

LATIN AMERICA & THE POLES



THE ULTIMATE EXPERIENCE





LATIN AMERICA & THE POLES

THE ULTIMATE EXPERIENCE

Our growing range of destination brochures is designed to inspire you to explore new horizons and the places where we love to travel.

This time we're bringing you Latin America and the Poles. From the steamy jungles of the Amazon to the icy vastness of Antarctica, there is nowhere on the planet quite so diverse or exotic. We've had more than 25 years of experience planning holidays to this part of the world, and our made-to-measure itineraries allow you to really get under the skin of each country.

Here at The Ultimate Travel Company, we pride ourselves on providing the very best service to our customers. We'll listen to your interests, tastes and needs, and then design a tailor-made trip that perfectly suits you - right down to the finest detail. We are committed to quality, from the very first conversation you have with us to the moment you arrive back home.

When you travel with us, you get more than just first-hand knowledge and expertise from our travel consultants. You can also be sure of the reliability and dedication of our in-country representatives and guides, who will use their enthusiasm and local know-how to ensure your holiday is a memorable one.

That's why we say that, wherever you choose to go, travelling with us is not simply an experience. It's the Ultimate Experience.

With best wishes,



NICK VAN GRUISEN

WHY I LOVE LATIN AMERICA

BY MICHAEL KERR



As deputy travel editor of The Daily Telegraph, Michael Kerr edited coverage of the Americas. He still contributes to the Telegraph, and edits Deskbound Traveller, a website dedicated to travel storytelling.

I had been haring after a fleet-footed guide at an Inca city that was once lost and is now found by at least 2,500 tourists a day. Carlos knows as much as most scholars do about Machu Picchu and its makers, but that doesn't amount to a lot. Time and again I began scribbling a note as he talked, only to hear him pause and add "possibly", "probably", "maybe". "We know only 20 to 25 per cent of our history," he said with a shrug. "The rest is enigmatic."

He didn't need to apologise: I didn't want Peru drained of mystery. I love Latin America partly because it's full of unanswered questions. It's a place where magical realism is on the streets as well as in the pages of Gabriel García Márquez; a place where they make cathedrals out of salt.

Whether you want to hike on a glacier field or bake on a Caribbean beach, raft white water or potter round colonial churches, hack through a rainforest or salsa across a dance floor, you can do it there. You can, indeed, do all those things (and see the salt cathedral) in Colombia alone.

A few words of Spanish will take you a long way: south from Tijuana, just over the Mexican border from California, to Ushuaia, starting point for cruises to Antarctica; east from Chile's snow-capped volcanoes to Uruguay's rolling ranch-lands. In between, in Guatemala, you'll meet K'iche'-speaking Amerindians who trace their descent from the Maya, and, in Patagonia, Welsh-speaking Argentinians who talk of forebears from Llangollen. During the day, you might bounce your way by bus to the markets with the locals and their chickens; during the night, you might stretch out on a four-poster in a converted convent.

I haven't yet mentioned Brazil, the fifth-biggest country in the world; the country of the Rio Carnival, baroque Bahia, modernist Brasília and the jaguars of the Pantanal. Well, I still haven't been there myself. The official language is Portuguese - and I haven't come close to exhausting the possibilities in Spanish-speaking countries.



SOUTH AMERICA & THE POLES

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“Imagine a man without
lungs. Imagine Earth without
Amazon rainforest.”

VINITA KINRA

BRAZIL

THE HEARTBEAT OF LATIN AMERICA

"If you do nothing else, head for the summit of Corcovado to embrace a unique fusion of city and sea, mountain and lagoon, rainforest and beach from under the 100 foot span of Christ the Redeemer's outstretched arms."

THE BRAZIL EXPERIENCE 15 NIGHTS



INCLUDES

3 nights Rio de Janeiro
2 nights Iguassu Falls
4 nights Pantanal
3 nights Salvador
3 nights Trancoso

WHEN TO GO

Year round, but with marked regional variations. The Pantanal is best in the cooler, drier months from May - October

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

MORE TO SEE

Buzios

A gorgeous, crinkle cut stretch of coast with around twenty beaches to choose from by day and a super cool, vibrant town by night. Just a 2-hour drive north from Rio, so it's a popular spot.



Chapada Diamantina

The rock formations, caves, subterranean rivers and waterfalls of this spectacular national park in Bahia are well worth a detour from Salvador.



Fernando de Noronha

A paradise island archipelago 350 miles off the Brazilian coast offering some fantastic snorkelling and diving in its marine rich Atlantic waters.

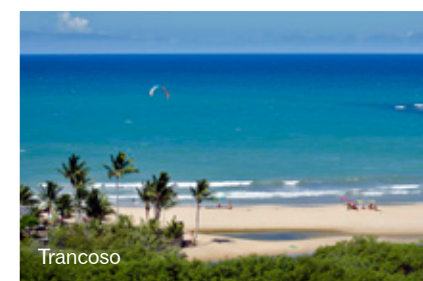


The Amazon

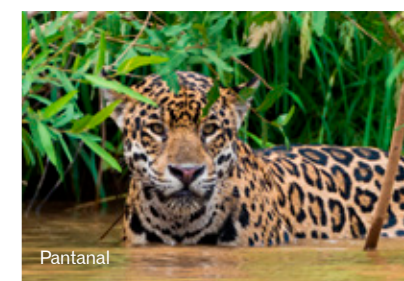
60% of the Amazon rainforest is contained within Brazil. Much of it remains unfathomable, but you can fly to Manaus and explore its untold riches from one of the nearby jungle lodges or aboard a river vessel.



Salvador



Trancoso



Pantanal

It's one of the most exotic destinations on the planet. Even the sound of its name can send the rhythm of the samba coursing through the veins. But how best to tackle this vast biomass of a destination? Think continent rather than country; Brazil is as big as the USA.

Begin in Rio de Janeiro...all singing, all dancing, all stunning Rio. If you do nothing else, head for the summit of Corcovado to embrace a unique fusion of city and sea, mountain and lagoon, rainforest and beach from under the 100 foot span of Christ the Redeemer's outstretched arms.

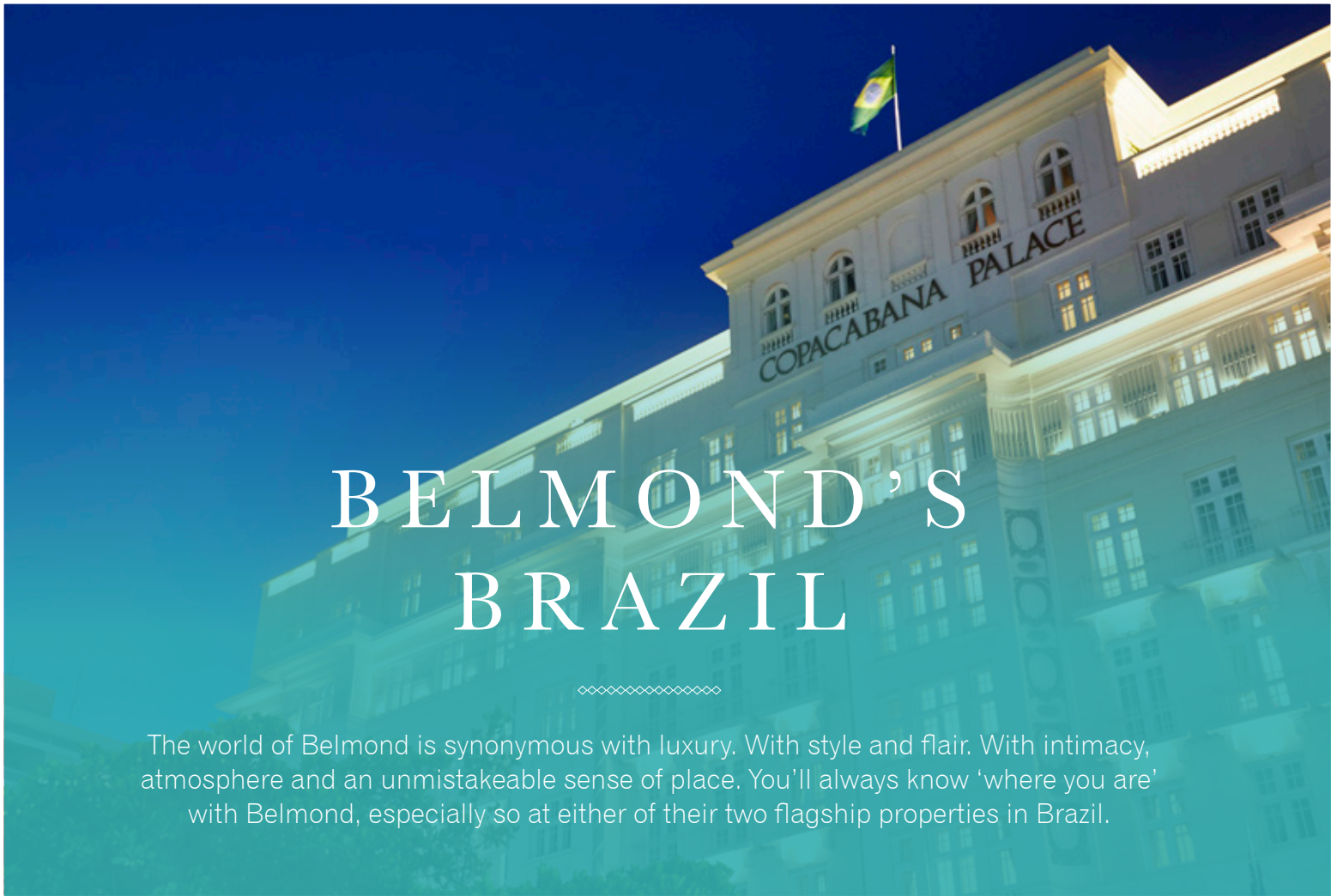
For a different perspective, ride the dramatic cableway up the soaring granite cliffs of Sugarloaf Mountain. Explore world famous beaches - Copacabana, its longest and broadest, might have the 'wow' factor, but Ipanema is leafier and prettier. And brave the Lapa District, hub of the city's exotic nightlife. After all, "Everything about Rio makes you want to dance!"

Beyond Rio, cultural enthusiasts will be drawn by the cobbled streets, exquisite Portuguese colonial buildings

and hypnotic Afro-Brazilian exuberance of Salvador, the country's historic first capital. As will those of more hedonistic intent - Salvador is also the gateway to the fabulous, white sand beaches of the northeast shoulder.

