



Meet the  
Specialist

Joanne Poole

## An Asian Affair

*Jo Poole remembers how she fell  
for Southeast Asia*

I fell in love with Southeast Asia at 18 when teaching English in a Malaysian Muslim boarding school. Each day I was woken at 5am with the call to prayer and a bowl of rice with spicy anchovy 'sambal' – not exactly Terry Wogan and a slice of toast!

My love of the region and fascination with its diversity grew through my travels around Malaysia and the surrounding countries. After graduating from university with a degree in zoology I was delighted to join Audley as a Southeast Asia specialist.

Papua New Guinea, my next adventure, was a step back in time. The tribal groups of the mountains and jungle have had virtually no contact with the outside world in the 70 years since they were first met by foreign anthropologists, and up in the temperate highlands the Huli people live as they have for hundreds of years. One of the things that made me want to work for Audley was their commitment to providing responsible, top quality travel to areas like this, where old cultures and spiritual beliefs are still refreshingly intact.

I was equally besotted with Papua New Guinea's dense rainforest and its colourful wildlife. The glorious birds of paradise, much revered by David Attenborough, are a delight and much of the wildlife bears at least some resemblance to its Australian cousins. The tropical seas off the coast are home to some of the world's best dive sites, but when the exploring is done you can simply do as I did and sit back under a palm tree without hearing a telephone ring or knowing what is happening beyond the next village - and for a week or two, I would challenge you to care!