

Great trips, good value too

We asked our specialists which destinations offer particularly good value for the coming year. We see plenty of offers in the newspapers and on the web for low-priced tours, but these invariably cut a lot of corners, so we also stressed that the trips needed to be the 'complete experience' and not less than two weeks. Here are some of their suggestions.

Kerala

This two-week tour encompasses all of the highlights of the charming south Indian state of Kerala and is terrific value for money. Kerala is where India slips down into second gear and where natural beauty, coupled with a delightfully languid pace of life, is the order of the day. Without rushing and trying to fit too much into this itinerary, it will take you from the colonial streets of Fort Kochi, where you will stay in Old Harbour, a beautiful boutique hotel, to the gentle majesty of the rolling tea hills surrounding Munnar. From the bird-filled spice gardens of Thekaddy, to the serene and tranquil calm of the backwaters where you will spend time as guests of the charming Parayil Tharakan family in their attractive home. You even have time to relax at the end of your trip with a three-night stay at the splendid Marari Beach Resort.

This 14-night tour costs from £1,900 per person. For more information please contact Joe Parkes on 01993 838 331.

Canada

The Atlantic provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland offer a superb opportunity to discover the desolate and beautiful coastline of Canada, all at your own pace. This region can be reached by direct flight from London to Halifax and the provinces are easily explored by hire car. After a couple of nights discovering Halifax with its historic harbour and citadel, head south to visit Kejimikujik National Park and the Bay of Fundy. Fundy is renowned for the highest tides in the world and has wonderful coastal walking trails. Drive through New Brunswick and cross to Prince Edward Island on the 13 kilometres long Confederation Bridge. Prince Edward Island is well known for rich red soils and lighthouse-littered sand dunes. Cross by ferry back to Nova

Scotia to travel one of Canada's most spectacular drives, the Cabot Trail, and visit Cape Breton Highlands National Park. Spend a night in Louisbourg to visit its historic fortress before driving along the rugged east coast back to Halifax.

This 15-night tour including B&B accommodation, return flights and car hire costs from £1,740 per person. Please contact Fiona Pearce on 01993 838 710 for further details.

Malaysia

Malaysia provides a superb introduction to Southeast Asia and this trip offers a good variety of sights along with excellent value. The tour begins in the recently designated UNESCO World Heritage Site of Malacca. The city is a melting pot of Portuguese, Dutch and English colonial influences from the spice trade and these influences are still evident today. A stay in the heart of the Old Town at the Puri Malacca Hotel, formerly a Chinese ancestral home dating back to the 15th century, provides an insight into the Chinese influence on Malaysia's culture before the spice race began in earnest. Moving north from Malacca to Malaysia's capital city of Kuala Lumpur, enjoy a stay at the Renaissance hotel. Situated close to the iconic Petronas Twin Towers in the Golden Triangle district it also provides an ideal base from which to experience the colourful night markets and hawker stalls of Chinatown and Little India.

A stay in the Taman Negara National Park provides the opportunity to explore one of the world's oldest rainforests with your own guide – the perfect antidote to city life. The pace winds down further and ends with a four-night stay at the small Casa Del Mar hotel on the white-sand beach of Pantai Cenang on the Langkawi archipelago.

This 14-night tour costs from £1,995 per person including flights. For more information please contact Jack Tydeman on 01993 838 118.

Egypt

The Pyramids need no introduction but beyond these Egypt boasts the world-famous Nile and the clear waters of the Red Sea. This tour begins in Cairo with a four-night stay in the heart of the city with views over the Nile. Take a private guided tour of the Pyramids of Giza and the Egyptian Museum before heading south by plane to Luxor and Aswan, where you visit the major sights of Upper Egypt, including the Valley of the Kings, the Temple of Karnak, and the Temple of Philae. Finally, head to the Red Sea town of Sharm El Sheikh for four days of relaxation at your beachfront hotel.

The 14-night tour costs from £1,995 per person including flights. For more information please contact Sarah Whatman on 01993 838 409.

South Africa

South Africa offers a superb blend of wildlife, history, winelands and scenery. This 14-night road trip visits some of the finest parts of country staying in small, character B&Bs along the way. Start in Cape Town and explore the city, Table Mountain and the Cape Peninsula, before spending a couple of nights in the Winelands, to eat great food and enjoy world-class wines. The tour then ventures south to Hermanus for a couple of days, for some of the best whale-watching anywhere in the world. Now take the road east to explore the De Hoop Nature Reserve before finishing your trip with four nights amongst the lagoons, forests and beaches of the Garden Route.

This 14-night tour costs from £1,995 per person. For more information please contact Rachel Read on 01993 838 413.



Top: Tiger frog, Costa Rica
Bottom: Riadh Mosque, Tunisia



Petronas Towers, Kuala Lumpur



Cape Town, South Africa

Costa Rica

Costa Rica is well known for its stunning scenery, wildlife, volcanoes and beaches. It has a long history of stability and is one of the safest countries to travel in Latin America. Relatively small with a well-established infrastructure for visitors, it also happens to be one of the best value countries to travel to in Latin America. The tour begins in the capital San Jose, a city surrounded by rugged mountains and volcanoes, and then moves onto Arenal National Park. The park has a variety of trails to follow through lush rainforest and all set against the backdrop of the imposing Volcan Arenal, one of the world's most active volcanoes. The next stop is Monteverde where the more adventurous can sample zip lining and canopy walks while others can opt for the more sedate bird watching on offer in the cloud forest reserve. The Pacific beach town of Guanacaste then offers a chance to relax, unwind and sample some of the local seafood.

This 14-night tour costs from £1,850 per person including flights and shared transfers. For more information please contact Sarah Powell on 01993 838 623.

Tunisia

Tunisia boasts a fantastic variety of sights for the visitor. Its beaches are well documented, but it is the historic and cultural sights that, although less well-known, we regard as the real draw. The Roman cities, documented elsewhere in this Traveller, are fantastic, and the Colosseum at El Jem is a real highlight. There is plenty of Berber culture to absorb, with troglodyte dwellings and fortified villages, whilst the Sahara offers classic oases and vast salt flats to marvel at.

A 14-night tour of Tunisia costs from £1,950 per person. For more information please contact Natalie Humphries on 01993 838 422.



Felucca on the Nile, Luxor