Wildlife lovers on the other hand will be lured west by the wonders of the Pantanal. Half the size of France, this vast wilderness of wetland and savannah is home to the elusive jaguar, caiman, monkey, anteater, capybara, anaconda, giant otter and river dolphin, as well as some 600 different species of birdlife.

And don't forget Iguassu Falls, a breathtaking expanse of some 240 cascades set in sub-tropical rainforest and arguably the southern hemisphere's most spectacular natural treasure.



BELMOND'S BRAZIL

The world of Belmond is synonymous with luxury. With style and flair. With intimacy, atmosphere and an unmistakeable sense of place. You'll always know 'where you are' with Belmond, especially so at either of their two flagship properties in Brazil.

COPACABANA PALACE, A BELMOND HOTEL, RIO DE JANEIRO



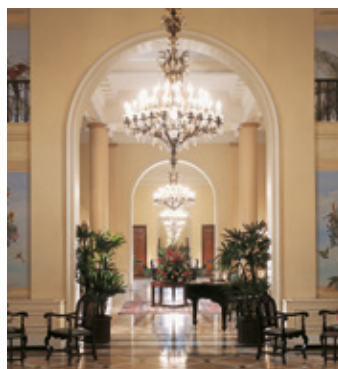
Since its Art Deco doors swung open in 1923, this landmark hotel has been the glamorous address in Rio de Janeiro, long the chosen pied-à-terre for the rich, the royal and the just plain famous. Indeed, the Copa's Golden Book reads like a veritable Who's Who - Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire, Oscar Wilde, Nelson Mandela, Sir Mick Jagger and Rod Stewart, who was infamously shown the red card for playing football in his suite.

Proudly part of the Belmond portfolio, the Copacabana Palace continues to dazzle all those who step across the threshold into its prestigious lobby. Rooms and suites are wonderfully airy, some with Juliet style balconies and private terraces overlooking Copacabana Beach, period furniture and original artwork is everywhere, and Michelin starred restaurants deliver Rio's finest gourmet experience.

But it is the hotel's seemingly effortless elegance and service which sets it apart. Coveted by celebrities, the Copacabana Palace is a celebration in its own right.

MAKE TIME FOR...

- Al fresco lunch around Rio's largest and most attractive swimming pool.
- Cocktail hour in the world-famous Piano Bar before dinner at either Ristorante Hotel Cipriani or Mee.
- The many restorative therapies offered by the hotel's immaculate spa.
- Copacabana Beach - sun loungers, umbrellas and assistants to look after your belongings are all part of the service.



HOTEL DAS CATARATAS, A BELMOND HOTEL, IGUASSU FALLS

"Poor Niagara!" American First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was reportedly moved to exclaim when she first set eyes on Iguassu's thunderous cascades. It may not have the same volume of water, but South America's most iconic natural attraction is without question the most scenically spectacular of all the planet's waterfalls.

And Hotel das Cataratas is without question the place to stay here. The only property located within the national park on the Brazilian side of the falls and just a short stroll away from the water's edge, this handsome Portuguese colonial residence sits in isolated splendour amidst orchid-strewn tropical gardens. There are 187 rooms and suites in total, divided between the main house and two forest and garden wings, from where the roar of Iguassu is a constant reminder of their proximity.

The park closes to visitors at night from 5pm to 9am, so hotel guests can enjoy the show, including the dramatic 'boa vista' horseshoe, more or less to themselves. A particular treat at dawn.

MAKE TIME FOR...

- Traditional gaucho barbeques at the poolside grill.
- Fine dining on the veranda of the main house as the sun sets behind the falls.
- Guided moonlight tours of the riverine forest and the falls.
- Helicopter flights over the falls and boat adventures on the Iguassu River below the fall

BELMOND'S PERU

Belmond's beautiful South American world extends beyond Brazil to Peru, where hotels fly the Belmond flag in all its key destinations.

There are six in total: Miraflores Park in Lima; Monasterio and Palacio Nazarenas in Cusco; Rio Sagrado in the Urubamba Valley; Sanctuary Lodge at the entrance to Machu Picchu; and Las Casitas in the Colca Canyon. Each has its own individual flair, but all are sprinkled with the same Belmond magic.

Belmond's Peru portfolio also includes two trains - the much-loved Hiram Bingham which runs between Cusco and Machu Picchu and the Andean Explorer linking Cusco, Lake Titicaca and Arequipa.

Planning an Andean adventure in Peru? Be sure to make it be exclusively and entirely Belmond!





COLOMBIA

A RISING STAR



San Agustin Archaeological Park



Tayrona

THE COLOMBIA EXPERIENCE
14 NIGHTS



INCLUDES

- 2 nights Bogotá
- 3 nights Coffee Region
- 3 nights Medellin
- 3 nights Cartagena
- 3 nights Tayrona National Park

WHEN TO GO

Year round, but best and driest from Dec - Jun

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

With political calm and non-stop flights from the UK endorsing a medley of attractions that include two stunning coastlines, exotic wildlife, lush interiors and a rich cultural heritage, it is of little surprise that Colombia is Latin America's brightest of rising stars.

Bogotá, the capital and main gateway, has plenty to keep you busy for the first few days. Essential sights include the Gold Museum, which holds some 24,000 priceless artefacts, and the nearby Salt Cathedral at Zipaquirá, but you'll love wandering around the historic neighbourhood of La Candelaria with its grand Spanish mansions, courtyards and gardens.

The funicular ride to the 3,100 metre summit of Cerro Monserrate for panoramic views across the city is also well worthwhile, as is a visit to the massive Botero Museum where works by no less than Picasso, Renoir, Dali, Chagall, Matisse and Monet are displayed.

Beyond Bogotá, you will discover traditional Indian villages hidden away in the hills of the Sierra Nevada, jungle-cloaked Caribbean beaches at Tayrona, remarkable stone statues in the San Agustin Archaeological Park...and a coffee culture that

is uniquely Colombian. Find time too for the fading charms of Mompox on the Magdalena River, birdwatching in the Utria National Park and Medellin, the 'City of Eternal Spring'.

The fairy tale port of Cartagena, built from the riches plundered by the Spanish and protected by seemingly impenetrable walls, is of course the jewel in Colombia's crown. Dating back to the 17th century at its core, atmospheric narrow streets lined with brightly coloured houses and overhung by flower-bedecked balconies are the facade to many a noble dwelling that hides its opulence behind thick oak doors. Several have now been turned into boutique hotels, with pools filling inner courtyards and rooftop bars overlooking the red tiled roofs and church towers of the old town towards the Manhattan-like profile of modern Cartagena beyond.

MORE TO SEE



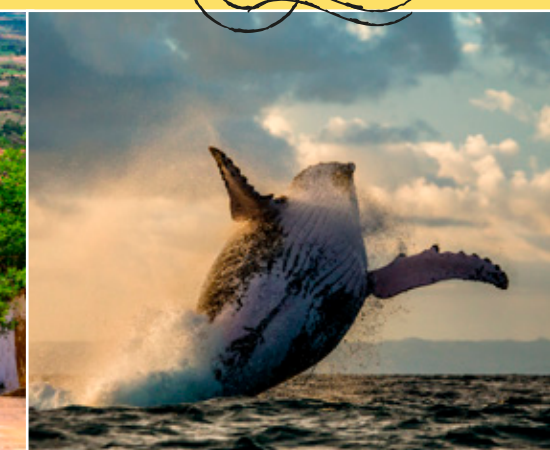
Providencia

It's tricky to get to, but that means you won't have to share this gorgeous slice of Caribbean paradise with the masses. Days can be spent scuba diving, hiking or simply lying in a hammock on one of the island's golden-sand beaches with a Club Colombia.



Barichara

Probably the most beautiful of Colombia's small Spanish colonial towns. Soaked in atmosphere, its cobblestone streets, whitewashed buildings and red-tiled roofs are picture perfect.



El Choco

Eco diverse and only accessible by air or sea, this Pacific paradise is a sanctuary for migratory birds, marine turtles and humpback whales, who calve here from July to October.

ECUADOR & THE GALAPAGOS

FROM THE AMAZON TO THE 'ENCHANTED ISLES'



THE ECUADOR EXPERIENCE
14 NIGHTS



INCLUDES

2 nights Quito
3 nights Amazon Jungle
2 nights Otavalo
7 nights Galapagos

WHEN TO GO

Year round, although the water can be cooler and choppiier in Galapagos from July to September.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

This peaceful and beautiful country is not just the Galapagos Islands. The high peaks of the Andean Cordillera run through the heart of Ecuador and divide the lush rainforests of the Amazon Basin from the rich farmlands of the coastal plain. Enchanting colonial towns and bustling Indian markets reveal a long and colourful history.

Most tours will begin in Quito, a vibrant and friendly city that was once the northern capital of the Inca Empire. Stay here in the historic Old Town with its narrow streets, grand plazas, churches and impressive mansions.

From Quito, you can fly east to Coca and the jungles of the Amazon Basin, a vast green carpet of rainforest laced with rivers and sanctuary to more than 400 exotic bird species. Lodges deep within the forest on the Rio Napo have hiking trails, suspended canopy walkways and canoes for the definitive Amazon experience.

Drive north from the capital through spectacular mountain scenery and you will discover a different world of traditional haciendas and Indian markets with their colourful array of woollen, leather and wooden goods. Most famous of these is Otavalo.

Of course, no visit to Ecuador could ever be complete without the Galapagos. Lying some 600 miles out in the Pacific, Darwin's 'enchanted isles' remain a living laboratory of evolution and a must-see destination for anyone interested in natural history. As award-winning travel writer Peter Hughes wrote, '...there are not enough buckets in the world to hold all the wish-lists on which the Galapagos appear.'

The islands are spread far and wide, many of them with their own endemic wildlife, so we suggest a week's cruise ideally on one of the smaller to medium sized vessels. Cabins can be booked on an individual basis or you can charter the whole boat exclusively.



MORE TO SEE

Hacienda Zuleta

Ride out on one of the hacienda's magnificent Zuleteno horses and explore this beautiful 4,500-acre private estate in the heart of the Ecuadorian Andes.



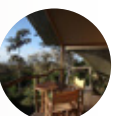
Cuenca

The colonial gem of Ecuador's south, the quaint city of Cuenca is one of the country's prettiest. Pick up an authentic Panama hat, which despite its misleading name, hails from the nearby town of Montecristi.



