



Maxine with the locals at Palakkad

MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME

Including a homestay in your trip lets you experience life with the locals. Our Specialists talk about their favourite homestays – some luxurious, some rather more basic, but all utterly fascinating.

Palakkad, India

Nestled in lush green Kerala paddy fields is a rural haven that tourism has barely touched. It is here in Palakkad that you can stay in an authentic village “Tharavad”, a traditional Keralan house. A visit to this friendly ancestral home should include a journey into the surrounding area, where you can observe village life that has changed little over the centuries. Whether learning to basket weave, tapping toddy (coconut brew) or taking part in an evening pooja at a shiva temple, the experiences are unique and fascinating.

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Shan State, Burma

Burma’s Shan State is home to a variety of ethnic tribes living amongst some of the country’s most spectacular scenery. A three-day trek between the remote Kakku temple complex and picturesque Inle Lake enables visitors to stay overnight in Pa-O villages and witness first-hand their traditional way of life. There are no en suite facilities, but a stay with the Pa-O is warm and welcoming, complemented by homecooked suppers and genuine hospitality.

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Shompole Mgadi, Kenya

Shompole, located on a private Maasai concession on the edge of southern Kenya’s Nguruman Escarpment, overlooks the vast plains and volcanic hills of the Great Rift Valley. One of the top lodges in Kenya, Shompole was initiated by the Shompole Maasai, who now host it and are pleased to share their ways and traditions. The shimmering red soda water of nearby Lake Natron is one of the few flamingo breeding habitats in Africa. Walking is superb and a visit to Shompole Village on market day is a wonderful experience.

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Gunya Titjikala, Australia

The Aboriginal community of Titjikala offers one of the very few chances in Australia of interacting with a traditional Aboriginal society. It is a community-based project (revenue is returned to the people) where guests stay in relatively luxurious accommodation but are taught the survival techniques, the somewhat alien diet, and the “Dreamtime” beliefs of the world’s oldest peoples.

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Shan State, Burma



Shompole Mgadi, Kenya

Pastoral Nomads, Kyrgyzstan

Of all the Central Asian countries, modern-day Kyrgyzstan has the strongest link with its past. Kyrgyz nomads have been herding in the high jailoo (summer pastures) since before the days of Genghis Khan, and many families still take their felt tents – or yurts – up near the snowline for the best summer grazing. Visitors are welcome to stay with them in their yurts, which (though basic) are genuine, traditional and often placed in stunning locations, such as at the foot of snow-capped peaks or by the shore of the spectacular Lake Song Kol.

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Gunya Titjikala, Australia

Hato El Cedral, Venezuela

Hato El Cedral is a beautiful working cattle ranch in Venezuela's Los Llanos region, an area of big skies, slow rivers and plains stretching to every horizon. Having protected its wildlife for over 25 years the ranch so teems with animals and birds that you often find iguanas outside your bedroom door, red howler monkeys in the trees and capybaras munching grass by the swimming pool.

As well as fantastic wildlife viewing, a stay on the ranch with gauchos gives an insight into the lives of the Llaneros. There are 25 air-conditioned cabins with ensuite hot water shower, and the kitchen produces traditional Llanos dishes - you may even be offered capybara! Local guides take you wildlife spotting, either by motorboat or by safari-style truck across the plains, while evenings are spent listening to Llanero music and talking about the day's experiences.

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Llaneros cowboys entertaining guests



Nomadic yurts near Issyk-Kul