand to reveal the best flora and fauna that the Marañon and Ucayali Rivers offer.

A&K offers a range of Amazon River cruises from 4 to 5 days.



PATAGONIA

Adventure awaits at the end of the Earth with Australis Cruises and its state-of-the-art expeditionary vessels, MV Stella Australis and the MV Ventus Australis. With expert guides, the finest on-board hospitality and fascinating field excursions, these voyages showcase breathtaking glaciers, rare wildlife, native forests and extraordinary marine attractions in some of the most remote parts of the planet — Tierra del Fuego, the Strait of Magellan, the Beagle Channel and Cape Horn.

A&K offers a range of Patagonia cruises from 4 to 5 days.

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

AROUND THE WORLD

6 LUXURY SMALL GROUP JOURNEYS



Are you an inquisitive traveller? Someone seeking a shared adventure? Starting to plan that dream trip for 2024? Here is a small selection of our Luxury Small Group Journeys which will take you on a deep dive into destinations both eternal and enthralling. We've highlighted departure dates that will reveal each destination at its most engaging, and rewarding. Meticulously planned by experts with years of local knowledge, each one incorporates privileged access to sites and experiences with unforgettable encounters that will remain long after you return home.



when
FEBRUARY

where
INDIA

Experience India's greatest treasures, its vivid colours, endless activity, profound spirituality, 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 take an intimate look at life and death in the sacred city of Varanasi, where devout pilgrims flock to the holy Ganges to bathe in the sacred water and cremate their loved ones.

Why February? Clear skies and pleasant temperatures in Northern India with excellent wildlife viewing.

14 days | Taj Mahal & the Treasures of India

Departs 4, 7, 11, 18 & 21 February 2024, plus regular departures January, March-May & October-December 2024

when
APRIL

where
JAPAN

Be surprised by this country of astonishing contrasts on this journey exploring 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.

Why April? The arrival of spring brings warm temperatures, vibrant scenery and cherry blossoms in abundance.

9 days | Classic Japan

Departs 1, 5, 8, 12 & 15 April 2024, plus regular departures March, May & September-November 2024





when

MAY

where

JORDAN & ISRAEL

Journey to the heart of these ancient lands where history and cultures converge. Wander through ancient Roman cities and crusader castles, historic sites sacred to three world faiths and haunting modern memorials. Marvel at the extraordinary Nabataean caravan-city of Petra, one of the new Seven Wonders of the World, and relax in the mineral-laden waters of the Dead Sea. Follow in the footsteps of Lawrence of Arabia across the desert reaches of Wadi Rum, and savour flavoursome Levantine cuisine.

Why May? Sunshine, warm days and cool nights plus wildflowers in bloom and fewer visitors.

14 days | Jordan & Israel: Ancient Wonders

Departs 1, 8 & 15 May 2024, plus regular departures all year

when

JUNE

where

PERU

Be enchanted on this journey to the heart of the ancient Inca Empire. See why Machu Picchu is such a show-stopper and explore at your own speed away from the crowds. Soak up the dazzling textiles and handicrafts and savour the fresh and flavoursome cuisine. Travel on a 1920s style train to the Sacred Valley and mingle with the locals on a private village visit. Stay at a luxurious hotel that was once a 16th century monastery, and the only hotel on site at Machu Picchu.

Why June? Sunny days, blue skies and starry nights. Lush, green valleys and perfect conditions for exploring.

8 days | Peru: Machu Picchu & the Sacred Valley

Departs 7, 14, 21 & 28 June 2024, plus regular departures all year



when

AUGUST

where

BOTSWANA

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, and marvel at the awe-inspiring Victoria Falls. 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.

Why August? Dry conditions mean better game viewing with animals concentrated around water sources.

10 days | Botswana Safari in Style

Departs 2, 9, 14, 21 & 28 August 2024, plus regular departures all year



when

NOVEMBER

where

CHILE & ARGENTINA

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/or boat through glacial wonderlands, rich native forest and awe-inspiring alpine scenery. And visit traditional working ranches to see how the European settlers influenced today's pastoralists. Your journey finishes in the sophisticated Chilean capital, Santiago, one of the world's most remarkably located cities.

Why November? Clear, sunny days, warmer temperatures and fewer visitors. Spring blooms galore.

10 days | Patagonia: The Last Wilderness

Departs 1, 8 & 15 November 2024, plus regular departures January–March, October & December 2024

For more information on the full portfolio of A&K Luxury Small Group Journeys, please visit www.abercrombiekent.com.au, call A&K on 1300 591 877 or your local travel advisor.

notes from the field

VIETNAM

Recently in Vietnam, A&K's **Laura Sullivan** travelled from Hanoi to the mountains, the beach at Phu Yen, the hills surrounding the Perfume River and to the old port city of Hoi An and shares below some of what she loved most about this intriguing destination.



Laura Sullivan

Operations Coordinator
A&K Australia

HOI AN BY NIGHT

Wandering the bustling streets of Hoi An's old town at night is a must-do. Twinkling lanterns in jewelled colours hang from market stalls and traders sell clothes, shoes and local handicrafts. There's also a tantalising selection of Vietnamese street food — including grilled pork noodles, battered quail eggs, sweet mango cakes and world's best banh mi.



THE ANGELINA

Sleek and elegant, Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi's in-house lounge bar is all sophistication. Double-height ceilings enhance the feeling of space while bright yellow and teal green bar stools and velvet wingback chairs create an intimate vibe.

A mirrored floor-to-ceiling bar houses all manner of pick-me-up including Vietnam's best selection of whisky. What about a Spritz Suzette or a nip of Cragganmore single malt to kick things off?



SAPA SCRAMBLE

Amidst endless rolling hills, picture-perfect rice paddies and ethnic villages, the five-hour hike to Lao Cai, while strenuous, was utterly rewarding. An expert guide accompanied us along the trail, which was at times steep and muddy, introducing us to a different, and entirely peaceful, side of Vietnam.

ZANNIER BAI SAN HO

On Vietnam's south-central coast is a stunning resort more serene than any I have had the pleasure of staying at. Set on 240 acres, it exudes minimalistic luxury combining earthy tones and textured interiors and blending peacefully into the

surrounding landscape. Its 73 suites and villas range in location from beach to hill to paddy field, each with traditional wooden floors and bamboo ceilings, some with plunge pool and direct beach access.



A BIG FAN

In Hanoi, I was thrilled to be part of a fan-making activity. Before putting our skills to the test, we learnt that fans were traditionally highly prized items in the Vietnamese home. Made from strong and flexible bamboo frames, silk and paper is attached and then decoratively painted. Our handiwork was simple but the experience rewarding and an unforgettable start to the trip.



BÀ HAI

Zannier Bai San Ho's head chef treated us to an extraordinary culinary journey and immersion in Vietnamese culture in the traditionally styled Bà Hai restaurant. Overlooking the rice paddies, this 12-metre-high stilted restaurant is a temple to Vietnamese culinary excellence with degustation menus reflecting Vietnam's four main cooking styles. Stand-out dishes were the pomelo salad with lobster, smoky eggplant with chilli soy sauce and dry pork belly with caramel sauce.



OUR SUGGESTED *Journey*

'Vietnam: A Nation Revealed' - A Luxury Small Group Journey
12 days

Priced from \$11,550 per person twin share

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

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