Galapagos land-based

An increasing number of lodges now offer land-based Galapagos packages. Pick of these are Finch Bay in Puerto Ayora, Galapagos Safari Camp in the highlands of Santa Cruz, and Scalesia on the western isle of Isabela.



MASHPI LODGE

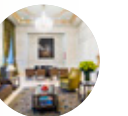
NATURE MEETS LUXURY AT ECUADOR'S
FINEST WILDERNESS RETREAT



METROPOLITAN TOURING

Mashpi Lodge is owned and run by our associates in Ecuador, Metropolitan Touring. The country's pioneering and leading travel specialist, Metropolitan's portfolio also includes:

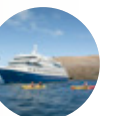
Casa Gangotena, Quito - elegant throwback to a bygone era in the heart of the Old Town with Art Deco furniture, rich carpets, flowing curtains and boutique mansion house charm.



Finch Bay, Galapagos - eco hotel close to the main port of Puerto Ayora on Santa Cruz Island, with private white sand beach and swimming pool, where you can hike, ride, mountain bike, scuba dive and kayak.



Santa Cruz II, Galapagos - brand new, 50-cabin cruise ship with chic modern interiors, indoor and outdoor dining, lounge bar, library, gym and two sumptuous hot tubs overlooking the ocean.



Isabela II and La Pinta, Galapagos - mid-size expedition yachts which both combine the sophistication of a larger ship with the intimacy and personal service of a smaller vessel.



Though only three hours from downtown Quito, this breathtaking creation of steel and glass, deep in the cloud forests of Choco, offers total immersion into an entirely natural world of biodiversity.

Set on a 3,200 acre private reserve of primary forest with an exotic wealth of fauna and flora, Mashpi was the creation of Roque Sevilla, a former mayor of Quito turned passionate environmentalist and lover of orchids. With floor to ceiling, wall to wall windows throughout, nothing competes with nature here, and you may well catch sight of howler monkeys flying through the jungle canopy from the indoor jacuzzi or wake up to birds of every shape and hue flitting just outside your bedroom.

As you might expect, Mashpi takes its eco credentials and commitment to sustainable luxury very seriously. Regular talks are given by the lodge's resident biologist in the Expedition Room, while a Laboratory functions as a research centre for the naturalist guides.

SOME KEY FACTS:

- 24 stylish and spacious rooms/suites with floor to ceiling and wall to wall windows.
- Stunning two storey restaurant where world-class cuisine is fused with the fruits of the jungle.
- Forest trails, soaring observation towers and thrilling treetop rides on both a tandem 'sky bike' and the 'Dragonfly' canopy gondola.
- Superb indoor spa as well as forest rock pools and waterfalls in the vicinity of the lodge for cooling off.





THE PERU EXPERIENCE
14 NIGHTS



- INCLUDES**
- 2 nights Lima
 - 2 nights Arequipa
 - 2 nights Colca Canyon
 - 2 nights Lake Titicaca
 - 2 nights Cusco
 - 1 night Machu Picchu
 - 3 nights Sacred Valley of the Incas

WHEN TO GO

Year round, although rain is likely in the mountains from Nov - Mar

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

The Incas may have never fathomed the wheel, but they were still able to create one of the world's great wonders in Machu Picchu, high above the Urubamba River and surrounded on all sides by the deep green of the Amazon cloud forest.

The 'lost city' will always be, and rightly so, Peru's star attraction, but this beautiful Andean country has so much more to offer. Beginning with its capital Lima, founded in 1535 by the Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro and a city of colonial squares, baroque churches and fine dining.

To the south of Lima is the 'white city' of Arequipa, on the edge of the high altiplano and ringed by volcanoes. Essential viewing here is the Santa Catalina Monastery, built in 1579 and still home to the nuns of the Dominican Second Order. Arequipa is also the stepping stone for the Colca Canyon. Twice the depth of the Grand Canyon, with Indian villages clinging to its steeply terraced flanks, this is the place to see the majestic Andean condor wheeling in thermals high above the valley floor.

Continue east from Colca across the Altiplano and you will reach Lake Titicaca, at 13,000 feet above sea level the highest navigable

in the world, from where the Inca god Viracocha arose to create the Earth. The indigenous Uros still live on artificial floating islands built from reeds that grow around the edge of the lake.

A slow train north through the Andes will then bring you to Cusco, historic capital of the Inca Empire, major hub for the Spanish Conquistadores and a delight to explore. It is from Cusco that you make the pilgrimage, either by train or on foot, to the sacred Urubamba Valley and to Machu Picchu for that 'time stood still' moment when you first set eyes on this fabulous mountain-top citadel.

MORE TO SEE



The Amazon

Cruise the Peruvian Amazon aboard the luxury Aqua Aria and Aqua Nera and enjoy such cutting edge luxury as river facing floor to ceiling windows in your Design Suite, outdoor jacuzzi and fine dining.



Trekking

Not just the Inca Trail! It may be a classic, but if you prefer not to camp, then Mountain Lodges of Peru offer an alternative path to Machu Picchu via the Salkantay Valley.



The North

Neglected by most, but such pre-Inca marvels as the Royal Tombs of Sipan and the citadel of Chan Chan are within easy reach of colonial Trujillo.



Belmond's Andean Explorer

South America's only luxury sleeper train linking Cusco with Lake Titicaca, Arequipa and the Colca Canyon.

BOLIVIA

HIGH AND WILD IN THE ANDES

“South America’s largest percentage of indigenous people live here, bringing colour and vibrancy to the streets.”

THE BOLIVIA EXPERIENCE
12 NIGHTS



INCLUDES

2 nights Santa Cruz
2 nights Sucre
1 night Potosi
3 nights Salar de Uyuni
2 nights La Paz
2 nights Lake Titicaca

WHEN TO GO

Year round, although rain is likely in the mountains from Nov - Mar

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

Tiwanaku

Bolivia may have much in common with its neighbour Peru - both share a rich Inca heritage, Spanish colonial influence and stunning mountain scenery - but strangely few plaudits come the way of this isolated country high in the Andes.

It is worthy of so many more. Stretching from the matted jungles of Amazonia in the north to the cracked, arid expanse of the Uyuni salt flats in the south, and split in two by the peaks of the Andean Cordillera, Bolivia’s natural beauty is superlative. Inca and Spanish colonial treasures are everywhere. And South America’s largest percentage of indigenous people live here, bringing colour and vibrancy to the streets.

With its history rooted in silver, it is no surprise that the magnificent city of Potosi garners much of what little attention there is. Founded on the vast deposits discovered by the Spanish Conquistadores beneath Cerro Rico, echoes of Potosi’s past still remain in its narrow, winding streets, wonderful baroque churches and in the mines themselves, where working conditions have changed little since Imperial times.

But you will need to stay longer and travel further if you wish to gain the key to Bolivia’s many secrets: the sacred waters and islands of Lake Titicaca on the western border with Peru; the Inca and pre-Inca ruins of Santa Cruz and Tiwanaku; La Paz* of course, the country’s sky high capital and an enchanting mix of colonial architecture and lively Indian street markets; the museums, restaurants and cobbled streets of Sucre; and the timeless, wondrous landscapes of Salar de Uyuni, where you stay on the edge of the pan in local village hotels constructed from salt.

** the world’s highest capital city stands at more than 3,500 metres above sea level, and its airport is even higher at 4,100 metres, so it is best to fly first to Santa Cruz at a more modest 400 metres!*



Salar de Uyuni

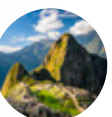


Sucre

MORE TO SEE

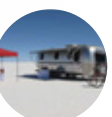
Peru

Peru and Bolivia combine perfectly. You can begin in Cusco and Machu Picchu, head south across Lake Titicaca to La Paz, then continue on through the High Andes to Potosi, Sucre and Salar de Uyuni.



Airstream Campers

Spend the night on the Uyuni salt flats in an Airstream Camper - 25 feet of luxury plus private guide and chef. It’s a unique way to experience the unearthly beauty and haunting solitude of the pan.



Atacama Desert

It’s possible to continue south from Uyuni into Chile’s Atacama Desert for more jaw-dropping lunar and volcanic landscapes.



Witches Market

Very strange, somewhat stomach churning local Andean market in La Paz, where witches in dark hats sell the raw ingredients used in rituals to call upon the spirits of the Aymara world!





Atacama



Torres del Paine

CHILE

LAND OF EXTREMES

Squeezed between the Andes and the Pacific Ocean, and affectionately labelled 'the thin country' by poet Pablo Neruda, Chile is never more than 100 miles wide but extends some 2,500 miles from north to south. This is a land of fire and ice - within its borders are the driest deserts on Earth, lush expanses of alpine forest, spectacular glaciers, isolated coastal fjords and more than 2,000 volcanoes.

Its cosmopolitan capital, Santiago, sits roughly in the middle. Although there is little to keep you here before heading north or south, make time for the historic port of Valparaiso and the wineries of the Central Valley, all within easy reach of the city.

To the north are the rugged lunar landscapes of the Atacama. The driest place on Earth is also one of its most spectacular - volcanoes soar to 7,000 metres above sea level, mighty geysers fire salvoes skyward from the high plains of El Tatio, salt flats extend for ever and whitewashed adobe Indian villages offer welcome respite from the harsh desert climate. Sunsets over the geological wonder that is the Valley of the Moon and night skies to dazzle you only add to the drama of it all.

To the south is Patagonia, an altogether different world, where sculpted granite peaks tower over the pampas, ancient forests of beech bend to the wind, and mile wide glaciers pour from the Ice Cap into lakes of iridescent beauty. The world famous Torres del Paine National Park lies at the heart of this awesome environment and offers the definitive Patagonian experience.

The journey from north to south is long, so it makes sense to break it with a day or two in and around Puerto Varas. This picturesque lakeside town nestles in the shadow of Osorno Volcano amidst the verdant alpine beauty of Chile's Lake District.

THE CHILE EXPERIENCE 14 NIGHTS



INCLUDES

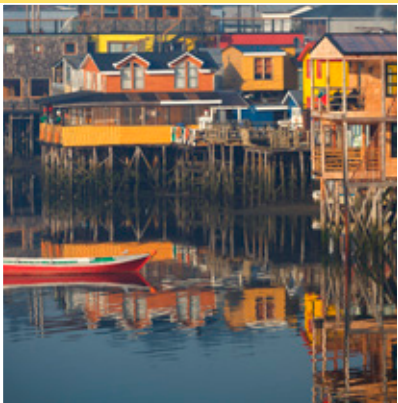
- 2 night Santiago
- 4 nights Atacama Desert
- 2 nights Puerto Varas, Lake District
- 4 nights Torres del Paine, Patagonia
- 2 nights Wine Region

WHEN TO GO

Year round, but winter weather can be extreme in Patagonia, so best Oct - Apr

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

MORE TO SEE



Chiloé

Wooden churches, brightly painted houses on stilts, a rare insight into the unique folklore of the Mapuches, Chile's largest ethnic community, are just some of this island archipelago's attractions. You might even meet the occasional sorcerer.

Easter Island

It may be as far out in the Pacific as the entire length of Chile and a five hour flight from Santiago, but distance should be no barrier if you are a serious 'head hunter'! Explora Rapa Nui has its own resident guides and is the place to stay.

Australis Cruises

Join a four or eight night cruise from Punta Arenas to Ushuaia and explore the wild coastal waterways of Tierra del Fuego at the 'utmost end of the Earth'.

Carretera Austral

The name given to Chile's Route 7, 1,240kms of partly paved road snaking its way through the mountainous frontier country of northern Patagonia. Hire a suitably robust vehicle and enjoy the ride!

explora VALLE SAGRADO

A LUXURY RETREAT IN THE HEART
OF PERU'S SACRED VALLEY



Stay at this delightful hacienda style hotel between Cusco and Machu Picchu, and you are perfectly positioned to explore the glorious legacy of the Incas.

Built in sympathy with its natural surroundings, explora Valle Sagrado nestles among cornfields, Inca terraces and dramatic snow-capped peaks. Guestrooms are lined in wood for maximum tranquillity, with no Wi-Fi or televisions to distract from the spectacular views. The restaurant honours traditional Andean ingredients, with an authentic menu developed by acclaimed Peruvian chef Virgilio Martínez.

The focus at any explora property is on outdoor adventure, and Valle Sagrado is no exception. There are more than 40 expertly guided 'explorations' to choose from that will take you to isolated villages and sacred Inca sites, biking along the Urubamba River and trekking the surrounding mountains. The valley is nearly 2,000 feet lower in altitude than Cusco, so you'll have more energy for all that is on offer!

And at the end of the day, the Pumacahua Bath House awaits - once a colonial manor but since meticulously restored to house the hotel's cutting-edge spa facilities.

SOME KEY FACTS:

- Off-grid location just outside the small village of Urquillos in the Sacred Valley.
- Fashioned after a 17th century Spanish colonial hacienda, with 50 tranquil rooms that all have jetted bathtubs and panoramic views.
- Daily, small group excursions to archaeological sites, colourful Indian market towns and ancient salt flats.
- Rejuvenating treatments in the spa's pools, saunas and steam rooms - the perfect antidote to the wear and tear of a typical explora day.
- Meals, drinks, transport and guiding automatically included in the cost of your stay (as is the case at any explora property).



explora Atacama



Patagonia National Park, Chile



explora El Chalten



Uyuni Lodge, Bolivia



explora Patagonia



explora Rapa Nui

explora IN CHILE, ARGENTINA AND BOLIVIA

explora Rapa Nui

Gateway to the mystical wonders of Easter Island, with 30 rooms that reflect the silence, privacy and space of the surrounding landscape.

Guests are free to plan their days from an innovative menu of excursions that lead to volcanoes, beaches and the island's megalithic moai sculptures.

explora El Chalten

Imitating the traditional estancias of Argentine Patagonia, this 20-room hideaway flaunts free-flowing wooden interiors and views towards the Electric Valley and Marconi Glacier.

Tucked into the Los Huemules Nature Reserve just north of the hiker's paradise that is El Chaltén, skilled explora guides lead ice trekking, rock climbing and overland adventures.

Uyuni Lodge, Bolivia

Accommodating twelve guests in the foothills of Tunupa Volcano, explora's only Bolivian lodge commands extraordinary views across the world's largest salt flat.

Operated in partnership with local families, days are spent biking across the mirror-like Salar de Uyuni, climbing Tunupa's multi-coloured slopes and experiencing local village life.

Patagonia National Park, Chile

Energy efficient and sustainably constructed from local materials, explora's new lodge in the Chacabuco Valley has conservation at its core.

Guests are invited to immerse themselves in the unspoilt beauty of the Aysén Region and to join off-the-beaten-track 'explorations' that delve deep into this remote corner of Chilean Patagonia.

explora Atacama

Set on 42 acres of Aymara land just outside the village of San Pedro de Atacama in northern Chile with a choice of 50 suites or rooms, four interconnected swimming pools, and all the right eco and adventure credentials.

The perfect base for exploring the driest spot on Planet Earth.

explora Patagonia

Cutting edge design and the monumental architecture of the Paine National Park blend seamlessly at explora's flagship property on the shores of turquoise Lake Pehoe.

You can also choose from more than 40 guided hikes and horseback rides in Chile's most famous natural wonder.

ARGENTINA

'LAND OF THE SIX CONTINENTS'

"Ever since Fernando de Magallanes first described its wonders in the early 16th century, this vast and magnificent wilderness of grassland, forest, mountain, lake and glacier has always held a very special appeal."

THE ARGENTINA EXPERIENCE
14 NIGHTS



INCLUDES

2 nights Buenos Aires
3 nights El Calafate, Patagonia
3 nights Bariloche, Lake District
3 nights Mendoza, Wine Region
2 nights Iguassu Falls

WHEN TO GO

The south (Patagonia) from Oct - Apr, the north (Mendoza and Salta) year round

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

MORE TO SEE

Ushuaia

The southernmost city in the world, provincial capital of Tierra del Fuego and the starting point for most Antarctic expedition cruises (see page 30).



Valdes Peninsula

Vast penguin, sea lion and bird colonies have made the wild Atlantic shores of this magnificent marine sanctuary their home. Southern right whales also come inshore to breed here from June to November.



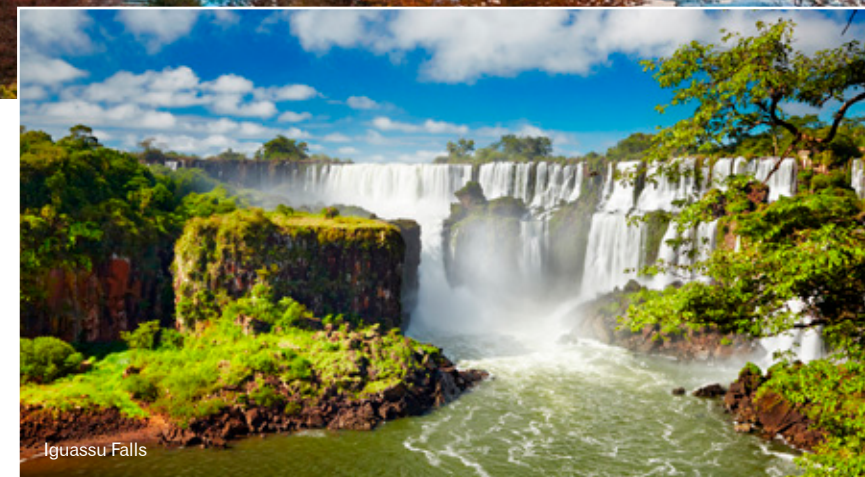
Go Gaucho

For a unique insight into traditional Argentine life, spend a few days on a family run estancia and ride out with the local gaucho cattle herders.



The North

A spectacular but well kept secret. Highlights include the beautiful colonial town of Salta and the Ibera Wetlands, twice the size of Florida's Everglades and rich in birdlife.



Iguassu Falls



Entre Cielos, Mendoza



Recoleta, Buenos Aires

Argentina conjures up images of sultry tango dancers, gauchos riding across endless pampa, hillsides ribbed by vines, vast glaciers calving into cobalt blue lakes and soaring Andean peaks. Such is the scale of the country and its varied topography that it is known as the 'land of the six continents'.

Most Argentine adventures will begin in Buenos Aires. Although short on big box office attractions - indeed the city's wide boulevards and belle epoque architecture have more in common with Paris than Latin America - you'll want to explore the distinctive neighbourhoods of elegant Recoleta, whose famous cemetery is home to Eva Peron's mausoleum, and the more bohemian San Telmo. And do take in one of the many tango shows. Even have a lesson!

But it is to Patagonia at the extreme southern tip of the South American continent that most of us are drawn. Ever since Fernando de Magallanes first described its wonders in the early 16th century, this vast and magnificent wilderness of grassland, forest, mountain, lake and glacier has always held

a very special appeal. Stay in El Calafate on the southern end of Lago Argentino and you can explore such iconic Patagonian landmarks as Mount Fitz Roy and the Perito Moreno Glacier.

The 'land of the six continents' does of course boast other notable attractions. Further up the spine of the Andean Cordillera are Bariloche and Mendoza, respective capitals of Argentina's stunning 'lake district' and wine country, where you can fish for trout, ride along mountain trails and sample some of the finest vino tinto.

And at Iguassu Falls, where the borders of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay meet in a thunderous display of nature's power, you have one of the most awesome spectacles on the planet.



URUGUAY

SMALL, STABLE
AND SOPHISTICATED



Bahía Vlk, Jose Ignacio



Colonia del Sacramento

South America's smallest country really doesn't get the overseas recognition it deserves. Progressive, stable and safe, Uruguay has long been a favourite holiday destination with its neighbours who flock to the beaches and sophisticated resorts of glamorous Punta Del Este.

Start in Montevideo with its gardens, sweeping boulevards and historic Cuidad Vieja. The capital also has a thriving music and dance culture - locals insist it was Uruguay, not Argentina that created the tango! You can then choose to stay east or head west.

The east offers a mix of traditional estancia life in the secluded hills of Lavalleja and the headier atmosphere of Jose Ignacio, a sleepy fishing village out of season but a fashionable magnet for surfers and sun seekers from November to February. Highlights of the west include picturesque Colonia del Sacramento on the Rio de la Plata and the vineyards and Jesuit ruins of Carmelo.

THE URUGUAY EXPERIENCE
10 NIGHTS

INCLUDES

1 night Colonia del Sacramento
2 nights Carmelo
2 nights Montevideo
2 nights Rocha
3 night José Ignacio

WHEN TO GO

Year round, but best from Oct - Mar
(beaches are busy Dec - Feb)

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

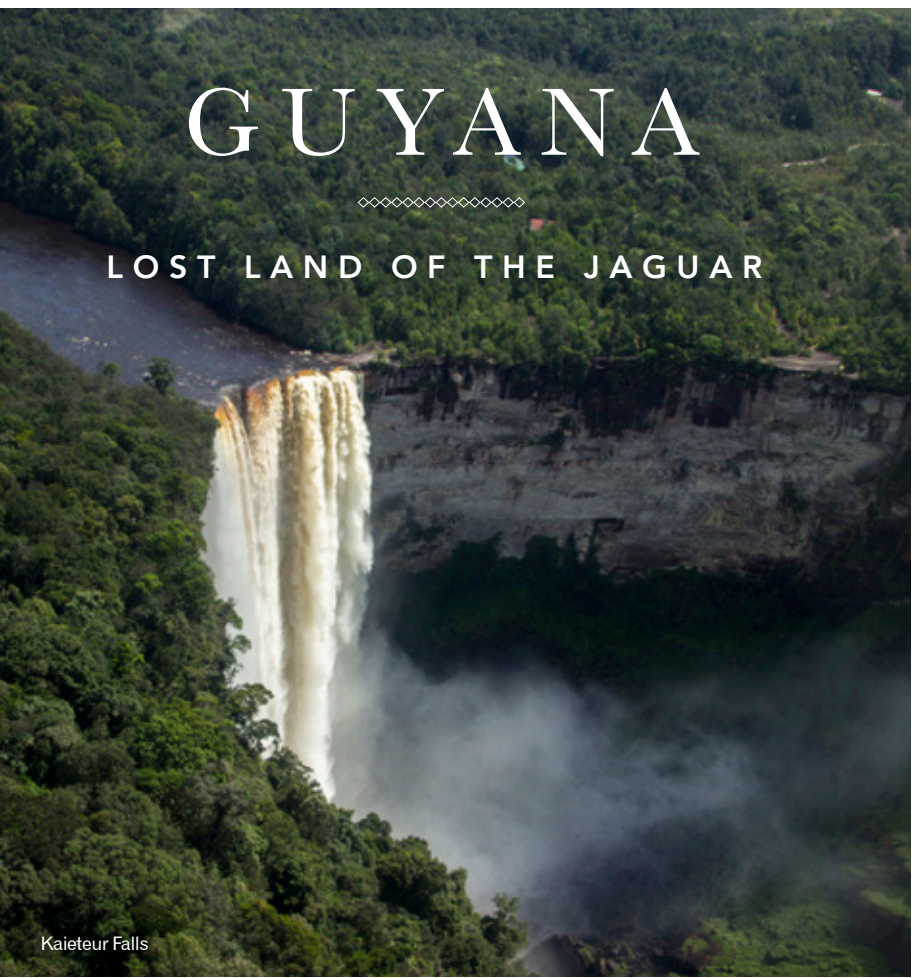
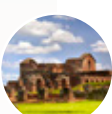
MORE TO SEE

Buenos Aires
Argentina's capital is a two hour ride by ferry from Montevideo across the Rio de la Plata estuary dividing the two countries.

Ride Uruguay
The best way to explore the country's rolling grassland pastures, shifting sand dunes and deserted Atlantic beaches.

Safaris last for up to a week, nights are spent in authentic working estancias, the Criollo horses are sure footed, and skilled local gauchos keep you safe and entertained. It's a very special adventure!

Paraguay
Largely overlooked maybe, and the last four letters of its name the only tenuous link to Uruguay, but there is much to discover here in the landlocked heart of the continent - remote Jesuit missions, mighty rivers and waterfalls, the seasonal wetlands of the Chaco...



GUYANA

LOST LAND OF THE JAGUAR

Kaieteur Falls



Giant anteater



Georgetown

Guyana is truly one of Latin America's last frontiers. Independent of the UK since 1966, but still English speaking, it is an intoxicating mix of old-fashioned hospitality, cricket, music, great rum and the most remarkable natural wonders imaginable.

Its capital Georgetown is gateway for both the spectacular Jasper-Orinduik Falls on the Brazilian border and Kaieteur, the world's tallest single-drop waterfall and more than four times the height of Niagara. The southern reaches of the country are cloaked by the vast savannahs of Rupunini, an extraordinary biological hotspot and home to giant anteater, giant river otter, armadillo, anaconda and black caiman. And at a remote rainforest lodge on the Iwokrama River within a million-acre reserve, you can search for the elusive jaguar on foot and by boat.

'Few places on the planet,' according to Lonely Planet, 'offer raw adventure as authentic as deeply forested Guyana. It's well worth the mud, bumps and sweat.'

THE GUYANA EXPERIENCE
12 NIGHTS

INCLUDES

2 nights Georgetown
1 night Kaieteur Falls
4 nights Iwokrama Forest
4 nights Rupunini
1 night Georgetown

WHEN TO GO

Wet and humid throughout the year, but best Aug - Nov and Feb - Apr

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

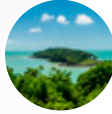


Guianan squirrel monkey

MORE TO SEE

French Guiana and Suriname
Combine Guyana with the rainforests and Maroon villages of neighbouring Suriname or with French Guiana, home to the Guyana Space Centre and notorious Devil's Island. What Papillon would have given for a rocket rather than a barrel!

You can also fly from Georgetown to Trinidad, Barbados or Antigua if you need some Caribbean chill after the jungle.





ANTARCTICA

THE GREAT WHITE CONTINENT



Weddell seal



THE ANTARCTIC EXPERIENCE
12+ NIGHTS



INCLUDES

2 nights Buenos Aires
1 night Ushuaia
Antarctic cruise*
1 night Buenos Aires

*Cruises range from 8 to 21 nights

WHEN TO GO

Only possible during the austral summer
from Oct - April

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

There is nothing on this Earth that can quite compare with the lonely splendour and majesty of Antarctica. Millions have been fed a regular diet of superb natural history TV series, but few have experienced at first-hand the sheer magnitude and awesome beauty of the Great White Continent.

It is a world of rugged beauty and solitude, of jaw-dropping ice sculptures the size of cathedrals, horizon-wide glaciers, icy blue-black waters and an infinity of whiteness. But Antarctica is no lifeless, frozen desert.

Here, in this land of perpetual snow and ice, some of our most enchanting creatures survive to bring colour and sound to an otherwise harsh and silent environment. Beaches resound to the raucous bellows of elephant, fur and leopard seals, humpback and minke whales glide effortlessly through the still, near frozen waters, and colonies of Emperor, Gentoo and Adelie penguins congregate in huge numbers on the vast snow plains. The animals have never been hunted and are remarkably unafraid of human visitors, making Antarctica a paradise for photographers and wildlife enthusiasts.

The best way to explore Antarctica is on one of the specialist expedition ships that have been constructed specifically for polar cruising. Such vessels are superbly equipped for the rigorous weather conditions which can be encountered at the bottom of the world and have a limited passenger capacity to minimise impact on the fragile ecosystem. Each cruise is accompanied by a select team of lecturers who are qualified experts on the natural history of the region, lead regular excursions ashore and give a series of daily talks.

Most ships sail from Ushuaia on the Argentine island of Tierra del Fuego and head straight across the notorious Drake Passage to the Antarctica Peninsula, but if time and money permit, book your berth on one that diverts via the sub-Antarctic islands of South Georgia and the Falklands.



King penguins, South Georgia Island

MORE TO SEE

White Desert

The ultimate polar adventure - private jet flights from Cape Town, luxury 'pod' camping deep in the interior, kite skiing, ice climbing, Emperor penguins and even the South Pole are all on this most exclusive (and expensive!) of Antarctic menus.



Fly/cruise

Avoid the infamous Drake Passage and fly from the Chilean port of Punta Arenas to King George Island for a 5-night cruise. The Peninsula is just a day's sail away.



Ross Sea

Follow in the wake of Scott and Shackleton on a month long Heritage Expedition from New Zealand to the Ross Sea. Their historic huts, here on the remote eastern shores of Antarctica, are as they were more than a century ago and define the heroic age of polar exploration.





THE ARCTIC

A MYTHIC APPEAL

“...the polar bear has achieved iconic status as the Lord of the Arctic.”

THE ARCTIC EXPERIENCE
7+ NIGHTS



INCLUDES

7-21 night Arctic cruise*

*Cruises range from 7 to 21 nights

WHEN TO GO

From Jun - Sep, although pack ice can be a problem at the start of the season

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

The Arctic...a vast ice-choked ocean defined by the frozen wastelands at the northern extremities of the Americas, Eurasia and their outlying islands. Alaska, Canada, Greenland, Iceland, Scandinavia and Russia all own a part, and access is relatively straightforward when compared with Antarctica, but this region of immense proportions and mythic appeal remains one of the world's most unique eco-systems.

The Arctic's wildlife defines much of this mythic appeal. The single-tusked narwhal, it is said, inspired the legend of the unicorn, the walrus amuses and intrigues, while the polar bear has achieved iconic status as the 'Lord of the Arctic'. Equally intriguing, however is the cultural diversity. Twenty or more different indigenous peoples have called the Arctic their home for millennia, and any expedition is incomplete without an insight into the impact of man on the region and the region's impact on man.

Again, the best way to explore the Arctic is aboard a specialist expedition ship. Cruises run during the summer months from June to September and can be broadly divided into two distinct areas - the Canadian Arctic to the west coast of Greenland, and the Scandinavian Arctic to the east coast of Greenland.

The Canadian Arctic is a savage land of rock and ice where whales and walrus thrive, and isolated Inuit villages dot the remote coastlines. Itineraries will include such 'landmarks' as the infamous Northwest Passage, Resolute Bay, Baffin Island and the Torngat Mountains Reserve, Canada's most remote national park.

Wilderness and wildlife astound in equal measure in the Scandinavian Arctic. The narrow fjords and drifting ice floes of the Spitsbergen Archipelago, a remote cluster of islands set entirely within the Arctic Circle, are home to around 5,000 polar bears, while Greenland's eastern coastline is an incomparably beautiful world of calving glaciers and icebergs, snow-capped mountains, alpine flowers, narwhals, abundant birdlife and even a unique sub-species of reindeer.

MORE TO SEE



Northern Lights

This celestial phenomenon is the main draw for winter visitors to Arctic Lapland, closely followed by Father Christmas, but you can also husky sled, snowmobile and even heli ski in the wilderness of the Abisko mountains.



Churchill

Every autumn, more than a thousand polar bears gather here to hunt for their staple diet of fur seal on the frozen waters of Hudson Bay. To observe the world's largest, land living carnivores, up close from the safety of a 'tundra buggy', is a truly amazing spectacle.



The North Pole

For those who wish to join that select group who have stood atop the world, Ponant operate icebreaker expeditions to the North Pole and also through the Northeast Passage, the elusive route to the Orient that for centuries drew adventurers from safe harbours into the great unknown.

POLAR LATITUDES

FOR THE ULTIMATE IN ANTARCTIC ADVENTURE



Bringing effortless luxury, superior comfort and real adventure to the world of small-ship polar exploration.

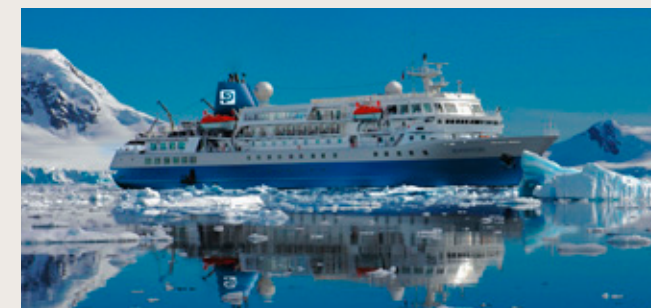
Cruising the frozen waters of Antarctica for over a decade, Polar Latitudes have an understanding of the continent that is second to none. Their two ships come superbly equipped with state-of-the-art stabilizers and ice-strengthened hulls, which facilitate a range of marine experiences that extend to the Antarctic Peninsula, Antarctic Circle, South Georgia, Falkland Islands and infamous Drake Passage.

Founder owned and operated, what really sets Polar Latitudes apart is their focus on people. You'll be welcomed aboard not just as a passenger but as a fellow explorer joining the ranks of experienced expedition leaders, world-class marine biologists, Antarctic historians and award-winning photography coaches. All of whom share a deep love of this frozen wilderness.

Alongside an impressive loyalty programme and high staff-to-guest ratio, this is a small expedition cruise operator with a strong responsibility ethos. Onboard auctions to support the organisations that protect Antarctica's wildlife are a regular feature, and passengers are encouraged to join the Citizen Science initiative - an informative, interactive and fun way to help with vital research on climate change the gathering of critical on-site data.



THE SHIPS



MS Seaventure

With the highest ice class rating available to a passenger vessel, the MS Seaventure is perfectly designed for navigating Antarctica's remotest coves, bays and channels.

139 passengers are accommodated in all outside-facing staterooms, with beautifully designed common areas and a heated saltwater pool to enjoy between excursions. The dining experience is also world-class, with delicious meals served alfresco on the Lido Deck in good weather.

KEY FEATURES:

- 1-A Super Ice Class rating (the highest available)
- Beautifully designed and very spacious public areas
- Heated outdoor pool, classic wooden sauna and fitness centre
- Custom-built Citizen Science lab
- Ample storage space for kayaking, snowshoeing and camping equipment



MS Island Sky

With the atmosphere of a private yacht, Italian-built Island Sky represents the epitome of comfort and style. Suites are exceptionally spacious and luxuriously fitted with plush beds, wood panelling and marble-clad bathrooms.

Many feature tinted sliding glass doors that open directly onto the outer deck - perfect for glimpsing passing dolphins or whales at a moment's notice - whilst roll stabilizers and 'redundant core technology' ensure a smooth and stable passage.

KEY FEATURES:

- Eight different cabin categories accommodating a maximum of 112 passengers
- Owner's, Penthouse and Veranda Suites have private balconies; Promenade and Deluxe Suites tinted sliding glass doors
- Ensuite bathrooms with marble-topped vanities and walk-in showers
- Live entertainment in the bar and lounge
- Panoramic top deck observation platform

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CARL SAGAN





Chichen Itza

MEXICO

A COUNTRY WITH SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

“...Chichen Itza, the most restored of all Mayan sites whose famous ball court and towering pyramids have been reclaimed from the matted greenery of the surrounding jungle.”

THE MEXICO EXPERIENCE
14 NIGHTS



INCLUDES
3 nights Mexico City
3 nights Oaxaca
3 nights Merida
5 nights Riviera Maya

WHEN TO GO
Best in the drier and cooler winter months
from Nov - Apr

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

MORE TO SEE

Most hop on a plane to Cancun and venture little further than the white sand beaches and aquamarine seas of the Yucatan Peninsula. But delightful as the prospect of some welcome Caribbean winter sunshine may be, the world's eighth largest country has so much more to offer.

Mexico City for one. Exciting, vibrant, and bursting with history ancient and modern, we recommend that you stay here in the fashionable Polanco district with its array of boutique shops, restaurants and galleries. 'Must sees' are the incredible Museum of Anthropology in Chapultepec Park, a superb showcase of the country's pre-Columbian roots, the celebrated Basilica de Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe, and the pyramids at Teotihuacan.

To the south of the capital lies the elegant university city of Oaxaca (pronounced 'Wahaca'), home to the monumental Zapotec ruins of Monte Alban and Mitla. To the east, the colonial capital of Merida, a delightful place of mansions, churches, cobbled courtyards and sweeping boulevards built on the wealth of 19th century sisal merchants.

At Merida, you'll be on the tortilla flat Yucatan shoulder of the country and within touching distance of Chichen Itza, the most restored of all Mayan sites whose famous ball court and towering pyramids have been reclaimed from the matted greenery of the surrounding jungle.

Of course, you will not want to fly home without dipping your toes in the warm waters of either the Mexican Riviera on the Pacific seaboard or the Maya Riviera, the stretch of Caribbean coastline on the Yucatan where the more popular resorts are concentrated. It makes for a suitably indulgent finale to any journey through Mexico - the 'country with something for everyone'.



Mexico City



Tulum

El Chepe
A spectacular, two day, 400-mile train journey that skirts the magnificent mile-deep copper canyons of the Sierra Madre, home to the indigenous Tarahumara Indians.

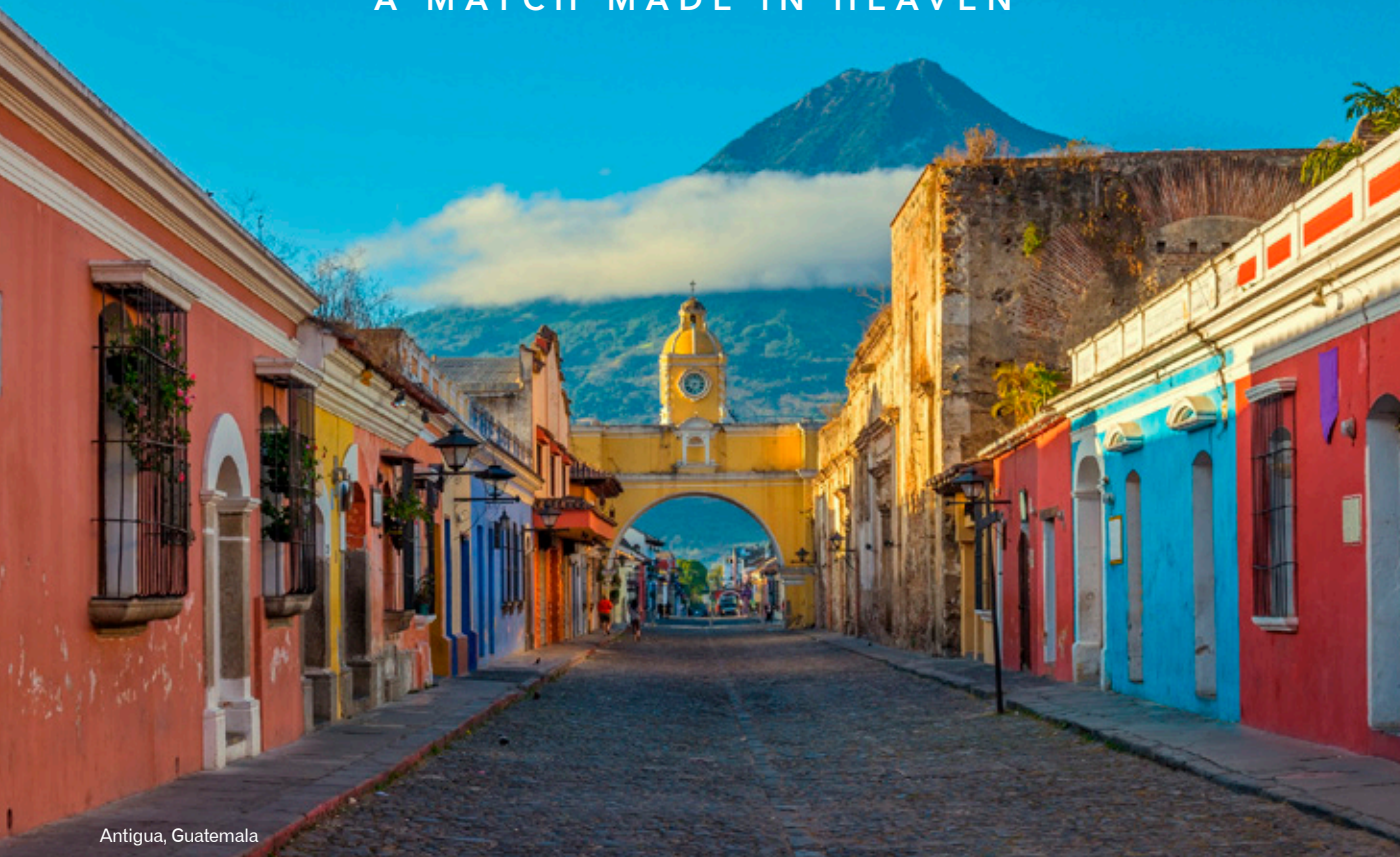
Baja California
A 1,200km splinter of land dividing the Sea of Cortez from the Pacific Ocean. Hollywood A-listers have been coming to Los Cabos on Baja's southern tip since the fifties, grey whales (who migrate here from the Arctic in the winter) for a little longer!

Delve deeper...
...into Mexico's rich historical legacy, first at the beautiful 16th century towns of Queretaro and San Miguel de Allende, and then at Palenque where toucans and howler monkeys share the jungle with this magnificent Mayan site.



GUATEMALA & BELIZE

A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN



Antigua, Guatemala



Ambergris Caye, Belize

One with magnificent Maya ruins and mountain landscapes, the other a reef and rainforest paradise, but both 'supreme wonders' that are tailor made for one another.

GUATEMALA

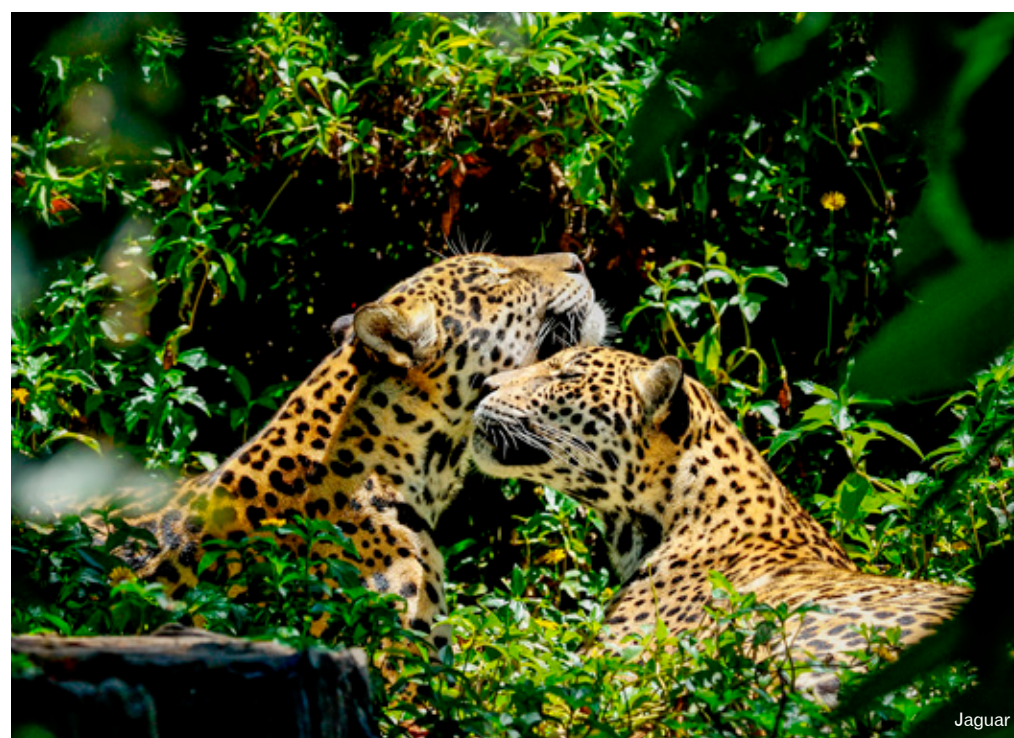
Guatemala is seductively beautiful, its unique and enduring pre-conquest Maya traditions of language and dress adding vitality to an outstanding array of world class attractions. Attractions which include the iconic ruins at Tikal, reclaimed from the barely penetrable rainforests of El Peten, and the remarkable colonial treasures of Antigua. Second only in New World importance to Mexico City and Lima, Antigua's baroque churches, convents, mansions, arches and arcades lining its gridded cobbled streets define the sheer magnificence of Spanish imperialism.

The country's scenic jewel is Lake Atitlan, described by Aldous Huxley as 'Como with the additional embellishments of several immense volcanoes.' Dotted around its shores are picturesque local villages and colourful Indian markets such as Chichicastenango, a dazzling feast of traditional crafts and fabrics.

BELIZE

Crossing the border at Melchor de Mencos, you enter a different but equally seductive world of jaguar preserves and unbroken coral reefs. The Maya were here too, but Belize's charms are more natural, more physical, with lush rainforests home to rare flora and fauna and white sand beaches washed clean by the azure waters of the Caribbean.

You will also discover some wonderful places to stay - the secluded riverside lodge at Chaa Creek on a private nature reserve in the shadow of the Maya Mountains for example, and Victoria House, a grand colonial residence that exudes an air of relaxed barefoot elegance beside a quiet stretch of beach on the reef-protected paradise of Ambergris Caye.



Jaguar

THE GUATEMALA & BELIZE EXPERIENCE 14 NIGHTS



INCLUDES

3 nights Antigua
2 nights Lake Atitlan
2 nights Peten / Tikal
3 nights Cayo District
4 nights Ambergris Caye

WHEN TO GO

Significant rainfall from Jun - Oct, so best Nov - May

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

MORE TO SEE

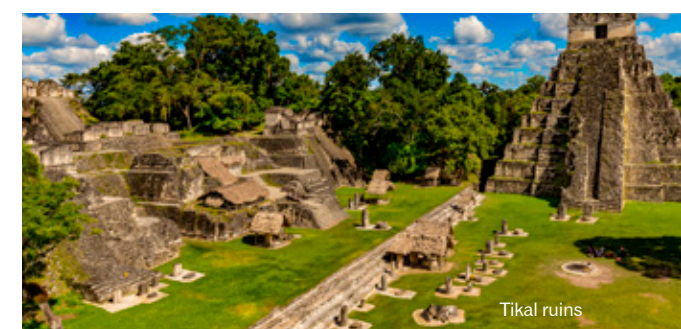
Lighthouse Reef

The farthest offshore of Belize's three atoll reefs, but easily accessible from the mainland and world famous for its Great Blue Hole dive.



Chan Chich

Built on the site of an ancient Maya city within a 250,000-acre nature reserve near Gallon Jug. Good chance of seeing the elusive jaguar here.



Tikal ruins



THE FAMILY COPPOLA HIDEAWAYS

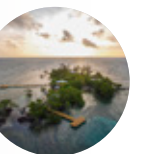
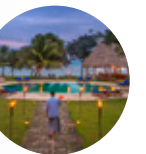
The Family Coppola has four other hideaways in Latin America - three in Belize and one in Argentina:

Turtle Inn - white sands dissolve into clear Caribbean water at this blissful Belizean beachside retreat close to the fishing village of Placencia.

Coral Caye - two to ten guests can enjoy a private island Robinson Crusoe experience here, just a short hop across the water from Turtle Inn.

Blancaneaux Lodge - once Coppola's private family hideaway, where you can search for lost Maya temples and the elusive jaguar in the remote jungles of Belize's Mountain Pine Ridge Reserve.

Jardin Escondido - seven stylish bedrooms and colour drenched gardens provide a boutique oasis of calm at the heart of Buenos Aires' vibrant Palermo Soho district.



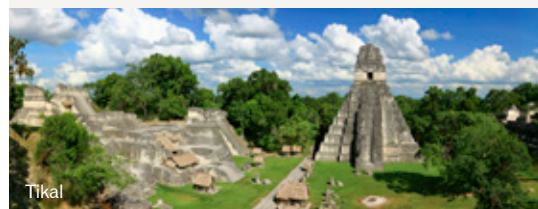
Simple pleasures await you at movie director Francis Ford Coppola's jungle outpost near the world-famous Maya ruins of Tikal.

There is little here to concern your carbon footprint. Just parakeets for background music, howler monkeys for alarm clocks, and ten naturally built thatched casitas furnished with local fabrics, carvings and masks. Tucked away in the rainforest with glorious views of Lago Peten Itza and Guatemala's greenery from your casita's private decking, La Lancha offers a back-to-nature experience tinged with just enough luxury in one of the world's wildest and most beautiful spots.

It is a wonderful place to simply relax, catch your breath and enjoy the simpler pleasures of life, but the more active can ride, jungle trek and kayak on the lake if they wish. And don't miss Tikal, just a 45-minute drive from the lodge and one of the Maya Empire's most magnificent creations.

SOME KEY FACTS:

- La Lancha is an hour's drive from the nearest airport at Flores.
- The lodge has a library, inviting split level pool, traditional Temazcal (Maya sauna) and thatched open sided restaurant with equally wonderful lake views and locally sourced food.
- Guided tours to Tikal, boat trips across the lake to local villages, sunrise birdwatching and even Spanish language classes can all be arranged.





COSTA RICA

A WONDER OF NATURE

Red eyed tree frog



Arenal



Scarlet macaws

THE COSTA RICA EXPERIENCE 14 NIGHTS



- INCLUDES**
- 2 nights San José
 - 3 nights Arenal
 - 2 nights Monteverde Cloud Forest
 - 3 nights Nicoya Peninsula
 - 4 nights Osa Peninsula

WHEN TO GO
Significant rainfall from Jun - Oct, so best Nov - May

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

Costa Rica - the 'Rich Coast' - so named by Christopher Columbus when he landed here in 1502. With both Caribbean and Pacific coastlines, *Costas Ricas* might have been more apt, but then Columbus didn't have the benefit of the Panama Canal!

Rich it most certainly is though. Costa Rica is a land of outstanding green credentials and the statistics are compelling. A quarter of the country is designated as a national park. It occupies less than 0.1% of the world's landmass but contains 5% of the world's biodiversity. It's blanketed by forest, a mix of rain, cloud and dry, and there are 14 volcanoes. 800 species of birdlife, 8,000 varieties of orchid and more than 10% of the world's butterflies bring vivid splashes of colour to the jungle. And there is more water per square kilometre here than all except New Zealand.

In a country of such astounding ecological diversity there are myriad attractions, but the Corcovado National Park is arguably the jewel in its dazzling crown. On the southern tip of the Osa Peninsula which bulges out into the Pacific Ocean, Corcovado's rainforests boast no fewer than thirteen separate ecosystems and a thousand types of tree, as well as record numbers of jaguar, tapir and scarlet macaw.

Arenal is another constant in any Costa Rica itinerary. Here, in the shadow of the country's most famous and active volcano, you can zip wire through the jungle canopy, walk and ride along forest trails, or simply relax in the local hot springs. Further south down the spine of the Central Highlands is the Monteverde Cloud Forest, a particularly good place to see the country's national bird, the resplendent quetzal.

And in the far north-west, on the country's Pacific shores, an enticing world of glorious white sand, tropical rainforest and exclusive, eco-luxury beach resorts awaits.

MORE TO SEE



Tortuguero
An astonishing array of fauna inhabits the rivers and rainforests of this national park on the Caribbean coast. Its beaches are also important nesting sites for Green and Leatherback sea turtles.



Manuel Antonio
Tropical forest meets white sand beach in perfect fusion at this stunning sanctuary on the Pacific side of the country.



Punta Islita
Costa Rica has one of the longest whale-watching seasons in the world. Enormous humpback whales roam the waters of the Pacific coast for about 8 months of the year and often use Golfo Dulce as a nursery for their young during October.



Pacuare Lodge
Challenge the exhilarating white water rapids of the Pacuare River from the eco comforts of this secluded retreat tucked away in the rainforest.

NICARAGUA

LAND OF LAKES
AND VOLCANOES

“...volcanic islands that are hothouses for flora and fauna are just some of the surprises that await you.”

THE NICARAGUA EXPERIENCE
11 NIGHTS



INCLUDES

1 night Managua
2 nights Leon
2 nights Granada
2 nights Lake Nicaragua
4 nights Emerald Coast

WHEN TO GO

Significant rainfall from Jun - Oct, so best Nov - May

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

Lake Nicaragua

Now at peace after decades of conflict, Nicaragua is one of Central America's emerging destinations. It is a charmingly un-commercialised country with a rich indigenous culture, vast inland seas, spectacular volcanic peaks and a tropical Pacific coastline.

In a little over a week, you can explore the cities of Leon and Granada, two of the oldest Spanish settlements in the Americas, visit the coffee plantations of Matagalpa and cruise the endless expanse of Lake Nicaragua, before putting your feet up at a hidden gem of a resort on the Emerald Coast.

But that is just the bare bones of it. Magnificent colonial churches, charming artisans' workshops and volcanic islands that are hothouses for flora and fauna are just some of the surprises that await you, but you can always combine Nicaragua with neighbouring Costa Rica if you want more!



Granada



Coffee plantations in Matagalpa

MORE TO SEE

Volcano surfing

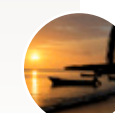
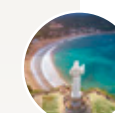
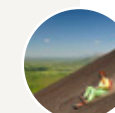
Surf or slide down the steep ash slopes of active Cerro Negro. Exhilarating but not for the faint-hearted!

San Juan del Sur

A lively fishing village on the country's south-west coast, San Juan del Sur is a popular stop for surfers and is close to some of the county's most picturesque beaches.

Corn Islands

Great Corn and Little Corn...50 miles offshore and an undiscovered Caribbean paradise of horseshoe bays, crystalline coves and colourful wooden Creole houses.





PANAMA



MUCH MORE THAN JUST THE 'BIG DITCH'

The serpentine isthmus of Panama, which ties the two halves of the American continent together, is divided by its most famous attraction, the 80km-long Panama Canal. Its construction still ranks as one of the most important engineering achievements in history, but there is so much more to discover here than just the 'big ditch'.

A character in John Le Carre's book *The Tailor of Panama* maintains that his country, the size of Ireland, 'has everything

that God needed to make paradise.' Although most people's knowledge of Panama is probably confined to the Canal, no doubt his enthusiasm incorporated its fantastic beaches, more bird species than the whole of North and South America combined, several national parks, stunning tropical islands, remote mountain villages and coffee plantations hidden away in the country's volcanic interior, and the San Blas Islands - an idyllic archipelago of some 400 palm-fringed Caribbean jewels that are home to the indigenous Kuna tribe.

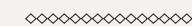


Copan



Sloth

HONDURAS



BACK ON THE TRAVEL MAP

After years of isolation, Honduras is once again on the travel map. While the challenges ahead remain significant, this vibrant and fascinating place, with its love of fiestas and festivals, has an enormous amount to offer the intrepid traveller.

This can be neatly divided into a trilogy of very distinct experiences. You can inspect exquisitely carved Mayan stelae

monuments at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Copan; choose from a dozen or so spectacular national parks such as Pico Bonito, whose cloud forests are home to monkey, wild pig, sloth, jaguar and a dazzling array of birdlife; and explore the white sand beaches and coral reefs of Honduras' Caribbean Bay Islands.



CUBA

RHYTHMIC PULSE OF THE CARIBBEAN



Cayo Santa Maria



Havana



Vinales Valley

The largest of the Caribbean islands is also the most intriguing. Yes, it has its fair share of white sand beaches and rolling fields of sugar cane, but Cuba dances to an entirely different beat.

Havana has always been the island's biggest draw. Part decaying and part restored, the genius of this vibrant city lies in its iconic artists and revolutionaries who have given the world the music of the Buena Vista Social Club, the classical dance of Carlos Acosta, the writings of Ernest Hemingway and the mythic image of Che Guevara.

But beyond the crumbling magnificence and beauty of Habana Vieja, Cuba is an island to explore, its spectacular landscapes the backdrop to tobacco plantations, beautiful colonial towns and an extraordinary ethnic melting pot of peoples who will open their hearts - and often their homes - to visitors.

To the west of the capital are the dramatic limestone mountains of the Vinales Valley, where farmers cultivate tobacco, fruit and vegetables. To the east, the historic

town of Cienfuegos - 'Pearl of the South' - where Columbus landed in 1494, and the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Trinidad with its picturesque cobbled streets and colonial mansions, legacy of the 19th century sugar boom.

Time allowing, you might also consider a detour to the far east of the island to explore the labyrinthine streets of Camaguey (deliberately designed to confuse visiting pirates), the Sierra Maestra (Cuba's highest mountain range and revolutionary hideout), and Castro's old HQ in Santo Domingo.

Unlike the cigars and the mojitos, good Cuban resorts are not easy to come by, but if you do want a few days of Caribbean chill before your flight home, then end on one of the many Cayes, ideally with a Cuba Libre or two to hand.

THE CUBA EXPERIENCE
12 NIGHTS



INCLUDES

3 nights Havana
2 nights Vinales
1 night Cienfuegos
3 nights Trinidad
3 nights Cayes

WHEN TO GO

Year round but best Dec - Apr.
Possibility of hurricanes Jul - Oct

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

MORE TO SEE

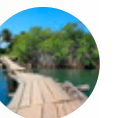
Santa Clara

Home to Che Guevara's mausoleum and memorial museum. For all their Soviet style pomp, it will be the details - a letter to his aunt signed 'Ernestito' and his asthma inhaler - that have greater impact.



Humboldt National Park

Reptiles, amphibians, birds and flora flourish in the rivers, jungles and mountains of this UNESCO World Heritage Centre at the eastern end of the island.



Bonefishing

Addictive, adrenaline fuelled and like no other form of sport fishing. There are a number of key locations on both north and south coasts of the island, but you'll need skill, finesse and stealth to catch one of these very wary and lightning fast little silver fish.



THE CARIBBEAN ISLANDS

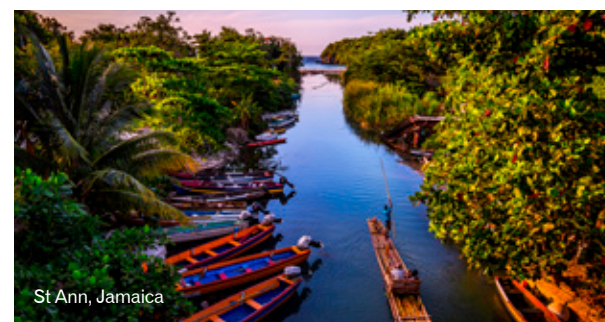
SIX OF THE BEST

All Caribbean islands bask in the same tropical sunshine, float in the same silky waters and are blessed with their fair share of gorgeous, palm shaded beaches. But then the differences begin.

St Lucia



English Harbour, Antigua



St Ann, Jamaica



Sugar Beach, Saint Lucia

1 BEST FOR BEACHES

Nelson called it "a vile spot" but sun seekers on Antigua's 365 beaches may beg to differ. Coves of white sand, which look as if they've been made by giant ice cream scoops and are found all around the hundred mile coastline, are the island's number one asset.

2 BEST FOR STYLE SEEKERS

Barbados attracts the rich and famous like bees to the honeypot. Make for the west coast where the most des of res are lined up along a ribbon of sand, gently lapped by pussycat waves.

3 BEST ALL ROUNDER

With its spice and sugar plantations, lush green towering interior and picturesque harbour capital of St George's, Grenada really does tick a surprising number of boxes. Secluded beaches and water sports aplenty simply tick two more!

4 BEST FOR FAMILY FUN

Non-stop flights from the UK, and much to keep all ages occupied on both land and water, have put St Lucia firmly on the family radar. In the stunning south-west corner of the island, you can choose an all inclusive hotel with kids club or a private villa with room for everyone.

5 BEST FOR ESCAPISTS

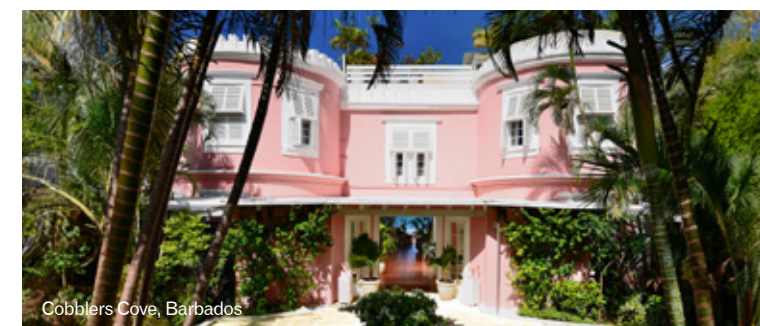
The lushest of the 32 islands that make up the Grenadines, Bequia is a fabulous, laid back little place. Rather than cocoon yourself away in the hotel, it's easy here to plug into local life, sip rum punches in the bars and eat roti on the waterfront.

6 BEST FOR ATMOSPHERE

It is hard not to argue with Noel Coward's lifelong love affair with Jamaica. The island, in many respects, is the cultural essence of the Caribbean. It's also one of the largest, so your experience will largely be determined by your port of entry, be that Montego Bay or Kingston.



Admiralty Bay, Bequia



Cobblers Cove, Barbados

MEET THE TEAM

AND SHARE THEIR
'ULTIMATE EXPERIENCES'



CLAIRE BETTS

POLAR & LATIN AMERICA SPECIALIST

“Nothing, not even the two days of anticipation building on the infamous Drake Passage, could have prepared me for my first glimpse of Antarctica. Flinging open the cabin curtains that first morning to the pristine White Continent in all her magnitude genuinely moved me to tears.”



JACOB JEWITT-JALLAND

POLAR & LATIN AMERICA SPECIALIST

“There's nothing quite like seeing a Puma stalk across the Patagonian Steppe, except perhaps toasting the big cat with a glass of whisky chilled with glacier ice.”



JONNY LIVINGSTONE

“The vast tropical forests of Guatemala are studded with Mayan ruins, but none are as impressive as Tikal. From a distance, the temples of this ancient city appear to float above the jungle canopy.”

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&
ALASKA



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EUROPE & BEYOND